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Don't Call Me a Street Child
Estimation and Characteristics
of Urban Street Children in Georgia

Note about the Authors

Katarzyna Wargan (Poland) has been living and working in Georgia for the past five years. A child psychologist by profession, Ms. Wargan has worked with children and youth for nearly 15 years. Her professional experience ranges from work in childcare institutions and youth counseling programs in Poland, supervising a world-wide youth volunteering network in the United States, to organizing psycho-social support for children and youth survivors of the Kosovo conflict in A bania and Macedonia. Trained in conflict resolution, mediation and peace education, in 2000 – 2004 Ms. Wargan was managing international projects oriented towards building communication and trust among children and young people across ethnic divides in Kosovo and in Georgia. Since 2004, Ms. Wargan has been Save the Children's Director of USAID-funded Rebuilding Lives Program (RLP) for street and other vulnerable children in Georgia. The program combines the development of social service options for children and families with policy advice and local capacity building.

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Acknowledgments

Thanks to the interest of the Street Children Working Group (SCWG), this project was initiated to better understand the current situation of street children in Georgia. It should be highlighted that SCWG members have endeavored to base potential future policies related to street children issues on valid and systematic evidence.

Without the close cooperation and support from a multitude of experts, groups and organizations, this study would not have been accomplished. Save the Children would like to express its gratitude to the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and UNICEF, who provided financial support and technical input that made the research possible. Because a careful and assiduous design of the research was so critically important, Save the Children would also like to gratefully acknowledge the expert support of UNICEF consultant, Dr. Brian Milne in the initial planning of the study.

The research effort drew great interest and support from the Childcare Department at the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia. We would like to particularly acknowledge the Head of the Department, Ms. Tamar Golubiani, for providing invaluable assistance and sharing professional human resources that helped assure a timely completion of quality field work. We would also like to thank the Vice-Mayors and Heads of the Social Affairs Departments in Kutaisi, Batumi and Rustavi for expressing their support.

In numerous aspects of research implementation, such as the development of sampling frames, training interviewers, organizing field logistics, and ensuring quality data and timely data entry, the independent research firm, ACT-Research, accomplished their tasks in a timely manner and with extreme professionalism. We would especially like to acknowledge the contribution of Mr. Lasha Bokuchava, Head of the Database and Statistics Department, and Ms. Sopo Chachanidze, Project Manager, who provided invaluable technical assistance in sampling, questionnaire design and quality control.

Equally important are every one of the 220 observers and interviewers who devoted long days driving and walking in each of the four cities to reach the street children there. We are deeply grateful for their hard work.

In order to mobilize such a large group of people, Save the Children cooperated with several government agencies, NGOs and other institutions, including the Ministry of Education and Science (social workers), Ministry of Labor, Health and Social Affairs (social agents), Tanadgoma, Child & Environment, Biliki, Mkurnali, World Vision International, Gldani Center for Street Children, Public Health Imereti Regional Center, and universities (last year students of Psychology and Social Sciences' departments). Former street children from Save the Children and Mkurnali programs also participated in the teams. It is thanks to all these agencies and individuals that this study was successfully executed.

Case studies and a great deal of anecdotal evidence cited in this document come from Child & Environment and Biliki, two local partner organizations of Save the Children. Both organizations have many years of practical work experience with street children. Their insight contributed an invaluable background context to research findings. Additionally, a parallel reserach conducted in Kutaisi and Batumi by World Vision International provided a significant opportunity to cross-verify data and offered additional perspectives on some results of this study.

Last but not least, the research authors are very grateful to all the street children who took the time and effort to answer all survey questions in a comprehensive manner.

This report was written by Katarzyna Wargan in cooperation with Dr. Larry Dershem, Maya Zedelashvili, Dr. Marina Chitashvili, Nino Kupatadze, Vakhtang Megrelishvili and Save the Children's Rebuilding Lives Project Team (Teona Aslanishvili, Eka Javakhishvili and Nino Nutsubidze).

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Executive Summary

The Urban Street Children Study in Georgia, with joint support from USAID and UNICEF, has been carried out by Save the Children in collaboration with a multitude of state, non-governmental and academic actors. The research included four large urban centers in Georgia: Tbilisi, Kutaisi, Rustavi and Batumi[1]. The locations were determined through discussions with several stakeholders, based on a preliminary street children mapping exercise conducted by Save the Children in 2006. Key informants reported that the highest observed numbers of street children were in these four cities.

This study is the first comprehensive assessment of street children ever done in Georgia and sets a unique precedent as few such studies have been carried out anywhere in the world. The research aimed to provide estimated numbers of street children in the four target urban locations and describe their characteristics so that evidence-based policy and programmatic recommendations could be drawn. The study used a three stage approach: a) pre-surveillance Time-Location Mapping; b) quantitative Point-Count Estimate, and; c) face-to-face interviewing. All three stages were implemented during the three months of June, September and November of 2007. Data entry and cleaning and data analysis took place in February/March of 2008.

To establish the study population, "street children" were defined as children 0 to 18 years of age (narrowed down to 8 to 18 years' age range for interviews) who were observed in the street. "Street children" in centers, shelters or other types of institutions were not included in this study.

Overall, the Point-Count Estimate revealed there was an average of 1,049 street children in the four cities in November 2007, with a maximum estimate of about 1,600 children. In general, street children in urban Georgia are primarily boys, 5 to 14 years of age, who mostly sustain themselves by begging. They are on the street mainly during daylight hours without an accompanying adult, although most of them have at least one parent and other relative(s) alive.

The study reveals that street children in Georgia are a manifestation of numerous socio-economic problems vulnerable children and their families face in the country, rather than a stand-alone phenomenon. An interesting observation can be made by analyzing the length of time children have spent on the street. Almost 40% of street children have been on the streets for more than three years. One could assume that these children began their street careers before or around the time of the Rose Revolution in 2003 when the Georgian population at large was suffering from a disastrous socio-economic situation. However, there are fewer (only one-quarter) street children who claim to have been on the streets for two to three years – since the early years after the Rose Revolution. As many authors indicate, this can be attributed to the renewed sense of hope the revolution brought the Georgian people. Nevertheless, the numbers of children who have been on the streets for one year or less are again high, reaching the pre-Rose Revolution levels. This growth reflects a general situation in Georgia where poverty has been increasing in the past few years and the impressive economic growth in the country has had little or adverse effect on enhancing the living standards for the majority of Georgians. In addition, the overall mood of the population has significantly worsened[2].

One must examine a complexity of driving, protective and inhibiting factors in the circumstances of street children to be able to draft an effective, well-targeted policy and programmatic responses. The research reveals that in a majority of cases, a combination of family and community stressors (usually not more than three or four) can lead a child in urban Georgia to the streets. These include:

- Absence of a parent or parents and other adult relatives in the child's surroundings.

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1. These are four largest urban centers in Georgia, with population as follows: Tbilisi – 1,342 thousand, Kutaisi – 165 thousand, Batumi – 100 thousand and Rustavi – 95 thousand (Source: Georgian Department of Statistics, www.statistics.ge)

2. See, for example, International Republican Institute (2007), "Georgian National Voter Study", IRI, USAID, Baltic Surveys/The Gallup Organization, PM

Although not many street children in Georgia are totally on their own, an absence of family members children can identify as caregivers – including parental death - is a powerful factor that can push them to begin a street life. The research shows that as the numbers of family members in the children's surroundings grow smaller, the children are increasingly more likely to spend nights on the streets or live there full time. Apart from parental death, an absence of parents the children can relate to takes several forms in Georgia. Parents may move away from their home cities and leave their children with people who are not capable of meeting the needs of the children. Some children may leave their parents and move to a relative's house in another city where care and protection options are insufficient, or (in rare cases) may even decide to move somewhere else alone. Finally, parents may work long hours (usually from early morning to late night, as the practice shows) to make ends meet, and are therefore not physically present in their children's lives.

- Economic problems - poverty, unemployment and homelessness

Poverty is a common factor for the majority of street children in Georgia. Escaping dire conditions at home, children try to find ways to make their own living outside of their households and spend earned money on personal needs or on their friends. Many see income generation as a way to support their families and some are also expected or forced to make money and bring it back home. Lack of accommodation or a family's appalling housing conditions can also lead children to take to the streets. Poverty alone does not drive children to the streets. The majority of families in Georgia, even in extreme economic conditions, still manage to keep their children at home. However, poverty can exacerbate stress on already vulnerable families, causing a shift in family priorities that no longer places the children's well-being at the center of attention.

- A change in the family setup, such as a divorce or re-marriage of a parent

Divorce of parents is a stressor for all children. In Georgia, it is also commonly accompanied by a sudden decrease of family living standards, especially if the children – as is usually believed to be the case – stay with the mothers. Single parents of street children in Georgia often find it very challenging to cope with their parenting obligations after going through a divorce. Remarriage of a parent frequently brings additional difficulties. Conflicts between children and their step-parents can arise, or the children might be altogether rejected by their step-parents and feel (or be) forced to leave their home.

- Family relocation

Families of street children in Georgia often change locations together with their children. Several relocation patterns have been observed: migration from small towns and villages to urban centers; movement from big cities to the capital of Tbilisi; relocation from Tbilisi to smaller towns; immigration from other countries; or forced migration from Georgia's conflict zones. A change of environment is a challenging situation for all children. If such relocation is not well prepared, the conditions in a new location may lead to a deterioration of family circumstances, and introduce additional stressors.

- Alcoholism and violence at home

Even though not predominantly mentioned by children, alcoholism and domestic violence are very potent stressors in the lives of children. They undermine safe and secure attachments at home and force children to resort to coping strategies that may include leaving home and living in the streets. As alcoholism and domestic violence are often reported by those street children in Georgia who have experienced a loss or a divorce of a parent, this only increases the adversity.

- Health problems in the family

Combined with poverty and lack of proper social support, severe health problems in the family can lead a child in Georgia to make a decision to drop out of school to start earning money or simply to leave home to escape difficulties which are beyond the child's ability to cope.

- Lack of schooling

The study has found school to be one of the crucial social protection elements for street children, but it is also frequently an active factor which furthers their social isolation. The majority of street children in Georgia are not enrolled in schools. Those who are still enrolled face several obstacles in their effort to remain there. Some try to combine income generation with schooling - a difficult task that can lead to dropping out. Others cannot afford basic necessities for schooling, or lack documents that would allow them to be enrolled. Families that face a choice between sending their children to school or earning money for the family may not find sufficient arguments for vague, long-term educational gains when confronted with immediate survival needs. A change in the family structure, brought about by a parent's death or divorce, can result in shifting household priorities in which education for children is no longer a primary concern. Finally, many street children in Georgia drop out of school quoting lack of interest, their own perception of inadequacy, or low quality of education as reasons for doing so.

- Insufficient social protection system in the child's surroundings

Social services that support children in Georgia at different stages of their street life are too few, and information about them is often unavailable. This fact makes a significant difference when it comes to preventing children from going to the streets or helping them to identify alternative life options while they are there. Once on the streets, children learn to make use of the scarce social services they can find. However, most street children in Georgia have not heard of, let alone taken advantage of, any social services.

- Absence of internal community child protection mechanisms

In some countries, an absence of a primary caregiver in a child's family has a less adverse effect because community members in the child's surroundings often provide protection when the family cannot. In urban Georgia, this is not the case – in the perception of the street children, when they face a range of adversities, wider communities such as neighbors are almost always absent from the picture. One could call it a societal or cultural indifference (and sometimes also a hostility) which results in further social isolation and self-depreciation of a child.

- Social isolation of street children families

The research findings reveal that street children in Georgia come from some of the poorest and most socially isolated families. Facing a prolonged complexity of adversities, from wide-spread poverty to lack of housing,

loss of a spouse, divorce or family conflicts, the families of street children often find it impossible to protect the children from internal and external shocks. With a perceived or actual lack of assistance from a wider family and community network, families often resort to coping strategies that do not create appropriate supportive conditions for their children.

As practice shows, many families of street children display symptoms of learned helplessness[3]– a psychological term that in a social context explains why individuals who have experienced recurrent failures in the past and who have faced certain adversities over a long period of time often fail to act. They tend to internalize their problems; see the difficulties as pervasive, affecting all aspects of their lives; and perceive the adversities as permanent and unchangeable.

The fact that hundreds of poor and socially excluded children are on the streets in Georgia, means a qualified social work action is urgently needed. The issues faced by street children and their families should be seen within a broader context of poverty reduction and social inclusion responses. An integrated and coordinated approach is needed to address the complexity of child, family and community-related factors that push children in Georgia to the streets or keeps them there. Such policy and programmatic responses should view street children as individuals with rights, complex needs and personal strengths rather than mere welfare recipients. Families and communities need to be regarded as part of the solutions rather than as part of the problem - policies and programs should be oriented at supporting families and social networks in protecting the rights of the children. With this approach, major policy, community and program recommendations include:

Policy level:

- Regularly research the situation of street children in Georgia in order to understand the dynamics within this group, and to enable the government to outline evidence-based programs and funding priorities.

- Revise identification criteria, information dissemination systems, outreach mechanisms and indicators for social support and social assistance to ensure that those in need are fully aware of their rights and that the existing state support options reach the most disadvantaged groups, not just those who are able to access them.

3. White, Harrison C. (1992); Identity and Control: A Structural Theory of Social Action. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press; see also: Petersen, C., Maier, S.F., Seligman, M.E.P. (1995). Learned Helplessness: A Theory for the Age of Personal Control. New York: Oxford University Press

- Consolidate and target existing social benefits designed to combat extreme poverty, and ensure inclusion of street children families in those benefits; poverty reduction programs should include job counseling and employment programs for those who are able to work, and material or cash assistance for those are not.

- Include age-appropriate targeted social services for street children in the overall child welfare system and develop new and more numerous services which focus specifically on outreach and quality multi-sector family support.

- Wherever possible and feasible, use existing mainstream resources (such as schools) that can offer regular or additional after-hours programming to street children. Develop new childcare services, focusing on daycare, after-school programs, kinship or, in the most critical cases, fostering and small-scale residential care.

- Revise state legislation regarding property rights and material support to mothers with children after a divorce and introduce executive mechanisms to minimize risks of homelessness and extreme economic hardship.

- Improve access to education for out-of-school children through: 1) developing and certifying modified (catch-up and open/distance learning) curricula, and include these curricula in education voucher systems; 2) tying the voucher system to attendance instead of enrollment; 3) creating an 'inclusive education fund' accessible for schools, vocational centers and alternative learning schemes' providers who need supplementary resources to develop additional educational programs; 4) allowing vocational centers, in particular cases, to lower entry requirements of completed compulsory education to make vocational education accessible for street youth.

- Address problems of limited access to social safety nets because of a lack of personal documentation, allowing for temporary registration of street children and their families (eg. based on self-identification), and facilitating the process of obtaining legal documents.

- Ensure that existing legislation includes practical mechanisms to guarantee timely protection of children from families with alcohol abuse and domestic violence, combined with adequate support for the families to overcome these problems.

- Establish mechanisms to effectively ban children's participation in gambling.

- Include child protection as a necessary component of police training; introduce a position of a police social

service professional for child-related interventions; and establish mechanisms for confidential complaints about police actions.

- Establish working mechanisms in court proceedings that guarantee proper care for children in cases of parental imprisonment.

- Develop independent living programs for street youth and include them in a continuum of child-care services.

- Ensure that formal cooperation, information sharing and cross-referral mechanisms exist between all agencies directly or indirectly responsible for child protection and family well-being in order to guarantee early crisis identification and timely multi-sector intervention.

Local level:

- Design and implement city specific social inclusion strategies. As a component of these strategies, facilitate and allocate financial resources for the development of locally appropriate services for street children and their families. Address the issues of homelessness in their cities.

- Lead and increase regular cooperation and cross-linkages between social protection systems existing in their cities (schools, non-governmental programs, statutory social workers, health facilities, state subsidy agency representatives, the administration and police).

School level:

- Establish additional educational programs for out-of-school children (after-school clubs, mentoring schemes, youth resource centers) to ensure that those children can either return to school or otherwise receive basic and/or vocational education.

- Train school teachers on individual curriculum delivery and the psycho-social aspects of teaching; and improve school-parent liaison.

- Provide incentives (such as scholarships, educational loans and textbook borrowing schemes) to children who are not enrolled due to extreme economic hardship.

Program level:

- Design interventions for individual children/families that are limited in time, well targeted and highly focused, distinguishing between prevention and intervention.
- Always develop clear indicators to measure the impact of programs on children and their family environment.

- Ensure early identification and full participation of families of beneficiary children (including siblings and step-parents); reach out to wider family networks; assess family and community strengths that will assist in designing an effective individual service plan.

- Ensure that beneficiaries have full information about programs and assistance options existing in their community, in a format that is accessible for them, and facilitate their access to these programs.

- Programs that intend to address family crisis should develop appropriate competencies (such as counseling in cases of alcoholism, domestic violence or divorce, economic activation and job counseling options, in-home respite care for children or the ill, and enhancing parental skills) and/or referral systems to such options for the families. Family services should be developed in a flexible manner with extensive outreach and should be developed in such hours and places where families can be reached and are free of other duties as to minimize a risk of sudden disruption in internal family ties and survival strategies.

- Programs which intend to work with minority populations (such as the Roma) should include representatives of these groups to facilitate access and a trustworthy connection.

- Projects aiming to work with street youth need to develop competencies relevant for delivering youth livelihood programming (including supervised group housing, alternative and vocational education, and life skills curricula) and to establish a formal referral system to outside assistance options. Similarly, programs planning to involve street children with toxic substance abuse problems have to be able to deal with these issues or must have linkages to specialized services.

- Programs aiming to provide basic education for out-of-school street children should be based on certified or otherwise officially recognized curricula and delivered through flexible and individually tailored methods. If re-integration of children in formal schools is envisioned, programs need to work closely with schools and provide training and sensitization activities for teachers, students and parents to reduce stigmatization and discrimination.

- Programs should not operate in a vacuum but should instead undertake all efforts to ensure permanent, structured and focused cooperation between the relevant social programs in their communities.

Introduction

Country Background

The Republic of Georgia has a population of 4.6 million (around 25 percent of which are children) and occupies a territory about the size of South Carolina or Ireland in a region of the South Caucasus. Bordering Russia, Turkey, Azerbaijan and Armenia, the country is strategically positioned along the ancient Silk Route, connecting the West with Asia.

Picture 1 - A Map of Georgia with Research Sites Highlighted

The recent turbulent history of Georgia has significantly affected the country's socio-economic situation. Following independence from the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, secessionist wars from 1991 to 1993 brought some 15 percent of the country's territory under the control of unrecognized governments in Abkhazia and South Ossetia and resulted in the internal displacement of hundreds of thousands of people. The 1995 Constitution conformed to primary democratic principles; however, under President Eduard Shevardnadze, the executive power was ineffective and corrupt, elections were increasingly rigged, and Georgia was often referred to as a "failing state."

The new government that came to power in 2003 as a result of the Rose Revolution has made a number of notable achievements. It has carried out several important reforms which have led to greater effectiveness in the public service, curbed corruption, made outstanding progress in rebuilding the country's economy and has set integration with NATO and the European Union as major national goals. In line with these overall strategic directions, the Government of Georgia has also committed itself to reforming the child welfare system and aligning the country's legislation with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child that Georgia signed in 1994. In terms of direct support to children in need, the reform has included the introduction of a welfare payment system and the initiation of care options alternative to residential institutions. In the area of juvenile justice, there is an ongoing debate regarding the age of criminality, prevention activities, and the introduction of diversion schemes as an alternative to imprisonment. In the development of care options, there is recognition that some groups of children require special attention to ensure that the programs developed are inclusive in addressing their needs. Street children are one such group.

To date there have been no systematic or comprehensive studies that have examined street children in Georgia. Recent population estimates of street children in the country, by local and international NGOs, have ranged from below 500 to over 5,000. In May 2006, at the initiative of the Parliament of Georgia, a Street Children Working Group (SCWG) was established by Save the Children, with the participation of government and non-governmental organizations. One of the objectives for the SCWG was to conduct a research on street children in order to understand more accurate numbers, causes and needs of street children. The research would then be used to assist the government, as well as non-government organizations in their planning of appropriate interventions and services.

In early 2007, Save the Children cooperated with UNICEF, providing technical inputs for the design of a street children's research project. The conclusions emphasized the need for a systematic approach to street children research that could inform policy making, planning and design actionable programs that address the needs of street children. Subsequently, the street children research was carried out in Georgia in June 2007 – March 2008.

Research Objectives

The current study aimed to provide valid and reliable data on the prevalence, characteristics and needs of street children in Georgia as well as to recommend pertinent and appropriate programs to reduce the number of street children and address their needs. Within this overall goal, the research was designed to provide a reasonable quantitative estimate of the numbers of street children in Tbilisi, Rustavi, Kutaisi and Batumi. Subsequently, the study intended to obtain reliable information about street children on the following issues: demographic characteristics, family situation, shelter/housing, educational status, knowledge and the use of services, income generation, physical health condition, and quality of life. Finally, the purpose was to provide evidence-based recommendations on appropriate interventions for street children in Georgia.

Discussion on Street Children Definitions

The definition of street children has been debated around the world for years (see, for example, Panter-Brick, 2003[4]). The most commonly used two-dimensional definitions focus on places where the children spend most of their time and on the intensity of their contacts with the family. Using these criteria, street children are often grouped into children of the street (or children living on the streets full time, and having little to no contact with their families) and children on the street (those who spend most of their day time on the streets but return home at night). For lack of a better evidence-based terminology, the Georgian practitioners based their categorization on the principles of those common definitions and distinguished three groups of street children:

Children of the street - those who spend nights (sleep) in the streets or in places not meant for human habitation for a period of one month or more. They either do not have a family/caregiver, or have not had any contact with their family/caregiver for a period of one month or longer. They provide for themselves, and spend the money to secure their own needs in their street surroundings.

Children on the street - those who always, or most of the time, sleep at home but spend most of the daytime on the streets. They may have regular (daily) or irregular (less frequent than daily) contact with their family/caregiver. They provide for themselves and usually bring at least a portion of their income back home to support their family/caregiver.

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4. Panter-Brick, Catherine (2003); "Street Children, Human Rights and Public Health" in Children, Youth and Environments Volume 13 No. 1

Children of street families - those who spend nights (sleep) in the streets or in places not meant for human habitation together with their adult family members for a period of one month or more. They contribute to providing for their family by generating income on the streets.

Another interesting attempt to describe street children in Georgia comes from a Georgian organization which provides services to the children. Here, two groups were distinguished based on a concept of a traditional child-adult link and a distortion of that relationship. In the first group – "children at risk of street life" – a child has already experienced spending some time on the street but the basic role division – an adult as a caregiver and a child as a dependent – is maintained. Children from the second group – "street children" – spend most of their time on the streets because they have to assume the role of caregiver. They need to provide for themselves and also often for adults who can no longer perform their care-giving functions, thus becoming the dependants of their children.

The above terms attempt, to some degree, to describe a complexity of issues that characterizes children who take to the streets in Georgia. However, the terms have certain limitations in that they focus on a narrow array of factors (locations, relationships or streets activities). Additionally, they fail to reflect the fluctuating nature of street life for children. As outlined in a guidance document from the Displaced Children's and Orphans Fund of USAID[5], recent research shows that street-active children and youth blend varying degrees of street working (time spent earning money through street-based work) and street living (time spent sleeping away from home on the street or in street children shelters).

In Georgia, the term "street children" is also charged with negative connotations, often focusing more on the harmful aspects of street life than on those who live such a life. The children themselves do not want to be called "street kids." The research organized two focus groups (in Tbilisi and Rustavi) with children known to Save the Children's project mobile teams from their street work. When the facilitators asked what name the children would use to describe themselves, they said "just kids." Prompted, they came up with other suggestions: "children who work," "begging children," or "cool boys." The stigma associated with the name and a trend to place

such children into rigid categories is so strong that it becomes easy to forget the most essential reality: that a "street child" is simply a child with individually unique talents and personal abilities.

A classification of street children is useful as long as it is understood that the groups and sub-groups are not necessarily uniform or separate from one another. Recognizing limitations of any strict categorization, the current research does not intend to develop new explicit definitions of different street children groups in Georgia. Rather, it tries to verify terminology that has been operational in the country so far. A basic place-time dimension is still used but it is analyzed against a variety of issues including and not limited to demography, mobility, family, shelter, education, income generation and health. The research acknowledges that street children might at different points in their lives move from one group to another, or share characteristics of different groups at the same time.

Grouping Street Children in Georgia

With all limitations of grouping and categorization of street children described above, two possible approaches have been discussed during the data analysis process. One could be broadly named a typology approach. This would attempt to define concrete groups and sub-groups of street children and tailor policy responses to these generic groups. According to this model, the term street children would be used to portray a separate category within a broader population of children in especially difficult circumstances.

The research data identifies presence or absence of caring adults (parents or other relatives) as the main determinant of street children's circumstances in Georgia. Using this indicator, one may say that one major group of street children includes those who do not live with their family members (35 percent of the total sample). Under the general heading "street children who do not live with their parents or family members", a further sub-group could be identified: children without a primary caregiver (those who say that no-one takes care of them).

The second major group is that of children who can identify a primary caregiver; and those who live with their families constitute a sub-group of children with caregivers.

Within these broad categories, one can distinguish further sub-groups: children who live on the streets all year

5. James-Wilson D. (2007); Building Bridges to Mainstream Opportunities; Displaced Children & Orphans Fund Guidance on Funding Priorities and Parameters for Street Children Programming ; USAID

mon characteristics. They are more likely to spend longer periods of time on the street. They are generally not enrolled in school and represent a significant proportion of school drop-outs. They consider death or absence of one or both parents to be a problem equal to or more prominent than poverty. They need to make money to support themselves. They have also been observed to have a higher incidence of special needs, visible physical traumas and toxic substance abuse.

