



GEORGIAN ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS October, 2017

CHAIRPERSON'S ADDRESS



Dear Members!

I decided to make our communication more active using all possible means. This is important due to a lot of reasons, but the main reason is that we need to work together for professional development. On the one hand, it is important that we know what is going on in each region, town and village where our colleagues work and where there are social problems; and on the other hand, it is important that you know what GASW is doing as an organization fighting for the development of the profession, as well as the achievements and challenges in the profession locally or outside the borders of our country.

To achieve this goal, we have decided to prepare a quarterly information leaflet which will traditionally be named as "GASW Newsletter".

GASW Newsletter will provide information on the ongoing activities, including programs and projects, as well as the activities related to civil activism and professional development. As you already know, we have a manager of relations with members – Ketevan Kalandadze, our colleague, who has already started communication with you and sent you our survey questionnaire. As for the questionnaires, we have already processed them, have summarized the data and will provide answers and thoughts on all the important issues identified in the questionnaires through e-mail.

In addition to GASW newsletter, our communication will be in person at least once each quarter. When I was visiting you in the regions, you expressed willingness and noted the need for such communication. Despite having a small country, visits to the regions take a lot of time, so, not to depend on just my visits for our communication, we will also have meetings in Tbilisi. Each region will name a social worker out of GASW members in the region who will take part in these meetings and this person will become GASW's regional representative. After the meetings, the regional representative will disseminate the information s/he receives with the local colleagues. We will pay for the transportation of the regional representatives (in case of the relevant need) from membership fees. However, due to irregular contributions, this sum is very small.

As you know, GASW's work is mainly undertaken on the basis of grant or service contracts. Within the frames of our projects, sometimes we do not have resources for communication with members and that is why we use membership fees for the needs like the above noted; at the end of the year, we provide you with a report to know exactly what we spent each tetri paid by you on.

Dear friends, I would like to remind you that GASW is an organization focused on professional development; it is not an organization participating in the arrangements related to employment relations or attributes. For this purpose, social workers at each agency can enlist in the association of professional unions of Georgia in case they would like to do so. Our association is not a member of this organization and that is why we cannot provide consultations on this topic and can provide only the above noted information.

I would like to remind you of the privileges of a GASW member as compared to a non-member:

1. Systematically receives information on professional topics, as GASW is an important actor in our field in Georgia, as well as a member of international professional associations.
2. Uses all GASW resources for free (publications, consultations on professional issues, trainings, etc.).
3. Can obtain recommendation from GASW for employment purposes.
4. In case of equal competitiveness, has privilege in terms of employment at GASW.
5. Has more chance to have contact with the professional community as compared to individual effort.

GROUP FOR "SAVING THE PROFESSION"

With the goal to efficiently work on the problems the profession is facing, in August, 2016, GASW initiated a working group for "saving the profession". All the non-governmental organizations employing social workers as well as the organizations focused on protecting social rights are participating in the group.

The action plan of the group was the following:

1. Analyzing the existing situation
2. Developing an action plan
3. Implementing the action plan.

The following were developed within the frames of the group:

1. A concept of regulating the profession
2. Analysis of the role and function of statutory social workers in child care alternative services
3. A document on assessing employment conditions of the social workers working at the Social Services Agency.

The group had meetings until June, 2017 when the final products were prepared and an action plan was developed; while from June, 2017 the group started to actively implement the plan. In June, a meeting with all the state agencies employing social workers was held. The vision of the group was stated at the meeting and the participants were acquainted with the reports prepared by the group. The next broader meeting was held on October 11th.

PETITION

"We demand that social workers are given an opportunity to carry out their professional obligations"

The petition was developed by GASW with active involvement of social workers and was published on September 28th of 2017. The petition was signed by up to 600 social workers and persons supporting the profession, as well as over 40 local and international organizations.

The goal of the petition is to support improvement of working conditions and professional development for the social workers at the Social Services Agency.

Within the frames of the petition, the involved parties are demanding the following: A meeting with the Minister of Labor, Health and Social Affairs, Mr. Davit Sergeenko and formation of a working group. GASW, together with the interested parties, will advocate for the issues noted in the petition.

