

2022 NEWSLETTER

THE PROJECT “CAPACITY BUILDING FOR THE PROMOTION OF GENDER EQUALITY AND THE PREVENTION OF FAMILY SEPARATION IN ZUGDIDI”



With funding from
 Austrian
Development
Cooperation



MINISTRY OF INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS
FROM THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES, LABOUR,
HEALTH AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS OF GEORGIA



ABOUT US

SOS Children's Villages is active in 137 countries worldwide.

SOS Children's Villages Georgia has been operating in Georgia in the field of child welfare since 1989. As a member of SOS Children's Villages International, SOS Georgia is committed to applying the federation's statutes, standards for quality childcare, and stringent financial and administrative practices.

We support socially vulnerable families to build their capacity so that children are well cared for. We provide quality alternative care to children deprived of parental care.



SUPPORT TO GENDER EQUALITY AND PREVENTION OF FAMILY SEPARATION IN ZUGDIDI MUNICIPALITY

A loving and caring family is crucial for a child's physical, emotional and social development. Every child needs a family environment which will support the child's healthy development.

In 2020, the Project "Capacity Building for the promotion of gender equality and the prevention of family separation in Zugdidi" was launched in Zugdidi. The project is implemented by SOS Children's Villages Georgia and is funded by the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) with funds of Austrian Development Cooperation, as well as SOS-Kinderdorf (SOS Children's Villages Austria) and in close cooperation with the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labor, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia.

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Because of my situation, I have no idea how my children's future would turn out if not for SOS Children's Villages project which helped me, supported me and taught me how to communicate with my children”.

service user



The project envisages provision of support to socially vulnerable children and their families so that children grow up in a caring and safe family environment. In addition, the project focuses on preventing and responding to domestic violence and gender-based violence, as well as raising awareness on gender equality in general.

The project offers psychosocial and economic strengthening services to vulnerable families.

IN 2020-2022, THE PROJECT HAS PROVIDED
SUPPORT TO **430 CHILDREN** AND THEIR
315 CAREGIVERS (182 FAMILIES).



PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN AND THEIR CAREGIVERS

The project provides psychological support to target group children and their caregivers. The goal of the psychological service is to ensure rehabilitation, psycho-education and development of various skills of beneficiaries through individual and group work with the families. During interventions, various methods are applied by the project psychologists (art therapy, cognitive-behavioral therapy, family therapy, etc.).

In 2020-2022, **385 children and 224 caregivers** were provided with psychological support services. The project psychologists conducted psychological assessment of the beneficiaries and, based on the individual needs of the families, provided individual and group counselling/activities. Major topics around which psychological support was provided included the following: overcoming stress related to the pandemic; enhancing self-esteem and decreasing aggressive behavior, especially among children; developing social skills, especially among children; supporting caregivers to develop their parenting skills as well as support their children with daily routine planning and age-appropriate developmental activities; prevention and response to domestic violence, child abuse and gender-based violence.

In 2020-2022, **180 caregivers** underwent training on domestic violence and gender-based violence. In addition, **12 men** received the training “Men to Men” conducted by UNFPA/Men Care Project. The trainings were aimed at raising the awareness of beneficiaries on types of abuse, signs of abuse, and how to prevent and respond to abuse, as well as raising the awareness of beneficiaries (including beneficiary men) on the importance of engaging men and boys in traditionally female areas of family and social life.

Support with positive parenting is one of the major directions of the psychosocial support services. In the previous 3-year phase, the project implemented Strong Parents, Strong Children (by German Child Protection Association), an evidence-based positive parenting support program. Within the current phase, the project has implemented **Parenting Without Violence**, also an evidence-based program owned by Save the Children to support prevention of abuse towards children in the upbringing process which is in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. In 2020-2022, the full module of the training was conducted with **100 caregivers and 202 children**. The training module is quite extensive (in order to train each group, 16 sessions are conducted with caregivers and 16 sessions are conducted with their children, as well as 4 sessions are conducted together with caregivers and their children).

During the project, 100 caregivers participated in self-help group meetings (10 meetings) on the following topics: effective communication with children, identifying, preventing and responding to abuse, fathers’ role in the lives of their children, gender equality in the community, stress and ways to overcome it, difficulties in parenting teenagers and how to overcome them, disability and special needs, etc.

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After getting involved in the project, I became friends with my children; I try to better understand them and listen to them and to have a more positive relationship with them.”

service user

During the project, **20 beneficiary women** received trainings on **effective communication** (2 days), **writing project proposals** (3 days), **managing project cycle** (3 days), and **leadership and advocacy** (2 days).

During the project, **300 children received training on Compass/Compassito**. The training topics included the following: human rights; children’s rights; gender equality, discrimination and protection from abuse.

During the project, **5 community initiatives** were implemented in the form of workshops and informational meetings by the project participant women on the following topics: children’s rights, prevention and response to child abuse, prevention and response to gender-based violence, gender equality, positive parenting, and reproductive health of women and girls.



ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF SOCIALLY VULNERABLE FAMILIES

One of the approaches of the project is to economically empower socially vulnerable families. The organization supports beneficiaries to receive and/or improve vocational education, to find jobs, to be trained in the area of agriculture, to develop agricultural activities and to become employed. Through this support, families have the possibility to increase their income and thus be better able to meet the needs of their children.