However, distinguishing sub-groups in the second category (children who do have a caregiver and/or live with their families) becomes much more complicated because some potential sub-groups vary greatly, many overlap, and children from different sub-groups share similar characteristics. For example, the research shows that street children with both parents alive and living in the same city are much more likely to be enrolled in school and to spend less time on the streets than children with no parents. However, street children who are migrants from other countries, despite having their parents in the same town, are for the most part not enrolled in school and tend to be mostly on the streets, just like children who have no parents but are not immigrants. Should immigrant children be included in the first group above since they share most of its characteristics? Or should they be included in the second category because of presence of families, even though they are strikingly different than its majority? When looking at working teenage street boys with long-time street-living experience, one faces similar dilemmas. These boys display characteristics similar to a wider group of children who do not live with their families. However, given their age, coping strategies and wishes for the future, can we still say that not living with the families is an adversity for them, one which would classify them together with other children not living with families? Many such questions arise when an attempt is made to create general "model" categories of street children because most of them have diverse life experiences and face multiple disadvantages.

Another grouping method might be conceptualized as a spectrum of vulnerability - where an individual street child can fall under multiple areas of disadvantage. Within this concept, different life experiences of street children are analyzed in a context of specific issues, such as migration, presence or absence of adults in the child's life, street-living patterns, education status and access to social services. This approach permits an observation of street children within a wider context of poverty, vulnerability of families, education and social safety nets. In

round (street-living children), children who spend only summer or winter nights on the street (street-and-home living children) and those who are on the streets during daytime hours but not at night (street-active children). As research data shows, children lacking a caregiver and those who do not live with their families are more likely to have experienced spending nights on the streets than children who live with their families and/or have a caregiver.

Street children who do not live with their families and/or do not have a caregiver (the first group) are relatively easy to describe because they share many com-

a single point-in-time snapshot study such as this one, sub-groups within each issue are mutually exclusive – for example, a child cannot be enrolled in school and be a school drop-out at the same time. Some of the major groups of children within these issues are captured in the table below.

Additionally, there are cross-cutting factors that in varying degrees affect different sub-groups of children. These include the children's perception of family stressors, reasons for no schooling and future life dreams, a range of income-generating strategies, and health issues. They are not mutually exclusive: for example, a child can have observable physical traumas and use toxic substances, or might mention more than one family hardship at the same time. Some of the major cross-cutting issues are presented in the following table.

Vulnerability issues	Major sub-groups of street children within issues
Perceived family hardships	Economic problems Death or absence of parents Family disintegration Alcoholism/domestic violence No problems
Perceived reasons for no schooling	Economic problems Not interested in schooling Quality of education Family disapproval of schooling Lack of documents for enrollment
Street activities	Begging Working Doing other things to make money Not earning/needing any money
Wishes for the future	Generic or specific education Work Improved livelihood Home/family Undefined
Health	Child's observed disability Child's observed physical trauma Child's observed toxic substance use Health issues perceived as a family hardship Health issues perceived as a reason for no schooling

Table 1 - Major Street Children Sub-groups by Vulnerability Issues

Cross-cutting issues	Sub-groups within issues
Migration	Non - migrant children Children - migrants from regions of Georgia Children - migrants from other countries
Presence of parents	Children - double orphans Children - maternal or paternal orphans Children with both parents alive
Level of social support	Children with relatives in the same city Children without relatives in the same city
Presence of caregivers	Children who identify their primary caregivers Children who say that no-one takes care of them
Households	Children who live alone Children who live with parents and/or relatives
Time on the street	Street-living children Street-and-home living children Street-active children
Education	Children currently enrolled in school School drop-out children Children who never attended schooling
Literacy	Illiterate children Children who can read and write
Access to social services	Children who never heard of social services Children who heard about social services but never used them Children who used one or more social service

Table 2 - Cross-cutting Issues for Street Children in Georgia

Research Methodology

Research Phases

The street children research was a multi-stage process. Methodologies used to estimate the number of street children in the four cities of Georgia were Time-Location Mapping (T-L Mapping or TLS – Time-Location Sampling) and Point-Count Estimate. To collect information about the street children, face-to-face interviews were conducted using a pre-tested, standardized questionnaire developed for the purpose of this research. Each phase received prior approval from the Research Ethics Committee, located at the Ministry of Labor, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia.

Stage 1: Time-Location Mapping
The aim of this stage of the research was to identify locations and time periods with the highest numbers of street children in four selected cities of Georgia.

Using the most recent maps available, the total area of each city was divided into a number of quadrants that could be observed by a T-L Mapping team from a slow moving car during a three-hour period of time. Teams recruited for each city were composed of three people: a) one driver, b) one trained social researcher, and c) one social worker or some other professional with experience of working with street children.

In order to facilitate identification of street children, Save the Children, together with the Street Children Working Group (SCWG) and subject area experts developed a list of observable characteristics of street children in Georgia. The combined list of characteristics was categorized into four groups: 1) physical, 2) behavioral, 3) location, and 4) activities. The list was then presented for rating to all SCWG members, as well as to observers participating in T-L Mapping in all four cities, for a "validation by ranking" exercise. They were all asked to score each characteristic of importance for street children identification, using a scale of 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest). The characteristics rated as the most important were presented to the observers during trainings as a list of additional criteria[6]. As agreed, the observation criteria would be used as a guideline to help the observers determine whether a child belonged to the street children group or not. In addition, a child would be included not by a single characteristic but by a combination of physical, behavioral, location and activity factors.

All observers attended a comprehensive one-day training, which covered the principles of T-L Mapping, a review of street children characteristics, use of the observation report form, ethical issues related to observing street children, a practicum in the streets using the report form and a debriefing session. At the end of the training each of the observation teams was assigned a date and quadrant.

During T-L Mapping, teams were instructed to use unobtrusive observation, and conduct mapping from a slowly moving car. Observers would leave the cars only in cases when certain sites (e.g. public parks, open market places, bus or railway stations or underground passages) would not be accessible for observation from the car. T-L Mapping did not aim at observing children inside abandoned buildings, casinos, Internet cafes, restaurants, movie theatres, public transport, supermarkets, churches or other similar places.

T-L Mapping was conducted on 28 June 2007 in Batumi and Kutaisi and on 29 June 2007 in Tbilisi and Rustavi. In all four cities, a total of 192 observers were deployed in 64 quadrants.

Stage 2: Point-Count Estimate
The aim of this stage was to estimate a more accurate number of street children in selected locations. To increase reliability, it was decided that counts would be made for three consecutive days, 20 hours a day, from 06:00 in the morning to 02:00 at night. According to practitioners in the area of working with street children, almost no children are on the street from 02:00 to 06:00 a.m. so the four-hour gap in the count was planned.

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6. The list is presented as Annex 3 at the end of the document

The Time-Location Mapping showed that 65% of all street children were observed in 20 of the 64 T-L quadrants, and that within those quadrants street children clustered around a few sites. Therefore, only these 20 quadrants were included in the Point-Count Estimate. At this stage observers had to cover their respective quadrants on foot; therefore, it was necessary to divide some large quadrants into smaller parts. As a result, five largest quadrants among the 20 original ones were split into two parts each and the number of new quadrants amounted to 25 in all four cities. Although at the second stage of the research fewer quadrants were observed overall, they were done so more extensively and accurately, which resulted in an overall sampling error being 2.1%.

	Tbilisi	Rustavi	Kutaisi	Batumi	Total
Number of quadrants for Pre-Surveillance T-L Mapping	33	7	16	8	64
Number of quadrants for Point-Estimate Count	11	3	4	2	20
Sampling error	3.30%	8%	4.30%	4.30%	2.10%

Table 3 - Numbers of Quadrants Observed by 1st Stage (Pre-Surveillance) and 2nd Stage (Point-Estimate)

Three teams of two observers were assigned to each quadrant (six people per quadrant in total), working in four-hour shifts followed by an eight-hour break. Point-Count Estimate observation teams were comprised of observers from Save the Children's partner organizations and professional interviewers from ACT-Research. In total, 150 observers were deployed in 75 working teams around four cities.

The Point-Count Estimate was conducted simultaneously in all four cities, for three consecutive days: 25, 26 and 27 September 2007. Each team of observers worked in four-hour shifts, compared to three-hour shifts of the T-L Mapping; however in the Point-Count Estimate each observation team reported counts every two hours, which resulted in two point counts each shift, 10 counts during each day and 30 counts over all three days. These two-hour reporting scheme and simultaneous observations in all four cities were used for minimizing redundancy in the count of street children. For quality control, personnel of Save the Children and ACT randomly contacted Observation Teams in each location, either by phone or through site visits, to answer questions, resolve issues, and to ensure the process was proceeding as planned.

Stage 3: Face-to-Face Interviews
The aim of the third stage of the research was to gather information on demographics, problems and needs of street children.

For compiling the first draft of the questionnaire, SCWG members were asked to identify issues/questions that seemed important and relevant to the scope of the research. An open list of questions was compiled of all topics mentioned by the SCWG members as important. Since the list was very long and would take too much time to administer, Save the Children used the same "validation by ranking" method, asking the SCWG members and all Point-Count Estimate observers to rank the questions according to their importance. Around 200 persons completed the ranking exercise. The final pre-pilot draft of the questionnaire contained 40 questions identified as the most important. The draft questionnaire was then pilot tested in the streets of Tbilisi and some minor modifications were made. The piloting was also crucial for determining the most effective sampling method.

Based on the results of Point-Count Estimate, ACT-Research designed sampling for face-to-face interviews. A total of 300 street children, 8 to 18 years of age, were sampled to be interviewed in four cities. Gender and age distribution was proportional to the distribution of street children observed during Point-Count Estimate. The numbers of interviews designated per city are shown in the table below.

City	Point-Estimate Count Results	Sample size	Sampling Error
Tbilisi	798	178	6.50%
Rustavi	271	61	11.00%
Kutaisi	131	29	16.00%
Batumi	141	32	15.00%
Total	1341	300	5.00%

Table 4 - Sample Size for Interviewing Street Children per City

Face-to-face interviews with street children were conducted in teams of two persons (one person conducting the interview and the other recording the responses), thus a total of 10 teams were used with 20 trained interviewers. Interviewers' teams were composed of trained personnel experienced in interviewing children. For most parts, these were different people than those who took part in the previous two phases because interviewing children requires a different set of skills and qualifications. Some of the interviewers were recruited from among the groups that worked with Save the Children and Boston University during the 2005 – 2007 study of children in Save the Children's centers and in state institutions. Interviewers were trained on the interviewing rotation plan (three shifts per day), techniques of working on the (1) Questionnaire, (2) Snowball Report Form, and (3) Refusal Form, and ethical issues related to interviewing children. Face-to-face interviews were conducted from 19 to 23 November 2007 from 08:00am to 10:00pm.

Interviewers were to start their shift in their designated quadrant and approach a street child using the developed characteristics to identify street children (mentioned above). Because of the very high refusal rate during the piloting, it was decided that two recruitment methods would be used. First, if interviewers easily observed other street children they used a convenience sampling method; that is, go to another observed street child meeting certain criteria (e.g., 8 years of age and older). Second, if other street children were not easily observed, interviews used a snowball sampling method by asking the street child to bring other street children they knew.

In all sampled locations, "seeds" were identified and they were asked to bring a maximum of three other children of sampling criteria. Interviewers recorded the snowball results on snowball report forms that were provided to them.

To motivate street children to devote their time to be interviewed, incentives were provided as per pre-identified street children's wishes. In Tbilisi, Kutaisi and Rustavi all interviewed children were given hats and in Batumi they were given mobile phone cards. In addition, any interviewee that recruited another street child for interviewing was given one Georgian Lari (around 0.7 U.S Dollar) for that child.

Field control was carried out by the ACT-Research which provided personnel that visited each city and team, controlling for rotation, answering interviewer questions if problems arose, and ensuring quotas of children were met. After all interviews were completed, the completed questionnaires, snowball report forms, and refusal forms were brought to the ACT-Research's head office in Tbilisi. ACT-Research conducted data entry into SPSS, data cleaning, and initial data processing.

A total of 301 street children were interviewed. 159 (52.8%) of the interviewing was a result of snowball sampling (32 street children recruited 1 other child; 26 recruited 2 other children; and 25 recruited 3 other children). The remaining 142 street children were recruited for interviewing using convenience sampling. The numbers of street children interviewed by city were as follows:

City	Number of street children interviews completed	Percentage of total sample
Tbilisi	181	60.10%
Rustavi	32	10.60%
Kutaisi	58	19.30%
Batumi	30	10.00%
Total	301	100%

Table 5 - Numbers of Interviews Completed per City

Limitations of the Study

Sampling methods (snowball and convenience) – both methods introduce a degree of non-random selection bias (systematic error); however, these are two appropriate methods used when a sampling frame is not available. When using convenience sampling, bias can be reduced by making selections based on valid and reliable criteria related to the research topic, which was one reason for the development of the key characteristics of street children by key informants and the pre-surveillance T-L Mapping. When using snowball sampling, bias can be reduced either by directing the recruitment (incentives to bring certain types of individuals) or by having longer recruitment chains of six or more. In this study, the largest recruitment chain of 3 other children was achieved by 25 children but the interviewers used directed recruitment most of the time.

Mobility – street children represent a relatively mobile population in that they, and their families, may not have stable residency and when visible, can be seen at various locations at different times of the day or night. Because of this movement, duplicate counting was one of the biggest challenges to the research in the four cities. Three types of duplicate counting were controlled for: a) street children moving between cities (e.g., from Tbilisi to Rustavi), b) between locations (observational quadrants) within each city, and c) observer discrepancies of counting the same children twice.

Response reliability – two types of response bias were possible during the interview. First was recall, which is the possibility that street children would not be able to accurately remember aspects of their lives on the streets, for example, when asking street children where they were born or their age. Another challenge to the reliability of the responses is deception. It is commonly believed that street children may have "expected" answers to certain questions designed to solicit money or avoid law enforcement.

Measurement error – for many street children, answering a set of standardized questions is unusual. Moreover, the wording of some questions may not have been accurately understood by the children. Another potential for measurement error was related to interviewer effects; that is, the "trust" factor between the interviewer and the children, as well as the how accurately the interviewers were able to determine certain health issues, such as disabilities, trauma and toxic substance use.

Only children "in the street" were counted and interviewed – At the beginning of the study there was a debate among the SCWG of whether to include children inside any facilities (shelters, orphanages, day centers, restaurants, Internet cafes and such like) in the count and interviewing. A decision was made that ONLY children observed in the street that meet the previously agreed characteristics would be counted and interviewed. Two major factors contributed to this decision. Firstly, as noted by practitioners, many children in existing services, despite their alleged street-living history, have in fact never experienced a street life, and identification would present a major challenge. Secondly, entering privately owned enterprises for the purpose of counting and interviewing street children would introduce additional logistical and child protection concerns which the study tried to minimize.

Relatively high refusal rate – A total of 301 street children completed the interview. To achieve this number, a total of 512 street children were approached during the field work. Of these, 44 had already been interviewed by another interviewer. Of the remaining 167 street children, 3 began the interview but refused to complete it, while the remaining 164 street children refused be interviewed at all; thus a 35.6% refusal rate (167/301+167). The highest refusal rates occurred in Kutaisi and Rustavi.

Data Analysis

No post-weighting of the data was applied since the percentage representation of children is proportional to the size of the city. Other post-weighting of the data, based on gender and age groups was not applied.

Data analysis involved the use of frequencies, cross-tabulation, means and regression. To determine statistically significant differences, a Chi-Square test was applied to cross-tabulation and t-tests for means. Due to the limited sample size, a 90% significance level was ($p<0.10$) was used.

Research Findings

Summary of Findings

Numbers

Table 6 (below) presents the minimum and maximum numbers of street children observed during the three days of the Point-Count Estimate by city. In addition, Table 6 shows the minimum and maximum number of street children observed in the pre-surveillance T-L Mapping for the quadrants that were not included in the Point-Count (in italics). When summed, the number of street children in these four cities ranges from a minimum of 528 to a maximum of 1569, giving an average of 1049.

City	City quadrants	Minimum number	Maximum number
Tbilisi	Pre-surveillance Time-Location Mapping Point-Count Estimate Total for the city	113 207 320	334 612 946
	Average for the city	633	
Kutaisi	Pre-surveillance Time-Location Mapping Point-Count Estimate Total for the city	30 59 89	110 215 325
	Average for the city	207	
Batumi	Pre-surveillance Time-Location Mapping Point-Count Estimate Total for the city	22 45 67	49 99 148
	Average for the city	108	
Rustavi	Pre-surveillance Time-Location Mapping Point-Count Estimate Total for the city	18 34 52	51 99 148
	Average for the city	101	
Total four cities		528	1569
Average four cities		1049	

* of street children observed

Table 6 - The numbers of street children observed in four cities

Demographics

1. Among Georgian street children, there are twice as many boys than girls and the share of boys grows even larger among teenage (15 to 18 years) street children and at night. One possible explanation for this disproportion lays in traditional gender differences in child rearing practices and cultural differentiation between male and female roles in Georgia, where girls are expected to engage in household duties more than boys. For boys, spending time outside of home with their peers is not necessarily perceived as negative. Another reason is that in cases of a death or absence of parents, girls are more likely to be taken care of by relatives than boys. Since girls are less visible on the streets than boys but likely to face similar adversities, there is a risk that they are less likely to receive assistance.

2. The vast majority of street children in Georgia are no older than 14 years of age. For most of them, street experience begins around early school age. However, one can also observe significant numbers of infants and toddlers (15%) on the streets, usually accompanying their mothers in begging. There is a sizeable population (20%) of street adolescents as well.

3. Contrary to a widespread opinion that street children in Georgia are mostly migrants, seven of every ten children have lived their entire lives in the same city. In the remaining group, two-thirds of the street children are migrants from various regions of Georgia and one-third – immigrants from Azerbaijan, Russia, Moldova and Ukraine. Seasonal increase in numbers of migrant children can be observed during the summer months. Children from Georgian regions can sometimes move to another place without their parents whereas children from abroad are usually a part of their family's migration. Relocation in the country and across the border appears to be primarily motivated by economic reasons.

4. Comparatively higher school enrollment and literacy rates, as well as higher usage of social services and relatively low incidence of begging among the in-country migrant children, indicate stronger social adaptation than that reported by non-migrant or out-of-country street children groups. Informal support networks (such as those of extended families) that usually guide migration flows in Georgia can partially explain why these children are more likely to maintain closer social ties. A pro-active approach to life in face of adversities – and a decision to relocate can be seen as such – may also contribute to such observable resilience.

5. Most immigrant street children in Georgia appear to have stronger family ties than their in-country peers. However, they are more excluded from mainstream society than any other group of children. Living with families who usually do not have an officially registered, adequate accommodation, often facing extreme poverty, lacking identification documents and not knowing the Georgian language, these children are mostly illiterate, not enrolled in school and do not benefit from any available social support schemes. A widespread perception of immigrant street children as "Gypsies" being culturally pre-determined to beg and live on the streets only furthers their stigma and isolation.

Time-Location Factors

6. The majority of street children in Georgia stay alone on the streets only during daylight hours. There are also street children (usually infants and toddlers, girls or those who are begging) who are accompanied by an adult during day-time activities on the streets.

7. Most street children spend nights with parents or relatives at home. If the children spend nights on the streets, it is usually during the summer period when it is warm. One may distinguish three groups of street children in Georgia based on the spending nights on the streets factor: a) street-living children (sleeping on the streets all year round – 6%); b) street-and-home living children (sleeping on the streets only some months during the year – 19%) and; c) street-active children (spending just days on the streets but not sleeping there – 74%). There is also a small percentage of children who live (sleep) on the street together with their families.

8. Street-living children in Georgia are almost exclusively boys, mostly between 11 and 18 years of age. Most of them are either double orphans or if they have parents, their parents and other relatives do not live in the same city. Their contacts with families – if they have them – are weak. They are often homeless and live in poverty and do not go to school or have dropped out. A majority of street-living children have already been on the streets for two years or longer. Their survival strategies include making money on the streets to support themselves and using social services if these are available.

9. Street-and-home living children in Georgia spend only a part of the year on the streets (usually during warm months). While living on the streets, they typically have limited or no contact with their families and return home for the winter period. Most of these children have experienced economic hardship. They also see loss or absence of parents, alcoholism/domestic violence and divorce or remarriage of parents as family problems. Few are still enrolled in school, and there are many school drop-outs. The majority earn money on the street and spend it on their own needs or on their families.

10. Street-active children usually live with parents or with single mothers. They face similar problems as street-and-home living children but most of them still identify parents or relatives as primary caregivers and they maintain closer contacts with their family members.

One in every five children is still enrolled in school and there is also a small group of drop-outs. Many, however, have never been in a classroom. The street-active children often make money on the streets to supplement their family income.

11. As the period of time on the street lengthens, the children's ties with families or the school system become weaker and they are more likely to seek alternative support, for example from social services. They are also more likely to form social bonds with their peers in similar life situations.

Street Children Families

12. 85% of Georgian street children have at least one parent alive. 55% have both parents, 24% have just a mother and 6% have just a father. Among street children who have one or both parents, 85% have mothers living in the same city and 71% also have fathers there. Most children also have siblings and other relatives in the same town.

13. Street children who have both parents living have much closer contact with their mothers than with their fathers. The majority of street children identified parents or other relatives as their primary caregivers. Mothers are the main (and often the only) care-takers in street children families. Approximately one-third of the children do not identify anyone as a caregiver, although not all these children are orphans. The longer a child spends on the street, the weaker their contacts with parents are. Also, older street children are more likely not to have anybody they consider a caregiver than younger ones.

14. Death or absence of one or both parents (or lack of a caregiver) has a great effect on many aspects of children's lives, especially if there are no other adult relatives living in the same city. It makes the children more likely to spend nights (or live full-time) on the streets; it reduces the probability of school enrollment and also increases the risk of dropping out of school. These children see a loss or absence of parent(s) as a problem equal to or greater than economic difficulties. Most of them need to make money to sustain their livelihoods. Very few orphaned street children have ever been helped by a social service. Conversely, non-orphaned children who state that no one takes care of them, substitute the lack of a present protective adult by a using a greater degree of the available social services.

15. 65% of street children live with their families, mostly with both parents or in single mother households. Other household arrangements include single fathers; a parent and relative (often a step-parent or a grandparent) and living with relatives only (without parents). The remaining 35% of street children do not live with their families, although more than half of these do not spend nights on the streets. Instead, they sleep at orphanages, shelters, friends' houses or rent cheap accommodations. Children living with one parent and a relative (often a step-parent) or only with fathers report the highest level of hardship, whereas those living with both parents report the lowest level of hardship.

16. An average street child in Georgia mentions a combination of two to three main family stressors. Economic hardship (poverty, unemployment, homelessness, debts or hunger) is the most predominant problem identified, followed by a change in the family setup (death or absence of a parent or both parents and a divorce/remarriage of parents), and/or alcoholism/domestic violence and health problems in the family. As the complexity of family stressors increase, children are more likely to spend long hours and nights on the streets. Among family stressors, there are two that, alone, can push a child to the streets: death or absence of parents (especially if combined with an absence of other adult relatives) and homelessness.

17. Economic problems are most discernible for street children with large families living in the same city, but are also significant in single mothers' households as well as those households where a child lives only with his/her relatives. Poverty at home is the most frequently mentioned adversity, followed by parents' unemployment and not having a house. Homelessness means not having a place to live at all, living in unstable accommodations that they change frequently or in places not fit for human habitation (such as makeshift barracks, houses lacking basic amenities and overcrowded dwellings). Extreme poverty has been observed to have a prolonged character in Georgia, often accompanied by a syndrome of learned helplessness that incapacitates adult family members to search for ways to change their situation.

18. Family disintegration is a very powerful stressor for street children. Death or absence (for example due to relocation or imprisonment) of parents or one parent, or divorce, is often accompanied by additional problems, such as a severe decrease of a family's economic conditions and a loss of the bond to the only caregiver present in the child's life. In the case of a divorce, additional problems include frequent family conflicts preceding the separation and an introduction of a step-parent who may not accept the children.

19. Alcoholism in the families of street children is more frequently associated with the fathers' presence than among households with mothers as the primary care-takers. Domestic violence is often mentioned in a context of parental re-marriage, pointing to conflicts between step-parents and children, but it is also visible in single mother households. Of the two, alcoholism is mentioned more predominantly than domestic violence but it is likely that the latter is underreported by the children.

Street Children and Education

20. The majority of street children in Georgia are of basic compulsory schooling age (up to 14 years) but are not enrolled in school: only 20% of primary school age (12 years of age or younger) and 10% of lower/upper secondary age children (above 12 years) are currently registered in school, whereas official statistics report country enrollment at 95% for primary and 76% for secondary schools. Boys are 82% more likely to be enrolled in schools than girls. Even when street children are signed up for schooling, attendance is very low.

21. In contrast with Georgian drop-out statistics which are estimated at 0.3% among the school-enrolled children country-wide, 40% of the street children in Georgia (mostly older ones, and twice more boys than girls) attended schooling in the past but dropped out, often before completing primary education. 60% of the street children in Georgia have never entered a classroom. Girls are more likely to be fully left out of schooling than boys.

22. A denial or discontinuation of education is often associated with a family's inability to meet direct costs of schooling (such as school supplies, clothes, food or informal school fees) and an opportunity cost where a time spent by a child in school would mean that the child has less time for other activities which may be seen as a priority for family survival. Poor quality of education, a loss of interest in schooling, a perception of one's own learning disability and negative treatment at school in the past are also often mentioned as main reasons for leaving schools. Other reasons include a loss or absence of parents and illness in the family. Children who have never

attended schooling also frequently mention lack of documents necessary for enrollment or parental disapproval.

23. Around one-half of the street children in Georgia are illiterate, with the lowest literacy rates among children-migrants from other countries. A level of literacy is significantly higher among children with present or past exposure to schooling than among those who have never received education.

