

Project Report

Tbilisi 2016



STEP-BY-STEP - TOWARDS A BETTER FUTURE

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WITH FUNDING FROM
**AUSTRIAN
DEVELOPMENT
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Background of the project

IDP Women's Association "Consent" in collaboration with its Austrian partner organization HILFSWERK AUSTRIA INTERNATIONAL for many years has been realizing development projects in Georgia and neighbouring countries which help defending the rights and improving the social and economic conditions of people who suffered from conflicts. From December 2013 until February 2016 the two partners implemented the project "Step by Step – towards a Better Future", funded by European Union and co-funded by Austrian Development Cooperation. The global aim of this funding was to promote restorative justice in Georgia through implementation of meaningful rehabilitation and re-socialisation programmes by Civil Society actors. The target region of this project was Shida Kartli where most of the population has been suffering from the Georgian-Russian war in August 2008. The project "Step by Step – towards a Better Future" was the first of its kind that introduced an integrated approach for rehabilitation of probationers, former prisoners and other risk groups in Shida Kartli at one contact point.

The importance of this project is that persons are given a chance to restore their dignity. We work on human rights issues and it is very important for the persons to feel that their dignity is not touched.

Julia Kharashvili– Chairperson at IDP Women Association "Consent"

Cooperation with governmental institutions

Right from the beginning of the project, close cooperation was established between the Association "Consent", Hilfswerk Austria International, the National Probation Agency (NPA) and the Crime Prevention Center (CPC) and Memoranda of Cooperation signed to foster mutual synergies and sustainability of developed services.



Throughout project implementation, the team closely cooperated with the various departments of both state agencies, especially with their probation officers and social workers in Shida Kartli region. To share the experience gained in the framework of the project also with other regions of Georgia, in November 2015, a round table with representatives from the Probation Bureaus of Samegrelo, Imereti and Kvemo Kartli as well as representatives of the respective municipalities and department heads of the Crime Prevention Center was organized.

International cooperation

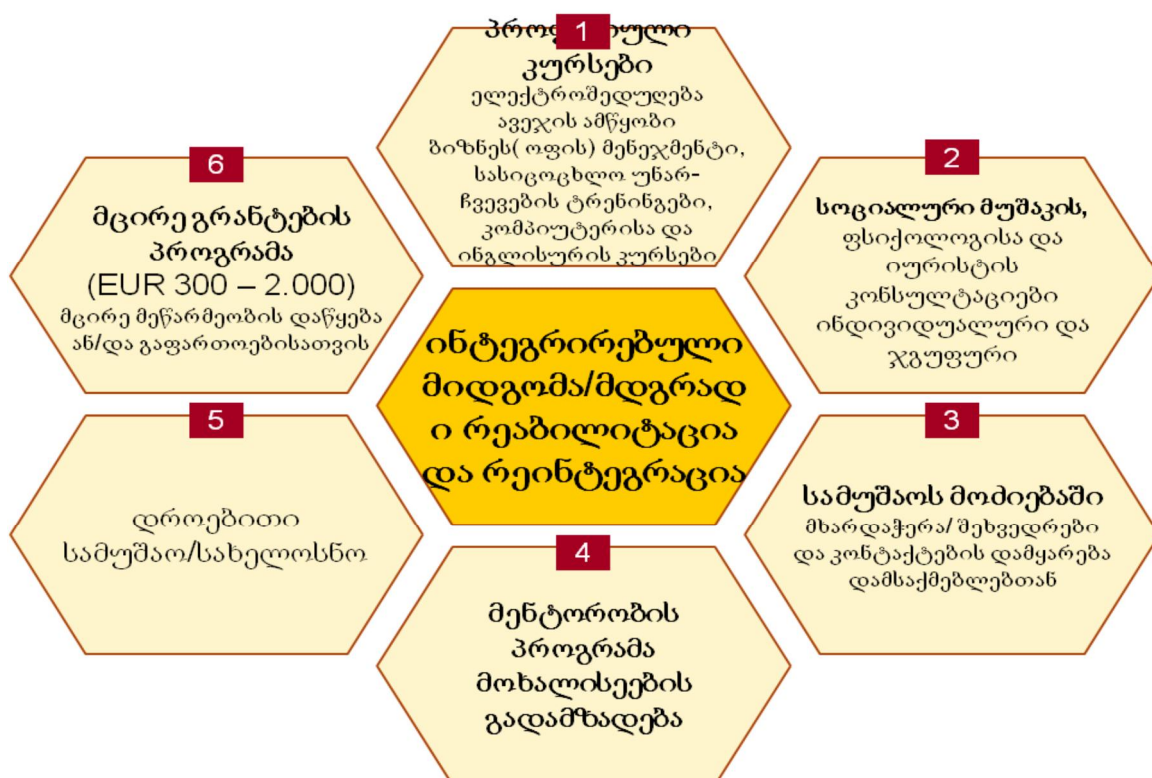
Through facilitation of Hilfswerk Austria International, the project partners cooperated closely with the Austrian organization "NEUSTART", being in charge of the Probation Service in Austria. Representatives of IDP Women Association Consent, the National Probation Agency and the Crime Prevention Center paid a study visit to Vienna in April 2014 where meetings were held not only with representatives of "NEUSTART", but also with those of the Department for Penitentiary Services at the Austrian Ministry of Justice as well as with several successful Austrian social enterprises. On the aforesaid meetings the Austrian model of working with probationers and former prisoners was introduced and experience exchanged.