You may find the full text of the petition on the following link:

['https://manifest.ge/main/item/1744/'](https://manifest.ge/main/item/1744/)

PROJECT "SUPPORT TO INCLUSION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITY IN ACHARA REGION"

The project was carried out in 2017 with the support from the International Center for Education and Open Society Washington. Its goal was to develop policy focused on persons with disability and to strengthen the local self-government representatives through facilitating dialogue between the local self-government and the civil society.

Within the frames of the project, several interesting working meetings were held with the representatives of the local self-government with the goal to acquaint them with methods to plan efficient policies of inclusion of persons with disability. Local social workers and civil society representatives were trained on the following topics: social advocacy, specifics of working with persons with disability, and strengthening social workers for social changes. A workshop was held for media representatives on the acceptable ways to cover issues related to persons with disability. Media representatives were acquainted with the role of a supporting social worker in working on issues related to persons with disability.

The project partner is the organization "Policy and Advocacy for Equal Opportunities". Local GASW members were also involved in the implementation of the project.



SOCIAL WORKERS' CLUB

Social Workers' Club was formed with the initiative of GASW Chairperson in October, 2016. The goal of the club is to acquaint social workers with the global developments in the field (based on the experience in various countries) which will help us in professional development, forming of an adequate outlook and engagement in the current global processes in the profession.

The club's administration was formed when the club was established with GASW members who expressed willingness to be in the administration (Teona Gvalia, Rezo Khvedelidze, Salome Danelia, Nino Shatberashvili and Natia Macharashvili). Currently, the number of administration members has increased.

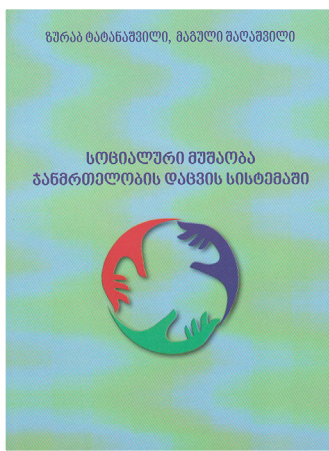
The first meeting of the club was held on January 10th, 2017 and in the following months, club meetings were held in the first week of the month. Various presenters present the information they have prepared or the unique experience in Georgia to the club members in informal environment.

During 2017, 9 meetings of the club were held. The number and diversity of the club members has been gradually enhancing.

PROJECT: "IMPROVING ACCESS TO MEDICAL AND SOCIAL SERVICES FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITY"

The project was carried out in 2016-2017 with the support from the Czech Development Agency. The project aimed at improving the quality of life of persons with disability in the healthcare and social fields through supporting realization of equal rights and opportunities for them.

The project team tried to support the beneficiaries with disability at one of Tbilisi polyclinics in overcoming the existing barriers, as well as to increase their access to services by providing information and individual consultations by a multidisciplinary team via a hotline. The goal of the team was to engage municipalities and primary healthcare representatives in the process of improving accessibility of medical and social protection services for persons with disability.



Within the frames of the project, Zurab Tatanashvili and Maguli Shaghashvili authored a handbook "Social Work in the Health Care System" designated for a master's course for social workers. The book is in Georgian and will be available in the resource centers of the higher education institutions enabling student social workers to read professional literature in the native language which is often impossible; while within the frames of this project, GASW had an opportunity to develop the noted handbook in Georgian and support student social workers by providing them Georgian literature.

The project is implemented in partnership with Caritas Czech Republic, Georgian Bioethics and Health Protection Society and Georgian Medical Association.

PROJECT "STRENGTHENING PROFESSIONALS TO IMPROVE ALTERNATIVE SERVICES FOR CHILDREN WITH PROFOUND AND SEVERE DISABILITY"

The noted project is implemented by GASW with the support from UNICEF. It aims at strengthening the staff and social workers working in/with specialized small group home for children with profound and severe disability or health problems to ensure high quality of the service. The first unique service of its kind was opened in Kutaisi; but two more homes are planned to be opened in Tbilisi.