24. School can be a strong protective factor for street children. It reduces the likelihood of spending nights on the streets, significantly increases knowledge and usage of social services and helps children to identify reasonable aspirations for their future. However, school can also be a factor which further isolates a child as problems with affordability, adaptation and socialization in the school environment can force a child to leave school and take to the streets instead.

Income Generation

25. The majority of street children in Georgia need to make money to support themselves and/or their families. Most of the children utilize one or two major income generating strategies. The most prevalent are begging, especially among younger children and girls, and working (such as petty trade, carrying goods, collecting glass or scrap metal, and car washing). Begging children are often accompanied by someone, whereas working children are usually alone. There are also incidences of scavenging and theft, particularly visible among street-living children. Cases of commercial sex work are rarely reported by street children in Georgia.

26. Children's engagement in income generating activities is primarily motivated by family economic hardship, especially for younger children who do not spend nights on the street. Income generating activities often supple-

ment (or substitute) family income, or allow the children to sustain themselves, thus reducing family expenditures. Sometimes children engage in street economic activities together with their mothers or relatives, or teenage street mothers make money on the streets together with their babies.

27. Some street children - particularly older ones who live without their families or those who do not have a care-taker and live on the street full-time - also engage in street begging or street labor to meet their own survival needs because there is nobody else to secure those needs for them. These children apply more income generation strategies than their counterparts who live with the family, and spend the money almost exclusively on themselves.

28. One out of every four street children (especially those who are 10 years of age or younger and begging) state that when they earn some money, it is taken away from them, usually by the parents. This is frequently linked with alcohol abuse in the family and a fear of physical punishment in cases when the children fail to bring money home. There are also street children who generate debts in adult gambling places and feel – or are - compelled to make money (often through stealing) to pay them back.

29. Begging typically excludes a possibility for street children to go to school; working less so: 20% of working children still try to combine school enrollment with economic activities. Children who do not engage in generating income have the highest (52%) enrollment rates.

30. Children engaged in street begging are much more likely to display signs of physical trauma than their peers who work or who are not involved in other types of street income generation.

Social Services

31. Information about and utilization of social services is low among street children in Georgia. A quarter of them have never heard of or used any social service. This can be partly explained by the fact that the numbers and outreach of social services existing in Georgia in no way correspond to the need and demand.

32. Social services are utilized by Georgian street children after they have already been in a crisis situation for a prolonged time period, as little attention is paid to prevention and early intervention. Social services appear to be reactive in nature – usually, children who need to substitute the absence of other protective elements search for services and not vice versa.

33. On the average, street children rarely report being assisted by more than one social service in their lives. Those who have, tend to frequently mention such social services which offer short-time survival options. One-third of the children have used shelters/orphanages or soup kitchens. Other services used include day-care centers or mobile outreach teams (in order of frequencies but varying greatly by city).

34. The services that street children use have little effect on improving their life situation (eg. schooling, length of time on the streets, family hardship or level of literacy). The reasons behind this apparent inadequacy and insufficiency of support is that street children services in Georgia tend to be more focused on the visible problems of groups of children rather than individually addressing root causes of a family crisis. However, the research only covered the children on the streets, not those in services, making it impossible to judge the effectiveness of the scarce support options that exist.

35. Stereotypes and prejudices about street children exist even within the network of social services, with very few begging and immigrant children receiving support. Another explanation for very low participation of begging children in social services is the opportunity cost where children receiving income on the streets are often not willing to give up the time needed to earn money in exchange for a long-term potential benefit of participating in social services.

36. Social services for street children in Georgia are not planned in a coordinated or strategic manner, and are frequently not seen as an integral part of the overall social protection system. The result is that services provide a rather chaotic and fragmented assistance that addresses the surface of the problem without offering sustainable solutions for the children and their families.

Demographics of Street Children in Georgia

The Children's Profile by Gender and Age

Data gathered in all three research phases shows that there are more boys than girls among street children in Georgia[7]. The Point-Count Estimate gave the proportion of boys at 63% while during the interviewing of 8 to 18 year olds, there were 65% of boys in the sample[8]. Several findings from other countries show similar gender disproportion among street children[9].

As noted by Aptekar (2001)[10], one of the reasons may be attributed to the fact that girls are expected to help at home more than boys, especially in female-headed households. Such gender disparity among Georgian street children can be explained by cultural differences in child upbringing for boys and girls. Girls in Georgia are traditionally more likely to be in charge of household duties, and it is not commonly accepted that they would spend long hours alone on the streets. Also, the data shows that in cases of death or absence of parents, girls are more likely to be taken care of by their relatives. Even when on the streets, they are more likely than the boys to be supervised by someone. For boys, 'street education' and 'street-wise experience' are often seen as important, culturally accepted elements of growing up. This belief finds its reflection in Georgian slang used in some urban communities where the term "ubnis bichi" (in literal translation "a neighborhood boy") depicts someone who is tough and cool, displaying masculine characteristics perceived as positive.

Some authors, however, argue that street girls are more likely to have experienced abuse at home and display a higher psychological distress than street boys[11]. While they are less visible than street boys, girls are not exempt from exposure to similar family stressors that push children to the streets. If visibility is related to the allocation of resources, the girls who are less visible on the streets may receive less assistance than boys.
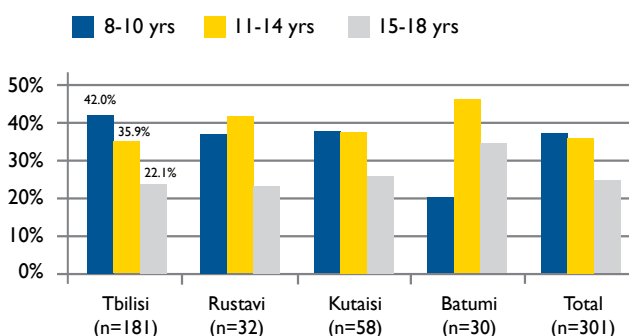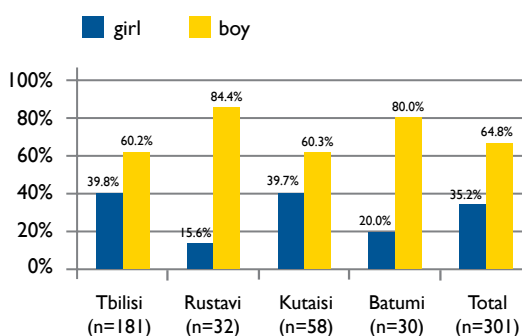
Chart 1 – Street Children Interviewed by Gender, Age and City

7. In gender distribution among Georgian general population of 0 to 19 year olds, there are 48% boys and 52% girls, according to the Department of Statistics (2006 estimates).
8. During the Point-Count Estimate, there were 8 percent of children – infants and toddlers – whose gender could not be determined by unobtrusive observation. Data from the interviews gives a more accurate account within its age range.
9. See, for example: Malcolm, J. (2001), A Study on Street Children in Zimbabwe; Project Concern International Zambia (2002), Rapid Assessment of Street Children in Lusaka.
10. Aptekar, Lewis (2001), Street Children in the Developing World: A Review of Their Condition; San Jose State University Press
11. See, for example, Aptekar, Lewis (2000), A Global View of Street Children in the Year 2000, San Jose State University Press

The Point-Count Estimate shows that around 66% of street children in Georgia are 5 to 14 years of age[12], with the remaining percentage distributed between infants and toddlers (0 to 4 years of age - around 15%) and teenagers (15 to 18 years - 20%). In the interview phase which surveyed children aged 8 to 18, the majority of children (almost 80%) were of basic school age - 8 to 14 years. A presence of street infants and toddlers should be perceived in a different context, as such small children have no way of influencing their mothers' choices of survival strategies and also lack the ability to develop their own. As a result, one should focus on "street mothers with babies" rather than on the children themselves. Anecdotal evidence suggests that in many cases, we already see a second generation of street children in Georgia – several of these young mothers have themselves experienced a street life.

The numbers of street girls decrease as they age. Again, this trend can be partially explained by traditional child rearing practices and gender roles' perception in Georgia. As girls grow older, an increased level of responsibilities at home and perceived or actual "moral" dangers on the streets can keep more of them off the street. A traditional notion of a Georgian male being expected to support himself and/or his family makes older boys more likely to seek survival strategies outside of home.
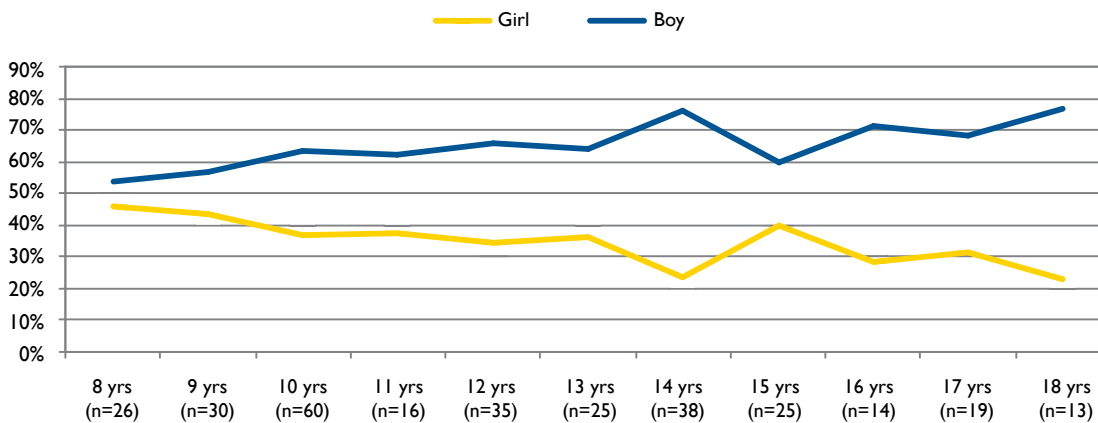
Chart 2 – Proportion of Street Children by Age and Gender

Gender and age distribution of street children in Georgia varies by the time of the day. On Point-Count Estimate days, an average ratio between girls and boys was slightly less than 1:2; however, during the night hours this ratio increased to 1:3.5. While in the total Point-Count Estimate sample almost 66% of street children were between 5 and 14 years of age, these age groups were not dominant at night, when 70% of the children were between 11 and 18 years of age.

Street Children's Place of Origin

Contrary to a common belief that most street children in Georgia are migrants from the regions to the big cities, this study indicates that street children are mostly "locally bred." That is, over 65% of the children state they were born in the same city. For the purpose of this study, migration was defined as a child "living in another location before moving to the current city", regardless of whether a child was born in the same city or not. According to this criterion, three distinct migration groups were identified: 1) non-migrant children (those who lived all their lives in the same city – 74%); 2) children-migrants from another place in Georgia – around 19 percent, and; 3) children-migrants from other countries (Azerbaijan, Russia, Moldova and Ukraine, in order of frequencies – 7%).

12. In the general population of 0 to 19 year olds in Georgia, the children 5 to 14 years of age constitute 47 percent (Source: the Department of Statistics, 2006 estimates)

Local & Migrant

Local ■ Migrant (circled) →→→ Origin of migrant Street Children

Other countries ■ Other regions
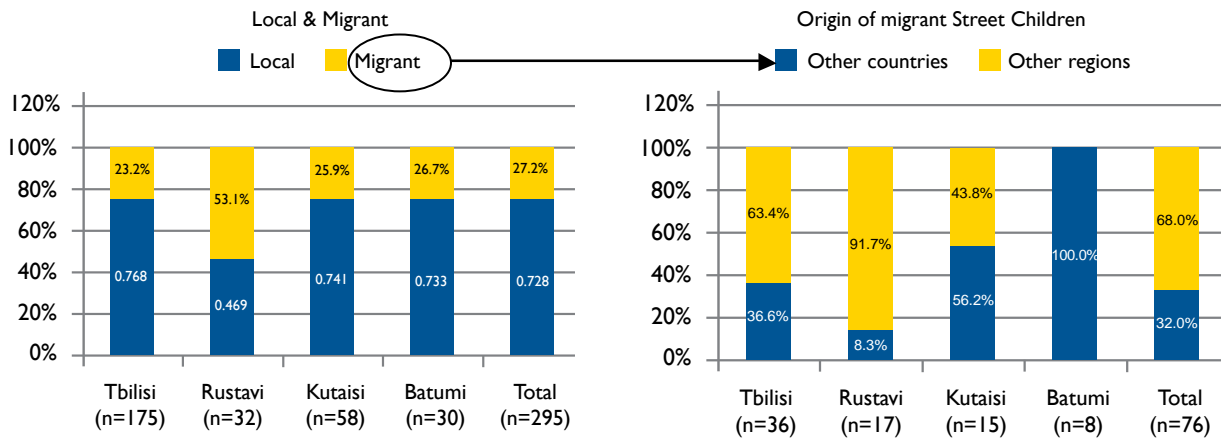
*6 children did not respond

Chart 3 – Proportion of Street Children by Migrant Status and Origin of Migrants Street Children
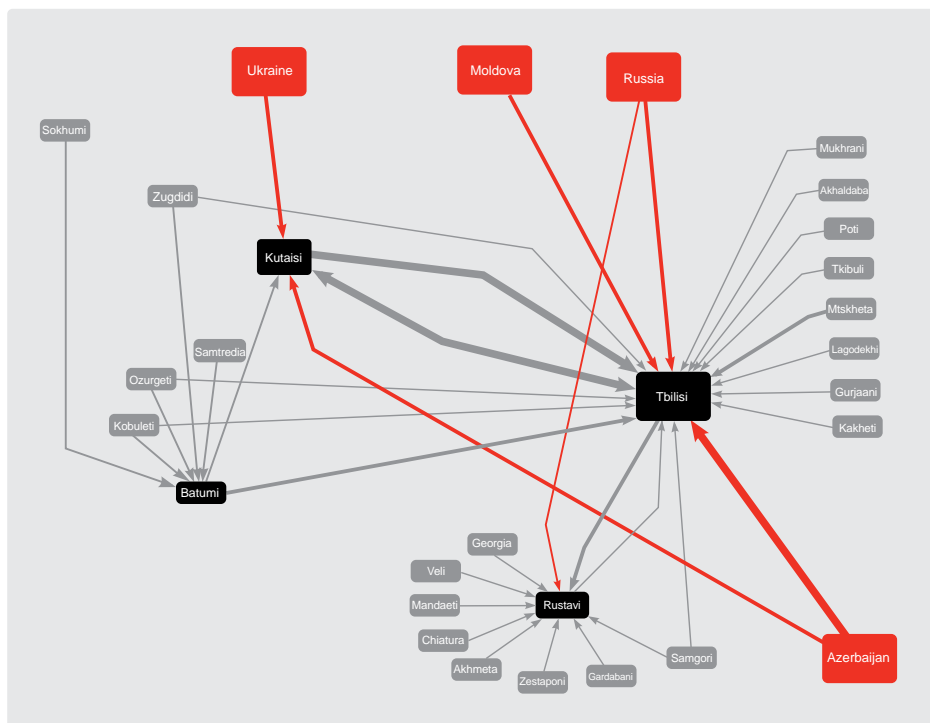
Picture 2 - Migration of Street Children Red lines show migration patterns from outside Georgia and gray lines show migration patterns within Georgia. The sizes of the lines are proportional to the numbers of children migrating.

Non-migrant street children are more likely to live on the streets full time than migrant children. They also spend many hours of the day on the street. However, non-migrant children are less likely to spend summer nights on the streets than migrant children. This finding confirms anecdotal evidence from projects in Georgia that street life patterns differ by season and an increased activity of migrant children from regions and other coun-

tries can be observed during summer months. The table below demonstrates this trend.

Even though the majority of non-migrant street children report one or both parents alive, the ratio of being or-phaned (both parents dead) is higher among non-migrant than migrant street children. Non-migrant street children also tend to report the death or absence of parents as

Groups of street children	Non-migrants	Migrants from Georgia	Migrants from abroad	Total sample
Street-living children	6.40%	5.50%	4.80%	6.30% (n=18)
Street-and-home living children	16.90%	21.80%	23.80%	18.60% (n-54)
Street-active children	76.70%	72.70%	71.40%	75.10% (n=223)
Total	100% (n=219)	100% (n=55)	(n=21)	100% (n-295)

Table 7 - Migration Status by Groups of Street Children

their main problem more often than their migrant counterparts. Moreover, of the three groups, non-migrant children report the most complex set of family problems and are more likely not to live with their families, even if they have them. Lastly, interviewers observed higher rates of visible traumas, special needs and substance abuse among non-migrants than migrant street children. These are likely to be related to more time spent on the street and a lack of family contact.

Street children who migrated from the regions are less likely to be orphans; however, these children, more often than non-migrants, report that their parents do not live in the same city. Interestingly, these children did not mention the absence of parents as a major problem. Migrant street children from the regions (more than non-migrant children or migrants from other countries) have also had a period in their lives when they had no contacts with their mothers for one month or longer, and report even less close contact with their fathers. This may indicate that these children sometimes migrate from the regions without their parents, although such cases seem rare and are linked to an increased summer activity.

In this study, two types of in-country migration patterns were reported – migration from small towns and villages to urban centers; movement from cities to the capital (likely in search for better opportunities) and relocation from Tbilisi to smaller urban centers. The latter, as anecdotal evidence suggests, is often motivated by families' inability to meet high living costs and employment competition in the capital city. Experiences from children programs and a parallel research carried out by World Vision International in Kutaisi and Batumi also note the forced relocation of families from separatist conflicts in early 1990s.

Studies from other countries identify unplanned family relocation to urban centers as one of the most likely indirect causes that drives children to the streets[13]. The reasons for in-country migration in Georgia may be primarily economic but this study shows that a decision to relocate is not necessarily done at the expense of the children's future or breaking social bonds. The in-country migrant children are almost twice as likely to be currently enrolled in school as children in the general sample. Approximately 60 percent of in-country migrant street children can read and write compared to only one-half of the children in the general sample. In-country migrant children are less likely to perceive a loss or absence of parents as their major problem and report economic issues more often than non-migrant street children. Almost one-half of the street children from the Georgian regions report that they have used social services – the highest rate in all three migration groups. In-country migrant children are less likely to make money through begging and more likely to work or not to make/need money than non-migrant street children and children who migrated from abroad. In-country migrant children additionally have more aspirations for getting a concrete job than children in other migration groups.

Georgian experts participating in the data analysis in this study underlined the importance of informal social networks that usually direct migration flows in Georgia as one likely cause of such resilience. They also argued that taking a decision to relocate demonstrates a pro-active approach to life in face of adversities, whereas those who are inert towards changing their life situation are more likely to display a passive acceptance of their own disadvantages and those of their children.

13. See, for example, UN ODCCP, UNICEF and WFP (June 2001); Rapid Situation Assessment on the Situation of Street Children in Cairo and Alexandria

Case Study 1: Ana is a main caretaker in her family of seven children. She lived her entire life in Tbilisi and married there. Having had her first child at an early age, she never worked. Her husband Davit (of Armenian descent) became unemployed and found it difficult to get a job in the capital and was not able to provide for his growing family.

In light of an increasing economic hardship, Ana and Davit discussed the best strategies that could secure the future for their family. First, they decided to sell their three-room apartment in Tbilisi. While the money from the sale was not enough to purchase another home in the capital and have some set aside for living expenses, a much cheaper apartment was found in Rustavi, a rather attractive location because of its proximity to Tbilisi. Secondly, Davit made a decision to seek temporary jobs in Armenia where employment opportunities seemed better.

The relocation, combined with Davit's departure, was very difficult period for Ana and her children to cope. Remittances from Davit's work abroad were scarce at first, Ana could not readjust to be solely on her own in her child rearing duties and the children felt disconnected from the social network they had back in Tbilisi. For the older ones, it was increasingly challenging to combine a perceived need to support their mother – both financially and in care of younger siblings – with schooling.

Even though the financial situation of the family was desperate for quite some time before Davit was able to support them, the parents did not want their children to suffer from the consequences of the situation. As the children started missing school or fully dropping out, Ana received assistance from social services available in Rustavi. With their help, the children returned to regular schooling and Ana found the support she needed to get her family through the crisis period.

All of the street children who are migrants from other countries reported that both parents are alive. Most of them also reported having parents living in the same city. Furthermore, the vast majority of them stated that they live with one or both parents. These findings support the generally accepted assumption that street children in Georgia who come from abroad are not likely to have migrated across international borders by themselves; mostly they relocate as a result of the migration of their family members.

Street children who migrated from other countries tend to be younger than the general sample. The majority of them are from 11 to 14 years of age (twice as many than in any of the in-country groups), with very few of them being in the oldest age group. They display the highest level of hardship among the three migration groups. They spend longer hours during the day on the streets than non-migrant and in-country migrant street children. Less than 5 percent of them are currently enrolled in school, and they have little interest in receiving an education. Most of them (a higher percentage than in the general sample) are illiterate. Of the three migration groups, street children from abroad are most likely to complain about health problems in the family or display special needs. They are also most likely to report wanting an improved home or family condition and represent the smallest percentage of children who have ever accessed a social service. Most of these children engage in income generation activities and 67% of them – the highest proportion in all three migration groups – make money through begging. Evidently, these children are a part of an economically motivated relocation practice of their families, in which begging is a survival strategy for the family. Anecdotal evidence shows that Georgia has long been considered an attractive destination for beggars due to the widespread belief in the charitable spirit and generosity of Georgians.

One of the largest groups (50%) of street children who migrated from abroad are from Azerbaijan. All Azeri street children who relocated to Georgia reported similar living conditions. 80% have both parents alive, while the remaining 20% have one parent – there are no or-

phans. Most of the Azeri children have at least one parent in the same city and 70% have both parents in the same city. Almost all (90%) reported having siblings in the same town also while only 10% of the children said that they have no other relatives living in the same city. None of the children are enrolled in school. Again, almost all (90%) of the children are on the streets full-time (winter and summer days and nights); all of the children engage in begging, and 90% of them have never used a social service.

These results generally confirm Save the Children's experience that entire families frequently migrate from other countries to Georgia with their children, where they generate income through street begging and for the most part, do not benefit from any of the social services available in their destinations. One of the reasons for this social isolation of immigrant street children is that they are commonly seen as "Gypsies", a term that in Georgia carries a strong notion of a destructive and irreversible lifestyle. Consequently, they are rarely approached by assistance groups due to the belief that "Gypsies simply have it in their culture to live such lives, and no-one is able change that". As noted by Dr. Brian Milne (2007)[14], it is not simply economic but also cultural and structural poverty that extends into the perceptions of people of other ethnic origin and possibly affects the behavior of people aware of their marginalization making them reluctant to join and distrustful of 'mainstream' society.

Another likely cause is that immigrant street children tend to not have a permanent, registered place of residence in Georgia or a residence permit, and hence are officially labeled as illegal immigrants, and therefore not eligible for services or assistance options. As per current Georgian legislation, if a citizen of a country with which Georgia has no-visa agreements (such as Azerbaijan) enters Georgia, they can remain in the country for three months without any registration. After this, they are obliged to register with the Ministry of Justice and to indicate their place of residence after which they are granted one year of legal stay. If the registration is not completed in the first instance or not prolonged after one year, they are considered illegal immigrants.

14. Milne, Brian (March 2007), Assessment of the Situation of Street Children in Georgia; Research Design and Programme Planning; UNICEF Georgia

Children's Street Experiences Defined in Time

This research found very few street children who have completely broken their ties with home. On average, more children report spending nights with their parents/relatives at home than spending nights in any other place: 59% during summer nights to 65% the previous night of the interview to a high of 72% during winter nights. As mentioned earlier, several research findings point to seasonality of street activities in Georgia: children are much more likely to spend summer (24%) than winter nights (7%) on the streets alone[15], and they often return home after the summer period is over.

Throughout the days of the Point-Count Estimate, 66% of children 0 to 18 years of age were observed on the streets alone (without an accompanying adult). Those who were accompanied by an adult were mostly girls and children 0 to 4 years of age. The presence of an accompanying adult was also associated with the child's activity - with working children more likely to be alone than those begging or doing other forms of activities. Data gathered from interviews shows that amongst street children 8 to 18 years of age, 80% reported spending days alone on the streets, with no large seasonal differences (even though there was a slightly larger number of children spending days on the streets during summer months).
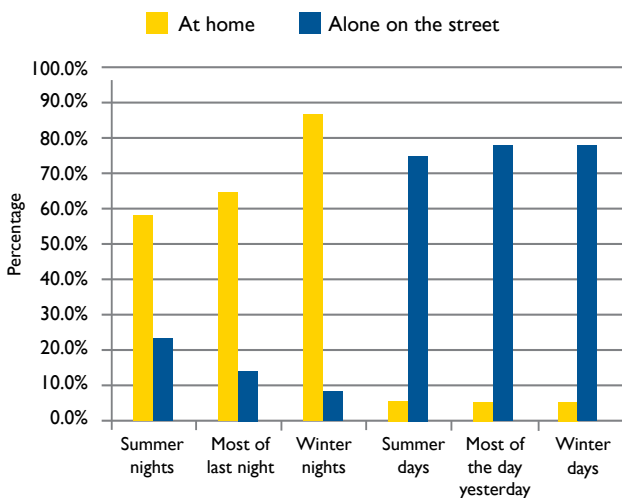
Chart 4 – Whether At Home or Alone on the Street by Time (Day/Night) and Season

15. The interviews were carried out in late November so technically speaking, the time could be categorized as "winter months, when it's cold". However, the results on the "last night" question are different from those about spending winter nights on the streets. It could indicate that some children in fact spend more time on the streets during winter months that they report.

When considering season, time (day/night) and location, three main street children groups can be identified in Georgia: 1) those who spend both winter and summer nights on the streets (hereafter referred to as street-living children – 6% of the total sample), 2) children who spend either winter or summer nights on the streets but report different living arrangements at different seasons (hereafter referred to as street-and-home living children – 19%) and 3) those who spend only days on the streets (hereafter referred to as street-active children – 75%).

