



## **MONITORING REPORT ON SERVICE CENTERS (SHELTERS) FOR VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN, DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND TRAFFICKING**

**2018**

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## Introduction

Violence against women and domestic violence is widespread problem in Georgia. Despite the fact that the rate of identification of the cases of violence has increased in recent years, it is important that the state offers adequate protection and assistance mechanisms to victims and survivors of gender-based violence.

State shelters for the protection and assistance of (statutory) victims of human trafficking provide safe housing and make significant contribution to the empowerment and psycho-social rehabilitation of victims. Rehabilitation of the beneficiaries and their rescue from the violent environment depends on the services properly planned by shelters.

For this very purpose, the Gender Equality Department of the Public Defender's Office of Georgia, with the technical assistance of UN Women, carried out a monitoring in state shelters for domestic violence and human trade (trafficking) victims at Tbilisi and Batumi, , as well as the service centers for victims of domestic violence in Kutaisi, Gori and Signaghi and crisis service centers for victims of violence in Tbilisi, Gori and Kutaisi, in 2018.

The quality of service delivery, beneficiaries' needs and performance of duties by personnel were assessed within the framework of the monitoring. Special attention was paid to the issue of provision of psycho-social rehabilitation programmes for the beneficiaries and their readiness for living independently after leaving a shelter.

In addition, the monitoring made it possible to measure the progress made as a result of the recommendations issued by the Public Defender's Office to the state shelters for victims of domestic violence and human trafficking in 2017.<sup>1</sup>

The present document is a special report reflecting the results of the monitoring carried out by the Public Defender's Office for the purpose of studying the situation in the state shelters for victims of domestic violence and human trafficking.

## Methodology

According to Article 18 of the Organic Law of Georgia on the Public Defender, employees of the Department of Gender Equality of the Public Defender's Office shall monitor the service centers (shelters)

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<sup>1</sup> The Department of Gender Equality of the Public Defender's Office monitored the service centers (shelters) for victims of domestic violence and trafficking in 2017 and issued relevant recommendations concerning the environment of shelters and the lack of employment, psycho-rehabilitation and educational programmes.

for victims of domestic violence on the basis of a special credential.<sup>2</sup> Similar monitoring was first carried out in 2016.<sup>3</sup>

The monitoring of shelters and crisis centers is aimed at evaluating the current situation and checking the efficiency of the services provided for beneficiaries. The Public Defender carried out ad hoc monitoring in the shelters, without any prior agreement with the shelter administration.

The physical environment and situation in the state shelters were evaluated at the first stage. At the second stage, the Public Defender's Office requested information from the State Fund for Protection of and Assistance to Victims of Human Trafficking about the statistics on the beneficiaries of service centers and its services. In addition, the Public Defender's Office requested information about the psycho-social rehabilitation, cultural and educational programmes of the centers, as well as the thematic trainings/seminars held for the shelter and crisis center staff.

The target group of the monitoring was adult beneficiaries and staff of the shelters; semi-closed questionnaires were used during interviewing them. Beneficiaries were interviewed individually; 18 beneficiaries were interviewed in total.

The questionnaires were made so that to make it possible to assess the beneficiaries' awareness of the protection and assistance services available in the country, their involvement in the services, the level of their satisfaction with the services received and whether these services improved.

As for the questionnaires for the shelter administration, they were worked out individually for each employee based on the specificity of their activities. The questionnaires made it possible to analyze as much as possible whether the beneficiaries' needs were met by the shelters. In addition, it was important to get information about the personnel's views regarding challenges and problems in the shelter.

Finally, based on the analysis of the requested information and the documented interviews, the relevant report and recommendations have been prepared.<sup>4</sup>

## Main Findings

The monitoring showed that most of the beneficiaries were satisfied with shelter services and positively evaluated the efforts of the administration and personnel; the beneficiaries feel safe and constantly supported in the shelter.

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<sup>2</sup> In the course of monitoring, the Department of Gender Equality of the Public Defender's Office is guided by the following documents: a) Guidelines for Monitoring the Service Centers (Shelter) for Victims of Domestic Violence; B) Internal Regulations of the structural units of the State Fund for Protection of and Assistance to Victims of Human Trafficking - Kutaisi, Gori, Tbilisi and Signaghi Service Centers (Shelters) for Victims of Domestic Violence; C) Decree No183/n of 28 July 2008 of the Minister of Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia on „Determination of minimum standards for providing temporary housing (shelter) for victims of domestic violence and rehabilitation centers for abusers; D) Decree N437 of 18 July 2006 of the President Georgia on “Approving the State Fund for Protection of and Assistance to Victims of Human Trafficking.

<sup>3</sup> Monitoring Report on Service Centers (Shelters) for Victims of Domestic Violence and Trafficking, 2016. Available on the website:

<http://www.ombudsman.ge/uploads/other/4/4617.pdf> last accessed on 10 July 2018.

<sup>4</sup> Monitoring was carried out in the second half of 2018 and therefore, the findings of the report reflect the mentioned period.

As a result of assessing the access of victims of violence to the protection and assistance services, it is clear that gender based violence is still justified by the public and victims of domestic violence have the sense of vulnerability and injustice in the process of escaping violence. For some victims, communication with the law enforcement agencies is a big challenge, caused by the lack of trust. The situation is further complicated by the fact that victims of domestic violence are often unable to get comprehensive information about the protection and assistance mechanisms available in the country, including the specificity of shelters, from the law enforcement agencies.

