A research on Social and Economic Needs of LGBTQI Community in Georgia

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RESEARCH TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Gay – Synonym for homosexual. The term is often used only with men and describes a man who is emotionally and physically attracted to a man.

Gender identity – A person's self-perception of gender, when he/she/they assigns him/her/themselves to any gender. A person may self-identify oneself as male or female. In some cases, self-perception is between the social constructs of masculinity and femininity or even beyond it. Gender identity may or may not be met with a person's birth sex. Since gender identity is internal, it is not visible to others. Gender identity is different from sexual orientation.

Gender (self)expression – The external manifestation of gender, which is mainly manifested in "masculine" and "feminine" clothing style, appearance, manners, speech, and other types of behavior. Gender expression is not always an indicator of sexual orientation or gender identity.

Gender-nonconformity or gender variance – The expression of a person's protest and resistance to gender "norms" and "conformities" established in a particular culture. Gender nonconformity can be manifested regardless of whether a person combines his/ her birth sex and gender identity.

Gender Dysphoria – A diagnosis used by psychologists and psychiatrists to describe the stress some individuals experience due to the difference between the sex they were assigned at birth and their gender identity.

Lesbian - A woman who is emotionally and physically attracted to a woman.

LGBTQI - An abbreviation used to refer to gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and queer people.

Men Who Have Sex with Men (MSM) - The term refers to sexual behavior rather than identity. It describes the behavior of all people who have sex with men, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Sexual orientation - an individual's sustained physical, romantic, emotional, and/or sexual attraction to another person. It includes homosexual, bisexual and heterosexual orientations.

Cisgender – The term cisgender refers to a person whose gender identity and gender self-expression is matching with the biological sex assigned to them at birth and the social expectations that apply to their gender.

Sex - A set of characteristics (anatomical, physiological, biochemical, genetic) that distinguish the female and male organism.

Transgender/trans* – An umbrella term that refers to people whose gender identity, expression, and behavior differ from the typical characteristics of their biological sex. This term also includes transsexuals, transvestites, transvestites, transgender people, cross-dressers, and gender non-conforming people. Transgender people can have hetero, homo, or bisexual orientation.

Transgender man – a person who was assigned the female gender at birth but identifies as a man. Transgender men are also called FtM (Female-to-Male).

Transgender woman – a person who was assigned male gender at birth but self-identifies as female. A transgender woman is also called MtF (Male-to-Female).

Transsexual – a person whose gender identity differs from the sex assigned at birth. Often, transsexual people want to correct their bodies through hormones or surgery to match their gender identity.

Homophobia/Transphobia – Irrational fear and hatred of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people based on prejudice similar to racism, xenophobia, antisemitism, and sexism.

Heterosexism – the Belief that heterosexuality is superior (religiously, morally, socially, emotionally, etc.) to other sexualities; the presumption that all people are heterosexual; the Belief that all people should be heterosexual. As an institutionalized system of oppression, heterosexism negatively affects LGBTQ people and some heterosexual individuals who do not conform to traditional understandings of masculinity and femininity.

Heterosexual – having an emotional, romantic, and sexual connection/feeling towards a person of the opposite sex or gender.

1. INTRODUCTION

Analysis of the legal status of LGBTQI people and the degree of their social inclusion in society requires a complex approach, which implies the identification of the fundamental causes of the group's vulnerability and disclosing the intersecting aspects. The existing analysis of the oppression of the LGBTQI group tends to see the identity-based oppression only in its cultural expressions and violations of civil and political rights. This leaves beside the analytical field of the socio-economic consequences of discrimination and violence, which manifest in the poverty, precariousness, and social vulnerability of the LGBTQI group, which in turn significantly worsens the group's well-being and chances of a dignified life.

LGBTQI people face significant challenges in protecting their rights and risk unfair and unequal treatment in every sphere of life. Heterosexism in society and the restrictions or self-limitations related to coming out have a particularly acute effect on the social and economic situation of the LGBTQI group, including the right to healthcare and the protection of labor rights. Therefore, the interrelationship of these challenges creates a cycle/network of social isolation, and consequently, poverty and escape are associated with substantial difficulties[1].

Unfortunately, despite the critical and progressive steps taken in Georgia regarding recognizing LGBTQI groups, improving the legislation, and establishing policy approaches, its practical implementation is less than satisfactory. Since the government has no vision and political will to go beyond formal steps and eliminate and prevent causes that produce oppression, discrimination, and violence toward LGBTQI people, the changing legislative/institutional environment cannot be adequately reflected in the lives of LGBTQI people. Moreover, this is also demonstrated by the research discussed in this document, according to which the state's anti-crisis policy, just as in previous years, still fails to respond to the needs of LGBTQI people, which has a negative impact on the socio-economic situation of the community members. This circumstance is further proven by the number of community members who moved abroad since the beginning of the pandemic[2].

The present research aims to study, analyze and identify the main challenges related to the social and economic conditions of the LGBTQI group. Based on that knowledge, it creates recommendations to the relevant state agencies, which are supposed to contribute to raising the awareness of the existing problems related to the socio-economic vulnerability of LGBTQI groups, introducing/implementing the relevant policy mechanisms by the government agencies, and their effective implementation in practice.

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[1] Special Report of the Public Defender of Georgia, Assessment of the Rights of the LGBT+ People in Georgia, 2021, p. 7, see: https://www.ombudsman.ge/res/docs/2022042914343766642.pdf

[2] Equality Coalition, The Right to Non-Discrimination in Practice for Various Groups in Georgia, Report from 2021, p. 46, see: https://wisg.org/Data/docs/publications/annual-reports/EC_DISCRIMINATION_ANNOUAL-REPORT-2021_GE.pdf

2. BASIC FINDINGS

The present research shows that the legal situation of LGBTQI people in Georgia, despite the significant improvements in the country's legislation and policies in recent years, is still difficult. Challenges and critical failures in the implementation process of international and national obligations still put the LGBTQI group at risk of violence, discrimination, and social isolation. The state still doesn't provide adequate care, support, and protection for the vulnerable part of the LGBTQI community adequately, and it's manifested in the social vulnerability, poverty, and many forms of unequal treatment toward LGBTQI community members.

The existing challenges related to the protection of the socio-economic rights of the LGBTQI community are also shown by the qualitative research carried out within the framework of this document, which identifies the following important results:

● Barriers to access to the right to education for the members of the LGBTQI community are manifested in various intersecting factors, yet, the experiences of the community members in schools and universities are not homogeneous. Respondents recalled cases of verbal, as well as physical, and psychological violence. Some of them remember their school period positively and note that there were no cases of discrimination or bullying. However, in some cases, this happens at the expense of hiding one's identity. The second part of the respondents talks about discrimination and bullying, which took place in school not only because of one's gender identity but also because of gender expression (e.g., different clothing styles, appearance, ethnicity, etc.) or differences in general.

● Compared to school, there was a less discriminatory environment in higher/professional education institutions, where, according to the respondents, they met relatively more tolerant people with different opinions. Despite this, some students and lecturers also had homophobic attitudes in the universities.

● Community members have different opinions regarding their employment. Some mention that employment is not a problem for them and that they work in various service fields (e.g., waiters, bartenders, consultants, etc.) and community organizations. The second part of the respondents notes that they have often faced problems because of their gender expression, appearance, or clothing style. There are also frequent cases when community members had to quit their jobs because of homophobic attitudes.

● Transgender women face the biggest obstacles in the labor market. Employers often turn them down because of their gender expression; as a result, their primary source of income comes from sex work. Moreover, in this kind of work, facts of discrimination and violence are frequent.

● Due to economic barriers, access to healthcare is also a challenge for LGBTQI community members: unemployment is high, wages are low, and public health insurance covers only a tiny percentage of needs; private insurance does not cover, for example, services related to sexual and reproductive health. Transgender people face economic obstacles the most, as they require expensive medical services - hormonal therapy, surgical intervention, etc. Community NGOs offer specific services (including services that are not generally available in the country) to the community members; however, they cannot

fully meet the demand due to limited resources. In addition, by providing these services, community organizations temporarily assume state obligations. However, community organizations can never offer certain categories of medical services due to the lack of an appropriate medical license.

- In addition to the economic barriers, several respondents talk about the discriminatory treatment, harassment, bullying, insult, rude and mocking attitude, lack of work ethics and competencies, and heteronormative views in the healthcare sphere from the medical staff. Fear of the violation of confidentiality or discriminatory treatment makes the LGBT(Q)I community members either refuse the use of certain services altogether or hide their orientation and identity. Psychiatrist or psychologist service is seen as one of the most needed services since the community members are forced to live in a traumatic environment. In addition to this, it is frequently a challenge for transgender persons to have access to the services essential for the transition process.