Street-living children are few and make up only 6% of the total street children in Georgia. These are in fact street-living boys. Only 5% of those who live on the streets full-time are girls. Of these children, almost 60% are 11 to 14 years of age (over 20% more than in the total sample) and teenagers. The 8 – 10 year olds constitute just a small fraction of this group.

One of the most common features of street-living children is a transitional state, when the weakening of family relationships has resulted in minimal support. Street-living children are more likely to have experienced a loss or absence of parents than their peers who spend only a part of their time on the street. Only 25% of street-living children have both parents alive. Their contact with families – if they have them – is much weaker than among those who do not live on the street full time. Most of them (80%) state they do not have any other relatives in the same city and that nobody takes care of them.

Street-living children mentioned fewer family problems than those who do not live on the street full time, and the problems they mentioned are concentrated around three areas only: a loss or absence of one or both parents, poverty, homelessness and health problems in the family. They are not enrolled in school and around one-half are illiterate. They also have the highest percentage of school drop-outs among the three groups. Related to a length of time spent on the street and a lack of an adult care-taker, street-living children are much more likely to have visible disabilities, physical traumas and/or abuse toxic substances than their peers who do not live on the streets full time. They also tend to be more resilient as they apply more income generating strategies (with high incidence of begging and stealing) and seek more social services' assistance than their non-street-living counterparts. This can be explained by a need to seek alternative protective systems in absence of a family care.

Street-and-home living children in Georgia could in fact be called "summer street children" because most of them report spending only summer nights on the streets. The majority have no contacts with their families for one month or longer while on the street. In some cases, as reported by street children service providers, parents may relocate to villages for summer agricultural work and their children stay behind in the cities. However, during the month preceding the survey (mid-October to mid-November) more than one-half of the street-and-home living children did not live with their families and said nobody took care of them. While a portion of these children spend nights at shelters, orphanages, friends' homes or occasionally rent a cheap room for the night, the high percentages could indicate that some, in fact, live longer periods on the streets than they state.

The street-and-home living children could be considered to be in transition from street-active behavior to becoming street-living. They experience more multifaceted family problems than those who live on the streets full-time. The most preeminent issues they identified were economic: poverty, parental unemployment and lack of housing. Other concerns they reported (in order of frequency) relate to loss or absence of one or both parents (a quarter of them are double orphans), alcoholism, domestic violence and divorce or remarriage of parents. Some street-and-home living children still combine street life with schooling although the enrollment ratio is lower than among children who spend nights at home. One-half are school dropouts. Most state they do something to make money and spend it mostly on their own needs; however, unlike street-living children, 20% also say that they use the money to contribute to family income and in 12% of the cases, children are forced to give their money to the parents.

Street-active street children only spend days on the street. The main characteristic of street-active children is a preservation of family relationships in which these children consider themselves a part of a family having problems and often feel responsibility to act on behalf of their family. Most street-active children live with both parents or with a single mother. Of the three groups, street-active children are the least likely to lose contact with their families for an extended period of time and most of them identify parents or relatives as primary care-takers. At the same time, they face the widest range of adversities among the three street children groups. Only 10% of street-active children are double orphans. Economic hardship is most frequently noted hardship, while the death or absence of parents is mentioned less often than in other groups (even though it is on the second

place of problem list). Other problems include parental divorce or re-marriage and alcoholism/abuse at home. A sizeable group (15%) of street-active children stated their families have no problems. These children are most likely to be currently enrolled in school (although at 16% the percentage is low) and yet they represent the highest incidence of children who never attended schooling. Street active children are the least likely to spend the money earned on the streets on their needs, with almost 40% stating that the money was used to support their families. However, street-active children also represent the highest percentage of those whose earned money was forcefully taken away from them, mostly by parents.

Staying on the streets On the average, 40% of all surveyed children report they have stayed on the streets for up to 1 year. 26% have stayed on the streets for 2-3 years and 36% for more than 3 years. For street-living children in Georgia, an experience of street life tends to be more prolonged in time – almost one-half of street-living children say they have been on the streets for more than three years.

A common belief in Georgia is that boys and older children are more likely to have spent longer periods of their lives (more than one year) on the streets than girls and younger children. The differences are not statistically significant but some trends can be observed. Older children (15 to 18 years of age) are more likely to have been on the street for three or more years than those from younger age groups. Gender breakdown does not confirm the common belief – in fact, there are more girls than boys who have spent three years or longer on the streets.

Children who are double and maternal orphans are more likely to have spent a period of one month or longer living on the streets at some point in their lives. When the mother or both parents are alive, more than 70% of the children say that they have not experienced such a street-living period.

Age Groups

56 street children did not answer.

Gender

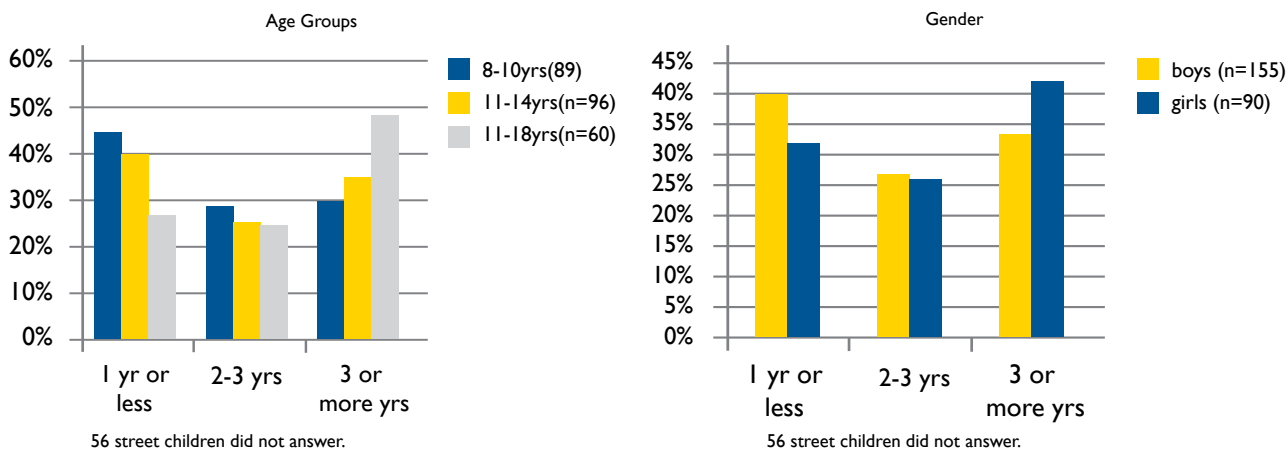56 street children did not answer.

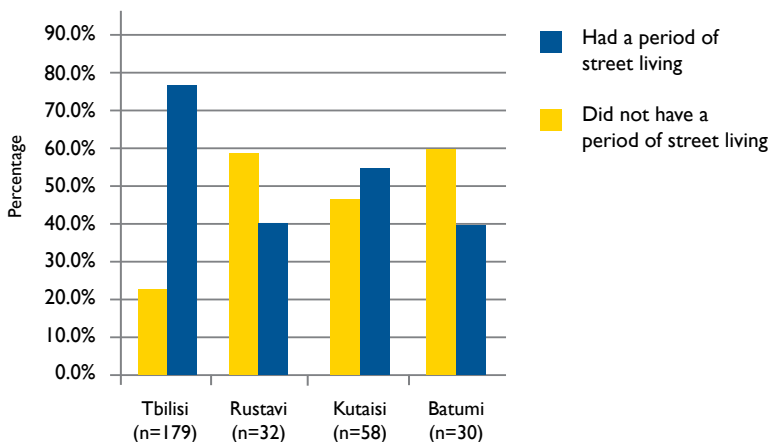Chart 5 – Age and Gender of Street Children by Number of Years on the Street

Chart 6 - Percentage of Street Children Who Had a Period of Street Living for One Month or Longer by City

As children's street experiences lengthen in time, their regular social connections become more and more severed. Schooling and usage of social services provide an example of this trend. Children who reported being on the streets for up to six months were more likely to be enrolled in school than children who reported being on the streets longer than six months. And, as the period on the street extends beyond the initial six months, the likelihood of not going to school grows significantly. Similar trends have been observed in the intensity of children's contacts with families. As the children move away from the protective factors of family and school, which were expected to have secured their needs, they start employing new coping strategies, making more use of social services (where such are available) to substitute for the loss of other protective factors.

Street children in Georgia tend to seek peer support among other street children. They usually know several other children who share similar types of activities – around 40% of the street children know up to ten other children living like they do in the same city, and another 40% know 11 to 20 such children. This type of coping strategy (developing social bonds and a sense of belonging on the streets) has often been described in street children studies[16].
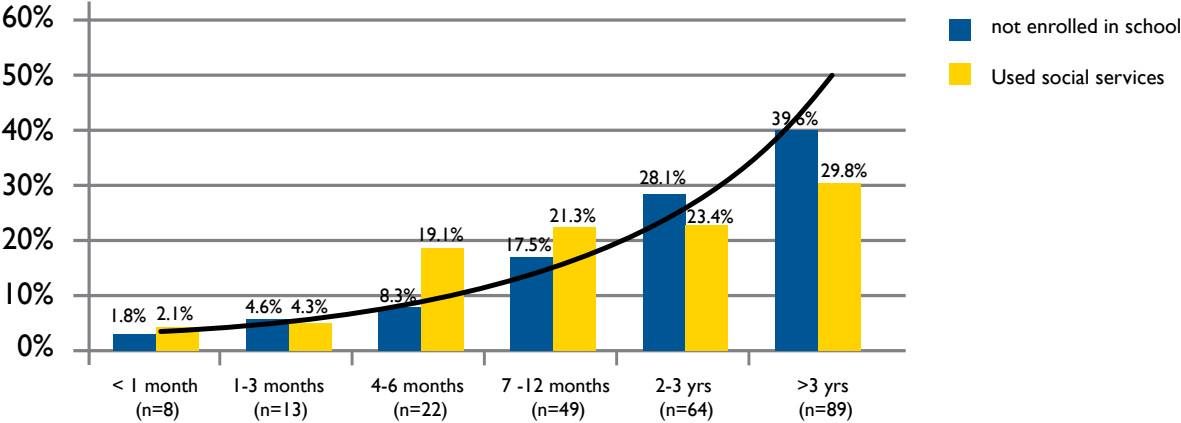
Chart 7 - Street Children Schooling and Usage of Social Services per Length of Street Experience

Legend:
- not enrolled in school
- Used social services

Data:
- < 1 month (n=8): 1.8%, 2.1%
- 1-3 months (n=13): 4.6%, 4.3%
- 4-6 months (n=22): 8.3%, 19.1%
- 7-12 months (n=49): 17.5%, 21.3%
- 2-3 yrs (n=64): 28.1%, 23.4%
- >3 yrs (n=89): 39.6%, 29.8%

16. See, for example: Koller, S.H., Hutz, C.S. (1995), Street Children: Psychological Perspectives in: Interamerican Journal of Psychology, Volume 29

Street Children's Perception of Family Circumstances

Presence of Parents and Other Relatives in Street Children's Surroundings

Using international definitions of orphans, street children in Georgia who can be identified as double orphans (both parents dead) represent 15% of the total sample; or in other words, 85% have at least one parent alive. Of the children who have at least one parent alive, 55% are not orphans (both parents are alive), 24% are paternal orphans (only the mother is alive) and 6% – maternal orphans (only the father is alive).
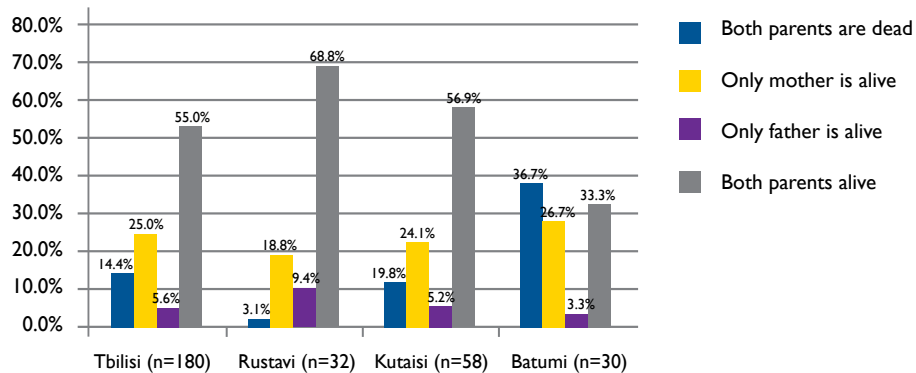
Chart 8 – Percentage of Street Children by Presence of Parents and City

Death of one or both parents has a very strong impact on a child's life. The ratio of street children who have been orphaned by one or both parents is almost twice as high among street-living children as in the general sample. All of the street children who are double or maternal orphans are not enrolled in school. Additionally, the highest percentage of school drop-outs was found among street children who have been orphaned by a mother or both parents. The death of parents was sometimes mentioned as a reason for dropping out. These children have a low interest in education and tend to believe that they would not be able to learn if they were to attend. All of them say they have to make a living to support themselves. They are also likely to have never been assisted by a social service. Linked with an increased amount of time spent on the streets and lack of a caring adult, double orphans also have more special needs and sustain physical traumas than children with one or both parents.

Chart 9 - Percentage of Street Children with No Mother, Father or Relative in the Same City

The majority of street children who are not orphans have their mother or father or both parents living in the same city. Six out of ten children also have siblings there. One-half of the children with no parents in the same city report having other adult relatives living there. Less than 10% of all interviewed children reported being completely alone – that is, having neither parents nor other adult family members living in the same city.

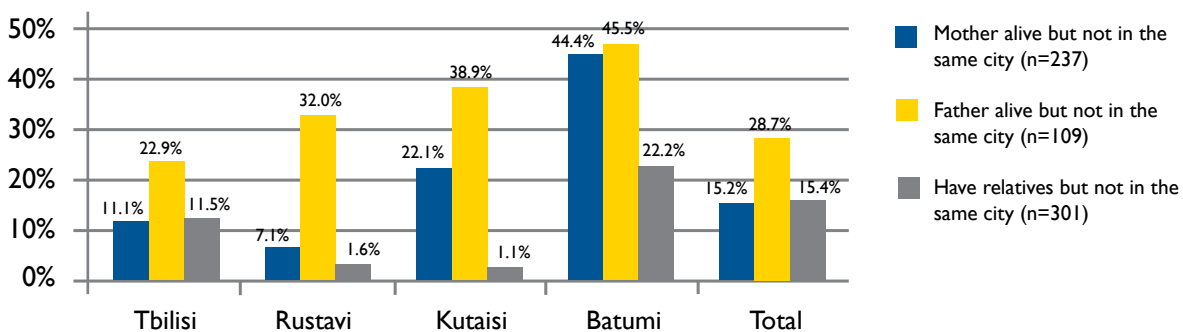85% of street children reported that their mothers live in the same city and a smaller percentage (71%) reported having their father in the same city. Among mothers who do not live in the same city, 9% live in other places in Georgia while 3% live outside the country (in Azerbaijan, Russia, Italy, Turkey and Greece, as mentioned by the children). Fathers who are not in the same city are reported to live in the regions of Georgia (13%) or abroad (8%). For the fathers living in other countries, children reported they were in Russia, Azerbaijan, Ukraine, Moldova, Italy or Kazakhstan. Among street children interviewed outside of the capital (Rustavi, Kutaisi or Batumi), the groups reporting that their parents lived in Tbilisi were the biggest (mothers living in Tbilisi - 4% to 9%; fathers - 8% to 19%).

Migration of parents should not be viewed as a predominant factor which drives the children in Georgia to the streets. Street children who have parents living elsewhere are likely to constitute only a fraction of all Georgian children left behind by migrant parents where the numbers are believed to be significant[17]. However, not all such children end up on the streets. Nevertheless, an absence of a parent or parents in street children's surroundings has a visible effect on several aspects of their lives.

Absence of both parents in the same city significantly increases the likelihood that a child will live in the streets full-time: 15 percent of children who do not have both parents in the same city live on the streets, compared to 4 percent among those with one parent and only 2 percent who live with both parents in the same city. However, children with one or both parents living in the same city are more likely to spend daylight hours on the street (82%) than children with no parents there (57%).

Of the street children who have no parents living in the same city, the absence of parents is perceived as more problematic than economic hardship. In addition, they are less likely to be enrolled in school and are 40% more likely to be uninterested in schooling than their peers who have both parents in the same city. The data also shows that children with only one parent living in the same city are much more likely to have never attended school than those with both parents in the same city.

Location of parents	Children groups	Frequency	Percent
Both parents in the same city	1. Street-living children 2. Street and home living children 3. Street-active children	2 19 95	1.70% 16.40% 81.90%
	Total	116	100.00%
One parent in the same city	1. Street-living children 2. Street and home living children 3. Street-active children	4 13 81	4.10% 13.20% 82.70%
	Total	98	100.00%
No parents in the same city	1. Street-living children 2. Street and home living children 3. Street-active children	13 24 49	15.10% 27.90% 57.00%
	Total	86	100.00%

Table 8 – Parents' Presence in the Same City versus Street Living

17. Svintadze, Ia; Ubiria, Grigol (2007), How Poverty Separates Families: Impact of International Labour Migration on Families and Children in Georgia, Eurasia Foundation Caucasus Research Resource Centre (CRRC) Fellowship

Case Study 2: Four years ago, Rati's unemployed mother, Nona, decided to seek job opportunities in Russia and left her son in the care of his father and grandmother. Initially, Nona tried to maintain contacts with the child and sent money back home. However, after some time, contact and financial support become increasingly less frequent until she disappeared from Rati's life altogether.

The boy's father Zurab was working at the time. Although he often spent family money on drinking rather than on Rati's needs, the boy still had a place to live, was not hungry and went to school. However, when Zurab was drunk, he often times beat both Rati and the boy's grandmother. Rati felt his home was no longer the safe haven it had been when his mother was there.

One day Zurab was arrested and sentenced to several years in prison. Rati was left with only his grandmother. Being old, ill and without an income, she was not able to provide proper care and support for the boy. Facing hunger while considering begging a humiliating activity, the grandmother sought an alternative way of making ends meet for them both. The two soon began roaming the city streets throughout the days, searching for glass bottles in trash containers to sell. The boy dropped out of school as his education was no longer a priority against immediate survival needs. Before long, gas and electricity supplies were cut off since their income was not enough to pay for utilities. Sometimes they did not even have enough to buy bread and Rati would go to sleep hungry.

82% of all street children interviewed reported having other relatives in their cities, such as siblings, grandparents, uncles/aunts or other adult relatives. In order to understand the level of social support street children may have, a count was made only of adult relatives - not siblings. If children reported no grandparents, uncles/aunts or another adult relative, they received a score of 0 (or no support). A score of 1 meant the presence of 1 relative from one of these groups, 2 meant relatives from 2 of these groups, and a score of 3 meant having a relative from all three groups - the score with the most social support. When analyzed, the data showed that as the amount of social support increases, children spend less time on the streets during the day. Moreover, they are 62% less likely to spend summer nights on the streets and less likely to live on the streets full time than children with no adult relatives in the same city. Higher levels of social support also have a positive effect on children's schooling: Children who have one or more adult relatives living in the same city are 38% more likely to be enrolled in school than those with no social support.
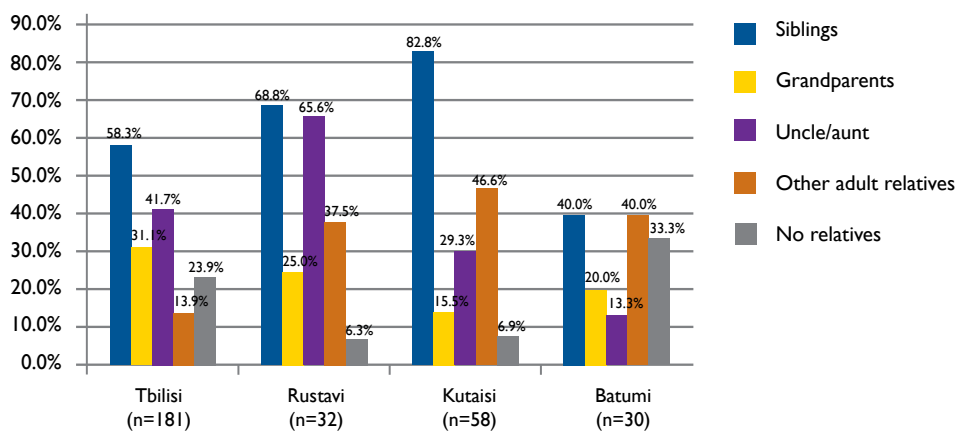
Chart 10 – Types of Street Children's Relatives Living in the Same City

Street Children's Contacts with their Families

When both parents are alive, street children have a closer connection with their mothers than fathers. Around 75% of all the street children interviewed claim to have had contact with their mothers that day and that they were in contact with them daily. However, only about one-half of all children said that had contact with their fathers that day (56%) or have contact with their father (almost) daily (57%).
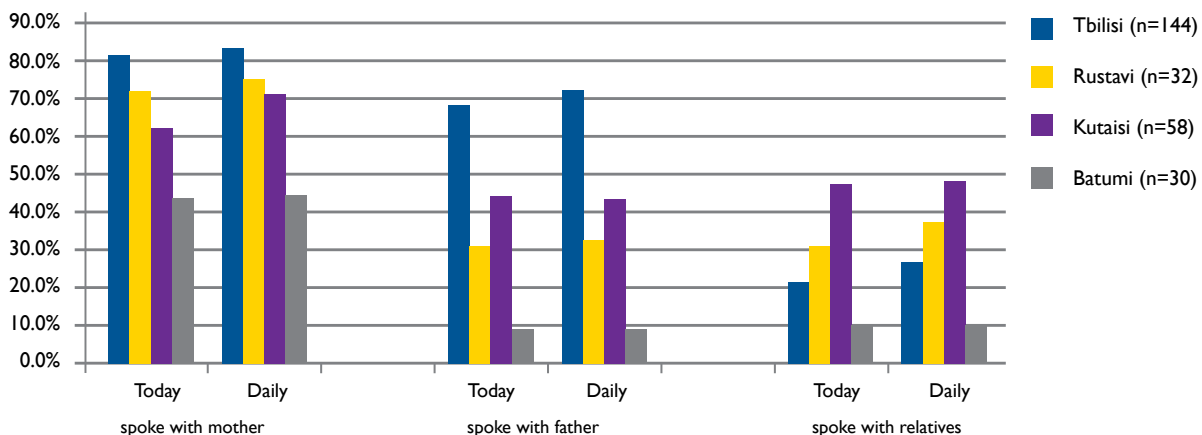
Chart 11 - Percentages of Street Children Who Spoke with Mother, Father or Relative Today and On a Daily Basis

Of all the street children with a mother alive, about 20% reported having a period in their lives when they had no contact with their mothers for one month or longer. Meanwhile, for street children with a father alive, the percentage of having no contact with their father for one month or longer grows to almost 30%.

The intensity of children's family contact decreases as their time on the streets increases. Street-active children are most likely to maintain a closer contact with their parents. Only 23% claim to have had a period of no contact with their mothers while 39% claim no contact with their fathers. 62% of street-and-home living children report having such periods of no contact with their mothers and 84% with fathers. Among street-living children, 80% have had a period in their lives when they had no contact with their mothers or fathers for one month or longer.

Street Children's Perception of Caregivers

The children were asked to identify the person who takes care of them most of the time. The majority of street children (62%) report being taken care of by their parents. Of these children, mothers are their primary (and often only) caregivers, as indicated by frequency of contact with mothers and other factors. In a traditional Georgian family model, raising a child is mainly the mother's role. As described by UNICEF (2007)[18], "Primary caregivers in Georgia are overwhelmingly mothers (91%), followed by grandmothers (7%). Secondary caregivers are primarily grandmothers (42%), followed by fathers (17%)." The families of street children are no different in this respect. One out of ten children also identified other relatives as primary caregivers.
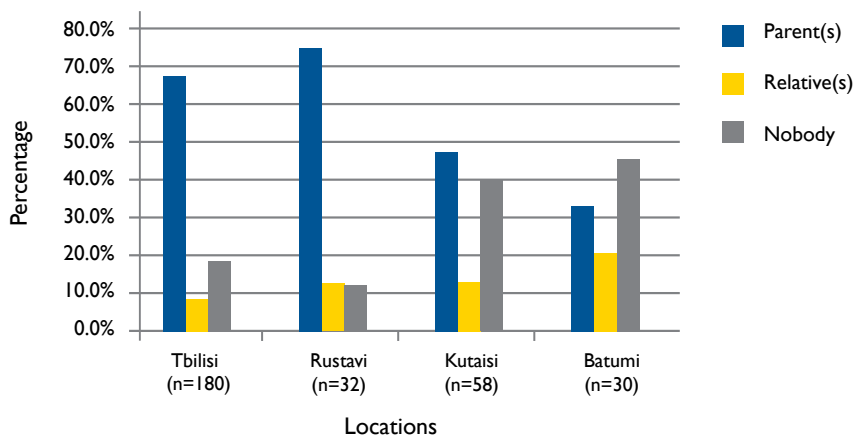

Chart 12 - Main Caregivers of Street Children

18. UNICEF Georgia (2007), Early Childhood Development in Georgia – Findings from the National Baseline Study

As street children grow older, they tend to move away from being under a family member's care to taking care of themselves. Among those from 8 to 10 years of age, there are seven times more children who are cared for by parents or relatives than those with no caregiver (a ratio of 7:1). In the two older age groups, the ratio drops to 2.2:1 and 1.5:1, respectively.

26% of children – the second biggest group – state that nobody takes care of them. Only one-third of these children have both parents alive (compared to 55% in the general sample) and 23% have only a mother alive. One could distinguish two sub-groups among these children: those whose parents are dead or absent and there is simply nobody they would consider a grown-up person responsible for attending to their needs, and those who have either one or both parents alive yet do not see their parents as the main care-takers.