The work of the project in the noted area was especially impacted by the global pandemic and the decline of the economy in 2020-2022. As a result of the project interventions, **120 beneficiaries** received trainings on job hunting; **46 beneficiaries** were employed; **33 beneficiaries** were provided with tools necessary to start their own business (for example, sewing machines, tools for a car repair shop, etc.); **65 beneficiaries** were able to gain professional qualification in various fields; **77 families** living in poverty were provided with agricultural support service, which has allowed them to carry out independent agricultural work (namely, cattle breeding).

Within the frames of the project, **2 bee-keeping cooperatives were established which employ 18 service users.**



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Being part of this project, I understood that I can be independent, I can make my own money with the profession I acquired and I can overcome difficulties. I understood that I can be happy with my child despite the difficulties.”

service user



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After I got involved in the project, my feeling of safety has returned. I know that I can protect myself in case of need.”

service user

DAY CARE CENTER SERVICE

In cooperation with the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labor, Health and Social Affairs, the project offers different support services to children between 6-18 years old in a day care center. In 2020-2022, **43 socially vulnerable children** received such services.

As per the childcare state standards, children receive two meals a day and they are engaged in various educational activities (Mathematics, English and elementary class groups). In times of the lockdown, the service was moved online (including psychosocial and educational support); in addition, the project supported the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labor, Health and Social Affairs in distributing food vouchers to the day care center service beneficiary families.

With the help of the day care center teachers, individual educational plans were developed for each child with the goal to improve their academic achievements. Through the day care center, children have an opportunity to use the library established within the project and to get acquainted with extracurricular literature. The children's club, supports children to receive non-formal education and develop their creative and social skills.



CAPACITY BUILDING OF THE STATE AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL STAKEHOLDERS AND PUBLIC AWARENESS RAISING

One of the main goals of the project is to strengthen the professional capacity of state and non-governmental stakeholders in Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti region as well as raise awareness on child rights, positive parenting, domestic violence and gender equality.

In 2020-2022, a number of trainings were conducted and organized by the project with the engagement of the major state stakeholders in the field of child welfare and family support as well as non-governmental organizations. The state stakeholders participating in the trainings included: **the State Guardianship and Care Agency** (based on the Memorandum of Understanding signed with the Agency), **Ministry of Internal Affairs** (including the new Human Rights Department at the Ministry), **Ministry of Crime Prevention, Probation and Corrections, Office of Resource Persons of the Ministry of Education** (representatives of the psychosocial services department), **local municipality social and child rights departments from Zugdidi and other municipalities in Samegrelo region, as well as local non-governmental organizations.**

The trainings/workshops conducted included the following:

- 3-day training of trainers aimed at enhancing the skills of the participants as trainers to conduct various training with beneficiary groups;
- One-day training on gender equality and domestic violence;
- 3-day training on family needs focused intervention based on the handbook and methodology developed in the previous 3-year phase of the project and aimed at preventing and responding to various needs of the families, including families where there are risks of domestic violence.;

- 6-day training on Compass and Compasito, human rights training manuals for children developed by the Council of Europe;
- 5-day training of the evidence based training module “Parenting without Violence”;
- 2-day virtual exchange meeting with Austrian experts on domestic and gender-based violence where the Police and NGOs working with gender-based violence survivors, perpetrators and young boys and schools on preventing gender-based violence in Austria presented their work, achievements and challenges to Georgian specialists;
- 3-day training on engaging men and boys was conducted by trainers from the project Men Care / UNFPA;
- 2-day training on empowering men and boys conducted by Austrian organization Poika.

In the fall of 2022 a study of needs of children and their families was conducted in Zugdidi in close cooperation with the Municipality. The tool used in the quantitative study was developed by the National Association of Local Authorities of Georgia (NALAG) with the support of UNICEF. The major needs identified were related to the basic needs (food items, housing, etc.), supporting parents with the development of positive parenting skills, day care center and afterschool safe spaces for children, economic strengthening and income-generating support to families, as well as supporting women and girls to overcome the barriers they face due to gender inequality. In the fall, 2022, the municipality representatives, as well as UNICEF and NALAG representatives were invited to a workshop in Tsikhisdziri where the study outcomes were presented, as well as discussions were held as to how these outcomes would affect the 2023 budget planning for the municipality. As a result of the study and the workshop, the municipality has integrated the findings in the discussions over the 2023 budget to better respond to the needs of vulnerable families.



” After I got involved in the project, I look at the house chores in a different way. I try in every way possible to be involved in raising children, I listen to them and I try to support them in case of need. I also have a job now (cooperative) which I have to be involved in daily and I can support my family financially as well.”

service user (father)



COVID-19 RESPONSE

During the project implementation, many of the project activities were affected by the global pandemic. Considerable project resources were directed at responding to the effects of the pandemic and reducing its negative impact on vulnerable families.

Considering the need to provide more online services due to the pandemic, as well as children spending weeks and months in online schooling (also taking into account the lack of technology and access to internet within families), SOS Children's Villages Georgia received additional funding from SOS Children's Villages International which enabled us to support 62 families within Zugdidi project who received computers and tablets, as well as internet access for a period of one year.