Furthermore, experts from "NEUSTART" paid two visits to Georgia and facilitated interactive and participatory trainings for project staff and volunteers on the topics of "Social Entrepreneurship" as well as "Mentoring and Volunteering" in August and November 2014.

Project Overview

The aim of the project "Step by Step – towards a Better Future" was to foster the reintegration of socially vulnerable groups of Shida Kartli, e.g. former inmates, probationers, their family members, IDPs, and young delinquents, in Georgian society through education, employment and personal support. Residents of Shida Kartli from these groups who were between 16 and 45 years old, unemployed, interested to learn new skills and capable to work in groups could participate in the project.



The project was unique due to its integrated approach, which manifested itself in providing complex service offers for rehabilitation by a team of multi-disciplinary professionals in one place— at the Integration and Training Center of IDP Women Association “Consent”, Ilia Sukhishvili St. 63, Gori. Thanks to the principles of voluntary participation and ease of accessibility, the formation of trust-relationships between project staff and beneficiaries was facilitated, which positively influenced participants’ motivation and openness for the offered services.

During the 27 months of project implementation, 149 persons used our service; 122 persons (81% male, 19% female) completed the training programs and were awarded certificates after successfully passing final examination. This indicates a very low drop-out rate – 82% who started the training courses also successfully finished it.

Among the graduates 49 persons were probationers, 9 persons were former inmates and 65 were from the so-called risk group. The latter refers to persons who live near the administrative border line and those who are family members of former prisoners.

I found out about vocational training courses at probation bureau,

I was very happy, because after my release it was very hard for me to get a job. Here I had an opportunity to learn a craft and start my own business.

Probationer: Z.SH.

1. Vocational training courses:

In the framework of the project the building of the Integration and Training Center in Gori was refurbished and equipped with new tools and furniture to fully satisfy the training needs of the various professions. In June 2014 the first courses for the three different specialisations—furniture assembler, electric welder and business (office) management - started. The curricula were developed by a multi-disciplinary trainer team in close cooperation with Hilfswerk Austria International, the National Probation Agency and the Crime Prevention Center. Each course lasted for two months and during the entire studying process participants were provided with medical insurance, transportation and dinner free of charge. In total 6 training cycles were offered over the period of one year.

1.1. Specialisation on Electric Welding: 34 people learned this handicraft, 16 of them were probationers, 14 were from the risk groups and 4 of them were former prisoners. Graduates are able to make Window Grates, Metal Ornaments.



1.2. Specialization on Furniture Assembling

41 persons graduated from this specialization. 24 of them were probationers, 14 of them were from the risk groups and 3 of them were former prisoners. Graduates are able to assemble different kinds of Solid Furniture, more specifically Office, Kitchen and other Furniture.