Presence or absence of a primary caregiver influences several aspects of street children's lives. Among street-living children, very few identify parents as primary caregivers and the majority report that there is no-one to take care of them. In contrast, the majority of street-active children name parents or relatives as their main caregivers. Street children without a caregiver display greater signs of affliction than those in the care of their parents. For these children, the death or absence of parents is mentioned as a more significant problem than economic difficulties. Meanwhile, children in the care of their parents disproportionately mention alcoholism, divorce/remarriage of parents and poverty as their concerns. Children with no caregiver are not enrolled in school whereas those in a parent's care have a 24% enrollment rate and are more likely to have dropped out of school (60%) than those who remain in their parents' care (40%). They mention the loss of parents or lack of belief in their learning abilities as the main reasons for not going to school. For children with parents as the primary caregivers, the most outstanding reasons for not attending school are parental disapproval, lack of documents, a perceived low quality of education and economic difficulties.

Children who state that nobody takes care of them resort to a variety of survival strategies. They report using more social services and are more likely to make a living by working or begging than those with parents as caregivers. Lack of a caregiver influences how street children think about life prospects. With a relatively low interest in generic education, professional skills or work, children with no caregiver often cannot specify any concrete desire for what they would like to do in the future.

It also affects their health - they are more likely to display special needs, signs of physical trauma or toxic substance abuse than children who have a caregiver.

Street Children Households

The types of family arrangements that street children in Georgia come from range from those who have both parents alive and living in the same city along with other adult relatives, to children who are double orphans and have no other family members present in the same town. Anecdotal evidence suggests that many street children have experienced different family arrangements in their lifetime, and several were born out of wedlock, or the parents' marriage was not officially registered.

As the family support system grows smaller or contacts become weaker, street children are more likely to spend longer hours on the streets. This relationship can be represented in the form of a pyramid where each layer represents a sub-group of children, shown as a percentage of the total sample. These sub-groups, for the most part, are neither mutually exclusive nor include one another – there is a 75% overlap between the groups, meaning that most children belong to more than one group at the same time. For example, not all street-living children report having no caregiver, and not all double orphans are street-living children.
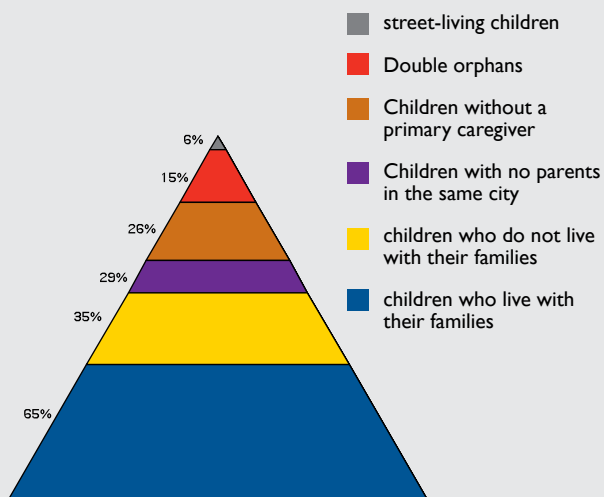

Chart 13 - Street Children in Different Family Situations (n-301)

58% of all street children reported living with their mothers during the last month, while 34% stated they live with their fathers (a smaller percentage in all four cities). 38% of all children said they live with other relatives (17%) or visit their relatives at home (20%).
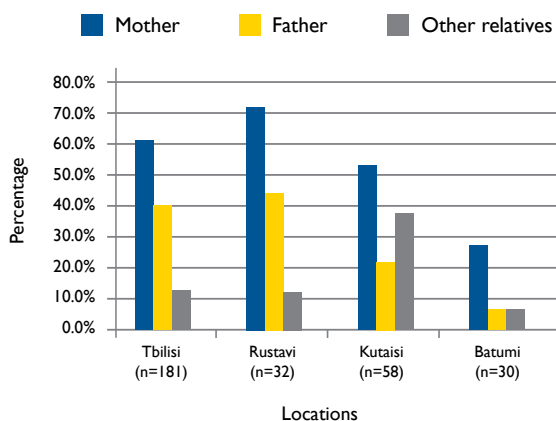
Chart 14 - Percentage of Street Children Who Lived with Family Members during Last Month

This research endeavored to identify how life within respective family arrangements influences street children's life situations. Six typical household arrangements were distinguished: 1) not living with parents or relatives, 2) living only with mother, 3) living only with father, 4) living with only 1 parent and other relatives, 5) living with both parents only, 6) living only with other relatives.

Within a single point-in-time study such as this one, it is difficult to determine how permanent household arrangements are for street children in Georgia. Given their well-known mobility and fluctuating lifestyle, one can assume that some children can move from one domestic composition to another at different points in their lives, and a snapshot analysis is not able to capture such dynamics. Therefore, household sub-groups are mutually exclusive in this study – a child cannot live with the mother only and report living with both parents at the same time. Even within the one-month time frame defined in the research, there are noticeable differences in the children's situation depending on who they live with.
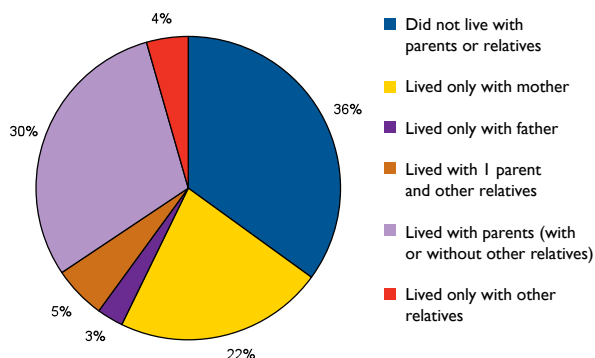

Chart 15 - Household Arrangements of Street Children during Past Month (n-301)

Street children living with both parents (30% of all sampled children) report the lowest level of hardship (2.2)[19] among all household types. However, the incidence of economic problems is very high – the highest of all households. These children, however, also disproportionately mention that their "family has no problems" (25%, comparing to 12% in the total sample). Street children from these families are more likely to be enrolled in school than those from single parent households or those without families. They are less likely to engage in begging than children living without a family or with mothers only; and also more often state they did not earn or need any money over the past month.

Street children who said they live only with their mothers constitute 22% of the sample. These children predominantly mention economic issues as the greatest family problem. The second most significant concern is the divorce of their parents, which is twice as high as in the total sample. Also, of all household types, children that live only with their mothers are the least likely to believe their family has no problems. They are also much more likely to go to school than those living with only their fathers or without any family members. These children have a higher incidence of begging than those living with both parents. Only a few mention they did not earn any money during the past month.

Street children who live only with their fathers represent the smallest household type – only 3% of all children. While in other household types age and gender distribution is more or less similar to that of the general sample, all children in single father households are of basic school age (8 to 14 years) and there are almost four times more boys than girls. Children who live only with their fathers display a higher level of hardship (3.0) than those living with mothers or with both parents. For them, having only one parent alive is disproportionately seen as a problem. Even though the numbers are small, the largest percentage of children who mentioned alcoholism as a family concern is found among those who live with their fathers only. None of these children are currently enrolled in school; they tend to work to generate income and are less likely to engage in begging.

Street children who live with only one parent and other relatives represent only 5% of the total sample. Anecdotal evidence suggests that in this household type, the

19. A level of hardship is defined as a number of family problems a child reports. The level of hardships in this study ranged from 0 (no problems in the family) to 6 (all problem groups present), with an average level of hardship in the total sample being at 2.5

"other relative" usually refers to a step-parent, non-registered partners of the parent (often several in a child's lifetime), the child's siblings or a grandparent. The children who live with one parent and other relatives report the highest level of hardship (3.6) among all household types. They state economic problems in the family less frequently than children from other home compositions but overwhelmingly mention parents' divorce or remarriage as their concern. These children are less likely to be enrolled in school than those living with both parents and/or other relatives. They are also less likely to be involved in begging than those from other household types. More special needs, visible traumas and toxic substance abuse were observed among those children than in children living in households with both parents or with single mothers.

Case Study 3: *Mari comes from a very poor family in a village near Rustavi. She never went to school and has no professional skills. She married early and moved into her husband's house in the village. Mari had four children with him but two children died in infancy. Facing harsh economic conditions, Mari and her husband decided to sell their house in the village and move to Rustavi, initially renting rooms in different places.*

Mari's unemployed husband eventually became involved in criminal activities, was arrested and sentenced to a long prison term. Mari divorced him and moved in with a new man. Although the relationship was not officially registered, she referred to him as her second husband. In the following years, Mari gave birth to three more children. The children from the first marriage started school but did not manage to get past the second grade. At this time, the second husband abandoned the family. Mari could no longer afford her children's education, so to make ends meet she took to begging.

Poverty and homelessness pushed Mari into another relationship and she moved in with her third partner. Initially, the children lived together with the mother. Even though Mari's begging was still the sole source of income for the family, there was at least a place to live. However, Mari's partner did not accept her children and often physically and emotionally abused them. The children no longer felt safe at home. As a result, the older boys decided to leave the house altogether.

Street children who live solely with their relatives constitute a mere 4% of the total sample. The level of hardship is higher for these children (2.9) than for those living with both parents or with only a mother. Like the street children who live without their families, those who live only with relatives exceedingly mention "parents dead" as the main family problem. More than children from other household types, these children report "parents absent" as their concern. They are much more likely to be enrolled in school than in any other household type. Despite relatively high incidence of begging among these children, many of them also reported they did not need any money.

Finally, street children who have not lived with any family members during the past month represent the largest household group – 36% of all children. Almost a half of these children are 11 to 14 years of age. However, more than 50% of the children that do not live with any family members spend only days on the street. Some of them identify an orphanage/shelter or a friends' house as their accommodation. Others, as various NGO street children projects suggest, occasionally rent cheap rooms for a night. Even though these children mention family economic problems at the first place of their problems list, it is stated much less often than by children from other household types. For children living without their family members, parental death is disproportionately identified as a problem, although they also mention having only one parent alive or "parents absent" as their concern. They are not enrolled in school, whereas in the total sample,

14% of the children report being enrolled. They show a higher incidence of begging (64%) and stealing (10%) than children in the general sample, and only 2% of them state they did not earn any money during the month (compared to almost 10% among the total sample). Also, the interviewers overwhelmingly observed more special needs, visible physical traumas and toxic substance abuse among children who did not live with their families than in any other household type.

Street Children's Perception of Main Family Problems

The children were asked to name one major problem in their families ("first mention") and were then prompted for more answers, using options from a pre-prepared problem list ("all mention"). When prompted, children on the average listed 2.5 different family problems. The highest level of hardship was found amongst children who live with one parent and other relatives (3.6), those with only father alive (3.0), only one parent in the same city and those who say that no-one takes care of them. There is not a significant correlation between a level of social support (number of adult relatives living in the same city) and a level of hardship (numbers of family problems listed).

All of the family problems were grouped into eight different categories. The children described economic hardship as poverty at home, parents who do not work, not having a house, debts and famine. Another group of

problems included both or one parent dead. "Parents absent" was explained as not knowing where the parents are, parents being abroad, or having a parent (sometimes specified as a father) in prison. In the "Parents divorced or remarried" category, children mentioned divorce or remarriage of parents as a separate problem and also listed bad relationship with a stepmother or a stepfather. Alcoholism/family violence referred to someone in the family drinking much or parents/someone in the family beating the child or other family members. Health problems were explained in general terms (ill) or specifying who in the family is affected (mother, father or brother). Other issues included a teenage girl saying that she had a baby and does not know where the baby's father is. Finally, some children stated that there are no problems in the family.

The analysis of the data reveals that as the complexity of family issues increases, children are more likely to seek solutions to their problems on the streets. An increased hardship in the family causes the child to spend longer hours in the streets. For example, children with high levels of hardship are 34% more likely to spend summer nights on the street that those with no hardships.
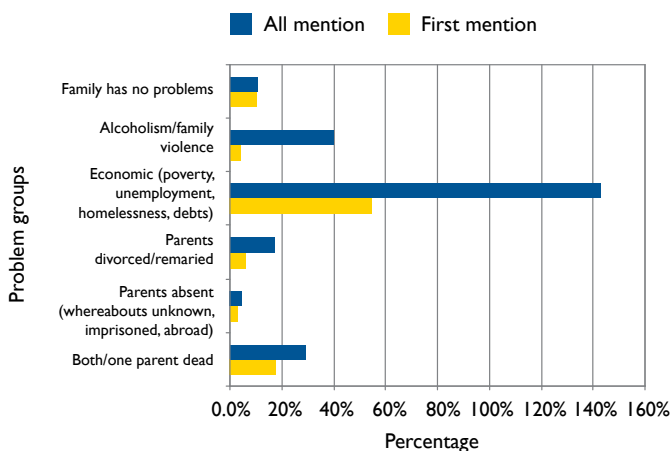

Chart 16 - Street Children – Main Family Problems (n=301)

Whether children were asked about their main family problem ("first mention") or given more options to choose from ("all mention"), economic issues were listed predominantly in first place. The percentage of children mentioning economic problems increases with the number of different types of adult relatives living in the same city. 56% of the children with no adult relatives in their city mentioned economic problems, compared to 63% of the children with one type of adult relative, 68% of children with two types of adult relatives and 85% of children with three types of adult relatives. A similar trend is

observed in the household types' distribution: the highest percentage of children that mention economic problems is found among those who live with both parents and other relatives. However, poverty is also prominent for children who live with parents only, single mother households, and those who live only with their relatives.

Case Study 4: Following the conflict in South Ossetia in early 90s, Merab's displaced family was offered a small room in a communal center for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). Merab had a sister about his age and a baby brother. For many years, Merab's parents were unemployed, and tiny cash assistance for IDPs – 11 Georgian Lari (approx.6.5US$) per person per month - was the only source of income for the family of five[20].

Depressed from the prolonged crisis situation, Merab's father started drinking. He would spend the little money randomly earned on alcohol rather than his family and spent increasingly less time at home. Merab's mother took all the household responsibilities upon herself and was always very attentive to her children, despite the severe circumstances. The children were very attached to her.

Hunger was a daily reality in the home. There was never enough money to survive, let alone provide education for the children. Merab and his mom sometimes found food in the city dumpsters and brought it back home. One day, after eating a meal of such scavenged food, Merab's little brother died of food poisoning. They never went scavenging again. Merab's mother began collecting scrap metal to sell. Merab often accompanied her in this task. Sometimes, he and his sister would beg and with the little money the family earned, they were able to at least buy basic food products for the house.

In 2007, Merab's mother was accused of stealing – the scrap metal she brought to a collection center was said to have been somebody else's property. Arrested and convicted, she was sentenced to several years of imprisonment. The children were left alone and have not seen her since.

The percentage of responses mentioning parents' unemployment as a family economic problem grew significantly from "first mention" (3%) to "all mention" (34%). As is often noted in street children programs in Georgia, the initial loss of a job by a parent is often followed by long-term unemployment, increasing poverty and a subsequent loss of motivation to seek work. The belief in one's own ability to be employed gradually disappears.

Similarly, lack of housing was not frequently mentioned in the "first mention" (3%) but grew much more prominent in all four cities (to 24%) in prompted responses. Homelessness combined with a weak social support network is a powerful factor that by itself can cause a child to begin a street life.

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20. During the same period, subsistence minimum for a family of five was defined at about 200 Georgian Lari (approx. 121US$) per month; source – the Department of Statistics, http://www.statistics.ge/_files/english/households/Subsistence%20Geo.xls

Parents do not work

■ All mention   ■ First mention

Location

Total	
Batumi	
Kutaisi	
Rustavi	
Tbilisi	

0.0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70%

Percentage

Family doesn't have a house

■ All mention   ■ First mention

Location

Total	
Batumi	
Kutaisi	
Rustavi	
Tbilisi	

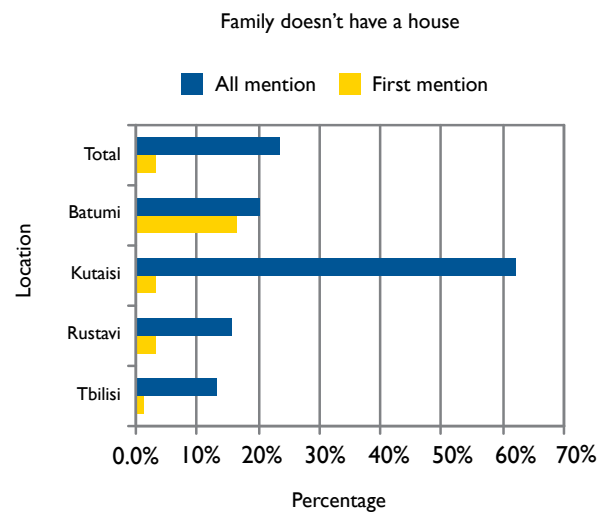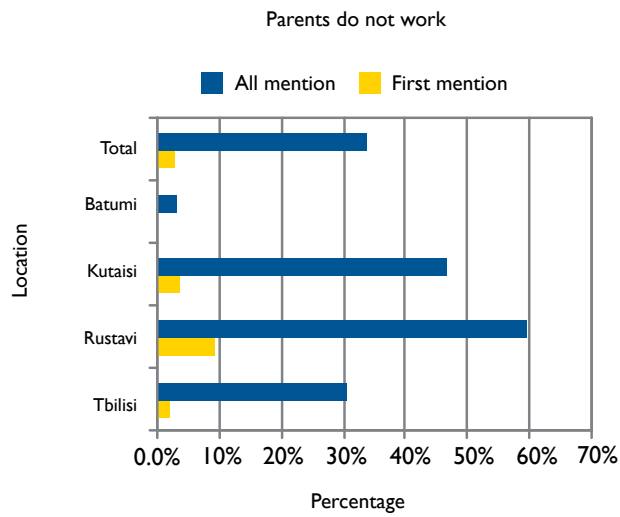0.0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70%

Percentage

Chart 17 - Family Problems of Unemployment and Lack of Housing by City (n=301)

Case Study 5: *In one of the cities, several children included in a parallel World Vision study described their living conditions: We live under (near) a bridge, on the grounds of a destroyed factory. We have makeshift houses – tents or barracks made out of cardboard boxes. Sometimes there are six persons living in one tent, sometimes ten. We have no beds and sleep on the ground. There is cardboard or plastic from the trash covering the floor, and we sleep on that. We have no blankets or pillows. Some have wood stoves but usually there is no wood. We find wood on the streets and bring it home sometimes. One day, when a bank burned down in our city, a man brought us wood remnants from there for our stoves. There are no doors and windows in the house, and when the wind blows it is freezing cold inside. There is no proper roof, and water leaks when it rains. There is no electricity and no gas where we live. We have no running water, and sometimes we bring water in canisters. Some children do not wash themselves even once in two weeks.*

Experiences of street children programming in Georgia describe three different forms of homelessness. Direct homelessness means that a child/family has no place to live, or lives in places not meant for human habitation, such as cellars, staircases of apartment blocks, kiosks and such. The second form is indirect homelessness which is when a child/family does not own any property and lives in very unstable and unsustainable conditions (e.g. renting a room at someone's home with no stable income to ensure monthly rent payments, resulting in frequent relocations). Another form of indirect homelessness is having a space not fit for habitation. Even if street children/families in Georgia have an accommodation, it often lacks basic amenities – a decrepit dwelling with no gas, electricity, heating or furniture can hardly be considered an appropriate living space for a child. Also, street children families often live in overcrowded conditions where there simply is not enough space to live and does not enable children to study or to have their own privacy.

Case Study 6: *Nino, a single mother of three early school-aged street children, has been begging in an underground passage in Tbilisi. At the age of 30, due to a combination of family problems and economic factors, Nino lost her apartment. Lacking education and having three small children to care for, she found it very hard to get a job that would allow her to make a living. When her scarce savings dwindled away, she was no longer able to rent even a small room where she could live with her children. There was nobody she felt she could turn to for help. At the time, begging seemed the only available survival option.*

Every morning, Nino would "work" on the stairs of "her" underground passage by herself. In the early afternoon, the children returned from school and Nino would give them each a sandwich that she bought with her morning earnings. They would then sit on their school bags, spread their books and notebooks all over the stairs, and Nino would help them with homework. Having finished their school work, the children would spend the rest of the day on the streets nearby, sometimes begging with their mother, until early evening when Nino took them away to an abandoned cellar where they all slept.

Under the circumstances, Nino was making every effort to see that her children were taken care of. She was nearly able to support herself and her children by begging. She was trying to ensure the children felt loved and protected, that they were not hungry and went to school regularly. When approached by social workers with an offer to send her children to an institution, Nino responded: "Just help me find a job and a roof over our heads, and then we'll be able to live a normal life again."

Some street children also mention debts in the context of economic hardship. Evidence from NGO projects and a parallel World Vision study suggests that debts in street children families rarely refer to formal bank loans to which these families usually have no access. Rather, the families take informal loans from someone (e.g. they buy basic products in a local shop "on the book" and are unable to pay for them later, or make a bigger purchase against future payment that they cannot cover). Some children also mention being involved in gambling and generating debts to owners of gambling establishments. Children report they are later forced or feel forced to pay these back.

Some authors argue that poverty might be an underlying cause for disintegration of the family structure[21] which can push a child out to the streets. Others point out that urban poverty, often characterized by social isolation, undermines the conditions for the formation of attachment security for the children[22]. A research on street children in some childcare facilities in Georgia[23] describes the negative impact that poverty has on the quality of Georgian family life and the anguish and ethical dilemmas experienced by impoverished parents who want to support their children but who are unable to fill their parental role of caring properly for their children. While economic issues are certainly a significant aspect of explaining why children in Georgia take to the streets,

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21. Apterkar, Lewis (2001), ibid.

22. Thomas de Benitez, Sarah (2007), State of the World's Street Children: Violence, Consortium for Street Children Street Children Series, London
23. Bolton, Paul; Murray, Laura; Semrau, Katherine; Wessells, Michael (2006), Causes of Children Living on the Street in Urban Georgia: A Qualitative Assessment; Boston University School of Public Health & Columbia University Program on Forced Migration and Health, for the Center for International Health, for Save the Children and USAID

they cannot be seen as a single push factor. Poverty in the country is still quite acute - since the end of 2006, registered the poverty rate in Georgia reached 31%, according to the IMF[24] and the rate of children living in poverty has been estimated at 57% (World Bank, 2005[25]). Yet, only a small percentage of economically destitute children engage in street activities or street life. It must be noted, as indicated by the experience of Georgian street children programs, that we often see large families living in extreme poverty (way below the official subsistence minimum as defined by Georgian Department of Statistics[26]) for a prolonged period of time.

The current research does not provide clear-cut answers as to cause-effect relationships between different problems, so it is impossible to say when poverty is a primary reason for children to go to the streets and when it is a result of other adversities or just neglect. One could argue that poverty can in fact be a result of several preexisting factors, such as family disintegration, unemployment or domestic violence. Harsh economic conditions and social isolation are globally recognized to aggravate pressure on already fragile families. As mentioned earlier, many parents of street children in Georgia live in a state of learned helplessness. Facing a wide range of difficulties over a long period of time, they have learned to see themselves as a part or a cause of the problem. They see adversities as affecting all aspects of their lives and perceive them as something they have no control over.

In all four cities, more than 82% of all interviewed children did not see death of one or both parents as their first concern. Even when prompted, 71% of the children did not name parents' death as their major problem. Still, economic issues aside, family disintegration is seen by street children in Georgia as a significant difficulty. The most commonly mentioned characteristics of family breakdown include parental death(s), divorce or remarriage, alcoholism and domestic violence. A loss of parents combined with an absence of other adult relatives is a very powerful (even if not frequent) stressor for children in Georgia, so much so that it can be a stand-alone factor that prompts children to begin a street life.

Both-one parent dead

Parents divorced/remarried

Chart 18 - Family Problems of Parental Death and Divorce by City (n=301)

24. International Monetary Fund (2007), Georgia: Sixth Review Under the Three-Year Arrangement Under the Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility, Country Report No.07/299, Middle East and Central Asia Department, IMF
25. Source: World Bank Household Budget Surveys and Living Standards Measurement Surveys, in UNICEF's INNOCENTI Social Monitor (2006); Understanding Child Poverty in South-Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States
26. According to the Statistics Department, in December 2007 the subsistence minimum for a family of five was 231 Georgian Lari (GEL); http://www.statistics.ge/_files/english/households/Subsistence%20Geo.xls

Case Study 7: *Shortly after completing school, at the age of 18, Nana married and moved into her in-law's apartment. She soon gave birth to her first child and stayed at home to take care of him. The salary of Nana's husband (Zaza) was the only source of income for the family of five (Nana's mother-in-law and her sister were both pensioners). When Zaza lost his job and could not find another, the resulting poverty began to destabilize the family's relationship. Infidelity provoked additional conflicts and when the child was four, Nana's husband divorced her. She had to move out of her in-law's house.*

Nana had nowhere to go with her son. Even if her own fragmented family could, they did not want to take her back. Housed at her in-law's place, she did not acquire any property rights to their apartment. She did not have any professional skills that would allow her to get a decent job. And if she could have worked, there was no one to take care of the boy. Nana did not want to give her son up to an institution and be separated from him. She moved into an empty cellar in an abandoned building in the Old Town of Tbilisi with her child. The two earned money begging at a church entrance where they spent long hours every day.
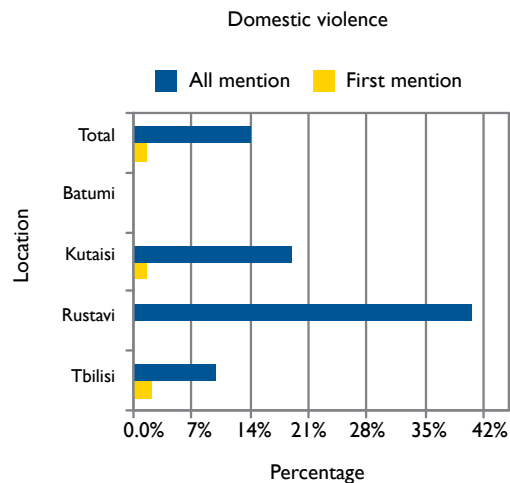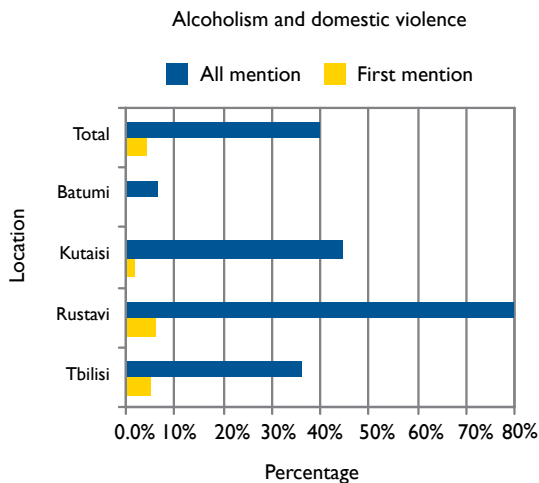
Chart 19 - Family Problems of Alcoholism and Domestic Violence by City (n=301)

In all four cities the percentage of street children identifying alcoholism and family violence as a problem increased from "first mention" (4%) to "all mention" (40%). Of the two, alcoholism was mentioned more often than domestic violence.