- The respondents rarely use certain social services, the reason for which is the lack of information. According to the community members, the LGBTQI group does not have access to state social protection services or housing. A discriminatory environment also limits access. Social services - housing for several months, vouchers for food, etc. - are provided only by non-governmental community organizations.

- The respondents have different experiences of the relationship with their family members: some of them have revealed their gender or sexual identity and have a good relationship with their family members, whereas some of them have not done so since they know about the homophobic attitudes of their families and are, therefore, forced to live with the certain restrictions, so that this information does not reach their families and some of them have complicated relationships with their family members. Part of the respondents has experienced psychological and physical violence from family members and expulsion from the home or the threat of it. Accordingly, respondents note that homelessness is a common problem in the community, especially among transgender people.

- Research participants noted that the shelter is undoubtedly essential for LGBTQI community members and emphasized those crucial aspects which have to be taken into account in case of the existence of a shelter: namely, the location should be strictly confidential to protect one from aggression from the society; The existence of a shelter is essential in Tbilisi then in other big cities according to the demand; They should be temporary if they provide education, employment promotion, psychiatrist and psychologist services, and other various development opportunities for the residents; It will be necessary to train staff to increase their acceptance of diversity and eliminate discrimination.

3. A METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE RESEARCH

According to the aims of the following research, **a desk study** was carried out, which included, on the one hand, the standards created by international and regional human rights organizations, and on the other hand, the analysis of the national legislation and policies of Georgia on the legal status of LGBTQI people in the light of their impact.

The report also includes qualitative research results addressing the social and economic needs and challenges of the LGBTQI community in different areas of society. The research covers issues such as community challenges in school, higher/vocational education institutions, and the labor market; Access to healthcare and barriers to receiving its services; Access to social services; Relationships with family, and housing (including shelters) issues.

The qualitative research was prepared by the non-governmental, non-profit research center CRRC-Georgia[3]. In order to study the issues mentioned above in depth and outline the needs of the LGBTQI group, within the framework of the research, ten focus groups and eight in-depth interviews were conducted directly with the representatives of the LGBTQI community in person from April 5 to April 14, 2022, through the Zoom platform.

Among the focus groups, two were conducted with gay men, two with lesbian women, two with bisexual men, two - with bisexual women, and two with transgender women. In each case, one/first focus group was conducted with representatives of the community living in Tbilisi and the second with the ones living outside Tbilisi in the regions. Each focus group was attended by an average of 6-8 participants, except for the transgender women's focus group, where there were three and four respondents.[4]

An in-depth interview method was used for transgender men and people with non-binary identities. As a result, four in-depth interviews were conducted with a transgender man and four with people with non-binary identities, one of whom presented herself as a transgender woman during the interview. Respondents were selected and included in the research with the help of the «Equality Movement» organization.

The average duration of the focus groups was 1 hour and 15 minutes, while for the interviews - 50 minutes. After preparing the transcriptions of the focus groups and notes of the interviews, the data were grouped and qualitatively analyzed, presented in the chapter - "Research Findings."

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[3] https://crrc.ge/en/
[4] See the number of focus groups and interviews with different representatives of the LGBTQI community in the first appendix.

4. A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC SITUATION OF LGBTQI PEOPLE IN GEORGIA

The legal situation of LGBTQI people in Georgia, despite the significant improvement of the policy, is still difficult. Over the past decade, Georgia has implemented significant legislative and policy reforms that have ensured the prohibition of discrimination and violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity and strengthened the principle of equality. The LGBTQI group was considered in the state human rights strategies of Georgia as well as in the action plans of the Permanent Parliamentary Gender Equality Council, which should be considered a significant step forward.

However, despite the changes, the challenges and critical failures in implementing the national obligations outlined in the policy documents mentioned above still put the LGBTQI group at risk of violence, discrimination, and social isolation. The state still does not provide adequate care, support, and protection for LGBTQI community members. In some cases, often high-ranking representatives of the state themselves contribute to stigmatizing the group and perpetuate negative attitudes and violence against the community.[5] As the report of the Public Defender of Georgia from 2021 indicates, „considering the current situation in Georgia, LGBT+ is one of the most marginalized groups and at the same time experiences the severe effects of institutional homophobia, negative public attitudes, and political instrumentalization. The report showed that the state's policy towards the LGBT+ group is not consistently and is not based on the real needs of the group, which is also clearly seen in the weakness of fulfillment of obligations that Georgia has - the state takes legislative or policy measures which do not affect real life and cannot improve the quality of LGBT+ group's life"[6]

On the other hand, little progress can be observed regarding public attitudes towards LGBTQI groups. As the study conducted by Women's Initiatives Supportive Group (WISG) in 2022 indicates: „the analysis of the results of the studies conducted in 2016 and 2021 shows that the attitude of the society toward the legal equality of LGBTQI people has significantly changed. The percentage of respondents who favor restricting some rights for LGBTQI people has dramatically decreased. However, it should be noted that this change is not naturally converted into positive attitudes"[7], which may be a sign that „openly expressing negative attitudes regarding issues of legal equality of LGBT(Q)I people are considered less acceptable."[8]

The mentioned, even negligible, changes have great importance, both for the acceptance and well-being of the LGBTQI group and for the formation of a democratic and healthy society. However, the social crisis in the country, uneven distribution of goods, widespread poverty, and the weakness of social security systems create significant barriers for citizens to use their civil and political, economic, social, and cultural rights. Social and economic crises continue to affect the most vulnerable groups, including women, persons with disabilities, rural households, the elderly, and LGBTQI people.

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[5] For example, see the public speech of the Prime Minister of Georgia regarding the events of July 5, 2021: https://www.radiotavi-supleba.ge/a/31345862.html

[6] Special Report of the Public Defender of Georgia, Assessment of the Rights of the LGBT+ People in Georgia, 2022, p. 60

[7] Aghdgomelashvili E. and others (2022). From Prejudice to Equality. Vol.2: Study on Public Knowledge, Awareness and Attitudes Towards LGBT(Q)I Community and Its Legal Equality, p. 20, see: https://wisg.org/Data/docs/publications/research-study/WISG_From%20Prejudice%20to%20Equality-Part%202-web%20.pdf

[8] Ibid.

Thus, cultural inequality manifests itself not only in discrimination and violence but also in social and economic vulnerability and poverty. However, despite the apparent relation between sexuality and poverty, this issue is not adequately studied internationally or nationally. The reason for this often is an incomplete understanding of factors that cause poverty and the problem of a narrow definition of „sexuality. " According to the overview by SIDA, "a human rights approach must uphold the principle of the indivisibility and integrity of the right itself, and recognize the interdependence of sexual rights with the rights for health, adequate housing, food, and employment. If poverty is understood not only materially but also as an exclusion, disease, and limitation of opportunities and freedom, then the lack of sexual rights is poverty. .[9] According to the World Health Organization, sexuality, among other things, includes what influences it - "sexuality is influenced by biological, psychological, social, economic, political, cultural, ethical, legal, historical, religious and spiritual factors.".[10]

According to SIDA's overview, poverty is much broader than material difficulties because, for poor people, other types of exclusion can be as crucial as an economic one. The document uses Robert Chambers' Web of Poverty's Disadvantages framework, highlighting aspects of poverty that typically do not fit into the narrow economic framework of development policy.[11] As for Chambers, poverty can include many interrelated dimensions: material poverty, physical illness, vulnerability, time poverty, institutions and access, lack of information and political influence, legal and social inferiority, impact on social relations, etc. These dimensions show, on the one hand, how existing norms about sexuality and gender affect well-being and, on the other hand, how poverty and vulnerability affect relationships or opportunities to fulfill one's desires.

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[9] Henry Armas (2007) Whose Sexualities Count: Poverty Participation and Sexual Rights, IDS Working Paper 294, Brighton: IDS., p.3 (As cited, SIDA (2010) Poverty and Sexuality: What are the connections? Overview and Literature Review)

[10] See: https://www.who.int/teams/sexual-and-reproductive-health-and-research/key-areas-of-work/sexual-health/defining-sexual-health

[11] SIDA (2010) Poverty and Sexuality: What are the connections? Overview and Literature Review, p. 13-14

5. RIGHT TO EDUCATION

5.1. International standard

In recent decades, international human rights organizations have created explicit legal guarantees and imposed clear political obligations on states to protect children from violence and ensure full access to education[12]. The right to education and the obligation to be protected from violence in educational institutions apply to all groups, including discrimination and violence based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression, as well as gender characteristics.

UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education (1960) is particularly important among international obligations. It establishes the obligation to ensure the principle of equal opportunities in education for all (Article 1). Article 13 of the UN's International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (1966) also recognized the right to education. It emphasized the importance of education in individuals' social, cultural, and economic empowerment. According to the document, education should strengthen respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990) also established a legally binding standard for ensuring full access to the right to education. Article 28 of the Convention protects children's rights by giving them equal opportunities to access the right to education. The Convention also obliges the countries to protect children from all forms of physical and psychological violence, including in educational institutions. This obligation relates explicitly to children at risk of violence based on their sexual orientation or gender identity. This is confirmed by the authoritative commentary of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, which states that Article 2 of the Convention, which concerns the prohibition of discrimination, also includes children's sexual orientation and gender identity.[13]. The Committee also highlights the problem of bullying in educational institutions, recognizing that bullying is often against potentially vulnerable children, including "gay, lesbian, transgender, and transsexual children."[14]

Among the international commitments recognized by Georgia, the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are critical, which, together with other issues, also include ensuring inclusive and equal education and lifelong learning opportunities for all.[15] Under SDG's goal 4, task 7, by 2030, the state must ensure that all students acquire the knowledge and skills to promote sustainable development. This includes sustainable livelihoods, human rights, gender equality, peace, and culture free from violence, through education to promote and protect cultural diversity.

To implement the 4th goal of sustainable development, UN institutions have developed The Incheon Declaration (Education 2030) and the framework of action,[16] according to one of the goal indicators, task 4.7. includes human rights, health, comprehensive sex education, climate change, and responsible and participatory citizenship. The states should also ensure that people of both sexes and all ages are given adequate opportunities throughout their lives to

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[12] CoE, Safe at school: Education sector responses to violence based on sexual orientation, gender identity/expression or sex characteristics in Europe, p. 25, see: https://rm.coe.int/prems-125718-gbr-2575-safe-at-school-a4-web/16809024f5

[13] UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, General comment No. 15 (2013) on the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health (art. 24): http://www.refworld.org/docid/51ef9e134.html; Also, UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, Concluding Observations on the combined second to fourth periodic reports of Iraq, par. 19 and 27, CRC/C/IRQ/CO/2-4 (2015): http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CRC/C/ IRQ/2-4&Lang=en

[14] UN Committee of the Rights of the Child, General Comment No. 13 (2011), p. 9-10: http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/50a0cd982.pdf

[15] UN, Sustainable Development Goals, Goal 4

[16] Education 2030: Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 4, 2016, see: https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000245656

acquire the education, skills, values, and attitudes needed to build a peaceful, healthy, and sustainable society.[17]

Recommendation CM/Rex(2010)5 of Committee of Ministers of The Council of Europe, which addresses eliminating discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, among other issues, specifies the obligation of member states to protect the right to education. As we read in the recommendation:

> „Taking into due account the over-riding interests of the child, member states should take appropriate legislative and other measures, addressed to educational staff and pupils, to ensure that the right to education can be effectively enjoyed without discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity; this includes, in particular, safeguarding the right of children and youth to education in a safe environment, free from violence, bullying, social exclusion or other forms of discriminatory and degrading treatment related to sexual orientation or gender identity.

> Taking into due account the over-riding interests of the child, appropriate measures should be taken to this effect at all levels to promote mutual tolerance and respect in schools, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. This should include providing objective information concerning sexual orientation and gender identity, for instance, in school curricula and educational materials, and providing pupils and students with the necessary information, protection, and support to enable them to live by their sexual orientation and gender identity.“ [18]

In addition to those mentioned above, according to the Council of Europe, it is of particular importance to implement and protect the following principles in educational spaces so that it responds to the needs and interests of LGBTQI children and adolescents, first of all, protect them from violence[19]:

1) National and school-level policies to prevent and address SOGIESC-based violence;

2) Curricula and learning materials supportive of diversity;

3) Support and training for educational staff, especially teachers;

4) Support for students;

5) Partnerships with civil society, in part to inform about SOGIESC-based violence;

6) Monitoring violence and evaluating responses.

Thus, the mere existence of specific policies is not enough to eliminate SOGIESC-based discrimination and violence in educational institutions. However, it requires continuous and complex measures, through the cooperation of various agencies, to effectively prevent inequality, discrimination, and violence and ensure its sustainability.

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[17] Ibid, par. 61

[18] Recommendation CM/Rec(2010)5 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on measures to combat discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity, paragraph 31-32, see: https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectID=09000016805cf40a

[19] CoE, Safe at school: Education sector responses to violence based on sexual orientation, gender identity/expression or sex characteristics in Europe, p. 30, see: https://rm.coe.int/prems-125718-gbr-2575-safe-at-school-a4-web/16809024f5

5.2. National obligations and the challenges in practice

To ensure the protection of the right to education for all people, Georgia has recognized all the obligations discussed in the previous chapter; in addition, the obligations of equal access to the right to education and protection from violence are given in the Law on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination, the legislation regulating education in Georgia and relevant policy documents. Noteworthy, following the amendments made in 2020 to the Law on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination in Georgia, access to education was marked out into a separate sub-section, to which the principle of equal treatment applies. [20]

Article 5, paragraph 6 of the Law of Georgia on General Education states, „Teaching subjects determined by the National and School Curricula must be academic, impartial and non-discriminatory." The anti-discrimination records are also seen in the Law on Higher Education, obliging the state, on the one hand, the higher education institution, on the other, to ensure access to higher education and to create an environment free from „academic, religious or ethnic discrimination, as well as discrimination on the grounds of opinion, sex, social origin, and others."[21]

However, despite the legislative guarantees, access to quality, safe and equitable education in Georgia remains challenging, especially for vulnerable groups. Access to the right to education for LGBTQI groups is influenced by the interplay of cultural and social factors. According to the research carried out by the Social Justice Center on the social exclusion of the LGBTQI group, "often the discriminatory or non-accepting environment in the educational institution affects not only the attendance and participation in the lessons but also the quality of learning."[22] Thus, unequal treatment in the educational institutions or the stress, emotional background caused by the fear of such treatment affects the involvement of LGBTQI students in the educational process.

In the special report of the Public Defender of Georgia regarding the legal status of the LGBT+ group in Georgia, it is mentioned that no in-depth studies have been conducted in Georgia regarding SOGIESC-based bullying and the encouragement of discriminatory behavior from the teachers. However, minor studies and the report of UN independent expert on violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity „shows that Georgian public schools are not free from this kind of practice. Moreover, the reinforcement of stereotypes and the encouragement of discriminatory behavior often come from the teachers themselves. Which, of course, indicates the need to raise teachers' awareness and constant work with them".[23]

To ensure school safety in the narrow sense and establish respect for the principle of equality in society in the broad sense, the inclusion and teaching of diversity issues, gender equality, mutual respect, and civic self-awareness have particular importance in the educational curricula. This also includes providing comprehensive sex education through formal and informal educational institutions. Georgia has made significant progress in recent years, involving teaching the subjects "self and society" and "civic education" in schools, which contains important notes on gender equality, respect for diversity, and other issues. However, comprehensive sex education is still not taught in Georgia. That negatively impacts students' awareness and knowledge of

[20] Article 2, Paragraph 10, Subsection g.g), see: https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/2339687?publication=3

[21] Article 2, paragraph 2, h) and Article 2, paragraph 3, j), see: https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/32830?publication=97

[22] Jalaghania L. „A Study of Social Exclusion of the LGBTQ Group in Georgia", 2020, Social Justice Center

[23] Special Report of the Public Defender of Georgia, Assessment of the Rights of the LGBT+ People in Georgia, 2022, p. 37, see: https://www.ombudsman.ge/res/docs/2022042914343766642.pdf

their rights, including sexual rights and health.[24] As mentioned in the Permanent Parliamentary Gender Equality Council report, „knowledge about reproductive health and rights among the students is still poor; students and adolescents do not have complete information about their bodies, relationships, reproductive health, and sexuality."[25]

5.3. Analysis of Qualitative Research

Challenges in Schools

In order to identify barriers to accessing the right to education, members of the LGBTQI community participating in focus groups and individual interviews were asked to talk about their experiences in the general education process, which were related to their sexual orientation and gender identity.

The study results showed that, from a physical and financial point of view, schools were accessible to almost all respondents. However, it should be noted that access to education does not only mean the physical presence of educational institutions and their financial availability but also includes a safe and respectful environment for students, the absence of which significantly interferes with access to education.

The respondents' experiences during their studies at school differ. This difference is based on the difference in age among the community members participating in the research. They had to study in schools during different periods, which also affected their experiences in school. However, apart from age and the period of studying, one of the factors of experiences is the different approaches that the members have chosen to express their sexuality and identity. Therefore, the experience of discriminatory treatment and bullying is not typical for everyone, although the respondents' opinions also differ regarding considering school as a safe space.