1.3. Specialization on Business/Office Management: Participants were made acquainted with the characteristics of different businesses, logistics, main aspects of communication with tax authorities and the rules of office clerical work. The abovementioned course was mostly attended by women. 47 persons chose this specialization. 12 of them were probationers, 31 of them were from the risk groups and 4 of them were former prisoners.

Taking the course of the electric welder gave me a chance to raise my qualification. At the end of the course, after testing I got my certificate of the electric welder, which helped me to find a relevant job.

Beneficiary, I.N.

1.4. Trainings on vital skills.

Each training participant, along with studying his/her chosen specialization, obligatorily had to attend computer classes and trainings on the following topics: effective written and oral communication, elementary mathematics, teamwork, life and social skills, job finding techniques. Abovementioned trainings on vital skills were helping participants to obtain required knowledge and skills to make them more competitive on the labor market. The participants also had an opportunity to visit different public or private institutions located in Gori and attend English language classes (on a voluntary basis).



2. Social, psychological and legal counseling individually and in groups.

Next to professional and life skills training, each participant obligatorily attended consultation sessions with a psychologist and a social worker. The complementary involvement of these specialists was one of the success factors of the project that significantly contributed to a comprehensive reintegration of the beneficiaries.

The project social workers and the psychologist assessed the risks and needs of each beneficiary, which means revealing circumstances relating to the person's criminal career, economic condition, educational background, values, social situation, etc. by means of interviewing (special forms and questionnaires were provided by Austrian experts). Based on the revealed information a support plan for each specific beneficiary was developed where concrete steps and interventions for the work with the beneficiary were planned (individually and in groups). Upon need, consultation with a lawyer was also organized for the beneficiaries.

In the framework of the project, social workers and the psychologist regularly were arranging meetings with the social workers and psychologists of the National Probation Agency's bureau of Shida Kartli, for joint discussion about the cases of probationers involved in the project and joint definition of future steps for working with the beneficiaries.

Project Psychologist Konstantin Pozov

Desperation, Distrust, anxiety and constant challenges.

.. Yes, it's the 21st century and that's the everyday reality that we face. We had contact with people who had same problems, who suffered a number of losses and personal mistakes, and after that the fear and distrust of future was formed. It's very hard to make people with such experience want to try new things, which will help them manage their own actions for achieving welfare and happiness. But we were able to do it with the help of professionals, mentors, society and most importantly with the readiness of beneficiaries itself. How much pride, when unexpectedly you receive a sincere gratitude and when everything we went through is appreciated, which is a great incentive for us. Reunited families, new jobs, education, health improvement, restored social and civil status

... Yes we believe that a person step-by-step can build a better future for himself/herself and welfare for surrounding people, **but in the beginning, when everything seems to be confusing, you need a strong consent to take the first step.**



3. Support in job hunting

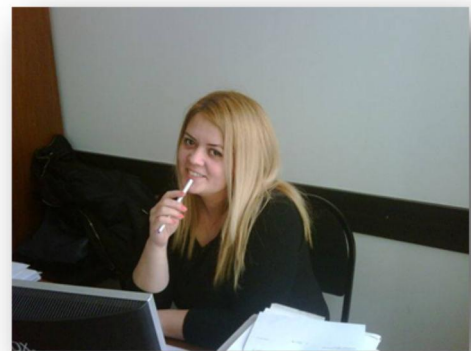


Finding a job and making a living on one's own is crucial for the successful and sustainable reintegration and resocialization of risk groups, probationers, former prisoners, their family members and people who suffered from conflicts. For this reason, beneficiaries were trained in job searching techniques: where to obtain relevant information from, how and where to find a job, how to prepare a resume and a motivation letter, how to act during the job interview, etc. After the trainings, social workers supported beneficiaries in searching for

vacancies and preparing their applications. Beneficiaries were also registered on worknet.gov.ge, a platform offered by the Employment Agency for unemployed and job-seekers. Thanks to these measures, 71 beneficiaries found a job during the project and 55 of them are still working upon project closure. The project participants are employed both in private institutions or are running their own businesses. Some of them are working in the field of specialization they learned during the project.