Common sense would suggest that if children complain about alcoholism at home or domestic violence, it would be related to the presence of a father (living with a father) and children who reside with only their mothers would be less likely to mention either of those problems. While this is certainly the case in most situations, alcoholism is also a noted problem for some children who live only with their mothers and those who live with both parents and no other relatives. Domestic violence was seen as a problem among children living with one parent and other relatives; those who live with their mothers only and those who do not live with any family members.

In many countries, domestic violence appears to be the most common factor which drives children onto the streets[27]. Although most Georgian street children have not identified alcoholism or domestic violence as their major concern, these issues still need to be examined more deeply. Recent reports indicate that incidences of domestic violence and child abuse in Georgia may be highly underreported by the victims themselves[28]. Stud-

ies world-wide acknowledge the damaging effect domestic violence has on a child's development and often highlights "the critical need to support families so they can eliminate home-based abuse"[29].

The way street children perceive their main problems varies with their street-living pattern. Identifying the death of a parent grows more prominent as the child spends more nights on the streets, until it overshadows economic difficulties for street-living children. Economic problems, on the other hand, are more significant for children with only days of experience on the streets than for those who live there. While 15% of street-active children state their families have no problems, only 2% of street-and-home living children and no street-living child selected this as a response option.

The absence of parents in the same city also affects the children's perception of problems. Street children with no parents living in the same city consider being alone a greater concern than being poor, while children with parents in the same city mention economic problems as their first choice. Children who have only one parent in the same city list economic problems at the first place, but the next two most difficult problems they identify are related to the family situation: only one living parent and parents divorced/remarried.

27. Thomas de Benitez, Sarah (2007), ibid

28. See, for example, Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights & Institute for Policy Studies (2006), Domestic Violence and Child Abuse in Georgia: An Assessment of Current Standings of Law and Practice Regarding Domestic Violence and Child Abuse in Georgia, and Recommendations for Future United Nations Country Team Involvement. UN Country Team of Georgia, Tbilisi
29. Thomas de Benitez, Sarah (2007), ibid.

Family Problems	Street-living children (n=19)	Street-and-home living children (n=56)	Street-active children (n=226)
Parents dead	42.10%	19.20%	8.00%
Economic	31.60%	53.70%	57.50%
Only one parent alive	15.80%	7.70%	4.90%

Table 9 – Main Family Problems versus Street-Living (Time/Place)

Street Children and Schooling

Education, in a broad meaning of the term, is central to human development and basic literacy and life-skills are crucial to the future income earning capability in Georgia. Thus, education related questions comprised an important part of the survey. Four aspects were taken as a basis for analysis: current school enrollment, past involvement in schooling, reasons for discontinuation or never going to school, and literacy (reading and writing) rates.

The findings reveal that the majority of street children in Georgia are of an age of basic compulsory education (up to 14 years). Approximately 86% of the street children are not currently enrolled in school. If we group the children according to a typical age for primary (up to 11 years of age) and lower/upper secondary schooling (12 years of age and older) in Georgia, enrollment is reported at 20% of street children in the first group and 10% in the second. The findings are in striking contrast with the total net enrollment rates for Georgia (data from 2007). The MoES states that enrollment rates were 95% for primary/basic and 76% for secondary schooling[30].

There is an observable discrepancy between school enrollment and regular attendance among street children. The interviews were carried out during regular school days (late November, Tuesday through Thursday). How-

ever, only around 3% of Rustavi street children (none in other cities) said they had spent most of the previous day's hours at school. The research data and anecdotal evidence reveal that some children still try to combine schooling with income generating activities. Because the need to make money is considered a priority, they often choose to skip classes if school hours conflict with their work schedule. Official attendance data for schools is not available in Georgia. MoES began to request attendance records from public schools in September 2007 but the results will not be publicized in time to use as a reference in this study. However, some recent studies indicate a high level of school absenteeism and long-term non attendance in Georgian schools, especially with poor children in urban centers with high unemployment rates[31].

40% of street children in Georgia are drop-outs who left school at various stages of their education (usually within the primary level). Again, this data is dramatically different from official education statistics in Georgia where drop-out rates (as a percentage of all student population) were estimated at 0.3% in 2007, and completion rates for the primary level is given as 98%[32]. A recent World Bank study mentions that Georgian children from poor households are less likely to stay in school beyond compulsory education[33].

Around 60% of all surveyed children have never entered a classroom. Such high rates of children who are fully deprived of their right to education is a multi-dimensional issue. On a policy level, basic education is compulsory in Georgia, however, there are no practical, working mechanisms to identify children approaching school age and guarantee their enrollment. There are no systematic solutions that could support education for children in cases when families cannot afford it. Secondly, often the families themselves, when faced with extreme poverty, long-term unemployment and social isolation, do not see their children's education as a priority, and choose to have them supplement the daily family income instead. Finally, lack of education and illiteracy, if not remedied at an early stage, leads to social adaptation problems for the children (especially in the case of boys who are the visible majority among street children in Georgia).
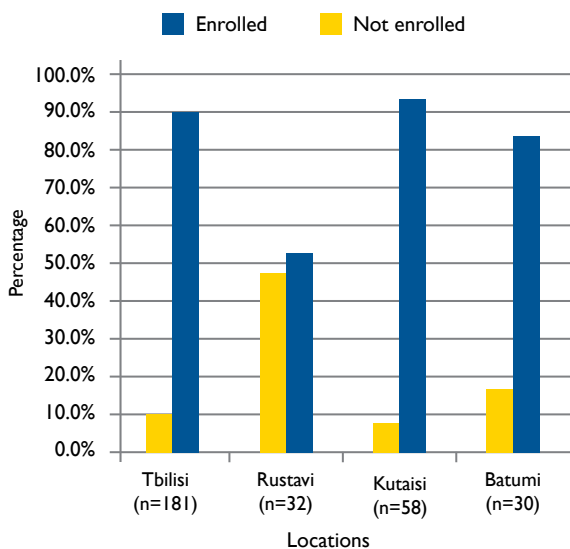
Chart 20 - Street Children Enrollment in School by City

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30. Source: MoES official Education Statistics Yearbook (compiled by EMIS), published by MoES (2007) and accessible via www.mes.gov.ge (go to Publications)

31. Rosati, Furio; Özbil, Zeynep; Marginean, Diana (2006): School-to-Work Transition and Youth Inclusion in Georgia; The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development / The World Bank
32. Source: MoES official Education Statistics Yearbook, ibid.
33. Rosati, Furio; Özbil, Zeynep; Marginean, Diana (2006), ibid.
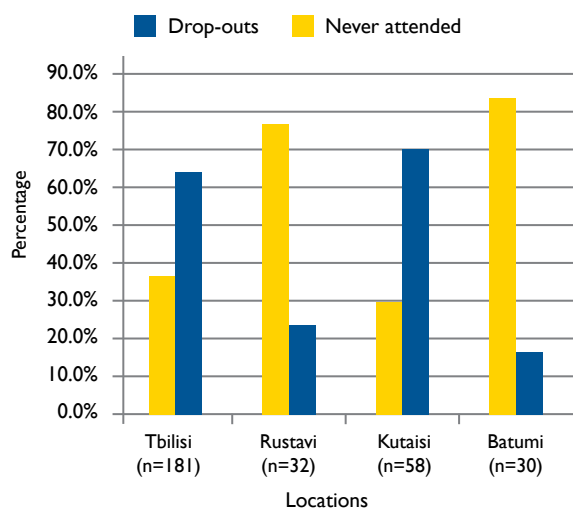
Chart 21 - Drop-outs and Never Attended School by City

Current or past schooling status of street children is related to their age and gender. Older children are less likely to be currently enrolled in schools than younger ones and more likely to have dropped out of school. Boys are 82% more likely to be currently enrolled in school, and 2.2 times more likely to have ever attended school than girls.

Family presence has a stronger impact on street children's access to education than the level of hardship in the family. For example, children with no primary caregiver, street-living children, double orphans and those living with only their fathers are not currently enrolled in school. Children with a higher level of social support are 38% more likely to be enrolled in school than children without any adult relative in the same city. Similarly, street children with both parents alive are much more likely to be currently enrolled in school (20%) than those with only a mother (11%) or only a father (6%) alive. Death of a parent or both parents has a strong impact on discontinuing education: 53% of maternal orphans, 44% of double orphans and 40% of paternal orphans are school drop-outs, compared to 31% of children with both parents alive. Double orphans are also less interested in going to school than those with both parents alive. Single mothers of street children place a relatively higher value on education than single fathers.

The children were asked to identify a primary cause for lack/discontinuation of schooling and then prompted for more options, using a pre-defined list of answers. On the average, each child mentioned two to three causes. The main reasons for never attending schooling or not being currently enrolled are similar in the order and values of responses, with economic difficulties and lack of interest in education topping the list. Quality of education and lack of documents necessary for enrollment come next, and "family does not allow schooling" is also relatively high. The main activity of children who mention the "family doesn't allow schooling" is earning money to bring back home. One could argue that in such cases, a decision not to send children to school can also sometimes be motivated by opportunity costs, with the child's contribution to the immediate survival needs of the family supersedes long-term potential educational gains.
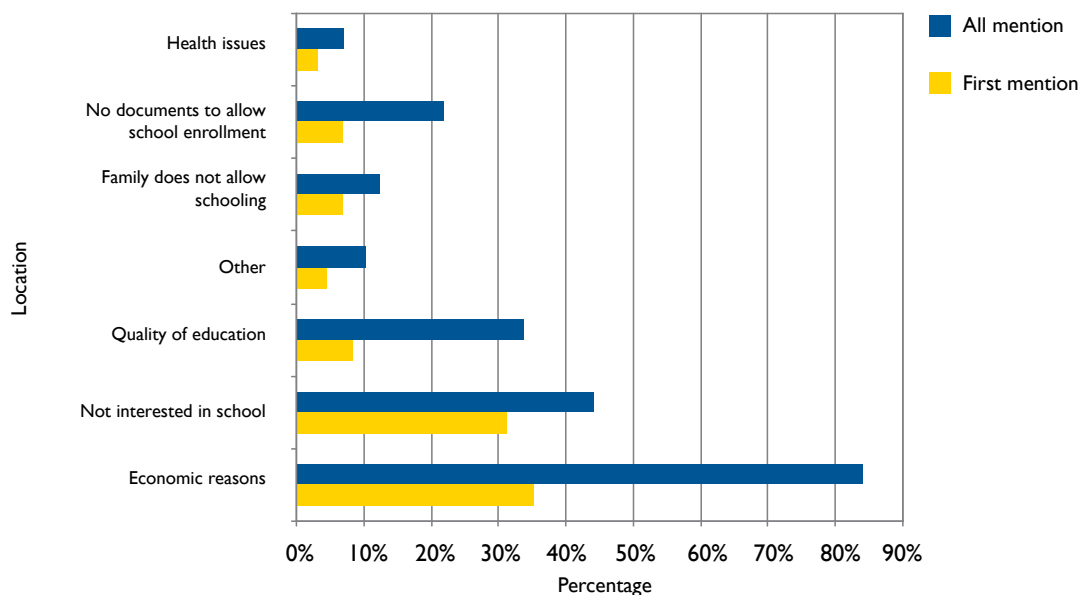

Chart 22 - Main Reasons for Not Attending School (n=250)

Children identified poverty at home and the necessity for them to make money as the major reasons for not going to school. As mentioned by some authors, poverty at home often leads to inequality in children's access to education in Georgia. For example, Rosati et al (2006)[34] writes that the contrast between the educational opportunities of poor and non-poor young people is rather stark. While government expenditure per student per year is only about 20 lari (approximately US $11 in 2002), the richest 20 percent of households spend an average of 22 times more on educating their children than do the poorest 20 percent. In recent years, private expenditures have been the most unequally distributed expenditure item in education. The resulting inequality of opportunity is expected to become sharper over time.

Experiences from street children programming in Georgia indicate that the economic reasons behind non-schooling are often quite complex. For some families, the direct costs of school supplies and text-books, clothes, lunches and informal contributions to school heating or building maintenance are way beyond their financial capabilities. An opportunity cost of schooling also plays a role. Faced with extreme poverty, many families consider it more practical to involve their children in securing daily family needs than to have them spend many hours daily in school. They cannot risk losing the additional income the children's activities earn. Additionally, as Georgia's unemployment rates continue to be high (especially among youth), families often do not see their children's education as an investment which would improve their future economic situation. As noted by Rosati et al (2007)[35], the allocation of children's time across different activities depends, among other things, on the relative returns of such activities. To the extent that school quality affects returns to education, it should also influence the household's decision concerning the investment in children's human capital. Children themselves may also feel that their responsibilities lay more in helping the family make ends meet than in going to school. Finally, children from extremely vulnerable families often lack appropriate conditions to study at home and have behavioral problems, which result in poor scholastic performances and difficulties to adapt to the school's social environment. They are also often discriminated against by their schoolmates and teachers due to their level of poverty.

Case Study 8: Venera (50), an illiterate mother of four school-age children, recalls the early days of their school experiences, following internal displacement to a city in Georgia: "I am Ossetian and I spent my childhood in a village in South Ossetia. I never went to school and I often regretted this; I could not even write my own name. I feel very unhappy because I did not manage to give my children an opportunity to study. We were so poor that I could not afford to buy shoes or clothes for them, not to mention books or school supplies. The teachers were also very unsupportive – they did not want to have such children in their classrooms, and often made fun of them because they were dressed in rags or did not have a notebook and a pencil, or did not have their homework done. My children often came back from school crying because their peers mocked them. Eventually, they spent more time on the streets than anywhere else."

An illness in the family creates an extra burden. A sick family member is unable to contribute to the household income and increases financial needs as money is needed for healthcare and medicines. In Georgia, where private payments represent three quarters of total national expenditure on health, out-of-pocket payments as a share of household expenditure is five times larger for individuals in the poorest income quintile than for those in the richest one[36]. In cases where there is a sick person in the family, the children may be needed even more to supplement the family income with their work. If the illness is in the household, the children may also be needed to work at home and take care of their younger siblings and the sick, thereby having little or no time left for school.

Among the youngest age group of street children, there are twice as many children who note economic difficulties as reasons for no schooling than those who state they are not interested in learning. In the two older age categories, the proportion is reversed and loss of interest in education becomes the foremost reason for not going to school. At the same time, the children mention several issues related to the quality of education (including poor treatment in school and lack of confidence in learning abilities) as reasons for not going to school – with a significant growth from the "first mention" to "all mention" in all aspects. Children who state economic difficulties prevent them from schooling also note that a lack of documents and parental disapproval are a significant issue, whereas school drop-outs will mention a lack of interest in education and its poor quality instead. One could conclude that formal education in the present format is not able to guarantee the inclusion of children who face external difficulties such as poverty, bad treatment in school, the need to make money, parental disapproval, lack of basic documents, or intrinsic challenges such as self-depreciation and a feeling of inadequacy displayed as a lack of belief in own learning capabilities.

34. Rosati, Furio; Özbil, Zeynep; Marginean, Diana (2006), ibid.
35. Rosati, F.C., Rossi, M (2007), Impact of school quality on child labor and school attendance: the case of CONAFE Compensatory Education Program in Mexico, World Bank, UNICEF and ILO - Understanding Children's Work (UCW) Project, University of Rome "Tor Vergata", Faculty of Economics

36. Source: UNICEF's INNOCENTI Social Monitor (2006), ibid.
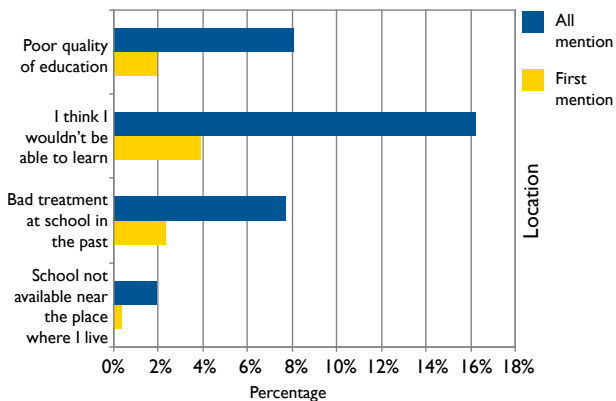
Chart 23 - Quality of Education as a Reason for Not Attending School (n=250)

Chart 24 - Literacy among Street Children by City

When tested, 45% of street children could not read and 50% could not write in their native (or any other) language. Children from other countries have the lowest results (only 38% could read and 33% could write). It is likely that children from other countries have experienced a longer disruption from schooling, often related to lack of relevant documents for school enrollment and poor knowledge of Georgian language.

There is a direct association between illiteracy and lack of schooling; children who have attended school are 31 times more likely to read and 58 times more likely to write than those who have never entered a classroom.

As mentioned earlier, school is one of the most crucial social protection elements for street children but it can also actively contribute to further their social isolation. Among the children who are currently enrolled in school, none lives on the streets full-time. In fact, the majority (over 80%) of school-enrolled children spends only daylight hours on the streets and has never experienced a period of street-living in their lives. In contrast, street-living children are much more likely to have dropped out of school (53%) than the street-active children (32%). As time on the streets lengthens, the children's ties with the school system become weaker. One-half of the children who have been on the street for one month or less still report being enrolled in school. For children who have spent three or more years on the streets, the non-enrollment rate reaches 97%.

Schooling also provides knowledge about social services. Children who are currently enrolled in school are 80% more likely to have heard about social services than those who are not enrolled. Additionally, children who have attended school at some point in their lives are 2.5 times more likely to have heard about one or more social services than those who have never attended school. A somewhat similar pattern was noticed with the usage of social services, where among those children who never attended school, only 11% had ever been assisted by a so-

cial service (compared to 21% among currently enrolled children and 30% among school drop-outs). In the same way, literacy is an enabling factor in providing children with knowledge about social services. Approximately 70% of illiterate children have not heard about any social services and 87% have never used any social service, compared to literate children of whom 46% know about services and almost 30% have used them.
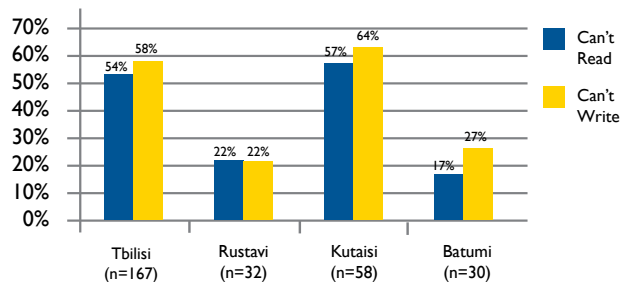
Links between schooling and social services can be explained by several factors. Teachers have daily contact with vulnerable children and should know them well enough to be able to notice signs of a crisis in the child's life. Anecdotal evidence indicates that teachers may often react to such unusual situations by their personal initiative, even though they are not legally obliged to do so. Social interaction at schools also provide for more information sharing on informal levels, increasing the likelihood that children who go to school will learn of more social services than their out-of-school peers.

The study shows that even very limited schooling has a long-term benefit on the self-definition of street children and re-motivates them to acquire knowledge and skills that could improve their life chances in the future. The children currently enrolled in schools have more focused and practical aspirations for their future than those who do not go or have never been to school – for example, 33% of currently enrolled children want to acquire a job or a concrete profession when they grow up, versus only 4% of those who are not enrolled.

Most of the street children's aspirations for the future relate directly or indirectly, to education. Two groups could be distinguished among street children who aspire to receive an education: First, street children who want to acquire a profession (such as a lawyer or a doctor) through formal schooling and higher education and second, those who want to learn practical skills or abilities to become an athlete, artist, craftsman or technician. Girls are more interested in academic subjects than boys (17% and 6%, respectively). Younger children also (8-10 years of age) have a much higher interest in generic education than older groups. This finding indicates a need for specific gender and age-tailored programmatic interventions.

Street Children's Income Generation Strategies

Most street children in Georgia could be classified as "child laborers" – the children of school age who have to work to earn an income for themselves or for their families[37]. During the Point-Count Estimate, begging was observed to be the principal activity of street children; fewer children were seen working. A higher percentage of girls were observed begging (59%) than boys (37%). Begging was also associated with age. Of the youngest age group (0 to 4 years of age), 61 percent were observed either actively or passively involved with their parents in begging. The percentage of children begging decreased for each age group, reaching a low of 27 percent among teenagers. Similarly, being observed doing work increased with age; from only 1 percent among the youngest children to 31 percent in the oldest age group[38].

The majority of street children in the interview phase – almost 90% – reported they engaged in activities to earn money during the month preceding interviews. The most prominent activity was again begging, reported by 55% of children, and working (27%). Usually, the children tend to have one or two major types of income generating activities. As demonstrated by street children programs in Georgia, working usually means petty trade on the streets, carrying goods, collecting glass or scrap metal and selling it to recycling centers, and car washing. Sometimes children go to villages to work on somebody else's farm, reportedly for little to no cash payment. Incidents of most extreme forms of labor among Georgian street children such as commercial sex trade or child pornography seem very rare.

A need to earn money is primarily motivated by economic hardship in the family, especially among children who spend only day hours on the streets. 40% of these children stated that they used the money earned for their family needs. Many children feel they need to support their families in times of crisis, either by supplementing (or substituting) the family revenue with their earnings, or by taking care of their own basic needs so the family does not have to. Sometimes the family mem-

bers are engaged in street begging or street labor and the children accompany them in these activities. As mentioned earlier, there are also street mothers (sometimes as young as fifteen) engaged in street income generation together with their little children. Often, the children display a great deal of responsibility to help their families meet the most basic needs.

> **Case Study 9:** *In the World Vision study on street children in Kutaisi and Batumi, several children expressed their feeling of responsibility for family survival:"My parents are pensioners, they are very old. They do not work. I am collecting scrap metal to earn money for bread and I give them whatever I earn" (boy, 17)."My mother is ill and I have no father. I have a little sister and I need to take care of her. We have no money for bread; I earn little and collect wood for the stove" (girl, 15). "My mother and father don't work. My sister is ill and we have no money for medicine so I beg to buy medications. Only one person [me] works in the family" (girl, 16)."There are five persons in my family but only I can work. My father worked when he could but he is disabled now. My sister is sick and my mother does not have a job" (boy, 15). "My mother does not work. My father and brother are in Moscow but they cannot send any money back. I have a brother who is ill. We do not have money for his medicine, we do not even have money for food. This is why I have to sell icons" (girl, 13)."If we don't go to the streets, my mother, grandmother and I would not have any food" (girl, 13)."My father died and there is nobody else to take care of us. My mom does not work. She is begging to buy money for bread but it is not enough so I help her" (girl, 10).*

The phenomenon of children's economic activities that supplement family income has been linked globally to poverty. As noted by Edmonds (2005)[39], poor parents in a developing country face a difficult decision. Children can make a productive economic contribution to their family [...] help feed, shelter, clothe, and otherwise support themselves, their siblings, and other family members. [...] Even when other opportunities [schooling] do exist, parents and children often need to make the sad choice to have the child work because the loss of his or her contribution to the household would worsen the family's poverty.

The second most frequent reason children are engaged in income generation is simply because there is nobody else who can support them and the children must sustain themselves. This is particularly the case for street-living children, those who do not live with their family members and children with no primary caregiver. These street-living children apply more income generating strategies than children in the general sample and they also spend the money earned exclusively on their own needs or those of their friends. The most common way of mak-

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37. See, for example: the World Bank, the Partnership for Child Development (PCD) at Imperial College, London, and UNICEF (2006): Ensuring Education Access for Orphans and Vulnerable Children - A Planners' Handbook, 2nd Edition

38. In the Point-Count Estimate phase, a significant percentage of children were recorded as being engaged in activities other than begging or working but not clearly specified. Because the incidence of those "other" activities was high, the interview phase income generating activities were further broken down to obtain more specific information.

39. Edmonds, Eric V. (2005), Understanding Child Labor: Patterns, Types and Causes, in: E-Journal USA – Economic Perspectives, the U.S. Department of State/the Bureau of International Information Programs, May 2005

ing money is reportedly by begging, and a much smaller percentage of these children report working, than those in the total representation. However, incidents of scavenging and stealing are much higher among street-living children than in the general street children population.

As street children grow older and become more likely to live away from their families, their need to be financially self-sustainable increases; for example, in the youngest age group over one-half of the children use the money earned for their families whereas 75 percent of older children use the money to support themselves.

Almost one-quarter of all surveyed children reported that when they earned some money, it was taken away by their parents (21%) or by someone else (2%). These cases concern mostly children 10 years of age or younger who are begging – only a small fraction of older children and those engaged in work stated that the money was taken from them. Anecdotal evidence indicates that such situations are often linked with alcohol (or less frequently, drug) abuse in the family and the failure to bring money home can expose the children to physical punishment.