Although significant changes have been observed in recent years in terms of establishing an acceptance culture in school institutions, the reason for this is the increased access to the usage of information technologies by students, rather than the transformation of the educational institutions themselves involving all the people in it. For example, even though the Resource Officers Institute was introduced to ensure the safety of Georgia's school institutions, it does not fully identify covert discriminatory behavior in schools and, more often, covert oppression.

> *"When they found out [about the orientation], a different kind of bullying started, the aggressive one. For example, once they burned my hair and told me that the "monkeys" like you have their head shaved, so I do not need it. When I told this to the Resource Officer, at that time, this regime of Resources Officers was new, he/ she told me not to make an elephant out of a fly and let me go. They didn't react anymore, and I had to deal with such cases alone. Firstly, I had aggressive reactions, but then I started to have indifferent reactions, and after that, such bullying stopped" (Focus group, lesbian woman, Batumi)*

Another part of the respondents noted that cases of bullying and discrimination due to their gender identity or sexual orientation were not often, but only because they either did not realize their identity yet or managed to hide it and avoid talking about it. Some respondents said they

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[24] Parliamentary Gender Equality Council, Gender Equality in Georgia, Barriers and Recommendations, Part II, 2022, UNDP, UNFPA, NDI, p. 55, see: https://georgia.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/gender_geo_part_2.pdf

[25] Ibid, p. 54-55

realized their **gender identity or sexual orientation** in the last years of school. However, they were careful about coming out to protect themselves from various forms of harassment and bullying:

> „*Personally, I didn't experience any kind of bullying or anything at school, although I was aware of all of it at that time, but I probably tried my best to cover it up, and I was fine because of that. I was probably a good actor, and that's why I didn't have any obstacles in this regard during school*" (*Focus group, gay man, Tbilisi*)

In other cases, when, for example, lesbian women revealed their identity, it was followed by rather harsh reactions from friends or schoolmates:

> „*The first people I told were my friends of years, two girls. After this, our friendship ended, not on my part but on their initiative, and, in a few days, this news was spread throughout the school, and there was physical abuse, and frequent verbal abuse, coming from completely unknown people. Once I was going down the stairs, a guy was going up, and he spat on my newly dyed hair. Such things used to happen often.*" (*Focus group, lesbian woman, Tbilisi*)

Many community members participating in the research also recalled the facts of bullying in school, which were not directly related to declared sexual orientation and gender identity but to a difference in perceptions of gender or self compared to normative perceptions. According to the respondents, the causes of bullying were different appearance, dressing styles, long hair, or representation of different subcultures. Noteworthy that the rules and approaches established by the school environment, the non-acceptance of critical opinion, and strict, often stereotypical representations were significant obstacles for some respondents.

> „*[...]The environment was not discriminatory to me, but there were some cases of bullying. But it might not have been because of my sexual orientation, because I hadn't come out back then, and it was more because of, for example, I had a piercing, or I was dressing a little differently, or something like that.*" (*Focus group, bisexual male, Tbilisi*)

In school institutions, gay and bisexual men with a feminine gender expression were mostly oppressed for expressing themselves differently from masculine norms, manifested in their appearance or tone of voice. In contrast, lesbian and bisexual women with masculine expressions were oppressed for their deviation from gender norms of appearance and femininity.

The respondents also emphasized the absence of an accepting and solidarity environment in Georgia, manifested in the exclusion of people who do not comply with various normative public standards. Therefore, these negative attitudes, in addition to LGBTQI community members, also significantly impact ethnic and religious minorities. Respondents representing ethnic minorities confirm this with their examples.

> "*I'm also ethnically Azerbaijani, and in this regard, I faced quite a lot of obstacles in public schools. While studying in public school, for a long time I was somewhat ashamed that I wasn't Georgian and thought that my ethnicity was something that defined me for the rest of my life. Of course, there were many cases of discrimination.*" (*focus group, bisexual woman, region*).

The respondents noted that the teachers are also responsible for the oppression of LGBTQI or other people gathered due to their similarities. Attitudes full of stereotypes are widespread among teachers, which causes distorted information and, in that way, strengthens stigma.

> „My biology teacher also thought that it was an illness, and she/he was saying it very freely, not embellished, but back then, I was young, and I couldn't resist. Instead, I avoided it because I tried to touch upon this topic as little as possible. It was kind of defense for me" (Focus group, lesbian woman, region)

In other cases, especially outside Tbilisi, discrimination and oppression were common in schools. According to the respondents, they were bullied by classmates and other children from school and treated unequally by teachers and parents of classmates. Some of the respondents said that while going to school, they felt only uncomfortable because they were different from the rest of the students.

> „I have a lot of, so to speak, trauma from school, from teachers, as well as from children and their parents, most of the time I felt like an object which can be thrown from one corner to another" (Focus group, gay man, region)

Transgender men noted that they were less discriminated against, e.g., compared to transgender women and gay men) because, based on the existing gender roles in Georgia, a man's femininity and "giving up" of masculinity are perceived as much more unacceptable than a woman's masculine expression. As respondents say, generally, transgender women have more problems because it's easier for a transgender man to disguise himself in society. They may not reveal their identity at all, while in the case of transgender women, it's tough to hide their identity due to their male biological/physical characteristics.

The initial reaction to the bullying and harassment towards the respondents in school was aggression and complaint to the administration. However, since the mentioned solutions proved ineffective, the community members preferred calmness, indifference, and ignorance.

> „My reaction to it [bullying] was to maintain my comfort zone, to communicate less, so I wouldn't have to express my thoughts sharply about certain things. For me, isolating myself was the best way to avoid unnecessary problems" (Focus group, bisexual man, Tbilisi).

Although the community members participating in the research shared positive experiences regarding accepting and the correct attitude of the teachers, such cases are so rare that they can only be considered exceptions. Focus groups and individual interviews showed that educational institutions are not free from stigma, discrimination, and various forms of violence, which comes not only in the form of bullying from classmates and schoolmates but also as oppression from teachers and administration, which is a significant problem. That requires a complex and continuous approach from the government to establish a culture based on equality and acceptance in educational institutions.

In addition to the mentioned, it's also essential to raise community members' awareness about bullying and discriminatory treatment because often, they may not be able to name specific behavior and seek help. That's why it's critically important to include these issues in educational curricula to ensure a safe and equitable educational environment through a multilateral approach.

Compared to school, the higher/vocational school turned out to be a more comfortable environment for LGBTQI community members. As the respondents noted, they met more mature, settled people with whom normal relations were possible at the university.

> „The situation at the university was different. There were many people with different opinions and a more comfortable environment. I mean not only fellow students but also the lecturers. The atmosphere was much more relaxed" (Focus group, gay man, Tbilisi)

Nevertheless, there are cases when some people in higher educational institutions express their non-acceptance of LGBTQI people. In those cases, the respondents try to avoid expressing their identity or stay away from people they expect discrimination, harassment, or unequal treatment.

Despite this, several respondents mentioned that some lecturers in the university have a negative attitude towards community members. This tendency was more notable in the regions.

> „I was studying at Shota Rustaveli State in Batumi, and I definitely have felt a homophobic attitude from one of my lecturers because I often wore an earring, I wasn't dressed as it was acceptable for him or as he expected me to, he always was putting some labels on me and was aggressive towards me" (Focus group, gay man, region)

Respondents believe that age plays a significant role in the quality of acceptance of lectures because, in their opinion, young people have a more open and accepting attitude, while the older generation - is more stereotypical.

> „I have heard many cases, I can't even count on my fingers how much, when the lecturer either didn't write or give a poorer grade or thrown out from the auditorium, even because of dress code... but when we are talking about the lecturers, I can't tell that all of them are like that. 70% of lecturers are of the older generation. But with the younger lecturers, who were invited recently, there were no problems at all" (Focus group, gay man, Tbilisi)

One of the respondents also recalled a case when the lecturer told the family members about the respondent's sexual orientation.

Those who experienced studying at the university outside Tbilisi also mention homophobic attitudes from fellow students:

> "In my case, for example, we got into conversation and reached a level when the students themselves, my fellow students, said that this is disrespectful, it should not be seen, and this should not be publicly shown because of our traditions. Logically they take every dialogue that way... that the Georgianness is apocryphal, the rejection of traditions, and so on. That is, it must be suppressed, hidden, something must be converted into it, in the context of respect-disrespect... initially from the lecturer and then from the majority of the students. (Focus group, bisexual woman, region)

Apart from these individual cases, most respondents positively evaluate their relationship with lecturers and their studying experience at university.