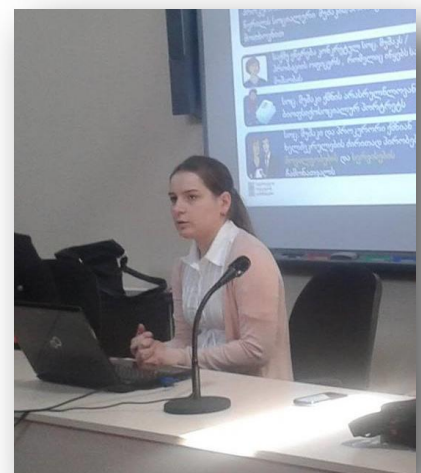
Uliana Petrova, Social Worker :

From November 2014 until today I am working as a project's social worker. I was scared at first because I didn't want to disappoint my beneficiaries. Despite all reservations I wanted that with my help beneficiaries could reintegrate in the society, get employed and become plenipotentiary members of our society. During this time, with friendly attitude, empathy, trust and hope, we were able to reach the project's goal. I am proud of each beneficiary, their motivation and the achieved results.



"In the work of social workers, the most important is existence of resources, especially for those social workers that work in the justice sphere and communicate with people who have lost their faith in the future and faith in themselves. It is a huge comfort to have an opportunity to offer available services to probationers and former inmates and to be sure that they benefit from this. Moreover, within the project were foreseen diverse needs of beneficiaries and this eased my further work with them".

Ketevan Vanishvili/ social worker at Probation Bureau of Shida kartli



I had two expectations from this program. First– That I would extend my knowledge and the second—that I would find a job. Both of my expectations turned into reality. Now I have a profession and I am employed in a private company. After employment I have an income , I got new friends and met new people who helped me to find new possibilities in myself.

G.L., Graduate

4. Mentorship program by trained volunteers.

A mentor is a person who supports and helps another person to develop one's personal skills and potential to lead a balanced and meaningful life. Inspired by the example of Austria, where voluntary mentors, ordinary citizens, have been working effectively with probationers and former inmates for years, the mentorship concept has been introduced for the first time in Shida Kartli – and achieved unexpected success.

Every person, resident of Shida Kartli or Tbilisi, who was at least 21 years old and interested to volunteer and help other people to overcome hardships, was invited to become a mentor for one or several beneficiaries of the project.

As a first stage, 54 applicants underwent a two-day training on tolerance and mentorship. The training was conducted by the Austrian trainer Klaus Binder, experienced social worker with the organization „NEUSTART“, specialized in Probation Services. After the training eligible mentors were involved in the working process step-by-step.

Finally, 30 mentors were matched with their mentees during the project and each of them was working for min. 10 months with one person. Most of the mentors are female; they have a very diverse background – some of them are students, others are social worker. The average age of a mentor is 35, with the youngest being 22 and the oldest 60.

During his/her activities a mentor was establishing an informal (friendly) relationship with the mentee and keeping regular contact with him/her: He/she supported the mentee in looking for a job, preparing documents, discussing with the beneficiary his/her interests and hobbies, also fears and expectations, and was motivating this person to participate in different activities and programmes offered by various institutions. Each mentor received a small allowance per month to be used for meetings and communication with his/her mentee and common leisure activities. Furthermore, monthly team meeting with the project social works, the psychologist and other mentors was organized to allow for mutual exchange. All mentors were awarded a certificate upon project closure.



Their resocialization and rehabilitation was achieved, they are well integrated into society, they have employability skills, they have proper documents to prove that they have obtained professions that are demanded in the labour market.

*Giorgi Getiashvili
Head of Shida Kartli Bureau of National Probation Agency*

Successful Stories

"Destroying existing stereotypes"

"I found out about the program "Step by step –become a mentor" from my friend and I was fascinated. I had to be friends with a person I didn't even know. It was a hard challenge. I was a little bit scared... first meeting was emotional, but nobody had problems with building a conversation and gaining trust. That was the moment when the stereotype of Prisoner!! was finally destroyed.