Like in previous years, medical examination of victims upon admission to the shelter is problematic, as the examination is mostly limited to an oral inquiry, which cannot identify the cases of tuberculosis or sexually transmitted diseases and thus poses risks to other beneficiaries.

The limited number of psycho-social rehabilitation, educational and employment programmes, and in some cases their absence, is still a problem in the shelters. In addition, infrastructure of the facilities is not adequate.

It is important the shelters to promote victims' education, which would enable them to enroll in the employment programmes and get ready to live independently. In this regard, it is necessary to deepen the cooperation of shelters with NGOs and service provider organizations.

## Protection and assistance services for victims of violence

The analysis of the information received by the Public Defender's Office as a result of interviewing the victims and survivors violence shows that most of them were less informed about the protection and assistance services before being placed in the shelter. It should be noted that the lack of information was also reported by those victims, whose cases were studied by the law enforcement agencies. It is also worth mentioning that most of the interviewed beneficiaries were informed of the consultation hotline (116 006) for victims of domestic violence.

Most of the interviewed beneficiaries positively evaluated the existing protection and assistance system. However, they named the obstacles that they had encountered when trying to escape violence. The majority of the interviewed victims have contacted the law enforcement agencies. The victims' evaluations of their relations with the law enforcement agencies were different from each other. Some of them positively noted that the police had assisted and supported them and responded to a case in accordance with their desire, while others talked about their negative relations with the police.

According to victims, they had to contact the police several times in order to escape violence, as police officers did not take necessary measures to protect them. They also named cases when the police called on victim to reconcile with abusers. A number of cases of insulting and mocking attitude by the police were indicated. Several victims noted that they had a feeling that the police were "bothered" by their repeated calls. The use of so called warning mechanism by the police was also named as a problem.<sup>5</sup> All

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<sup>5</sup> The practice of warning was identified as a result of studying individual cases by the Public Defender's Office as well; on 5 March 2018, the Public Defender addressed the Ministry of Internal Affairs with a recommendation (N08/3537) to eliminate the mentioned practice.

of the above-mentioned were described as significant obstacles to getting protection and assistance services.

The long-term protection of victims remains a problem. Several victims noted that they could not feel safe and were afraid of repeated violence after leaving a shelter.

In addition, the analysis of information shows that the stereotypical opinions of the society still remain a problem, as due to public pressure, victims have to double efforts in order to escape violence. The interviewed victims were particularly sensitive about the absence of support from their biological family members and relatives. Due to these very sentiments, victims in some cases refuse to disclose the cases of violence, which make them more vulnerable in case of repeated violence.

### The Group for Determining the Status of a Victim of Domestic Violence operating under the Interagency Council on Elimination of Domestic Violence (Status Identification Group) and getting Status

Addressing the Victim Identification Group is one of the most important ways to use psycho-social services.<sup>6</sup> The monitoring showed that Group has positive impact on the identification of cases of domestic violence and the delivery of services to victims. If victims do not want to contact law enforcement agencies for a variety of reasons, the Victim Identification Group is a kind of alternative for them to receive medical and legal services from the shelter.

Despite the positive role of the Victim Identification Group, certain shortcomings were detected during monitoring. Employees of the State Fund for Protection of and Assistance to Victims of Human Trafficking named a number of cases, when the Victim Identification Group granted a victim's status to a person, although the examination of the case by the shelter administration showed that the person was not actually a victim. In this regard, it is important to provide procedures for reviewing the status granted by the Group, which is currently not allowed by the regulations.

In addition, it is important the Victim Identification Group to analyze the filed cases and identify tendencies and systemic shortcomings. Within the framework of the monitoring, the Public Defender requested and processed the mentioned information, analyzed the age and education of victims, forms of violence, relationship with offenders and the rate of reporting to the law enforcement agencies.

The analysis of information clearly shows that the Victim Identification Group is mostly addressed by women aged between 25 and 34, who are in need of escaping violent environment. In addition, 75% of victims have a child or children. As for education, the majority of victims are married women (unregistered marriage) with secondary education. The Group has also been addressed by widows, divorced and single women. The Victim Identification Group has been addressed by only one representative of the LGBT+ community.

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<sup>6</sup> The Group Determining the Status of Victim of Domestic Violence (Victim Identification Group) operating under the Interagency Council on Elimination of Domestic Violence was set up by the Interagency Commission for Gender Equality, Violence against Women and Domestic Violence. The group consists of 12 civil society representatives; the Public Defender is engaged in the work of the group with deliberative vote.

The analysis of the questionnaires also shows that most of the victims of violence were abused by family members (52%), followed by partners (43%) and former partners (5%). Based on this, we can assume that in case of violence by family members, it is essential that there be a mechanism such as the Victim Identification Group, as victims of violence committed by family members are less likely to contact the law enforcement agencies.

Victims of violence most often contact the Victim Identification Group for getting psychological assistance and be placed in a shelter, as well as with regard to the isolation of the offender and provision of adequate legal/medical services to them.

The main forms of violence indicated in the questionnaires were coercion, psychological, physical and economic violence. It should be noted that the Victim Identification Group has repeatedly been contacted by a person who suffered sexual violence, the identification rate of which is very low due to the stigma around this issue. Consequently, it is important to significantly improve the quality of identification of victims of sexual abuse and provide them with relevant assistance and protection services.