As for financial restrictions, the community members had cases when they dropped their studies due to financial problems, but they also note that many people in Georgia have this problem. It doesn't affect members of the community specifically:

> „In my opinion, this problem is everywhere, and it happened to me that I dropped my studies because of financial reasons, and that's why I have an incomplete higher education. It's a problem in Georgia generally and not only for our community… " (Focus group, lesbian woman, region)

However, it should be emphasized that the barriers to accessing higher education are directly related to societal, cultural, and social inequality. The presence of negative attitudes and the expectation of violence get in the way of LGBTQI students getting a complete education and create real chances for future well-being.

6. RIGHT TO WORK

6.1. International standard

The right to work and employment is one of the fundamental rights that create the basis of people's well-being and development opportunities.[26] International Labour Organization's (ILO) Convention N111 on Discrimination protects all workers from unequal treatment. With Convention N190 on Eliminating Violence and Harassment in the World of Work, ILO recognizes the rights of everyone to be free from discrimination and violence at the workplace. As for Article 6 of the convention, „Each Member shall adopt laws, regulations, and policies ensuring the right to equality and non-discrimination in employment and occupation, including for women workers, as well as for workers and other persons belonging to one or more vulnerable groups or groups in situations of vulnerability that are disproportionately affected by violence and harassment in the world of work."[27]

Given the importance of unequal treatment in the employment field and its serious consequences, the ILO adopted a special resolution in 2021 concerning inequalities and the world of work.[28] According to this, unequal access to economic and decent work opportunities, finance, public services, quality education, relevant training, and essential social services infrastructures between urban, rural, and peripheral areas and more prosperous and poorer regions also contribute to the strengthening of inequality and the stratification of society. According to the document, „Discrimination, including systemic, multiple and intersectional forms of discrimination, remains a persistent and pervasive dimension and the root cause of inequality, which often manifests in a lack of career opportunities in the labor market. [...] Violence and harassment in the world of work create and reinforce inequalities. Discrimination hinders not only equal access to education, training, and lifelong learning, but also access to quality jobs, housing, mobility, land, and capital, as well as social protection."[29]

To effectively implement the principle of protection of the right to decent work, the ILO Convention N131 on Minimum Wage Fixing is significantly essential. According to the Convention, the minimum wage must be relevant to the country's economic development and cost of living and respond to the needs of the population[30]. However, this issue is not regulated in Georgia[31], which essentially violates the rights not only of LGBTQI but all workers in the country.

Apart from the ILO Conventions, which Georgia has ratified, the country also has several obligations to eliminate inequality in labor relations. This includes the Association Agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States.[32] The Georgian state must ensure the harmonization of the legislation and practice based on the relevant directives from the European Union on the issues of employment, social policy, and equal opportunities. Also, within the UN Sustainable Development Goals, Georgia is obliged to „ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including by

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[26] ILO, Inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) persons in the world of work: A learning guide, 2022, see: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---gender/documents/publication/wcms_846108.pdf

[27] ILO, Recommendation N. 190, Article 6, see: https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C190

[28] ILO, ICL.109/Resolution XVI, International Labour Conference – 109th Session, 2021, par. 10, see: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_832096.pdf

[29] Ibid, par. 20

[30] ILO, Convention N131, Article 3, see: https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C131

[31] The minimum wage in Georgia is still 20 GEL (approximately 7 EUR), according to the Decree of the President of Georgia No. 351 of June 4, 1999.

[32] Association Agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States, of the One Part, and Georgia, of the Other Part, XXX Appendix, see: https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/ view/2496959?publication=0

eliminating discriminatory laws, policies, and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies, and action in this regard."[33]

The recommendation of the European Council CM/Rec(2010)5 on measures to combat discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity is also noteworthy. Among the other issues, it focuses on protecting the rights of LGBTQ people in the labor market and gives the following recommendations to member states:

> *„Member states should ensure the establishment and implementation of appropriate measures which provide adequate protection against discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity in employment and occupation in public as well as in the private sector. These measures should cover access to employment and promotion, dismissals, pay, and other working conditions, including the prevention, combating, and punishment of harassment and other forms of victimization.*
>
> *Particular attention should be paid to providing effective protection of the right to privacy of transgender individuals in the context of employment, in particular regarding employment applications, to avoid any irrelevant disclosure of their gender history or their former name to the employer and other employees."[34]*

The above-mentioned document of the Council of Europe is recommendatory. Though, it establishes a necessary international standard, according to which the states must ensure the maintenance of inadmissibility of SOGIESC-based discrimination in labor relations by developing the legislation or offering strategic intervention through policies.

6.2. National obligations and challenges in practice

The main regulatory framework of labor relations in Georgia is the Labor Code and the Law on Public Service. The reforms concerning labor law in 2020, which were part of the Association Agreement signed between Georgia and the European Union, significantly strengthened the rights of employees at the workplace. The reforms also improved concepts of discrimination and adapted it more to international standards. The law also clarified boundaries of prohibition of discrimination and indicated that it applies to selection criteria and employment conditions in pre-contractual relations, as well as access to career advancement at all levels of the professional hierarchy and whatever the sector or branch of activity; access to all types of vocational guidance, advanced training, vocational training and retraining (including practical work experience) at all levels of the professional hierarchy; labor conditions, remuneration conditions, and conditions for the termination of labor relations; membership of, and involvement in, an employees' association, an employers' association, or any organization whose members carry out a particular profession, including the benefits provided for by such organizations and also to conditions of occupational social protection, including social security and health care conditions.[35]

In addition to the above, the Labor Code took into account the obligation of the employer to take measures to ensure compliance with the principle of equal treatment between persons in the workplace, including anti-discrimination provisions in its internal labor regulations,

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[33] Goal 10.3, see: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/11803Official-List-of-Proposed-SDG-Indicators.pdf
[34] par. 29-30
[35] Labour Code of Georgia, Article 5

collective agreements, and other documents, and shall ensure adherence to it.[36] This record is of particular importance because, among other reasons, the lack of a positive commitment to providing a safe and secure workplace led to a hostile work environment that often forced LGBTQI people to leave their jobs and stay without income.[37] The research conducted even before the COVID-19 pandemic showed the unsustainability of access to employment and its maintenance for LGBTQI people. A large number of respondents (32.7%) work in the arts, entertainment, and recreation, and almost a fifth (19.2%) work in the accommodation/food services[38], which often represent precarious work and are characterized by low social protection and pay. The study conducted in 2020 showed that the average salary of LGBTQI people participating in the study didn't exceed 1000 GEL in the case of 60.5% of the respondents. The salary of 36.1% was in the range of 601-100 GEL. Almost a quarter (24.4%) indicated that their monthly salary was an average of 251-600 GEL.[39]

As noted in a special report of the Public Defender of Georgia regarding the rights of LGBT+ people, the COVID-19 pandemic caused the most damage to the above-mentioned areas of employment and, therefore, to the economic situation of the LGBTQI community. „The financial crisis wreaked havoc on socially vulnerable and marginalized groups. Because most community members were employed in the service sector, the cessation of employment in these sectors automatically resulted in job losses and a steep decline in income. Self-employed individuals and those working in the informal sector were also placed in a difficult position. As with the rest of the community, this group was left without income due to the workplace's lack of social protection mechanisms. They were unable to locate any recipients of state assistance under the anti-crisis plan".[40]

According to the study conducted by The Women's Initiatives Supporting Group (WISG) as well, during the lockdown, 12.8% of the respondents were left without an income - „The median income of the participants (900 GEL) was reduced three times during the lockdown (300 GEL). Currently, the median monthly income of respondents is lower than before the pandemic by 45% and is 500 GEL."[41]

According to the study mentioned earlier, the pandemic also affected the diversification of sources of income. Before the pandemic, hired labor, self-employment, and income from renting property/deposit (including sex work) made up 58% of income sources, and assistance from family, intimate partner, or friends made up 33%. In comparison, the remaining 9% was distributed to state assistance, pension, and other sources. The situation changed dramatically during the lockdown: only 31.7% of the participants identified hired labor and self-employment as sources of income. The share of financial assistance provided by family members, intimate partners, or friends in total revenue increased from 33% to 56.3%. The percentage of state assistance rose from 1% to 6.2% due to services provided to citizens affected by government-imposed restrictions. After the lockdown, part of the respondents was able to continue working, although the majority of them are still in need of financial assistance.[42]

[36] Labour Code of Georgia, Article 11, paragraph 9
[37] WISG, CM/Rec(2010)5 Monitoring of the Implementation of the Recommendation, 2018, see: https://wisg.org/Data/docs/publications/report/WISG-CMREC-2013-18-GE.pdf
[38] Jalaghania L. „A Study of Social Exclusion of the LGBTQ Group in Georgia", 2020, Social Justice Center
[39] Ibid, p. 138
[40] p. 38
[41] Aghdgomelashvili E. and others, Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on LGBT(Q)I Community in Georgia, WISG, 2022, see: https://wisg.org/Data/docs/publications/research-study/WISG_Covid-impact-on-LGBTQI-community.pdf?fbclid=IwAR2l8cUdXMXUvM_uQFVi-4htEfIIykpvRZXOmzwRuZ64mlCIQTWcpfeXcQ-c
[42] Ibid.