Within the frames of the project, GASW is undertaking the following activities:

- 4-day training for social workers from the Social Services Agency from all regions;
- 2-day workshops for the members of Guardianship and Care Panels from all regions;

- 2-day workshop to improve advocacy skills for the staff and social workers at the Social Services Agency;
- Development of advocacy concept and implementation of advocacy project;
- 2-day training for the staff at the specialized small group home on the following issues: work of a multidisciplinary team and abuse;
- Work on developing a monitoring tool;
- Development of a supervision concept and implementation of supervision;
- Participation in the child care standards working group.

The project started in the summer of 2016 and will continue for 2 years.

GASW INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE - 2017



On June 14-15th of 2017, GASW, together with local and foreign partners, hosted a conference: "The Third International Conference to Support the Development of Social Work in Post-Soviet Countries: Integration of Social Work in the Health Care Field as a Global Challenge".

11 foreign and 7 Georgian specialists in the field presented at the conference; experience and best practices were shared from the countries in the region, as well as at the international level in regards to the topic of the conference.

PROJECT "SOCIAL WORKERS IN COLLABORATION FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT IN EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES"

The project is implemented with the goal to support equal development of social work in the region (Armenia, Azerbaijan and Moldova) to enhance the well-being of vulnerable population.

Project partners:

- Hilfswerk Austria International
- Armenian Association of Social Workers (AASW)
- Azerbaijan Social Work Public Union (ASWPU)
- Georgian Association of Social Workers (GASW)
- Nurses' Association of the Republic of Moldova (NARM)

GASW staff members are provided an opportunity to actively work on professional issues and development of social services not only based on the example of neighboring countries, but also by getting information on the efficient practice in Austria from Austrian colleagues and understanding what can work in Georgia with the same success.

Within the frames of the project, GASW started to issue small grants. The competition was held in February of the current year. The main goal of this initiative was to develop the profession of social work in the regions of Georgia with the goal to support equal development of the profession in the regions and in the capital.

Within the frames of the project, GASW tries to strengthen the non-governmental sector. This was the goal of the training at the end of September. The topic of the training was acquaint-

ing the representatives of the regional organizations with the role and functions of a social worker.

The project strengthens GASW's staff on various topics, for example, PR, because we think that the society has insufficient information on GASW as well as the profession in general; however, it is important for the society to know what our profession is about and think about social workers as supporters. Trainings are planned in social advocacy, research, management of information technologies and searching for grants. The participants of these trainings will be GASW staff and members. However, it should be noted that the allocated resources and therefore, the number of places will be limited for members. We will provide information on these trainings via e-mail, while the participants will be selected by the order of registration.

Small Grants Program

Goal: The goal of the program is to contribute to the enhancement of the level of social well-being of vulnerable families and children by developing the concept of social work, as well as access to social work services and by strengthening multi-sector dialogue.

The commission tasked with assessing the grant proposals selected 5 winning organizations which implement projects in 6 regions of Georgia (Kakheti, Kvemo Kartli, Shida Kartli, Mtskheta-Mtianeti, Samegrelo and Guria). It should be noted that the small grants program is a unique experience for GASW with which it supports and strengthens civil society organizations so that they are able to engage in social reforms and contribute to strengthening of social protection and family support services, with a special focus on supporting the family strengthening component via developing social work practice, increasing community engagement and developing inter-agency, inter-system and inter-disciplinary partnerships in regions.

The organizations receiving grants from the small grants program:

1. Civil Society Development Center
2. Our Home Georgia
3. Initiative for Social Change
4. Civil Integration Fund
5. Human Health and Rights Research Center

GASW WEBSITE SECTION: "WE EMPOWER, WE FIGHT, WE CHANGE"

Since January, 2017, GASW website has a new section under the name: "We empower; we fight; we change" - the goal of which is to share the successful cases of social workers and to raise the visibility of the work conducted by social workers. GASW regards it is important for the society and professional communities to develop a better understanding of what social workers do and what their contribution is in each person's life. It also has to be noted that this section supports sharing of successful cases in the professional community.

We would like to thank those 5 social workers who have already supplied us with their cases and have contributed to promoting the work of social workers by sharing their practical experience.



<http://gasw.org/index.php/ka/publications/latest-blogs>

Please, join this initiative by GASW!

Any social worker can contribute in this process and send us description of his/her successful case!