The Public Defender considers that the Victim Identification Group should maintain and analyze the statistics on the filed applications, the identified tendencies of which would enable the improvement of protection and assistance mechanisms in accordance with victims' real needs and problems.

## Placement in the shelter and relations with staff

It is important that victims be provided with safe and friendly atmosphere, when being placed in the shelter. Particular attention should be paid to the victims' first meeting with the personnel in terms of developing trust between them. Consequently, this chapter provides information about the immediate feelings of victims after being placed in the shelter and their assessments.

Beneficiaries are admitted to a shelter on the basis of restraining and protective orders or a decision of the Victim Identification Group. Victims are placed in a shelter for up to 3 months. After the end of this period, the term may be extended, if necessary, on the basis of a decision of the shelter administration in accordance with the internal regulations of the shelter; for this purpose, the beneficiary's condition shall be evaluated and the document on the extension of a term shall indicate the motive for the decision. The monitoring identified cases when the shelter administration extended the term for up to a year.

The Public Defender of Georgia also requested the 2017-2018 statistics on the beneficiaries' admission to the shelter, as well as on the date of their departure, from the State Fund for Protection of and Assistance to Victims of Human Trafficking. According to the information provided<sup>7</sup>, the total number of beneficiaries in 2017-2018 (I quarter) was 320 (including: 135 adults, 12 juveniles and 173 dependent persons).

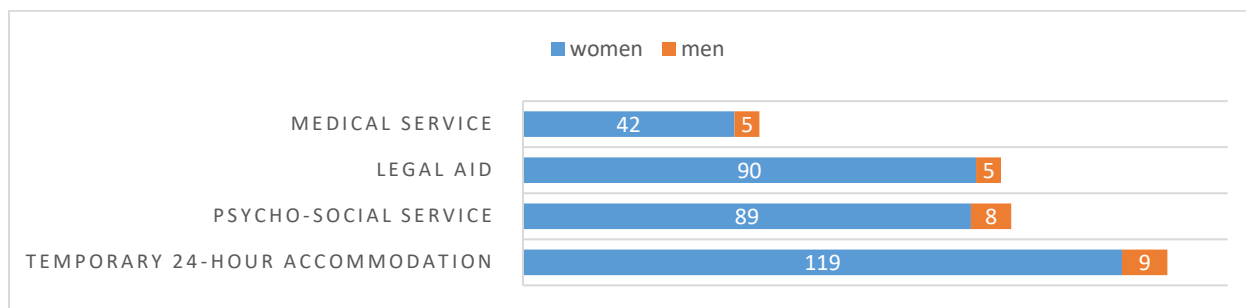
128 persons were placed in the shelter in 2017, 119 of which were women and 9 men. The statistics on the beneficiaries admission/outflow are as follows:

**Table N1: Statistics on the services enjoyed by the beneficiaries of service centers (shelters) for victims of violence in 2017**

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<sup>7</sup> Letter #07/800; 29.05.2018 of the State Fund for Protection and Assistance of Victims of Human Trafficking.





The table shows that beneficiaries most frequently use a shelter for 24-hour accommodation, followed by psycho-social assistance and legal aid. Victims use medical services least of all.<sup>8</sup> It is important shelters to offer not only housing to victims, but to strengthen efforts for offering other services, which would also influence the psycho-social rehabilitation of victims.

Within the framework of the monitoring, information was requested from the State Fund for Protection and Assistance of Victims of Human Trafficking about the beneficiaries' motives for leaving a shelter. The information provided<sup>9</sup> shows that the expiration of a term was the most common reason for leaving a shelter among 350 beneficiaries. 179 beneficiaries moved to rented apartments, 91 beneficiaries returned to their biological families and 36 returned to their partners. Some victims named their friends' families, the shelter for mothers and children, foreign country, etc. Only 1 beneficiary was removed from the shelter due to the violation of internal regulations.

It should be noted that all shelters are provided with the services of a babysitter and an interpreter, if needed. Beneficiaries have the right to hold their religious rituals in their own rooms, if desired.

The **Batumi** shelter can simultaneously accommodate and serve 5 adults and 10 dependent persons. 3 women and 4 children were in the shelter during monitoring. There were only two cases when victims could not be placed in the shelter due to the lack of seats last year. The shelter has never refused to serve a beneficiary for other reasons. The **Tbilisi** shelter can simultaneously accommodate and serve 23 adults and has 8 living rooms. 6 women and 14 dependent persons were placed in the shelter during monitoring. The **Sighnaghi** shelter can simultaneously accommodate and serve 12 beneficiaries together with dependent persons. 3 women and 4 dependent persons lived in the shelter during monitoring. The **Kutaisi** shelter can accommodate and serve 8 adults together with dependent persons. There were 22 persons - 6 women and 16 children - in the shelter during monitoring. It should be noted that the Kutaisi shelter was closed due to fire and the following repairs from May to August 2017. The **Gori** shelter has only 8 rooms and it can accommodate and serve 22 persons (adults and dependent persons) simultaneously. 20 persons, including 8 adults and 12 children, were in the shelter during monitoring.

The majority of the 18 interviewed beneficiaries positively evaluated the shelter conditions and noted that their expectations turned out to be close to the situation in the shelter. However, some of the beneficiaries pointed out that they had been of negative opinion of shelters and went there because of extreme violence, although their negative expectations turned out to be wrong.

<sup>8</sup> See page 16 for detailed information.

<sup>9</sup> Letter #07/800; 29.05.2018 of the State Fund for Protection of Assistance of Victims of Human Trafficking.