The barriers for trans people to access decent work, caused by the lack of legal recognition of gender in Georgia and the obligation to submit identity documents at the workplace, should be noted separately. Based on this, trans people often avoid engaging in formal work so that, on the one hand, information about their identity is not disclosed. On the other hand, the community members expect adverse reactions, which limits them from participating in the labor market on an equal basis with other citizens. Based on the mentioned and other additional barriers, many trans women are involved in everyday work, particularly sex work. Studies show that the main reason why trans people engage in sex work is a difficult economic situation, resulting from the stress of financial instability and threats to life and health.[43] Consequently, sex work in Georgia can be considered one of the most dangerous jobs. Besides, during the pandemic, as a result of the current economic crisis and imposed restrictions, trans women were the ones who suffered the most.[44]

A decent work environment for LGBTQI people means adequate pay and a safe and stigma-free environment. According to the survey conducted in 2020, 54.4% of the respondents answered positively to the question - "Would you work for low pay if the workplace allowed you to express your identity freely." [45] This indicates that for more than half of the respondents, not only adequate pay is essential, but also a safe, healthy work environment, which would be free from homophobia and where they don't have to constantly self-control themselves and make additional efforts to avoid a direct or indirect declaration of identity and, therefore, to maintain a healthy work environment.

6.3. Analysis of Qualitative Research

Challenges on labor market

The results of the qualitative research show that for LGBTQI community members, access to employment and labor rights, in general, is manifested in different forms. On the one hand, discriminatory attitudes are manifested in the pre-contractual stage, which, among other stages, includes the interview, the labor relationship stage during employment, and the time of dismissal. Consequently, for LGBTQI community members, barriers arise not only directly in labor relations and entering the labor market. Based on those mentioned above, the spaces that don't set many criteria in the employment process and where there is a relatively high degree of acceptance towards people with non-normative sexuality or identity become more accessible to the LGBTQI community members. Therefore, a large part of the group is employed in the field of entertainment, artistic spaces, and the field of service, in particular, in clubs, bars, salons, and hotels, as waiters, administrators, consultants, or "receptionists," some of them are also employed in the non-governmental sector. According to the respondents, access to a decent working environment in Georgia is limited. That's why the LGBTQI community members agree to work at places that don't provide them with a decent salary and social protection schemes. Therefore, they're involved in precarious work, which doesn't ensure their well-being and adequate quality of life.

[43] Jalaghania L. „A Study of Social Exclusion of the LGBTQ Group in Georgia", 2020, Social Justice Center, p. 151
[44] Aghdgomelashvili E. and others, Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on LGBT(Q)I Community in Georgia, WISG, 2022, p. 13
[45] Jalaghania L. „A Study of Social Exclusion of the LGBTQ Group in Georgia", 2020, Social Justice Center, p. 147

„[...]It is not accessible... [Adequate work], you work at a viral, low-income job like for example, a waitress, or a stylist or something like that... to tell the truth, in kind of supermarkets like Spar there are many members of the community because they have no other options and agree to work at this low-paid job" (Individual interview, transgender man, Tbilisi).

As the respondents noted, it's possible for workplaces not to be clearly and directly discriminatory towards the LGBTQI community and that a hostile environment isn't a part of the employer's policy. However, this doesn't solve the homophobic attitudes at the workplace at the individual level and leads to unhealthy attitudes and the creation of a hostile work environment.

Generally, according to the research results, the practices of harassment and discrimination at the workplace are expressed in open and hidden forms. This Includes apparent discriminatory behavior, but, at the same time, homophobic treatment can be reflected in the exclusion, isolation, and unfriendly attitudes towards a member of the LGBTQI community, which affects the work environment in the same way.

"At first, I blamed the fact that I was new there. So, I was this so-called "new" for four months already, and I mean, they ignored me, whether I was there or not, they didn't talk to me at all because they didn't react to what I said. Because of that, I got used to it. I was always quiet and am still quiet now because I am used to it. Well, it had such a destructive effect that you work side by side, and they have this kind of attitude... Ignoring was the worst. It would be better if they said something and were mad at me. I could say something, but in that situation, I preferred to stand somewhere and work alone and not be around them. Even when I was there, I wasn't there "(Individual interview, transgender man, Region/Tbilisi).

According to the respondents, there are a number of cases when non-normative clothing style, hair color, or other characteristics became an excuse for employers, which happens more often in the regions. As the respondents assume, the selection of the employees is based on visual appearance:

„There might not be a problem of employment, but here's the case of self-expression. The main case is an expression, when you are different and express yourself, for example, with hair color. I can recall, I was once working in Batumi and my manager often bullied me because of my hair color, he/she knew about my orientation... As you know, the situation is even more difficult in regions. Actually, I never had trouble finding the job, but when you are expressing yourself, others talk about you out loud as well" (Focus group, gay man, Tbilisi)

The respondents believe it's possible to maintain a safe working environment, although in most cases, for LGBTQI people, this happens at the expense of hiding one's identity and expression. However, even the latter is a problem for trans people, especially for women, because it's not always possible to hide their gender identity, and that's why they have much fewer chances to be hired. Consequently, they often have to choose jobs where they wouldn't have to hide their identity or submit personal documents.

„It's not accessible for everyone. I mean, it's tough when people look at you, and you are trans. You are lowered in their eyes. Even if the government is supporting you, the employer rejects you based on your orientation" (Focus group, transgender woman, Tbilisi)

As for the transgender men, there were also cases when the respondents were fired, or quit their job because of their identity:

> "I had two cases when I had troubles at work. In the first case, which was in 2005, I simply quit, and the second one was in 2016-2017. I had problems at the place where I'm a freelancer, and I settled things down involving "black people," but it's a fact that I had problems… [At the work] they found out that I was the supporter [of the community] and said that I was gay as well. They couldn't realize who I was, and that's where the problems started… At first, [at the first workplace] they thought I was lesbian, and that's why they dismissed me, then they thought that since I'm a supporter, I'm gay as well. Nevertheless, today they know that I'm simply transgender man "(Individual interview, transgender man, Tbilisi).

One of the respondents also recalled that after the disclosure of her identity by a third party, she had to leave not only the job but also the region:

> „…As for the fact that I left my region, it's related to my forced coming out, because of which I had to leave the region because of my former boss, who was following me on Instagram. I accidentally forgot to hide the story (laughing), and he saw a photo of my partner. After that, I received a text in which he threatened me with showing it to everyone, telling me that I was despicable to my family, for everyone, for orthodox Christians since this girl was even a close acquaintance to me. So it was a personal insult, and he/she/they even told me that it would have been better if I had not been born. The text was full of insults and painful to read. Moreover, of course, he/she/they made a screenshot of this photo and showed it to my acquaintances and friends. I was therefore forced to leave the region. (Focus group, bisexual woman, region)

Regarding access to decent pay, community members believe that in Georgia, in general, there are no salaries that are adequate and relevant to the cost of living, affecting not only the LGBTQI group but the entire population.

Within the research, the respondents also talked about sex work. As they say, the challenges in the Georgian labor market are precisely why transgender women are often involved in sex work, which is related to unstable income and actual risks to health and life.

> „Terrible things are happening there, there's a peak of discrimination, and I don't know how the situation is now, but earlier, there was no night without any kind of violence. One person may even be beaten ten times by so-called clients. And after that, there was mocking from the police, they were not listening and reacting appropriately " (Individual interview, transgender man, region/Tbilisi).

Some respondents also note that the employment problem due to non-normative expression was more significant than it is now. Some of them believe that, compared to the older generation, the new generation is more open and accepting and hopes there'll be a more free environment for community members in the future.

> „It should be noted that times and attitudes have changed. If I came to the same supermarket, for example, 5 or 10 years ago, I think they wouldn't accept me… Things are still changing, but very slowly and need a lot of time for a radical change" (Focus group, gay man, Tbilisi).

7. RIGHT TO HEALTH

7.1. International standard

Every human being is entitled to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health conducive to living a life of dignity. The realization of the right to health may be pursued through numerous complementary factors, namely the physical presence, financial availability, affordability, and quality of healthcare services.[46] The human right to healthcare can be achieved through the full implementation of the mentioned aspects.