> **Case Study 10:** *Anton has two older brothers, an older sister and a little brother who is mentally disabled. When Anton was eight, his mother died. Soon, Anton's father moved away with another woman and left the children in the care of their teenage siblings. A year later, both Anton's older brother and sister married and moved away, too. The second oldest brother developed a serious alcohol dependency and did not work. There was no money for food in the house.*
>
> *Anton felt that he had to take care of his disabled little brother so he took to street activities, begging, collecting scrap metal or occasionally stealing things to sell. The sense of responsibility was emotionally very difficult for the boy. To make things worse, Anton's older brother often forced him to bring money home for alcohol and would physically punish the child if Anton did not give him money. Eventually, Anton was not able to bear the burden any longer and left the house altogether.*

A troubling observation about street children generating income comes from the World Vision study where several children report being forced to generate income because of gambling debts. Apparently, the owners of gambling facilities allow street children to enter and play. They sometimes lose significant sums of money and feel (or perhaps are) theatened into timely repayment of their "debts". The children report they felt forced to beg or steal to return the money they lost gambling. Engaging in theft often led to conflict with the law. Some children stated that they were not able to cope with the resulting stresses and had attempted suicide.

There is a direct correlation between street income generation activities and schooling. Street children who re-

> **Case Study 11:** *A 14-year old boy from Kutaisi recalls his experiences with gambling: Children lose money once, twice and need to pay it back but cannot get enough money. Because of this, others and I steal. I thought about suicide; I wrote a letter and stood on a bridge to jump. They saved me, then my parents took a loan and paid [the gambling establishment owner] back. A priest can help street kids; he can go to the gambling places to ban it. I can't do this, I have no power. They will say "who are you to tell us what to do?" Somebody who will be listened to should do this.*

ported that they did not need to earn money are much more likely to still be enrolled in school (52%) than their working counterparts, of whom only about 20% are enrolled. While combining school and work is still attempted by some children, engaging in begging almost completely excludes schooling (with 96% non-enrollment rate among begging children). As mentioned earlier, the immediate economic benefits versus expected long-term returns of schooling often compel children and families to favor income generating activities over education. Especially in the case of begging, which is a demand and opportunity driven activity – as long as people give money to children on the streets and options to make a living by other means remain extremely limited, there will be children begging on the streets. In fact, it is extremely difficult to make families and children understand education is a viable alternative to the quick and relatively easy way of making money by begging. Additionally, the stigma associated with street begging makes it almost impossible for children to be accepted by their peers at school.

The type of street activities also has a visible effect on children's health in that interviewers observed more physical trauma among children who reported begging as the main income activity than among working street children.

Social Services and Street Children

Research data shows that critical situations experienced by street children are very similar (although often more severe) to the problems of children and families among other vulnerable populations in Georgia and frequently coincide with other groups of children who did not end up on the streets but live apart from their biological families. It has been acknowledged that services targeting children and families in emergency situations are scarce in Georgia. Research findings confirm the fact that information about and accessibility of social services is low among street children. On the average, 41% of children mention that they have not heard of any social programs, while 46% of children who have heard about social services say that they have never been assisted by any program. If we exclude orphanages/shelters – the most frequently mentioned social services – then we can say that 80% of street children have never been helped any social service. On the average, the children rarely report having used more than one social service.

It must be re-emphasized that street children surveyed in this study were exclusively those who were found on the streets and not children in a shelter, day center or other type of service, and therefore the effectiveness of an existing service cannot be judged on the basis of the present data. It is apparent, however, that the numbers and reach of services are much too insufficient compared to the need.
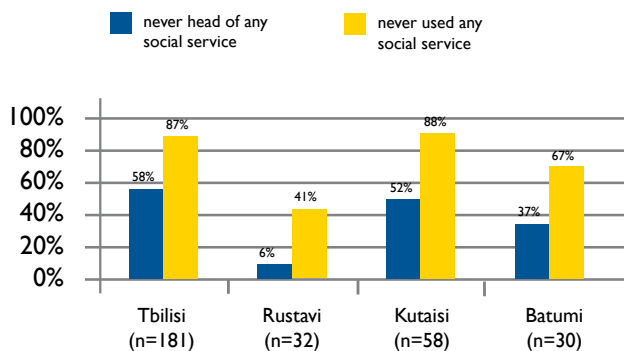

Chart 25 - Percentage of Street Children Who Have Never Heard of or Used Social Services by City

The data shows that children who are more likely to have heard about or use a social service are those who had an experience of street-living for one month or longer; those who have been on the streets for one year or more; those with high levels of hardship in their families; school drop-outs and street-living children. Similarly, the lowest knowledge/utilization of social services is among street children who do not spend nights on the streets; who report few problems in their families and those who have just recently started their street career.

Based on this information, one can conclude that social services in Georgia are more likely to address those children who have been in a crisis situation for a longer period of time, while little attention is paid to the timely detection of problems, prevention and early intervention. As noted by Wilson (2007)[40], reintegration or "cure strategies" can be easier as they respond to more specific needs (what has already happened to someone), whereas prevention widens the scope. Also, it is obvious that existing services are rather reactive – they are accessed by those street children whose ties with regular social protection networks have already been severed and who are actively searching for substitutes. A proactive service approach would mean that services are focused on seeking out children and their families, not the other way around. When a service individually determines the best interest of a child within the framework of his or her right to grow up in a family environment, to education, health, protection and participation, it should use both approaches. In general, the reactive approach is widespread on the current social service market in Georgia, while the proactive approach is scarce.

Utilization of social services by street children in Georgia is often a short-term survival strategy (such as shelters or orphanages for sleeping and soup kitchens for feeding 31% of the children), used by children while they stay on the streets. An example of Gldani Social Rehabilitation Center in Tbilisi illustrates this trend well: children often come by themselves or are brought by their peers "because they need shelter or food"[41]. By their very nature, these services do not provide the long-term benefits of education, nor do they contribute to a decrease in time children spend daily on the streets, or aid in the social adaptation of the children who use them. Utilization of

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40. Wilson-James, David (2007), ibid.
41. Wargan, K.; Aslanishvili, T. (2007): Rapid Assessment of Four Residential Care "Shelters" in Tbilisi; USAID/Save the Children for the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia

other social services, such as day-care centers or mobile outreach teams (18%) also has no significant effect on changing the child's life situation. The data reveals that the use of social services (other than orphanages or shelters) has no statistically significant effect on increasing school enrollment or the level of literacy for children. Children who know more about social services are no different than the other children in their desire to go to school or to learn. Moreover, the number of social services used by a child has no effect on how many hours the child spends daily on the street[42].

Anecdotal evidence points to existing services being focused on addressing the most visible needs of street children - sometimes in a relatively complex way - but failing to tackle the root causes of the crisis. There is emerging evidence in global literature that several of the most commonly used street children assistance options focus on the generalized needs of a vaguely defined 'category' of children. This assistance pays insufficient or no attention to family and social support systems, which redirects a child's attachment towards a social institution and can loosen his or her natural social bonds as opposed to reinforcing them[43]. Some experts quote limited human and financial resources in Georgia as the main factors for the insufficiency and inadequacy of services. In the long run, cost effectiveness of the existing small-scale operations may be questionable.

Case Study 12: *When Nana divorced and had to move out of her in-laws house together with her four year-old son, she did not have anywhere to go or any skills that would enable her to get a job. She found an empty cellar in an abandoned building in Tbilisi and moved there with the child. The two earned money begging at a church entrance where they spent long hours every day. (Case study 7, page 46)*

An analysis of the family situation points out to several factors in Nana's life: lack of education and independent living skills combined with a history of conflict and poverty in her own family, unemployment of her husband led to poverty and family conflicts that eventually ended up in a divorce, subsequent homelessness and lack of means for survival. Certain psycho-social traits can also be associated with Nana's situation: a sense of inadequacy and guilt resulting from living in a prolonged family conflict situation, a perception of isolation in the face of adversities and a feeling that the overall situation is beyond Nana's control. There were also several strengths in Nana's circumstances, most importantly the strong emotional bond between the boy and his mother, the child's agility and intellectual capacities and the fact that there existed a large circle of relatives who, if supported, could learn to help Nana.

When social workers from an NGO had first come in contact with Nana and her son, they involved the boy in a series of informal street education activities and provided psychological help. As for Nana, the social workers tried to convince her to put the boy up in a street children's residential shelter. As she did not want to be separated from her son, Nana resisted the offer for a long time. However, one day she was hit by a car started having speech and space coordination problems as a result. Only then did she agree to the social workers' suggestion that she was no longer capable of providing proper care for the child and agreed to allow him to be placed in the shelter.

By 2008, the boy had already been in the shelter for several years. Work regarding the reunification with his mother and relatives was not reported.

Street children who are begging are much less likely to know about social services and are also somewhat less likely to have been assisted by social services than other street children. This may be caused by social stereotypes about these children (eg. a generalization that most begging children are Gypsies who have begging in their blood) and a stigma associated with begging. A level of social responsibility from the general population is in question here too: as long as people give money to children begging on the streets, these children will continue to take advantage of a relatively simple means of income and will likely resist being involved in activities that that take away the time needed for begging.

Social services targeting street children in Georgia tend to "serve their own purpose" – they act on their own in a direction that they consider most appropriate. They appear to be a rather chaotic response to urgent and visible needs of street children (eg. long-term placement of a child in a shelter if found begging on the streets). This can be explained in part by the lack of a systematic, strategic approach to street children issues in the country. As a result, the few existing programs are separated from the overall context of social protection.

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42. This observation is partly based in street children programs' experience in Georgia and should be seen as an approximation because the study was carried out only once, and there is no point of comparison to describe the dynamics of street children's involvement in services and resulting changes in their lives.

43. Wilson-James, David (2007), ibid.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

For the past several years, the Government of Georgia has made several steps to deal with questions of poverty, issues of social policy and many other spheres aimed at improving the lives of its citizens. Unfortunately, these efforts have not reached all sectors of the Georgian population, and there are segments of Georgian society who remain in a level of far greater vulnerability than the societal average. Street children and their families are such a group – few of the country's socioeconomic advances have been translated into real benefits for these sectors of the country's population.

Poverty is a cross-country problem and at the root of most of the disadvantages street children face. The Government of Georgia is currently trying to cope with this issue, with its new social policy initiatives and anti-poverty rhetoric. However, other aspects of poverty must also be addressed; particularly social equity and inclusion as well as proactive social programs which deal with alcoholism and family violence, broken families and the social capital as a whole. Street children and their families need to be included in broader poverty reduction, social inclusion, child protection and education strategies across the country. Several administrative tools already in existence in Georgia can be used to stabilize and reduce the numbers of street children. Within these frameworks, street children need to be regarded as individuals with rights, strengths and complex needs rather than as mere welfare recipients. Finally, families and communities must be viewed as a part of the solution rather than the problem.

In the four localities, there are resources available which systematically target these problems with the aid of relevant agencies. Collaboration between the local municipalities, resource centers of the Ministry of Education and Science and the Social Assistance Agency of the Ministry of Labor, Health and Social Affairs is absolutely necessary. In areas that deal with issues of street children, a proper partnership between official institutions and civil society is the only real way to adequately address issues of poverty and social exclusion. These issues need to be addressed, not suppressed, by developing mechanisms to assist the lives of vulnerable children and youth.

Recommendations

Policy Level

Regular data collection about street children and their families

1. The current street children study was the first research of its kind ever conducted in Georgia and should be viewed as a basis for the numbers and characteristics of children on the street. Because street children are a relatively new phenomenon in the country, regularly researching their situation and that of their families should be seen as a priority in order to judge the effectiveness of existing policy responses, programming and funding directions, as well as to design future evidence-based approaches. The role of regular, anonymous collection and processing of data on street children should be assigned to and organized within an existing administrative body, such as the Childcare Department of the MoES or the Department of Statistics. Methodologies of the current study could be utilized for the process. Periodic studies would allow the dynamics to be seen within and between various street children groups and also answer questions about changes in numbers of these groups and what initiates the moving from one group to another. An interesting component of such a future study would be to use a Positive Deviance technique in which in-depth interviews would be conducted with street children who are now adults and are successfully integrated into society in order to identify skills and coping mechanisms these individuals used to transition from the street.

Development of appropriate, proactive social assistance schemes and social services

2. Effective solutions to street children issues (particularly important in cases of street-active children to prevent them from moving further along the street life path) need to address the complex set of family and community factors that push children to the streets or keeps them

there. Of the utmost importance are solutions which address poverty and other stressors within street children families. Criteria, identification mechanisms and indicators for social support and social assistance need to be revised to ensure that state programs reach those most disadvantaged, not just the families who are able to find assistance options, and that only those families/children who really need services/assistance receive them and only for such a period of time as is absolutely necessary for resolution of the problems. Policy indicators and targets should be set for monitoring and evaluation of state interventions. Wherever they exist, organizations and programs working with street children should be used for beneficiary identification against pre-set criteria. Distribution and collection of information should be made possible via all entities such as police, schools, health facilities, social worker teams and NGO programs.

3. Preventive policies should promote support to families and protection of children from external shocks and instability, guaranteeing financial and organizational resources to prevent children from being sent to work or otherwise leaving home for the streets. State policies to combat extreme poverty in street children families should particularly focus on tackling long-term unemployment for those who are able to work, and financial assistance for those who are not. Temporary cash assistance for the unemployed should be linked with professional training, job counseling and employment options for families whose adult members are capable of working. Flexible financing schemes, especially social subsidies to support poor single parents or children's relatives in their child upbringing roles, should be developed. Innovative approaches, such as introducing flexible borrowing instruments for disadvantaged families and street youth, could also be a viable element of poverty reduction.

Existing social benefits should be modified, consolidated and better targeted so that street children families may access them as per individually assessed need. The benefits could include: education, healthcare and social services, and cash transfers. Repressive measures, such as banning street begging or child labor, will have no effect as long as a demand for the children's economic activities to help families survive exists.

4. Services for street children should be a part of the overall social protection system for children and families where preventative measures are taken through all available mechanisms of social support, followed by targeted programs for the children who are not captured by the social protection network. Services should be age-appropriate. Whenever mainstream services such as kin-

dergartens and schools can offer traditional or additional services to accommodate the needs of younger street children, such options should be used to their maximum capacity. The older children with significant street life experience will need a different approach, including preparation for further studies or acquiring skills necessary for independent living.

5. This research shows that existing social services for street children are highly inadequate in numbers and reach. They do not reach most of the children currently on the streets, nor do they appear to make a real difference in their life situation. Allocation of resources to develop social services for street children and their families should be foreseen in the state budget, with financing mechanisms flexible enough to ensure that money is available when needed and delivered to services in a timely, scheduled manner. A proactive approach in a form of outreach services, including an active search for beneficiaries and a viable referral system, is a key. However, service options the children can be referred to, such as day care centers, after-school programs, and in some cases residential care options, combined with a professional quality family counseling and support, should also be developed.

6. The state should review current policies regulating property rights and material support to mothers and children in cases of divorce, and ensure that adequate mechanisms exist to protect divorced mothers with children against a risk of homelessness and extreme poverty. Evidence suggests that current legislation guaranteeing a place to live for a divorced mother and children and child support from the fathers is almost never executed and that families are generally not aware of their legal rights and those of their children in cases of divorce. One important step would be to include free legal counseling as a necessary component of professional family support services, and conduct public information campaigns.

7. To facilitate early recognition of family crisis, the state should create mechanisms that allow for the monitoring of children's situations within a family, such as computerized databases of compulsory immunization and compulsory school enrollment for children approaching school age. Also, existing non-state street children programs should be provided with complete information regarding existing criteria for various forms of state support. These should be able to screen children and families against these criteria and assist families in self-representation in applying for those, or apply on their behalf.

8. Street children's problems most often originate from

within their families. In the child welfare system, which is now being reformed in Georgia, too much attention has been focused primarily on the child and not on the family. The country does not have sufficient human resources and mechanisms that are able to deal with the complexity of the problems inside the street children families and the problems are rarely tackled from the root causes. Subsequently, preparation of street children and their families, and monitoring of their sustainable reunification rarely happens in Georgia. Qualified, flexible and individually tailored family support systems need to be developed and included as a necessary component of child welfare schemes to ensure that the right for each child to grow up in a family environment is truly reflected in both policy and practice.

Improving schooling options for street children

9. Policy recommendations for solving educational issues of street children in Georgia need to be viewed in the context of the Millennium Development Goals and Education for All strategies that the country has signed. The denial of access to education that the majority of street children in Georgia are experiencing today is detrimental to the reputation of the government and the country with an ambition to meet European Union standards. Street children need to be included into the target audiences for educational policies that imply positive discrimination for eligible equity groups. Within this context, education needs to be linked to broader poverty reduction, social inclusion and child protection strategies.

10. The policy, as well as programs, could include educational options such as: formal schooling for younger groups, vocational training based on modular curriculum for older groups and development, regulation and certification of flexible schooling schemes, such as open and distance learning. Within such a system, curricula for catch-up and open/distance learning (offered through day-centers, mobile street educators' teams, in schools or through other systems to ensure the children's re-integration into formal schools) should be developed and accredited by relevant state institutes. A system of financing beneficiaries of these alternative learning schemes, just like students of regular schools, should be introduced.

11. This study indicates that some of the biggest constraints to street children's successful schooling, whether current or previous, are economic reasons, lack of interest in schools, poor quality of education, lack of confidence in own learning abilities and lack of required legal docu-

mentation for enrollment. All these reasons, except the latter, tie into one problem that is not specific to street children at all – the problem of 'appropriate' schooling for economically and socially disadvantaged populations. What children get out of school determines their engagement and future prospects. Currently, the Georgian public education system is in the process of addressing some of the most widely acknowledged problems – relevance of the school curriculum (hence mismatch of skills/knowledge imparted by schools and required for employment), poor quality of teacher training, links between education and training providers and the labor market. These efforts, if successful, can play a key role in facilitating education for street children. Ongoing vocational education reform and a rapidly growing network of primary vocational centers could also play a significant part in educational provision for street children.

12. A state level policy for school enrollment and attendance needs to envisage strict adherence to compulsory schooling requirement and sanctions against non-attendance for families. However, these can be enacted only after the social policy has covered disadvantaged groups (families/caregivers/other adults) and mitigated their need for child labor for survival. Allocation of state resources for education could be improved by tying the school voucher system to attendance, as opposed to enrollment. In line with the new National Childcare Standards, the state should also ensure an alternative to family care options for street children without parents prioritize education.

13. The Government could create a state 'inclusive education fund' accessible for schools and vocational training centers that need additional programs for inclusion of out-of-school children (as a contingency fund rather than per capita funding). A special program, with economic incentives, such as stipends for attendance and subsequent continuation of education for younger groups or employment opportunities for older groups, can be designed and administered by the MoES as well as individual Resource Centers or schools. Alternative education providers (such as day centers, drop-in centers or mobile street groups) providing certified educational activities to street children should also be able to tap into this financial scheme.

14. Legal constraints, such as lack of required documents for enrollment need to be addressed jointly by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Justice. A special status for compulsory (basic) school age immigrant children and those lacking proper documentation can be considered. This would allow the schools, with

Ministry consent, to enroll children without a full set of documents. The per capita funding for these children could be substituted by a contingency fund of an individual school, incorporated into the 'inclusive education fund' for which individual schools can apply to the MoES until the children acquire a permanent eligibility status or relocate to another region or another school. Alternatively, local authorities could cover the schooling from their education support programs budgets.

Guaranteeing child protection and social inclusion measures for street children

15. Street children and their families are often excluded from access to basic social safety net elements because they do not have basic documentation required for state services and assistance. The Government should introduce temporary child protection measures (access to health, social services and social assistance) for immigrant street children, those lacking proper documentation and those without a permanent address. One of the possibilities of such temporary registration, for example in case of not having a birth certificate, could be to allow for self-identification of families and/or children until other legal identification processes are concluded. The state should also simplify the process of obtaining relevant documentation by street children and their families, and make sure that it is fully free of charge, including cancellation or waiver of court-related costs in more complicated cases. The Civil Registry Agency could handle registration and processing of such cases.

16. Existing legislation needs to be amended to ensure practical mechanisms for timely protection of street children from families with severe alcohol abuse and domestic violence. In such cases, child protection measures should be combined with comprehensive assistance options to support families in dealing with these problems[44].

17. Existing legislation should be amended to ensure that there are working mechanisms that effectively prohibit the participation of children in gambling[45]. Such mechanisms should include control systems in registered gambling places (eg. through 'mystery shoppers' methodology[46]), and legal accountability of owners of such places in cases children are found in their facilities.

18. Child protection should be included as a necessary component of police training to guarantee that street children are protected by the police from external abuse and exploitation, and to ensure that the police do not abuse or criminalize street children. A position of a po-lice psychologist or social worker could be introduced, with this person present in all cases where the police come in direct contact with the children. An innovative approach could include a system wherein street children would be allowed to make confidential complaints about police abuse to nominated appropriate independent national or local agencies.

Providing care for children with no or insufficient parental support

19. Kinship care should be made a priority in cases when street children do not have or temporarily cannot live with their parents. Emergency care options (emergency foster care, crisis care places in small group homes) should be developed and made accessible for children who are on the streets as a result of parental death and lack of appropriate support from extended families, with appropriate and flexible financing schemes. Similarly, a development of temporary small care facilities for street children lacking parents and other relatives (small-family type homes for younger ones and supervised group housing for older ones) should be prioritized over investing in large costly shelters.

20. Street-living children constitute the smallest group, yet face the most significant hazards among all street children. Having experienced full disruption of social contacts (including those with their families), they have had to construct new social relations to facilitate income generation, support them in day-to-day survival or to provide them with a sense of belonging. Street-living children are already independent decision makers and are dealing with their lives independently. Therefore, they have already learned how to survive, so supporting them through regular, structured services is more complex. Services for street-living children require the highest possible professional expertise from staff. Every case should be considered separately, and different options for support like mobile street work for identification, basic education and referral, vocational education linked

44. At present, no clear and specific coordinated mechanisms or procedures for child protection exist in Georgia. The Georgian law obliges every citizen to inform about any situation of violence against the child. The law however fails to specify the exact definitions of forms of violence against the child (some general definitions of violence are included in the Law on Protection and Aid for the Victims of Domestic Violence, 3143-Is, 2006-05-25). Also, the law does not spell out who specifically is obliged to report situations that pose threats to child protection, which concrete reporting and intervention procedures are to be followed and what repercussions are foreseen in case someone fails to report such a case.
45. "The Law on Protection of Juveniles from Harmful Influence" bans minors from gambling. In practice, however, no mechanisms are in place to ensure that this provision in the law is adhered to.
46. A mystery shopper is a person hired to visit certain facilities incognito, posing as their customer, to verify certain aspects of their activities, such as quality of service or compliance with the law.

to employment, independent supervised housing options or other carefully selected types of social services can be applicable. Offering services that make street survival easier (such as feeding children on the streets, provision of clothing or night-only shelters) is unsustainable and will have a counter-effect if the root causes of street-living children' problems are not effectively addressed or if options that children consider more attractive than street life are not offered. Health services on the streets are an exception and should be made available by qualified medical personnel periodically by offering examination and treatment free of charge to children living on the streets.

21. Guaranteeing proper care for children should be made a compulsory element of court proceedings in cases of parental imprisonment and should always involve statutory social workers. Even though such provisions are included in Georgian legislation, the research reveals cases in which children end up on the streets because their parents have been imprisoned and the situation of children was not properly investigated, resulting in children being left with no care or inadequate care.

Establishing special support mechanisms for street youth

22. This study shows that for older street children, especially those lacking parental care or having an extended time of street living, reintegration back to their family or a placement in an alternative care may not be the best option. Rather, independent living schemes would need to be developed and included in a continuum of child-care services. The schemes for street youth should include temporary supervised group housing combined with basic literacy if needed, in addition to vocational education/job counseling options and should be linked to social assistance schemes available in the country. All of this could constitute an element of the Government's efforts to combat youth joblessness through a development of youth employment and social inclusion strategy.

23. To complement such schemes, the state should press for an adoption of life skills/vocational element in basic/secondary education, and work on legal amendments to the Law on Vocational Education that would allow individual vocational centers to, in particular situations, lower entry requirements (of nine full grades of completed schooling) for youth who have not had an opportunity to finish compulsory education.

Cooperation and collaboration

24. The state should ensure that there exists an appro-

priate legal framework to guarantee the formalization of cooperation, information sharing and cross-referral between agencies directly or indirectly responsible for the protection and well-being of children and their families, including schools, medical facilities, statutory social workers, state assistance programs, social services and the police.

25. State agencies responsible for child and family welfare should establish collaboration means with their counterparts in countries that are the most common places of origin of immigrant street children and their families and should jointly work on developing mechanisms that would limit the potential risks of cross-border family migration for children.

Local Authorities' Level

1. The local administration in cities where street children can be observed should be both responsible for and have adequate financial resources to allocate the development of locally appropriate social services for street children. Depending on the identified needs, such services might include: mobile outreach (street) groups for identification of street children and their families, street education and referral; drop-in day centers and after-school programs for children who spend long hours on the streets because of their parents' absence or long working hours; free mobile outreach health services to reach children on the streets and their family members at home; and temporary shelters for street mothers with little children, linked to other social safety nets existing in the community. Additionally, local authorities particularly need to address homelessness in their cities, for example through introduction of temporary supervised social housing.

2. Local authorities should design and implement city-specific social inclusion strategies. Depending on evidence-based community needs, these could incorporate one or more of the following: local poverty reduction and employment schemes; local strategies for independent youth livelihood (development of vocational training and youth employment systems, financial support, and temporary protected and supervised housing) and activities which combat the exclusion of IDP families and their children from mainstream society. In order to effectively reach out to the minority groups (such as the Roma or immigrant families), local structures (statutory social workers and social assistance teams) could consider including and training representatives of these groups as facilitators.