Most of the beneficiaries have friendly relations with the shelter personnel, as well as other beneficiaries. The interviewed beneficiaries noted that they had been provided with legal consultations concerning issues relating to documents, divorce, lawsuit and alimony. The victims's histories were mainly related to psychological, physical and economic violence. According to victims, they would still have lived in a violent environment or on the street if there were no shelters.

The monitoring showed that the beneficiaries' sensitivity is quite low with regard to the placement of LGBT+ persons in a shelter. Therefore, it is important the shelter administrations to plan and take appropriate measures for minimizing the discriminatory attitudes among beneficiaries.

The majority of respondents noted that they felt comfortable in the shelter due to the basic living conditions and calmness that was accompanied by appropriate support. The victims, who lived in the shelter together with dependent persons, noted that their underage children felt better in the violence-free environment. It should be noted that the number of beneficiaries that cannot put up with living in the shelter and are unhappy with the environment/services has been increased compared to the last year's monitoring results, which is related not to the deterioration of the quality of services but to the beneficiaries' increased expectations for state shelters.

Most beneficiaries are informed of the complaints mechanism available in the shelter and further procedures, but none of them has used the complaints box. Instead, they solve problems with personal communication. The lack of application of the complaints mechanism was identified as a problematic issue during the monitoring carried out in 2016 as well, when the Public Defender addressed the State Fund for Protection and Assistance of Victims of Human Trafficking with a recommendation to ensure proper functioning of feedback and complaints mechanism in the shelter and to provide an anonymous feedback mechanism. However, the mechanism still does not work in practice.

The monitoring made it clear that the number of juvenile victims increased in the Tbilisi shelter. The administration of the Tbilisi shelter considers that the institution is not suitable for juvenile victims and that they should be transferred to small group homes or other specialized institutions for children. In addition, the involvement of the Social Agency in the integration of child victims with their family was named as a challenge. It should be noted that the Public Defender of Georgia has underlined the necessity for creating a rehabilitation service for child victims of violence in a number of reports.<sup>10</sup>

## Shelter administration and personnel

Apart from the beneficiaries placed in the shelter during monitoring, interviews were held with shelter administration and personnel in order to make it possible to identify the problems seen by them.

The list of persons employed in the shelters of the LEPL State Fund for Protection and Assistance of Victims of Human Trafficking on the basis of labour agreements is as follows: head of the shelter, lawyer, psychologist, social worker, nurse (4), babysitter, accountant, cleaner, guard (4) and driver. Interviews with shelter administration showed that 80% of beneficiaries address the administration with a request to extend a term, which raises questions about the beneficiaries' readiness to live independently after leaving a shelter.

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<sup>10</sup> Public Defender's Report on the Situation of Rights and Freedoms in Georgia, 2017.

Although 4 trainings were conducted on sexual violence for the employees of the State Fund for Protection and Assistance of Victims of Human Trafficking in 2017-2018,<sup>11</sup> none of the shelters uses special approaches or methodology for working with victims of sexual violence and the services offered to such victims are general and standard.

The personnel of the **Batumi** shelter have been trained with regard to the issues relating to domestic violence and trafficking, but some problems were identified during interviews in relation to the use of gender-sensitive terminology, which indicates the importance of retraining the personnel in this direction.

Interviews with the staff of the **Tbilisi** shelter made it clear that everybody except guard, accountant and babysitter had been trained with regard to issues relating to domestic violence. During monitoring, some of the employees expressed their desire to have more information about the LGBT+ issues.

The monitoring showed that everyone except technical personnel had been trained with regard to issues relating to domestic violence in the **Sighnaghi** shelter. In addition, information meetings were held regarding reproductive health, HIV and sexually transmitted diseases. However, the personnel have not been trained regarding the LGBT+ issues. The lawyer of the **Sighnaghi** shelter was not present in the shelter during monitoring and beneficiaries were provided with legal consultations by a law company. Depending on the specificity of a shelter, it is important that a lawyer be present in the shelter in order to ensure that beneficiaries are timely consulted. Beneficiaries of the Sighnaghi shelter also named the communication between them and social workers as a problem. In particular, they complained about the lack of sensitive attitude of the Sighnaghi social worker.

According to the information provided by the **Kutaisi** shelter administration, the staff were trained with regard to issues relating to domestic violence, infectious/contagious diseases, child's issues, conflict management and special standards of work procedures. The personnel have not been trained with regard to the LGBT+ issues.<sup>12</sup>

The information received from the **Gori** administration made it clear that the staff had been trained with regard to issues relating to domestic violence. It should be positively noted that the social worker of the **Gori** shelter assesses the environment awaiting beneficiaries after returning home.

## Internal regulations of shelters and related issues

It is important that victims of domestic violence be informed of their rights and responsibilities, as well as the rules of the shelter, in a language that can be easily understood. In addition, given the specificity of a shelter, it is necessary to ensure calm environment and regulation of beneficiaries' admission/outflow so that the safety of other beneficiaries is protected as much as possible.

Most of the beneficiaries said that their rights/responsibilities were explained to them in an oral and written manner and that the applicable rules were acceptable for them. They realize that certain

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<sup>11</sup> Letter #07/800; 29.05.2018 of the State Fund for Protection and Assistance of Victims of Human Trafficking.

<sup>12</sup> According to the information received from the Fund, the shelter personnel were retrained regarding the LGBT+ rights in June 2018.

restrictions are necessary for their security. It should be noted that most of the beneficiaries use the shelter transport to go to work, doctor, court and school.