The UN Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights recognizes the right of everyone to physical and mental healthcare services.[47] Moreover, according to paragraph N14 of the Covenant, the right to health is not to be understood as a right to be healthy. The right to health contains both freedoms and entitlements. The freedoms include the right to control one's health and body, including sexual and reproductive freedom, and the right to be free from interference, such as freedom from torture, non-consensual medical treatment, and experimentation. By contrast, the entitlements include the right to a system of health protection that provides equality of opportunity for people to enjoy the highest attainable level of health.[48] The same document proscribes any discrimination in access to health care, among the other factors, based on health status (including HIV/AIDS), sexual orientation, social vulnerability, or other things.[49] The committee notes that even in times of severe resource constraints, the vulnerable members of society must be protected by the adoption of relatively low-cost targeted programs.[50]

The Special Rapporteur in the report of 2019 on the rights to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, pays special attention to the elimination of discrimination in both - physical and mental healthcare services.[51] According to the Rapporteur, the right to mental health depends on non-discrimination in the enjoyment of all other human rights. It is itself a critical determinant of mental health and well-being. Discrimination on any ground, within and beyond mental health settings, is both a cause and a consequence of poor mental health.[52] Harmful stereotypes and stigmatization in the community, family, school and workplace settings undermine healthy relationships, dismantling the supportive and inclusive environments that are required for good mental health.[53] Moreover, the Rapporteur mentions that structural violence stems from unequal power relationships in social structures, notably exemplified by racism, sexism, heterosexism, and ableism, where groups in vulnerable situations are systematically prevented from meeting basic needs. Violence and discrimination are inextricably linked; many people worldwide have their mental health placed at risk due to avoidable forms of violence or socially normalized discriminatory practices. Accordingly, the speaker notes that the state's approach to dealing with mental health problems requires using not only a bio-medical model but paying attention to the social determinants that cause such issues, such as poverty, experiences of violence and trauma, or discrimination.[54]

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[46] ICESCR, General comment N14, par. 12, see: https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/4538838d0.pdf
[47] ICESCR, Article 12
[48] ICESCR, General comment N14, par. 8
[49] Ibid, par. 18
[50] Ibid.
[51] A/HRC/41/34, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights to the enjoyment to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, 2019, par. 36, see: https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G19/105/97/PDF/G1910597.pd-f?OpenElement
[52] Ibid.
[53] Ibid, par. 37
[54] Ibid, par. 86

According to the Independent Expert's Report on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity 2019, discrimination by health workers is widespread. It can manifest in refusals to make medical appointments or treat LGBT people, providing treatment with gross disrespect or violating medical privacy. This practice can deter LGBTQI individuals from seeking healthcare services and can make them reluctant to share personal and medical information, jeopardizing their overall well-being and both physical and mental health.[55]

Along with other aspects of physical and mental health, sexual health is also one of the important factors of human well-being. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), sexual health is a fundamental part of individuals' physical and emotional health and well-being and, ultimately, the social and economic development of the community. However, the ability of individuals to achieve sexual health and well-being depends on them having: access to comprehensive information about sexuality; knowledge about the risks they face and their vulnerability to the adverse consequences of sexual activity; access to good quality sexual health care; and an environment that affirms the importance of sexual health in people's lives.[56]

The International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), organized in Cairo in 1994, developed a Programme of Action on sexual and reproductive health and, among other things, emphasizes the importance of sexual rights and health. The document includes sexual health under reproductive health. It indicates that the primary purpose of its protection is „to improve the quality of life and personal relationships and not only to provide consulting and medical care about reproduction and sexually transmitted infections (STIs)."[57] According to the World Health Organization, although the ICPD mentions sexual rights and health, it's often subsumed under reproduction and sexual health and receives less attention from states and international organizations. Based on the above, WHO believes that additional effort is needed to ensure access to information, education, and services on sexual health, which implies the adoption of relevant legislation and strengthening of policies.[58]

7.2. National obligations and the challenges in practice

Part of the international obligations recognized by Georgia regarding the provision of health care is included in the health regulatory laws and policy documents. The Law of Georgia on Health Care and Patient Rights recognizes the inadmissibility of discrimination based on sexual orientation (but not gender identity) while providing health care services[59], as well as issues of patient confidentiality[60] and informed consent. Article 48 of Georgian Law on Medical Practice obliges the independent medical practitioner to observe confidentiality of information concerning the health status and private life of a patient in the course of implementing medical practice or after its termination, both during the lifetime and after the death of the patient except for cases determined by the legislation of Georgia.[61]

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[55] A/74/181, Report of the Independent Expert protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientations and gender identity, 2019, par. 24, see: https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N19/220/72/PDF/N1922072.pdf?OpenElement

[56] WHO, Sexual Health, Human Rights and the Law, 2015, p. 4-5, see: https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789241564984

[57] ICPD, Program of Action, 1994, see: https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/event-pdf/PoA_en.pdf

[58] WHO, Sexual Health, Human Rights and the Law, 2015

[59] Law of Georgia on Health Care, Article 6; Law of Georgia on Patient Rights, Article 6

[60] Law of Georgia on Patient Rights, Article 27

[61] Law of Gerogia on Medical Practice, Article 48

In addition, Georgia has nationalized a large part of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, among which is the obligation to ensure access to a healthy lifestyle and well-being for people of all ages (Goal 3). Under this goal, the state has committed by 2030 to ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services, including family planning, information and education, and the integration of reproductive health into national strategies and programs[62]; Also, by 2030, Achieve universal health coverage, including financial risk protection, access to quality essential health-care services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all.[63] However, it should be noted that the full implementation of the tasks under the mentioned goal remains a significant challenge, and health issues of LGBTQI people, including sexual and reproductive health, are not considered under the national strategies of Georgia. For example, the National Maternal & Newborn Health Strategy for 2017-2030[64], an important document for the protection of sexual and reproductive health and rights in Georgia, doesn't distinguish vulnerable categories, nor does it review the critical challenges they face.

Regarding sexual health, there are also some challenges in Georgia regarding the prevention and treatment (antiretroviral therapy, ART) of HIV/AIDS. Despite the existing state programs, this medical field is still discriminatory for the LGBTQI community members, which is related to the violation of their privacy and improper treatment.[65] The lack of accessible and objective information on HIV/AIDS supports this treatment. HIV-positive people are left with social isolation and no chance of achieving well-being.

Generally, discrimination and/or expectation of discrimination while receiving health services is a significant challenge for the LGBTQI group. The main problem is low sensitivity and stereotypical attitudes toward the medical staff.[66] According to the Special Report of the Public Defender of Georgia on the Rights of the LGBT+ People in Georgia from 2022, „Even though Georgian law protects LGBT+ people from discrimination, unequal treatment is still prevalent in the medical sector. Not only are there documented instances of discrimination, but there is also an expectation of discrimination among the LGBT+ community due to widespread homophobic attitudes and stigma in society. As a result, even when members of the LBGT+ community had no negative experiences with medical personnel, they frequently avoided visiting the doctor, except in cases of absolute necessity. However, referrals based on discriminatory behavior or negative experiences are extremely rare.“[67]

However, in addition to the discriminatory experience, it should be noted that financial inaccessibility to medical services is one of the main challenges for the LGBTQI group. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, it appeared that for some members of the LGBTQI community, the price of both medical consultation and medications did not allow them to receive adequate treatment due to financial inaccessibility. As the study from 2020 mentions, the financial inaccessibility of healthcare services is the main barrier for 32.7% of the respondents, and 41.4% indicate the price of medicines as a barrier.[68]

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[62] The task assigned to Georgia 3.7
[63] The task assigned to Georgia 3.8
[64] The Resolution of the Government of Georgia N 459, October 6, 2017, see: https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/3825285?-publication=0
[65] Universal Periodic Review, NGO Coalition Joint Submission on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, Georgia, 2020, see: https://socialjustice.org.ge/uploads/products/covers/UPR_Georgia_submission_by_NGO_Coalition_on_SRHR_2020_1594713975.pdf
[66] Jalaghania L. „A Study of Social Exclusion of the LGBTQ Group in Georgia", 2020, Social Justice Center
[67] Special Report of the Public Defender of Georgia, Assessment of the Rights of the LGBT+ People in Georgia, 2022, p. 47
[68] Jalaghania L. „A Study of Social Exclusion of the LGBTQ Group in Georgia", 2020, Social Justice Center, p. 161

Those challenges are even more acute for the trans community because there are no appropriate guidelines and protocols for trans-specific health care in Georgia. Therefore, the trans people who are in need to use the mentioned services do not have access to them, which is why they often use self-treatment and, as a result, are at serious health risk of both physical and mental health.[69]