PROJECT "SUPPORT TO IMPLEMENTATION OF CHILD PROTECTION REFERRAL PROCEDURES IN ACHARA"

GASW, through funding from the European Union and support from UNICEF, has been implementing a project since March, 2017 the goal of which is to strengthen Achara municipalities in the direction of implementation of the obligations under the Decree #437 of the Government of Georgia of September 12th, 2016 on Child Protection Referral Procedures.

Within the frames of the project:

- The capacities of the local structures of Achara municipalities, as well as their functions were assessed and a training curriculum was developed.
- The representatives and specialists selected by the governors/mayors of all six municipalities were provided with 4-day training on child abuse issues (in total, up to 130 participants).
- With the help of GASW, municipalities developed internal working instructions for responding to child abuse cases.
- Working meetings were held in each municipality with the representatives of the institutions working/having contact with children.
- Meetings were held between the trained employees of the municipalities and social workers with the goal to share work experience,

coordinate their work and identify ways to cooperate.

- In addition, two-stage monitoring was carried out on the implementation of the local referral procedures (after 1.5 and 3 months from the training).



PROJECT: "SUPPORT TO SOCIAL INCLUSION OF YOUTH WITH DISABILITY IN GEORGIA / SUPPORT TO STRENGTHENING THE SCHOOL"

The main goal of the project is to contribute to raising the quality of life and the level of social inclusion for youth with disability through supporting inclusive education and employment at the job market in Georgia.

In 2017, within the frames of the project, a direction of strengthening the school is carried out at 2 pilot schools in Tbilisi. The goals of this direction are the following: to increase the level of integration of the students from the target group (students with disability and/or special educational needs) in the school, to meet their and their families' psycho-social needs and to support building of positive environment in the pilot schools.

In 2017, within the frames of the project, baseline research was carried out in pilot classes including both quantitative and qualitative (participatory) methods (namely, focus groups with students, parents, teachers and the administration representatives who identify problems and develop and implement plans to work on these problems). In the parallel regime, work is undertaken on individual cases with students, parents and teachers, as well as group interventions are

implemented with pilot classes with the goal to raise the emotional intellect of students. The noted work will continue until the end of 2017 when the project is planned to end.

In addition, in 2017, within the frames of the same project, several trainings were held on disabilities for the senior social workers and guardianship and care panel heads at the Social Services Agency.

The project is carried out with the main implementing partner, Czech International Non-Governmental Organization People In Need. The project is funded by the Czech Development Agency. The major partners of the project are: Children and Youth Development Fund, Children and Youth National Center, Ministry of Education and Science, and Social Services Agency.



GASW WEBSITE SECTION: "PROFESSION WHICH IS INSIDE ME"

Since January, 2017, GASW website has added a section under the name "Profession which is inside me". Within the frames of this section, interviews were held with 9 social workers working in various fields.