Some beneficiaries complained about the internal regulations and restrictions of a shelter, claiming that the instructions and rules of the shelter were humiliating for them and that they's like to feel less restricted. Some beneficiaries of the Batumi shelter noted that they were unable to work during night hours due to the internal regulations.

## Health care

Systematic violence poses a serious threat to women's health, which can lead to reproductive health issues, unwanted pregnancy, various functional disorders, chronic pain syndrome and mental health disorders.<sup>13</sup> Consequently, shelters should provide social, psychological and health services to victims in a complex and continuous manner.

In case of health issues, beneficiaries address a nurse, which provides them with relevant medicines.<sup>14</sup> All shelters provide children with necessary vaccinations. In addition, shelters teach the child care and upbringing skills to victims.

During monitoring, special attention was paid to the health assessment of beneficiaries upon admission to a shelter. As it turned out, the primary examination of victims, including victims of sexual violence, is based on an oral inquiry, while in-depth examination and specific analysis are made only in case of identifying suspicious symptoms. In this regard, the recommendation of the Public Defender of Georgia, which refers to the complete health examination of beneficiaries upon admission to a shelter for the purpose of preventing the further spread of possible diseases/infections, remains unimplemented.

In addition, the monitoring identified a problem relating to reproductive health services. In particular, it turned out that one of the beneficiaries could not enjoy the post-natal service after the delivery or had never left the shelter for that purpose.

Very few beneficiaries were provided with reproductive health examination. In addition, victims do not have information about sexually transmitted diseases or infectious diseases. Only a small number of victims of sexual violence were provided with necessary examinations.

The level of beneficiaries' satisfaction with health care services was also checked during monitoring. Some beneficiaries named the delayed bureaucratic and procedural issues as a challenge hindering the timely supply of medicines. However, victims are generally satisfied with the health care services and note that they were provided with necessary physical, mental and dental health services, when they addressed a nurse.

The beneficiaries' health care monitoring results indicate that shelters should pay more attention to the provision of medical services and satisfy the beneficiaries needs' in this direction as much as possible.

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<sup>13</sup> Information is available on the website: <http://www.ombudsman.ge/uploads/other/5/5304.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> It should be noted that the drug store of the Batumi shelter was almost empty and they did not even have essential drugs.

## Living conditions and hygiene

Most of the interviewed beneficiaries noted that they were satisfied with the personal hygiene products provided in the shelter, but some of them expressed dissatisfaction over the quality and quantity of the products supplied. The monitoring also showed that in some cases the provision of season/age-appropriate clothes and shoes was problematic.<sup>15</sup>

The monitoring made it clear that beneficiaries are responsible for cleaning up their own rooms. Despite the fact that shelters took into consideration the recommendation of the Public Defender and employed more cleaners, they are responsible only for cleaning the administration rooms. As for the clean-up of common rooms, beneficiaries organize it so that to clean them up in turn. This rule is acceptable to some beneficiaries, who note that the above-mentioned is a way to relax, although other beneficiaries believe that the above-mentioned should be the responsibility of a cleaner. Some beneficiaries expressed dissatisfaction over the cleanliness of their shelter. Central heating/cooling systems are more or less provided in the shelters, but the systems were turned off or not working in some of the shelters.<sup>16</sup>

Some beneficiaries said during the interviews with representatives of the Public Defender that it was humiliating for them to ask the administration to provide more hygiene products. It is important shelters to take into consideration the beneficiaries' specific needs and provide everyday hygiene items in addition to standard packages.

## Physical environment and food

The physical environment, living conditions and food standards of the shelters were also evaluated during monitoring. It is desirable that the shelters for victims of domestic violence be constructed in accordance with relevant safety norms. However, several shelters share buildings with other type of organizations, which raises questions regarding the security issue.

Despite the numerous recommendations of the Public Defender, out of 5 shelters of Georgia, the issues related to the location and safety remain problematic in Tbilisi, Kutaisi, Batumi and Gori shelters. The shelter is most easily accessible in Gori, where beneficiaries also confirmed that their relatives did not have a problem of getting the address of the institution. The safety of shelters is mainly provided by the guard and other personnel. It should be noted that the Sighnaghi shelter is the only shelter, which has an isolated building with children's playground and video cameras. Monitoring in the Gori shelter made it clear that the building infrastructure should be improved, the yard should be arranged and toys for children should be renewed.

The contact information of service providers, including the Public Defender's hotline, is available in the shelters. The hygiene products was sufficient in the shelters during monitoring and the daily menus were in line with the food supplies in all shelters, except the Batumi shelter.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Problems were identified in the Sighnaghi shelter with regard to the provision of clothes and shoes to beneficiaries.

<sup>16</sup> Central heating system was turned off in the Batumi shelter during monitoring, but the beneficiaries' rooms were heated with electric devices.

<sup>17</sup> The meals indicated in the menu posted on the kitchen wall in the Batumi shelter did not correspond to that's day's food. In addition, certain expired products were detected and the refrigerator was empty.

As a result of the monitoring, cleanliness, hygiene and privacy issues were identified in the Gori shelter. Certain problems were identified in the Tbilisi shelter in terms of the cleanliness of the toilet and the bathroom.

Furniture needs to be renewed, or repaired in most cases, everywhere apart from the Signaghi and Kutaisi shelters. The situation is especially alarming in the Batumi and Tbilisi shelters. The Kutaisi administration and personnel named the shared yards as the main challenge, as it endangers the safety of the shelters.