We are friends! And both of us are proud of it. Giorgi only needed a listener. A friend that would listen to him, would understand him and give him an advice.

The question is, who got the most out of the project? Him or me? Communication with Giorgi increased my faith, made me stronger and made me want to do good deeds and increased my reverence to god."



Nino Eliauri - mentor (30-year-old)

"The most important thing is to believe..."

Since November 2014 I've been participating in the project "Step by step - towards a Better Future". I am a mentor. This project envisages the support and resocialization of probationers. Nowadays people look differently at probationers and convicts, and the reason behind that is the existence of fear, distrust, doubt, stigma, and stereotypes. Especially there are lots of myths about their employment, which is the biggest obstacle. I was always trying to support this kind of people by saying out loud that they are the pleni potentiary members of our society and they are in need of our help and support. While participating in the project I was working with two people (colloquially David and Vasil), I was trying to gain their trust in the first place, to avoid the risks. During each meeting with them, I was trying to help them using their skills and resources the right way. It was necessary to show them that their families, children and country need them. This belief had to be strengthened in the first place. I want to note that both fathers took my challenge in the right way and actively cooperated with me. I also want to note that at first I didn't quite expect this kind of results, they showed care and boundless love towards their children, which they could much less express in previous times because of their social circumstances. I introduced them to parental rights and responsibilities, we were talking about styles of upbringing, about the ways of strengthening positive relationship with them, and also about adolescence and its difficulties. We were working together on employment issues, how to find a job, filling in applications and preparing documentation. I also want to note that David and Vasil have passed handicraft and training courses, also they started thinking about professional development. David has participated in social projects and he also presented the project and now he is implementing it. Vasil is currently taking a course of fruit-growing at a vocational school. I can honestly say that I gained two new good friends."



Magda Jambrishvili - mentor (39 year old)

5. Sheltered transitory jobs in workshop

Some project participants were offered the opportunity to stay in IDPWA's Integration Center in Gori to increase their professional skills by practical additional trainings and then continue working in the organization's workshop on a temporary basis, with the aim of having increased chances of employability after project closure. Two successful beneficiaries who were assembling Solid furniture in the workshop took this offer. Supported by an experienced master craftsman, the temporary workers were offering free repair services of furniture for IDPs living on the territory of "Turbaza Autocamping" in Gori, adjacent to the Integrative Training Center. They also provided the same kind of assistance to other vulnerable groups in Shida Kartli.



6. Small Grants Programme

Another component of the project to help beneficiaries improve their socio-economic situation and contribute to their self-realization and reintegration into society was the award of small grants to selected applicants, i.e. means by which they could start their own small business or extend and improve an existing small enterprise.

All graduates from the vocational training program were invited to apply for this programme. Out of 57 applications received, 33 persons were selected to participate in a preparatory course on "Business Plan Development" and subsequent counselling on their individual business ideas. Finally, an independent Evaluation Committee selected 23 grant applications. Out of those, two group projects and 21 individual projects were funded.

The total budget of the Small Grants Programme amounted to 16.000 EUR, the amount of each grant varied between 300 -2.000 EUR. Contribution from each candidate to the planned business project (in cash or in kind) was encouraged.

Selected projected supported by small grants



Sprayer Machine
Flavi



FacialCleaning Machine
Gori

Selected projected supported by small grants

მცირე საგრანტო პროგრამის ფარგლებში დაფინანსებული პროექტები



Irrigation system for apple orchard
Akhalsofeli

სარწყავი სისტემა ვაშლის ბაღისთვის
ახალსოფელი



Greenhouse for strawberry cultivation
Patara garejvari

მარწყვის სათბური
პატარა გარეჯვარი



Tools for furniture workshop
Gori

ავეჯის სახელოსნო
გორი



Refrigerator for grocery store
Qveshi

დახლ-მაცივარი მაღაზიისთვის
სოფ. ქვეში