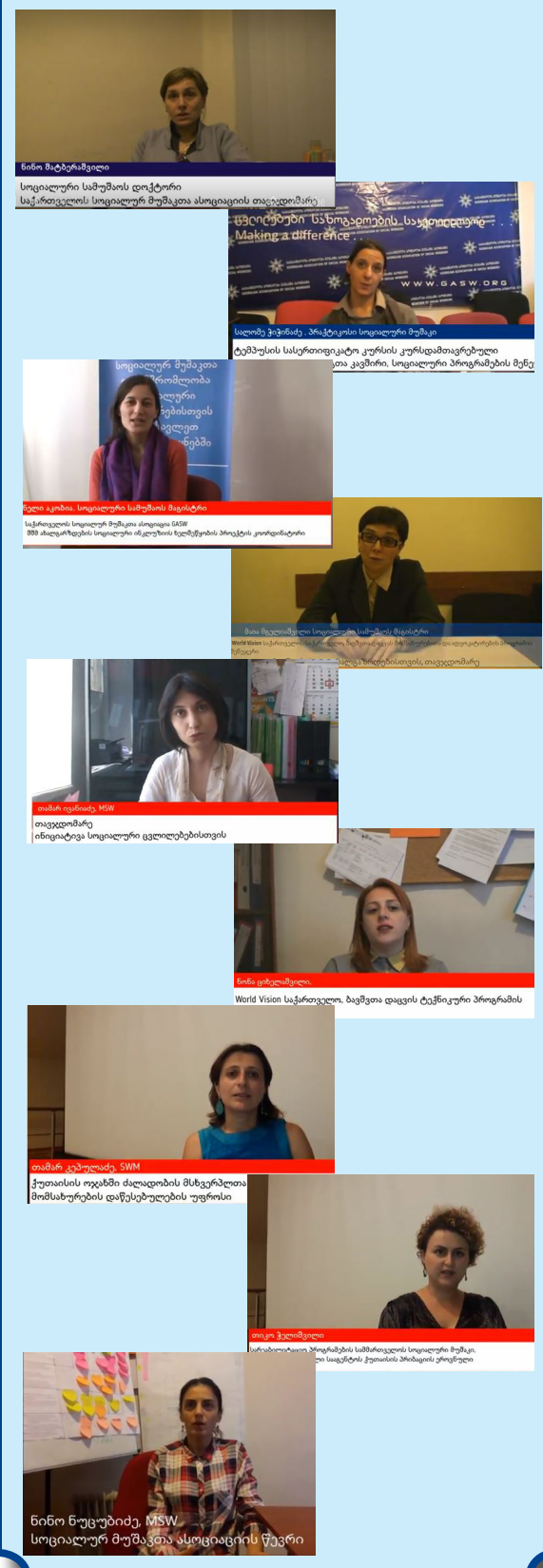
The goal of the section is to promote social work in Georgia, to show the diversity of the profession, to identify the importance of the role of a social worker and to focus on social problems/challenges and positive developments.

GASW respondents were given an opportunity to provide advice to new social workers starting their practice within the frames of the interviews.

We would like to thank our respondents! We will continue looking for new respondents and we will offer you interesting perspectives!

You may find the interviews on the following link:

<http://gasw.org/index.php/ka/publications/the-profession-which-is-a-part-of-me>



PROJECT "UNITED VOICE FOR CHILDREN"



The project has a goal to support child welfare through strengthening the society in the Black Sea Region (Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Georgia, Kosovo, Moldova, Romania and Serbia). The project in Georgia had a goal to unite the organizations in the child care field / to strengthen a coalition of these organizations. Within the frames of the project, the Coalition formed in 2012 was registered under the name "Coalition for Children and Youth".

Within the frames of the project, a series of activities were also carried out to strengthen the coalition:

- Performing needs assessment of the coalition and developing the relevant action plan;
- Registering the coalition and developing the statutes;
- Re-enlisting members and holding elections of the Board and the Chairperson;
- Increasing visibility of the coalition through media (a roundtable and field visits for the media representatives);
- Forming cooperation with organizations in the civil sector, as well as business organizations and celebrities with a high level of social responsibility;
- Undertaking grant searching activities;
- Supporting implementation of the coalition action plan and activities;
- There are working groups within the coalition with GASW representatives as their members.

The project was carried out with the support from the Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development of Germany, World Vision Germany and Agro Invest Serbia.

PROJECT "DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE FOSTER CARE IN KVEMO KARTLI REGION"



The project is carried out in partnership with McLain Association for Children in 3 raions (districts) of Kvemo Kartli region: Rustavi, Gardabani and Marneuli.

The goal of the project is to strengthen the foster care service which includes: capacity building of the existing foster carers, recruitment of new foster carers and empowerment of biological families / supporting the process of reintegrating children from foster families.

The project started in 2017 and has been implemented for a period of 6 months. Within the frames of the project, by this stage, the following has been achieved: a consultative group is formed, a concept of recruiting new foster carers is developed and a brochure is put together (in 3 languages). In person and group meetings were held with the goal to recruit new foster carers in Rustavi, Gardabani and Marneuli. Current foster carers participated in the process of recruiting new foster carers. Meetings were held with the representatives of the local municipalities with the goal to acquaint them with the foster care service and to engage them in the process of recruiting new foster carers.

Needs assessment was conducted in 5 biological families and they received relevant support. The children of these families are in foster care and are turning 18.

In the process of awareness raising and recruitment of new foster carers, a media workshop was held for local journalists with the goal to increase the role of the local media.

Georgian Association of Social Workers
www.gasw.org

E-mail for communication with members:
gaswmembers@gasw.org