Most beneficiaries spend free time in the common room, watch TV, communicate with children or read books. The persons placed in the Batumi, Signaghi and Gori shelters have no access to a library. The problem can be solved by close cooperation with the libraries available in the city and municipality, which would be a step forward in terms of entertainment and education of persons placed in shelters. Special attention should also be paid to the supply of books and items suitable for children's age and interests.

None of the shelters is fully adapted to the needs of persons with physical or other disabilities. Consequently, rooms intended for persons with disabilities are mainly used for beneficiaries with infectious diseases.

Apart from the assessments of the representatives of the Public Defender, it was important to find out how satisfied the beneficiaries themselves were with food. The food supply is more than sufficient for some beneficiaries, but insufficient for others.<sup>18</sup> Beneficiaries also expressed dissatisfaction over the lack of seasonal fruit and vegetables, which is related to the provision of special food supplies for children.

## Education and employment

According to the Public Defender of Georgia, employment of victims of domestic violence and their economic independence still remain problematic. According to the information obtained during monitoring, the shelters cooperate with LEPL Social Service Agency's employment portal ([www.worknet.gov.ge](http://www.worknet.gov.ge)).<sup>19</sup> It is important that beneficiaries no longer need a document certifying general education in order to enroll in programmes, which had earlier been a problem for victims of domestic violence.

During interviews, social workers were constantly indicating the lack of beneficiaries' desire to participate in retraining programmes. According to them, 90% of beneficiaries find it difficult to fill in documents and have not even completed the level of secondary education.

The beneficiaries engaged in vocational education programs say that they prefer being employed during their stay in the shelter (mostly three months) in order to get income and therefore, they are oriented to finding a job. Some of them even refused education because of this reason. The persons with little children refuse to be employed as they cannot leave their children alone. The lack of money for transportation was also named as a hindering factor.

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<sup>18</sup> Some beneficiaries complained about the amount of food provided in the Gori and Signaghi shelters.

<sup>19</sup> The aim of the portal is to develop labour market, reduce the rate of employment and identify major tendencies on the labour market.

It is important for shelters to intensify coordination and cooperation with local NGOs and service providers in order to ensure that beneficiaries have a choice of jobs. In addition, it is necessary to take effective measures to promote vocational education in order to increase victims' motivation.

### Psycho-rehabilitation and preparation of beneficiaries for living independently

Psycho-social rehabilitation programmes, as well as development of skills needed for living independently, is extremely important for persons placed in shelters.

Most of the interviewed beneficiaries are satisfied with psychologist's consultations and think that they help them keep calm and also teach them a lot about their abilities. Beneficiaries also say that they were very confused, when they arrived at the shelter, but regained self-confidence and became more social after consulting with a psychologist.

A visit to a psychologist depends on the beneficiary's desire and most of the beneficiaries enjoy this opportunity. Meetings are held both individually and in groups. The monitoring showed that the psychologist's service is least of all used by the employed beneficiaries, who are busy during the psychologist's working hours (Gori shelter).

The practice of the **Kutaisi shelter** to make records about the state of beneficiaries and their children in the behavior register, which is then responded by a psychologist, is welcomed.

It is also evident in terms of psycho-social rehabilitation of victims that there is a lack of cooperation between shelters and local NGOs, which would have provided more opportunities and choice for beneficiaries for enrolling in various rehabilitation, educational and employment programmes. During interviews, representatives of shelter administrations said that they had no enough budget to buy painting papers or pencils for beneficiaries. Unfortunately, the number of psycho-social rehabilitation programmes and planned measures in this direction are so low that they cannot provide long-term or consistent rehabilitation programmes for beneficiaries.

One of the systemic problems is termination of social assistance for a victim after being placed in a shelter. As a result, beneficiaries have to go through a number of procedures anew after leaving a shelter in order to regain the status. In addition, the beneficiaries, who are offered assistance by the district administration in paying the rent of an apartment, are often unable to enjoy this opportunity, as they do not want to return to the environment containing the risk of meeting an abuser.

In addition, beneficiaries constantly emphasize the fact that they cannot feel strong due to the problem of temporary accommodation and are not ready to take financial liabilities in case of living alone with their children. They also consider that the term of placement in the shelter is very short and it is desirable that there be special homes, where beneficiaries would be able to live free of charge, on the basis of victim's status, after leaving a shelter.

Enjoyment of services after leaving a shelter is problematic for female victims of violence. In particular, according to one of the social workers, women cannot leave their children, because there is no free kindergarten in Batumi. Another challenge is the fact that the Batumi City Hall does not fund apartment rents for victims of domestic violence and the support initiatives of the local municipality are scarce.

The lack of psycho-social rehabilitation programmes was identified as a problem during the monitoring carried out in 2016 as well. Consequently, the beneficiaries' involvement in the projects that provide their psycho-rehabilitation and prepare them to live independently is still a challenge and needs proper attention of the state fund.

## Evaluation of services provided by domestic violence crisis centers

A crisis center is a place of temporary accommodation for victims, which provides urgent services. Crisis centers can be used by persons with victim's status, as well as alleged victims of violence. 3 state crisis centers operate currently in Georgia: in Kutaisi, Gori and Tbilisi.

