



# EU SUPPORT FOR VULNERABLE CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN GEORGIA: A FIVE-YEAR IMPACT ON CHILD PROTECTION

In Georgia, a country of 3.7 million people, the needs of its young population are both urgent and complex. Approximately **841,727 children under the age of 18\*** make up 23% of the population, and among these, 38% are affected by material and social deprivations, equating to around 350,000 children facing severe economic hardship. More than a quarter of Georgian children—over 250,000—depend on limited government aid to meet basic needs. The situation is particularly acute for approximately 3,000 children who live and work on the streets.

Amid these pressing issues, the European Union (EU) has partnered with World Vision over the past five years to address these vulnerabilities, prioritising child protection and support for social services. Although social work in Georgia is still an emerging sector, with a critical need for training, resources, and professional development, this partnership has driven significant progress toward a structured, reliable child protection system that is increasingly able to support vulnerable children and families. This effort has built municipal-level child protection units, strengthened human capital in social work, and established a sustainable framework for family and youth support across Georgia. Here's how this EU-World Vision partnership has made a tangible impact across the country:

## 1. DEINSTITUTIONALISATION AND TRANSITION TO ALTERNATIVE CARE FOR CHILDREN

With substantial support from the EU, World Vision in Georgia has significantly contributed to the deinstitutionalisation of large-scale, non-regulated institutions, facilitating the transition of children into alternative care services. The EU support also enabled the closure of the Kojori boarding school, relocating 45 children into biological families and alternative care, including small group homes with targeted support, and capacity-building of front-line staff to meet their needs.

## 2. ESTABLISHING A MUNICIPAL NETWORK OF CHILD PROTECTION UNITS

A cornerstone of the EU-World Vision collaboration has been supporting establishment of 65 Child Protection Units (CPUs) across municipalities. These units, serving as the local backbone of child welfare, provide critical support for children and families by ensuring timely intervention in cases of abuse, neglect, and exploitation. This municipal network enables quick, accessible support, creating a protective framework that is aligned with community needs and tailored to safeguard Georgia's children.

## 3. BUILDING HUMAN CAPITAL FOR CHILD PROTECTION

Human capital development is essential for the sustainability of Georgia's child protection system. The EU-World Vision partnership has trained 749 social workers, including 400 state social workers and 349 municipal workers, in child rights, protection policies, and intervention techniques. With specialised training in psychological support, case management, and referral systems, these social workers are now better prepared to respond to complex welfare cases, which is vital as the social work sector in Georgia continues to evolve. This focus on professional training is laying the groundwork for a robust child protection system that serves vulnerable populations effectively.

## 4. ADVANCING FOSTER CARE SYSTEMS TO PROTECT VULNERABLE CHILDREN

The partnership has also enhanced foster care support across Georgia, aiming to provide quality alternative care options for children in need. Through the development of curricula and training for 488 foster parents, focusing on child development and trauma-informed care, over 1,000 foster children are benefiting. Public awareness campaigns, in partnership with UNICEF, have reached over 1,800 individuals and thousands more online, helping to increase societal support and understanding of foster care as a viable and protective solution.

\* Population data for individuals under the age of 18, sourced from GEOSTAT (2024).

## 5. ENHANCING STANDARDS IN CHILDCARE FACILITIES

To improve caregiving across diverse settings, around 300 frontline childcare staff from small group homes, daycare centres, and shelters received comprehensive training. This initiative has enriched the caregiving environment for more than 1,617 children, ensuring they are cared for by skilled staff who understand and meet their physical, emotional, and psychological needs.

## 6. PROVIDING ESSENTIAL SERVICES FOR STREET-CONNECTED CHILDREN

Street-connected children face particularly severe risks, with many lacking access to basic needs and security. The EU-World Vision partnership has reached approximately 1,000 children through Day Care Centers and mobile outreach services, providing crucial support such as food, shelter, healthcare, education and psychological assistance. These services indirectly benefit up to 3,000 children across Georgia, establishing a protective safety net that supports vulnerable children in moving towards more secure living situations.

## 7. ECONOMIC SUPPORT FOR CHILD WELFARE AND FAMILY STABILITY

Addressing economic instability is fundamental to child protection. Through the EU-World Vision partnership, 95 vulnerable families—primarily single-mother households with multiple children—have been supported through the World Vision's Ultra-Poor Graduation Model. This programme provides families with resources, training, and employment opportunities, helping them to increase their income and create a more stable environment for their children.

## 8. EMPOWERING YOUTH AS ADVOCATES FOR CHILD RIGHTS AND PROTECTION

Youth engagement is essential for sustainable child protection, and the EU-World Vision partnership has created platforms for young people to advocate for their rights. Over the past 5 years, through 15 municipal youth forums, 2,500 youth participants, particularly those from rural communities, have voiced their concerns on issues impacting their lives. These forums enable youth to influence local policy and foster a culture of accountability and protection, where the voices of young people are integral to community development.

## 9. EQUIPPING YOUTH WITH SKILLS FOR ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

To tackle unemployment among vulnerable youth, the EU-World Vision partnership established 26 SKYE (Skills and Knowledge for Youth Economic Empowerment) clubs, empowering over 650 young people. These clubs focus on developing job readiness, leadership, and essential life skills. With SKYE-led initiatives, more than 5,200 youth have gained practical experience that prepares them for the workforce and empowers them to become active contributors to child protection and social cohesion within their communities.

## 10. FOSTERING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT THROUGH YOUTH-LED PROJECTS

More than 60,000 young people have been reached through youth-led community projects and advocacy initiatives, launching nearly 1,000 initiatives in 12 municipalities. Youth advisory boards, consisting of 300 young leaders, have guided these projects, engaging youth in community development. By involving young people directly in these projects, the EU-World Vision partnership has fostered a sense of ownership, commitment, and responsibility in child protection among Georgia's youth.

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## STRENGTHENING CHILD PROTECTION FOR GEORGIA'S FUTURE

Through their partnership, the EU and World Vision have built a sustainable, community-centred child protection framework in Georgia, prioritising human capital development and community engagement. These initiatives provide vital support to vulnerable children, foster societal commitment to child protection, and empower social workers, foster families, and young leaders as champions of child welfare. Together, the EU and World Vision have laid a solid foundation for lasting change, creating a future where all of Georgia's children can grow up in safe, nurturing, and resilient communities.