3. Local authorities should undertake efforts to increase cooperation and cross-linkages between social protection systems in the community (schools, counseling options, statutory social workers, health facilities, social services, NGOs, the police and others) to ensure timely recognition of crisis and early multi-sector intervention. As a component of such social protection networks, local authorities should develop comprehensive local social support information packages, organize information campaigns about locally existing social assistance and social support options and ensure timely referral of street children and their families to available service and assistance schemes.

School Level

1. As street children are stigmatized by other children and their parents and teachers for the socio-economic conditions of their families and the activities they conduct outside of school, the policies that could be designed and adopted at the decentralized school level need to address the following issues: individual/flexible approach to delivering curriculum, the quality of human interaction, a culture of non-responsiveness and bullying. The state policy of SAFE Schools, which is focusing on the interaction between the school members and the creation of the positive environment, provides a good foundation for implementing such changes.

2. Taking into account the time street children spend on the street, the schools should consider creating after-school homework clubs, evening classes or mentor systems in primary schools, and establish youth resource centers in secondary schools as a way to offer additional, flexible non-formal classes, mentoring schemes and career counseling services.

3. In order to improve the quality of human interaction, training for educators on psycho-social aspects of pedagogical work and individual approach to delivering curriculum should be included as a necessary component of teacher training. At the same time, schools should work towards improving school-parents liaison and helping families support their children in continuing their education

4. Within the 'inclusive education fund', schools should have a possibility to address problems of children who are out of school because of extreme economic hardship. This could be done through provision of targeted bursaries, scholarship or zero-interest rate educational loan programs for children, conditional upon attendance, and introduction of school textbook borrowing schemes

Programs

1. Program approaches should clearly distinguish between prevention, early intervention and working with long-term street children, and differentiate services for street-living children and those who still stay at home. The design of programs should reflect specifics of the approach chosen – for example, if a program chooses to work with street-living children in a community, it will clearly identify their needs and strengths and will most likely focus on developing mobile outreach schemes and longer-term independent livelihood options with the children. Programs addressing needs of street children who still live with their families need to develop competencies and approaches to address a specific issue or issues within individual family contexts. A focus should be on interventions that are limited in time, well targeted and highly focused. Indicators to measure impact of interventions at individual and family level should also be developed.

2. For all street children involved in services or programs, identification of, and establishing contact with, family members - if such exist - should be the first step. For double orphans this would involve identifying any possible wider circle of kin. Also, efforts should be made to reach out to the home communities of in-country migrant street children and their families to research possibilities of additional social support. Families and wider communities of street children should always be involved in service delivery from the very beginning. Interventions need to be based on existing and individually researched children, family and community strengths - not only needs - and ensure a meaningful participation of children and families in designing assistance programs that concern them.

3. Family crisis that leads to children's involvement in street activities does not affect only one child in the family but the entire family nucleus. Programs should make sure to include siblings of beneficiary street children in their assistance. Programs that intend to work with families of beneficiary children need to develop focused, needs and resource-based family support options (or a referral system to such options) such as: counseling programs to support families in overcoming problems related to alcohol abuse and domestic violence; economic activation and job counseling programs for families; family counseling options for parents going through a divorce/re-marriage process and their children, in-home respite care options for sick family members, and; providing full information about legal and social protection schemes existing in the community, and facilitating access to those.

4. Some families will resist contact because they either have no time, they are afraid of being judged on a moral level by the service staff, they have lost interest in their children's affairs due to a combination of family stressors, or because of other reasons. Family support options should not be limited to expecting the families to come to established facilities but rather outreach options should be available to approach the parents where they are - be it home visits or contacts in work places, streets, prisons or health care facilities. Outreach programs (mobile groups) should have a flexible time schedule (including street and home-based support and evening programs) to reach families when they are free from work or other obligations. Support to children and families should be offered in such ways as to ensure that services do not disrupt existing family ties. They should try to minimize interference in current family survival strategies and gradually help the families to identify alternatives.

5. Most families of street children, especially single parent households or relatives taking care of the children in the absence of parents, should be supported in their child upbringing responsibilities. Often, this will mean flexible service delivery, including at-home childcare if needed and teaching the caregivers about their rights, obligations, and community support in child upbringing.

6. Programs that intend to work with migrant or minority street children should develop "safe migration" information packages (including full information about available schooling, social services and social assistance options) to facilitate migrant families' and children's adaptation to their new surroundings. An innovative approach to address the issues affecting minority groups' street children and their families (such as the Roma) could be to teach and engage representatives of these minority groups as facilitators to reach out to those populations.

7. Programs that intend to focus on street youth need to develop competencies, approaches and linkages for the design and implementation of youth independent livelihood programs that could include supervised group housing, alternative and vocational education and life skills curricula or linkages to similar programs in the community. Similarly, programs that intend to work on counseling and rehabilitation options for street children with toxic substance abuse problems should ensure that an appropriately qualified and prepared staff is available not only to deal with the immediate effects of substance use but also with long-term psycho-social implications within the child's family and community.

8. Programs that intend to specifically target education for out-of-school street children should be based on a certified or otherwise officially recognized curriculum and should have a set of indicators to measure effectiveness. Educational programs (street, center or home-based) need to be designed with a flexible schedule and delivery options to reduce the risk of disrupting family ties and survival strategies. Programs can focus on approaches such as: mobile street education, evening non-formal education and basic literacy classes for street children, catch-up classes or individual mentoring schemes, delivered also at the child's home if needed. Educating parents/caregivers (if such exist) on the importance of schooling and helping them to assist their children in school work should be a necessary component of educational programs for street children. Sometimes, it may require such programs to address the issues of illiteracy or low education of adult family members as well and programs that choose to work in this area need to develop additional competencies to be effective in delivering adult learning approaches.

Educational programs may also aim to return out-of-school street children into the formal schooling system, or prevent currently enrolled children from dropping out. To accomplish these aims, educational programs need to establish very close cooperation with local public schools, and design and implement sensitization programs for teachers, students and parents to reduce stigmatization and discrimination at school.

9. Programs working with street children should not operate in a vacuum but should ensure permanent and focused cooperation between street children and relevant social programs existing in the community. Programs should also focus on creating a supportive environment for the implementation both internally (through ongoing targeted capacity building and support for front-line personnel working with street children and their families) and externally, through local targeted advocacy and public awareness campaigns. An important component of building a conductive environment for street children programming could be to combine assistance to families along with a public awareness campaign against street begging, discouraging the public to give cash to children and offering to support street children assistance programs instead.

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Abbreviations

MoES	Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia
NATO	North-Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	non-governmental organization
RLP	Rebuilding Lives Project
SCWG	Street Children Working Group
T-L Mapping	Time-Location Mapping
TLS	Time-Location Sampling
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

Annexes

Annex 1 – Significant City Characteristics

Tbilisi

Tbilisi has the largest number of street children in Georgia, with an average estimated number of 600 and a maximum of 950. These figures are based on the Point-Estimate from this study, which was conducted in the fall months. Therefore, these figures may likely increase during the summer months.

Age and gender distribution of street children in Tbilisi does not differ significantly from that of the general sample. Although Tbilisi is the main migratory destination for street children in Georgia and from abroad, it has the largest proportion of non-migrant children, compared to the other three cities in the survey. Or in other words, most street children in Tbilisi have lived here all their lives.

In contrast to other cities, Tbilisi has a high proportion of street-living children (37%) but also a very high percentage of children who have never had a period in their lives when they lived on the street for one month or longer. Tbilisi also has a comparatively higher percentage of street children who spend nights at their friends' homes and daytime hours on the streets with their family members than in other cities.

Unlike other cities, the majority of Tbilisi street children have never had a period in their lives when they had no contact with their mothers or fathers. Tbilisi has the highest percentage of street children (almost 80%) whose fathers live in the same city and who have daily contact with their mothers and fathers. However, Tbilisi has the highest percentage of street children lacking extended social support (not having any other adult relatives in the same city). The level of hardship is relatively low among Tbilisi street children (2.2), with parental death and poverty being of a smaller significance than for children from other locations, and the highest proportion (17%) of children who state that their family has no problems.

90% of Tbilisi street children are not currently enrolled in school while 64% have never attended school. These are relatively high rates. Of the two major reasons for not attending school, an absence of interest in schooling is mentioned more often than poverty. Family disapproval and lack of documents for school enrollment are two other reasons stated more frequently in Tbilisi than in other cities. Street children in Tbilisi are also most likely to think that they would not be able to learn.

Street children in Tbilisi usually earn money by begging, and less frequently by working than in the other three cities. Of the four locations, Tbilisi street children are also more likely to state that their money was forcefully taken away from them by someone other than parents.

Tbilisi has a very large proportion of street children (87%) who have never benefited from a social service. For example, several children reported knowing about the existence of daycare centers, but only 2 percent of them stated that they spend daytime hours there and do so only during the winter. In absolute numbers, taking the maximum estimate from the study, this would mean that over 825 of the 950 estimated street children in the capital have never received any assistance. This fact can be partially explained by the city's scarce social services. These are insufficient in number and reach for such a large target group. Secondly, the Tbilisi services for street children are dispersed across various districts of the city, with little to no association between them. For example, a mobile outreach team can work with street children in the city center but the closest daycare facility with a family support system they could refer the children to is about ten kilometers away, in a different neighborhood. Lastly, the data indicates that street children in Tbilisi would benefit mostly from professional assistance which targets a complex set of adversities that affects their parents, who tend to have little or no support from extended families. Existing services within the city have a limited capacity to play such a role.

Street children and their families in Tbilisi would benefit greatly from organized networks of child and family protection services by district, with outreach teams and a range of assistance options covering a limited number

of beneficiaries tied to a particular location. Such district networks would each have an outreach group, a range of childcare facilities (including those inside existing schools), and qualified family support options. Also, age-appropriate temporary small group housing and independent supervised accommodation options should be established.

Rustavi

Based on the Point-Estimate, the average number of street children in Rustavi is 100, with a maximum of 150 children. Rustavi has a much higher population of street boys (85%) than street girls, and almost 80% of the city street children are 11 to 14 years of age. More than one-half of its street children (twice as many as in other cities) have not spent their entire lives in Rustavi; among those, almost 90% are child-migrants from other regions of Georgia. Rustavi also has the highest percentage of children – almost one-half of the city sample - born in other regions of Georgia. This can be explained by the fact that Rustavi has been an artificially created industrial urban center and most of its inhabitants relocated to Rustavi to provide a workforce for the city factories but they still have families in their places of origin.

At the time the survey was conducted, Rustavi had the lowest percentage of street-and-home living children (11%) among the four cities but a relatively high percentage (60%) of children who have had a history of street-living for one month or longer. Street children in Rustavi are much more likely to spend summer than winter nights on the streets; in the summer months over one-half spend the night on the street (compared to just about 10 percent during the winter). Rustavi is the only city where no child reported spending nights in the street with their family members, and only a small percent (3%) said that they spend winter or summer days with their parents/relatives on the street. Rustavi also has a smaller percentage of children who spend days on the streets than any other city.

Among the four cities, Rustavi has the highest percentage (almost 70%) of street children with both parents alive, and the smallest percentage (3%) of double orphans. The vast majority of Rustavi street children (93%) have mothers living in Rustavi, however, one-third of the children do not have fathers in the same town. They have more adult relatives in the same city than children in any other town; consequently, they also have the highest level of social support among the four city groups. They are most likely to identify parents as their primary caregivers and there is only a very small percentage of children who say that no-

body takes care of them. Nevertheless, Rustavi children report a high level of hardship (3.2), with economic issues and parental unemployment mentioned in the first place and more predominantly than in other locations. Other significant problems identified by Rustavi street children include alcoholism and domestic violence – mentioned much more frequently than in other cities.

School enrollment rates are the highest among all four cities. Whereas in the general sample only 14% of children are currently enrolled, the proportion in Rustavi reaches almost one-half of the street children population. It is also the only city where a percentage of children were actually attending school during the interview days. Three-quarters of out-of-school Rustavi street children are dropouts (against 42% in the general sample), and about one-quarter of the children have never entered a classroom. Economic issues are mentioned in the first place on the list of reasons for not attending school; Rustavi street children also mention health problems in the family in this context more often than in other cities. In Rustavi, there is a smaller proportion of street children who are not interested in school but the children mention experiencing bad treatment at school in the past more frequently than in other cities. Rustavi also has a comparatively high percentage (80%, comparing to around 50% in the general sample) of street children who are literate (with some being able to read and write both Georgian and Russian).

Among the four city groups, Rustavi street children are more likely to generate money by working and least likely to earn it by begging. A comparatively high percentage of children reported that they spent money earned on their family needs. Rustavi also has the largest proportion (almost 40%) of children who did not need/earn any money during the month preceding the interviews. Notably, street children in Rustavi are very goal-oriented in their thinking about the future – they represent the highest proportion of children who are interested in getting a job. Moreover, there was not a single street child who expressed a desire to continue living as they live now.

On the average, a street child in Rustavi has heard of three different social services (the highest level of awareness among the four cities). Rustavi is the only city with a significant proportion of children who use social services – 60% of its children have been assisted by one or more social services. Rustavi children are the only among the four city groups who do not spend nights in an institution. Rustavi is also the only city where a percentage of children seem consistently involved in a day center activity – 3% say they spend most of their summer days there; 9% spend

winter days and 16% said the spent most of the previous day's hours. As there was only one such center in Rustavi at the time of the study (Sapovnela Daycare Center, operating under the USAID-funded Rebuilding Lives Project of Save the Children), it is assumed that the children are most likely referring to that facility.

The relatively high awareness and usage of social services can be attributed to the efforts made to target this particular group of children in a coordinated and concise manner. Based on reports from professional program staff, much of the work has been directed towards strengthening communication between the target group and service provider professionals. It should be noted that when the Rebuilding Lives Project in Rustavi started, it only had a mobile outreach group, while day care and family support services were created at a latter stage, when communication and trust had already been established. Rustavi programs have also benefited from the relatively compact structure of the city, as well as the close cooperation between various social protection elements which exist in the city, including direct support from the local administration and a tight collaboration with statutory social workers.

In Rustavi, street children and their families would greatly benefit from strengthening its family support services so that they are capable of tapping into resources of street children extended family networks, both in the city and in the families' places of origin. Such family support options should develop capacities to help families deal with alcohol abuse and domestic violence issues. Vocational education and employment options for street children and their families – an issue of great importance for many older street boys in the city - should also be expanded. An increase in systematic collaboration between various institutions that can assist street children and their families – including schools, medical services, the police and others – should be made a priority for future street children programs in Rustavi. To combat apparent discrimination of street children in schools, a comprehensive teacher training and sensitization program should be introduced. Finally, given such a sharp increase of children spending nights on the streets during the summer, programs could consider organizing seasonal activities such as summer camps.

Kutaisi

Based on the Point-Estimate, the average number of street children in Kutaisi is 200, with a maximum number of 325 children. Age and gender distribution does not differ significantly from those in the general sample. Most of Kutaisi's

street children have spent their entire lives in the same city; among those who did not, Kutaisi has the largest proportion of out-of country migrants (40%, compared to less than 10% in the total sample). A comparatively higher ratio of non-migrant Kutaisi children also state they were born in another country.

16% of Kutaisi children live alone on the streets full-time. Among the four cities, Kutaisi has the highest proportion of children who spend nights on the streets with their parents/relatives. The majority of Kutaisi street children spend days (usually all day) on the street without parents/relatives. Almost one-half of Kutaisi children have had a period of one-month or longer of living on the streets full-time (mostly during the summer months). Almost 95% of Kutaisi street children – the greatest percentage in all four cities – have been on the streets for two years or longer.

Of the four cities, Kutaisi street children have the largest proportion (83%) of those who have siblings in the same city. Kutaisi also has the largest percentage of children that live only with their relatives (45%). These children mention they have a closer contact with their relatives than with fathers. However, Kutaisi also has a high percentage of children (40%) who do not have a caregiver. One-fifth of the children do not have a mother living in the same city, with many mentioning their mothers are abroad. The level of hardship is the highest among all four cities (3.3), with the absence of parents, homelessness and alcoholism at home being mentioned more frequently than in other locations. Street children in Kutaisi mentioned only family violence as their first response, but when prompted, they listed alcoholism more frequently (26% of responses) than domestic violence (19%). It should also be stressed that street children in Kutaisi who mention debts as their family problem often refer to the financial obligations they generate while gambling.

Kutaisi has the largest proportion of street children who are not currently enrolled in school (93%). Even within the small group of children who reported being enrolled, not a single child said they had spent most of the previous day's hours at school. Furthermore, the proportion of street children here who have never been to school is the largest of all four cities (70%). Approximately 60% of Kutaisi street children are fully illiterate (cannot read and write). Among the reasons given for not attending school, the Kutaisi children mention they need to work to make money more predominantly than in any other city. Other reasons include family poverty, lack of interest in schooling and not having the documents which would permit school enrollment.

Street children in Kutaisi report the highest incidence of begging (72%) and scavenging (24%) and are least likely to state that they did not need/earn any money among the four city groups. Almost 60% of the children reported spending the money earned on their family needs. Kutaisi children also report the highest incidence of having their earned money being taken by the parents than the other cities.

Kutaisi has the highest percentage of children who have never heard of any social service (50%), and the largest proportion of those who have been to an orphanage (22%). A percent of street children from Kutaisi reported spending only nights (during winter months) in an orphanage. No child mentions spending daytime hours in a childcare facility even though 17% of children have been assisted by a daycare facility in the past.

It is worth noting that Kutaisi has the largest percentage of street children (16%) of the four cities, who consider their current situation an optimal lifestyle choice and who say they would like to do what they are doing now in the future.

Programs for street children in Kutaisi should be oriented towards targeting large family networks, especially siblings and relatives of the children. All efforts should be made to mitigate the effects of extreme poverty and direct or indirect homelessness. Education for street children is of the first and utmost priority. However, as most of the children do not go to school because they must supplement or substitute their families' income, distant or open learning schemes (including street education) should be developed first, before effective mechanisms to address family poverty are in place and reintegration of children into formal schooling can be considered. The prolonged character of street involvement for Kutaisi children calls for a significant focus on high quality psycho-social assistance. Programs would also benefit by engaging parents or relatives from immigrant and minority groups as facilitators. Finally, it is necessary to improve access to information about available social assistance and social support options, using informal channels like street outreach, rather than print or media announcements.

Batumi

Based on the Point-Estimate, the average number of street children in Batumi is 100, with a maximum of 150 children. Batumi street children are older than in other cities, with 80% being 11 years of age or older. There are four times more street boys than street girls. 27% of the children are migrants from the regions (mostly from West Georgia) and none of the children are immigrants from other countries.

Almost 40% of Batumi street children live on the street full-time. Batumi also differs significantly from other cities, consistently having the smallest percentage of children spending nights with parents/relatives at home (30% - night prior to interview; 40% - winter nights and 17% - summer nights). Almost all Batumi street children spend both winter and summer days alone on the streets, usually all day long. 60% of Batumi street children have lived on the streets full time for one-month or longer. Compared with other data, one could assume that such periods in life would most likely mean summer months. Unlike the other cities, only one-fifth of Batumi children have been on the street for longer than one year.

Among the four cities, Batumi has the highest proportion of double orphans (37%), and only one-third of its children have both parents alive. Among those street children whose mother or both parents are alive, Batumi has the highest percentage of children whose mothers do not live in the same city (28%) although the mothers are believed to be somewhere else in Georgia and not abroad, unlike in other surveyed cities. Around one-half of Batumi street children do not have a father living in the same city (one-fifth of the fathers are reportedly in Russia – the largest ratio among the four city groups). Only about 50% of the children live with their mothers, and 30% with fathers. There is a significant percentage of children who have fathers (17%) or other relatives (9%) in prison. More than one-half of the children do not have siblings in the same city. 40% of Batumi street children have no other adult relatives living there, while 10% (the highest proportion) of the children have never had any contacts with their relatives. Almost one-half of street children in Batumi do not have anyone they consider a caregiver.

Batumi street children display the lowest level of family hardship (1.9) among the four cities. This is likely because a high number of children spend most of their time alone. Not a single child in Batumi selected "family has no problems" as their answer option, prompted or not. Homelessness is very predominant on the problems' list. Even though children in Batumi mention economic problems, particularly "lack of housing" as very important, they tend not to see parents' unemployment as a component of economic hardship. In the "first mention" answers, almost one-half of Batumi children mentioned death of one or both parents as a problem of equal significance to poverty. In "all mention," the problem was listed second after eco-

nomic issues. Interestingly, children in Batumi mentioned neither alcoholism nor domestic violence as their first choice of family problems. When prompted, they listed alcohol abuse, but no one responded by stating physical abuse within the family as a factor. It should be acknowledged that Batumi street children wish for a family or home more predominantly than their counterparts in other cities.

With an 83% non-enrollment rate, Batumi has the largest proportion of school drop-outs (84%) among the four city groups. Lack of interest in schooling is mentioned as the main reason for not continuing education (more than in other locations), and a need to work to earn money is the second factor. The poor quality of education is also mentioned more often than in other cities. Even though infrequently mentioned, death of parents and a need to care for family members are reasons for no schooling and are mentioned more frequently in Batumi than anywhere else. Street children in Batumi have the highest rates of literacy among four city groups.

Working and stealing are the most frequently mentioned income generation strategies for Batumi street children (with the incidence of stealing four times higher than in other places). Unlike in the other cities, three quarters of Batumi street children spend earned money on their own needs or their friends' and only 25% use the money to support their families.

Two-thirds of Batumi street children have heard of a social service but 55% have never received any assistance. Residential institutions are better known to Batumi street children than in other places. Batumi has a relatively high percentage – much larger than anywhere else - of street children who seem to be consistently using some sort of night shelter (27% - winter nights and 17% - summer nights). According to social workers from Batumi, the children are most likely referring to a residential childcare facility operated by the Orthodox Church. Batumi street children also mention using soup kitchens more frequently than children from other cities.

Consistent with a lack of caregivers and long hours spent on the streets, children in Batumi have higher incidences of observed disabilities, physical traumas and toxic substance abuse than in any other city.

Specific characteristics of street children in Batumi indicate that a development of temporary small family-type care options would be one of key priorities. Support to single mothers and reaching out to family members who live elsewhere would be an important element of working with non-orphaned street children. The research data indicates that in many cases in Batumi, one can observe incidences of child poverty rather than family poverty. Consequently, programs should be established to address this issue. Given the older age of street children in Batumi and the high drop-out rates and low interest in generic education, re-integration of children into formal schooling is perhaps not the best response. However, programs should consider giving children a possibility to complete their education (for example through distant learning options) and receive a certificate. Also, developing youth independent livelihood programs for older street children (including supervised independent housing, vocational training and employment schemes) is extremely important.

Annex 2 – Selected Terms Used in the Document

Data collection and analysis processes gave very specific meanings to some terms used in the text. For the sake of clarity and language consistency, these terms are explained below. The proposed terminology is not meant to repeat existing or to offer alternative definitions – it just explains a context in which certain expressions are used for the purpose of this study.

Average

An average means a percentage point indicator among the total sampled population of street children.

Children-migrants

Children – migrants are those who report not living in the same city all their lives and living somewhere else before, regardless of whether or not they were born in the same city. Two groups of migrants can be distinguished: 1) those from regions of Georgia other than the current city, and 2) those from countries other than Georgia.

Households

A household is understood as type(s) of relatives (mother, father, both parents and/or other relatives) a child has lived with during the past month.

Level of hardship

A level of hardship is defined as a number of family problems a child reports. The level of hardships in this study ranged from 0 (no problems in the family) to 6 (all problem groups present), with an average level of hardship in the total sample being at 2.5.

Level of social support

A level of social support a child has is defined as a number of adult relatives (other than parents), such as grandparents, uncles/aunts and others, living in the same city.

Literacy

Literacy means a child's ability to read and write (in their native language) an elementary level text. Numeric skills (an ability to recognize and write numbers) have not been included in the term 'literacy'' in the current research.

Orphans

Internationally used terminology of maternal (only mother dead), paternal (only father dead) and double (mother and father dead) orphans is used.

School age

The basic school age is defined as from eight to fourteen years.

Street children

As mentioned earlier, a place-time denominator of street children groupings has been used to give a background to multi-variable analysis. According to this denominator, street-living children (children who live on the street full-time) are those who report spending both winter and summer nights on the streets. Street-and-home living children are those who spend only winter or only summer nights on the streets, not both. Street-active children are those who spend only winter or summer days, or both, on the streets but do not spend nights on the streets. The general term "street children" refers to children age 0 to 18 belonging to any of those groups.

Annex 3 – Observational Criteria of Street Children in Georgia

I-tier Criteria
Physical characteristics

Barefoot	Clothes and shoes of inappropriate size
Torn clothes	Dirty face and hair
Dirty clothes and shoes	Not dressed seasonally

Behavior

A child or group of children alone at an inappropriate place	Child alone or with parents in underground passage or on streets
Assertive and annoying with strangers	Swearing
Asocial behavior	Fighting

Activities

Sleeping on the street	Stealing
Plastic bag with glue	Smoking
Scavenging	

II-tier Criteria
Physical characteristics

Unhealthy look	Wearing different shoes
Dirty hands	Dark skin
Cuts on hands and other parts of the body	Skin on the face is peeling and has stains

Behavior

Shouting	Body is too loose
Beating with all might	Staggering
Uncontrolled movements	

Activities

Wandering around without purpose	Bad (harmful) habits
Sleeping in public transport	Strange games (inappropriate games at inappropriate places)
Alcohol	Trading (candles, icons, flowers)

III-tier Criteria
Physical characteristics

Shaved head
Scars on the face
Missing teeth

Behavior

Outgoing, gets in contact easily
Lively manner fo talking
Joyful

Activities

Collecting scrap metals
Physical labor (loading)
Collecting bottles