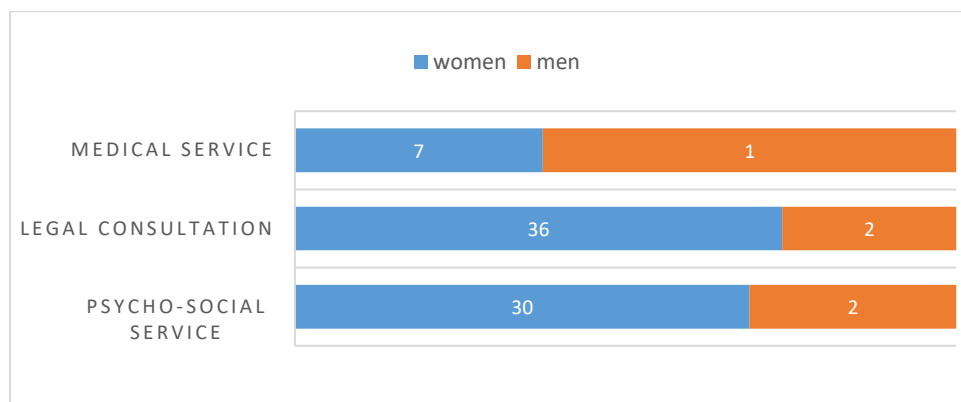
The services provided by the crisis centers are the following:

- Psychological and social rehabilitation;
- Medical services;
- Legal aid;
- Translator's service, if needed;
- Other services, if needed.

All crisis centers and the services delivered by them were checked within the framework of the monitoring. It should be noted that only the Tbilisi crisis center provides beneficiaries with 24-hour accommodation. As for the Gori and Kutaisi crisis centers, they offer only daily services. The personnel employed in the Gori and Kutaisi shelters work in the shelters for victims of domestic violence at the same time, unlike the personnel of the Tbilisi crisis center.

According to the information requested from the State Fund for Protection of and Assistance to Victims of Human Trafficking, the total number of beneficiaries who used the services of crisis centers in 2017-2018 (I quarter) was 171, including: 102 adults, 2 juveniles and 67 dependent persons.

**Table N2: Services provided by crisis centers in 2017**



Due to the specificity of crisis centers, victims of violence most often need legal aid and psychologist's service. Like the shelters for victims of violence, the beneficiaries of crisis centers most seldom use medical care.



The health condition of the beneficiaries of crisis centers is checked on the basis of oral inquiry like in shelters, and in case of detection of a disease, the beneficiary is referred to the relevant clinic. Crisis centers meet the beneficiaries' health needs within the limit of GEL 300, while no limits are set for the beneficiaries of shelters.

The **Kutaisi** crisis center was opened on 8 December 2017. Only five persons were provided services in the period between the opening of the facility and the monitoring<sup>20</sup>. The crisis center shares a building with several other institutions. Information about the center is disseminated through NGOs, Police and Social Service Agency. Beneficiaries can only receive day services - psychological and legal assistance and social worker's service. The most often applied service is psychologist's consultation.

The **Gori** crisis center was opened on 26 January 2018. 8 adults and 9 juveniles were served in the center in the period between the opening of the facility and the monitoring.<sup>21</sup> The crisis center is located in a separate building. According to the information provided, one employee is constantly present in the center. Like the Kutaisi crisis center, the Gori crisis center can only provide day services, namely the service of a social worker, as well as psychological and legal assistance.

The monitoring showed that the Kutaisi and Gori crisis centers provide a beneficiary-oriented environment, but neither of them is adapted to the needs of persons with physical and/or other disabilities.

As for the **Tbilisi** crisis center, most information was received from the administration, as there was no beneficiary during monitoring due to the employment. It should be noted that it is possible to place both victims and alleged victims in the crisis center. The building is provided with individual and personnel rooms, kitchen, stores, adapted room for persons with disabilities and proper yard. The building has one isolated room with private toilet and bathroom and 7 living rooms. Hygiene norms are observed and appropriate equipment is provided in the center. The complaints and feedback mechanism is not functional like in the Tbilisi crisis center. The hotline numbers and contact information of relevant service provider organizations are visibly posted on the walls.

20 persons, including (4) hotline operators, are employed in the center and all of them were retrained regarding the domestic violence issues. The cooperation with the Equality Movement was underlined during the monitoring. The shelter has a library, where books are available in various languages.

A hotline operator responsible for providing appropriate consultation to alleged victims of violence or interested persons, was also interviewed within the framework of the monitoring. The hotline provides interpreters of 7 languages in the conference regime, if necessary. According to the operator, on average, 5-7 calls are received per day, mostly in relation to the available services and protection mechanisms.

In conclusion, we can say that the work of crisis centers is quite important for beneficiaries. However, it is necessary to further improve the existing services and increase their coverage area in the future in order to enable victims to get legal, social and medical services apart from accommodation. In addition, special attention should be paid to the delivery of health care services.

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<sup>20</sup> Monitoring was carried out in the Kutaisi crisis center on 19 April 2018.

<sup>21</sup> Monitoring was carried out in the Gori crisis center on 27 April 2018.

## Evaluation of protection and assistance services for victims of human trafficking

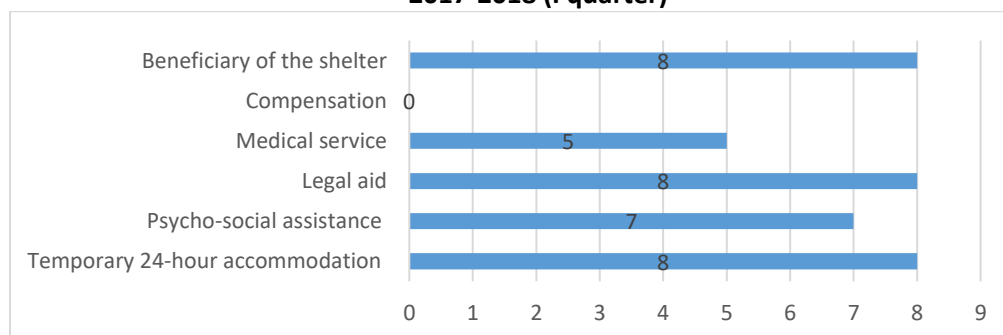
Monitoring of service centers (shelters) for victims of human trafficking was carried out in Tbilisi and Batumi. The aim of the monitoring was to evaluate the existing services and determine the level of victims' satisfaction.

The Tbilisi and Batumi service centers for victims of human trafficking are structural units of the State Fund for Protection of and Assistance to Victims of Human Trafficking. The service can be enjoyed by the survivors /victims of human trafficking (together with their dependent persons). The shelters offer the following services:

- 24-hour accommodation (in the shelter);
- Psycho-social rehabilitation;
- Medical services;
- Legal aid;
- Translator's service, if needed.

According to the information provided by the State Fund for Protection of and Assistance to Victims of Human Trafficking, shelters and its services were enjoyed only by women in 2017-2018. It should be noted that the problems and challenges identified in relation to the services provided to victims of trafficking were identical in the Tbilisi and Batumi shelters. The only difference was the fact that beneficiaries of the Batumi shelter were mainly of non-Georgian ethnicity and therefore, they needed the service of an interpreter.

**Table N3: Statistical data on persons enjoying a shelter for victims of trafficking and its services in 2017-2018 (I quarter)**



There were no beneficiaries in the Tbilisi or Batumi shelters during monitoring. Consequently, the monitoring findings are based on the interviews with the shelter directors.

The **Tbilisi** shelter can simultaneously serve three persons (both beneficiaries and dependent persons). It should be noted that only victims of sex trafficking (3 women) used the shelter services in 2017-2018, but it was found out that victims leave the shelter soon after getting necessary services (shelter and health

care).<sup>22</sup> Beneficiaries had not asked for the extension of a term, the psychologist's assistance or legal aid during the monitoring period.

Admission of victims of trafficking to the **Batumi** shelter has sharply decreased compared to previous years. No victim has applied to the administration for the extension of a term in 2017-2018.

The Batumi shelter can simultaneously serve 5 adults and 10 dependent persons. The shelter does not have a room intended for persons with infectious diseases, but despite this, the shelter provides service without observing security norms. The service of an interpreter is applied when needed, but the psychologist of the center cannot work with victims in case of the lack of knowledge of the language. The staff of the **Batumi** shelter for victims of trafficking were retrained with regard to issues relating to trafficking in persons.

In conclusion, we can say that shelters for trafficking victims are mainly tailored to the services for victims of domestic violence and not victims of human trafficking. Therefore, less attention is paid to the services for victims of human trafficking. It is worth mentioning that provision of an interpreter's service and psycho-social rehabilitation programmes is minimized. In addition, according to the administration, victims of trafficking remain in the shelter for a short period, making it difficult to offer full service to them. It should be noted that the services for victims of human trafficking need to be improved in Tbilisi and Batumi and be oriented to offering needs-based services to beneficiaries.

## Recommendations

### **To the Administration of the Government of Georgia**

- Process information about persons with status, maintain statistics and identify appropriate systemic shortcomings
- Create a procedure for reviewing the status granted by the Victim Identification Group

### **To the State Fund for Protection and Assistance of (statutory) Victims of Human Trafficking**

- Improve the functioning of feedback and complaints mechanisms in shelters
- Provide a full, in-depth health examination of survivors / victims of sexual violence upon admission to the shelter
- Ensure that beneficiaries are provided with appropriate clothes/shoes according to age and season
- Pay more attention to the arrangement of shelter yards, equipment and child-oriented infrastructure
- Provide shelters with libraries supplied with literature in accordance with beneficiaries' age and language
- Adapt the physical environment of shelters in order to maximize the delivery of services to persons with disabilities

### **To the administration of service centers (shelters) for victims of human trafficking and domestic violence**

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<sup>22</sup> In case of non-Georgian victims, leaving a shelter is related to the repatriation to the country of migration by the Migration Service.

- Ensure proper delivery of services to beneficiaries of any social class and with any kind of history and ensure that the services are tailored to their needs
- Ensure that personnel employed in shelters become more proactive so that victims can properly get services
- Further promote the strengthening of cooperation and coordination with local NGOs and service provider companies in order to provide psycho-social, educational and employment opportunities for beneficiaries
- Pay more attention to the protection of sanitary-hygienic norms
- Ensure that shelters actively cooperate with local libraries in order to renew the existing books, while in case of their absence, provide a library in accordance with beneficiaries' age and interests

**To the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia**

- Ensure that police officers properly inform victims of domestic violence of the services available in state shelters and crisis centers

**To the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia**

- Regulate procedures for granting or abolishing social allowances so that victims of domestic violence can regain their status automatically after leaving a shelter

**To the local municipalities**

- Ensure that funding of apartment rents for /victims/survivors of domestic violence depends not on their legal but factual address.