Along with physical health, mental health is a significant challenge, which, as already mentioned, is often directly related to the experience of violence, discrimination, and serious consequences associated with it. As the research shows, the majority of the community members assessed their physical health and life satisfaction as poor even before the pandemic, but it significantly worsened after the pandemic.[70] According to the study conducted by the Women's Initiatives Supportive Group (WISG), the percentage of the respondents who assessed their physical condition negatively before the pandemic was only 7.1%. Since the beginning of the pandemic, the percentage of these respondents increased 2,5 times and reached 17.1%. The situation is the same regarding mental health as well: the percentage of those respondents who assessed their mental health increased three times since the start of the pandemic (respectively, from 13.7% to 35.1%). The percentage of those respondents who became less satisfied with their lives increased even more dramatically – from 18% to 46%.[71]

Despite the mentioned challenges, Georgia has no unified mental health support system. It is not covered by the state's universal healthcare or the primary private insurance schemes. That is why the community is entirely dependent on the services of community organizations, which have limited resources. Generally, access to health care is substantially improved by access to adequate insurance. Georgia adopted universal healthcare in 2013. Therefore the financing from the state budget also increased the financial coverage of healthcare services, improving access to health care and providing better financial protection for the population. However, despite the increase in funding, other healthcare sector challenges have not been reformed. In particular, the reforms did not include the mechanisms of service quality control and monitoring, the regulation of the quality and price of medications. The state also did not take additional measures to improve primary health care as a financially effective service that can detect, treat and prevent diseases early.[72]

7.3. Analysis of Qualitative Research

Access to health services and barriers to receiving health services

The research results show that health services are not equally accessible to all respondents. Some state that there are no economic or other barriers to using health services. A few respondents have private corporate insurance, which fully ensures access to health services. In rarer cases, respondents mentioned that they do not need or use health services.

However, despite universal healthcare, it does not sufficiently ensure access to quality services. On the other hand, some of the participants face significant economic barriers to accessing health services and, in this regard, are familiar with the needs and difficulties of the community members. The respondents say that unemployment is high, and even while employed, the salaries are so low that they cannot cover their healthcare. Another barrier is the substantially high prices of medication, which are not regulated appropriately by the state.

[69] Ibid, p. 165-166
[70] Aghdgomelashvili E. and others, Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on LGBT(Q)I Community in Georgia, WISG, 2022, p. 148
[71] Ibid.
[72] UN Women, Country Gender Equality Profile of Georgia, 2020, p. 33

Transgender respondents and transgender people in Georgia face financial problems more often since the medical services they require - hormonal therapy and surgical intervention - are expensive, and the state does not take responsibility for providing them.

> *"It's not accessible at all. I've had cases where I was financially able to go to the doctor, but I couldn't buy the prescribed medicine for six months… Also, when I had an operation, the state covered 40% or 60% of it, but I spent twice as much on the medication and rehabilitation process on the operation… If we follow from the beginning, once you start the hormone-therapeutic, you need so many examinations and analyses that it's very difficult for a vulnerable person to have even those 500 GEL to spend at once on tests. Many people don't have it "(Individual interview, transgender man, Tbilisi).*

Respondents mention certain public services that are available free of charge for all. However, these services are only intended for specific risk groups - mainly including the tests for detecting HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases and the full provision of treatment after detection - therefore, it meets only a small part of needs. In addition, community NGOs are often named as providers of certain services to the members. However, due to limited resources, these services - blood tests for infectious diseases, gynecologist services, psychiatrist and psychologist services, etc. - cannot meet all needs and are not available to everyone. It was also mentioned that the community organizations not only offer services to community members that are not available from the state but also contribute to raising awareness about infectious diseases and the importance of timely treatment. Therefore, contributing to the increase in the use of state services since direct access to information is also a challenge. In general, it was also noted that raising awareness about HIV/AIDS should start from school.

> *"There is [a service] from the state and from the organization, that organization tracks you, you go to the AIDS center and register there… Recently they prescribed me the medication three milligrams which cost 150 GEL, and I had to take them for a month. Without organizations, I wouldn't be able to buy this medicine on my own. It was a pandemic, I wasn't working anymore, and I didn't even have food at home, and the organizations were helping me. How many people can this organization help? They also have limited resources "(Individual interview, non-binary transgender woman, Tbilisi).*

Respondents talk about obstacles caused by discriminatory treatment in the healthcare sector along with economic barriers. Indeed, some respondents did not mention discrimination, harassment, or bullying while receiving health services, nor have they heard of such cases. However, some of the respondents have been victims of discrimination and/or have heard about cases of discrimination, harassment, or bullying from other community members. Respondents believe that in the field of health care, including pharmacies, and mental health, LGBTQI people, as well as people infected with HIV, are still highly stigmatized, and cases of abuse and rude attitude are expected. Also, several transgender participants talk about the cases of legal disputes that started based on homophobic treatment against medical personnel or institutions, which have repeatedly ended in favor of transgender people.

In addition to such direct forms of expression, respondents talk about non-verbal forms such as mocking and disgusted looks from medical personnel while receiving services.

„People were looking at me, mocking me, make laugh at me only because of my appearance. While vaccination, the nurse stroked me with the needle so hard… I know, he/she/they did it on purpose… In this case, it was because of my appearance that I was a girl and didn't look like one. It happened so that they were older people and I don't know, they had this mocking attitude" *(Focus group, lesbian woman, Tbilisi).*

Respondents consider the lack of work and culture of medical staff as problematic. One of the participants, a healthcare worker, notes that there are no discrimination, bullying, or other cases in his/her/their experience while working - neither towards him/her/them nor from the colleagues towards patients. Although, there are some personal conversations about why someone was wearing that, why he looked like a girl while being a man according to the ID, etc. However, these conversations do not reach patients.

„I had an embarrassing incident with a gynecologist… as a rule and tradition, they ask the question - are you married? - T answered that no. So, aren't you sexually active? Yes, I live a busy sex life, and then I was asked about the pregnancy, if I had some, or was it possible that I was pregnant now… I told them that it wasn't possible. Why do you use protection? No, I don't need it. But, You said that you are sexually active. I said that my partner was a woman. You had to see her/his/their face… It was like an extinct dinosaur was alive and came to his/her/their office and sat in front of him/her/them" *(Focus group, bisexual woman, Tbilisi).*

The participants observed that the elderly medical staff have less acceptance than the younger staff. However, the problem remains in all age groups. Despite this, according to them, the healthcare sector is slowly changing. The more personal contact gave personnel with LGBTQI patients or medical personnel who are members of the community, the greater the acceptance. Also, some participants refer only to the medical facilities and staff to whom the community organization addresses them, and therefore, they have greater trust in competence and confidentiality, ethics, and equal treatment.

The way to avoid discrimination and unpleasant experiences is to share the experiences of LGBTQI community members and receive health services from a trusted person. For example, in this regard, one of the respondents says that when he/she/they needed hospitalization, he/she/they applied to a clinic where a transgender person was working because he/she/they trusted the institution where the member of the community worked, much more.

Respondents have different attitudes and experiences towards the issue of confidentiality protection. Some respondents do not remember the feeling or the case that confidentiality was violated. At the same time, some say that while receiving medical services, they never feel that the patient's confidentiality is protected. Fear of violation of confidentiality or bullying makes a member of the LGBTQI community refuse to use certain services, including HIV testing, or hide their gender identity or sexual orientation.

„There were many facts in Batumi when confidentiality wasn't protected, especially in the infectious hospital. For example, I remember once somebody went there, and before he/she/they came back home, the mother knew that he/she/they had AIDS and went to the hospital. One of the workers messaged this boy's mother. Unfortunately, we have this kind of environment in general, non-confidential, inhumane, sometimes even the doctors don't have a proper attitude… Many people,

for example, my friends or people I know, have problems coming to the hospital because they don't feel safe and are afraid to go there. That's why the participation in the program is low in Batumi because confidentiality is now protected"
(Focus group, gay man, region).

The homophobic environment in the country, which also covers healthcare and other cases, forces community members to refrain from receiving certain services. In most cases, they are forced to use only the services the community organizations offer to the beneficiaries. This mentioned tendency indicates the problem of locking themselves up in the role of so-called beneficiaries.

Along with the discriminatory treatment, violation of confidentiality, and other issues mentioned above, the lack of competence of the doctors is often cited as a problem. Gynecologists, endocrinologists, urologists, proctologists, and psychiatrists are specially named in this regard. Because of this, the participants, and according to their information, other community members are also reluctant to receive services, as there is often low awareness of the specific needs of LGBTQI people on the doctors' part and cases of incorrect treatment. In the respondents' experience, there is frequent confusion among medical staff about transgender patients. One of the participants recalls a case when doctors who performed the surgery had no idea about the existence of transgender men. They thought the transgender person was only a woman since they had experience treating transgender women, so they put this person in the male ward. Only after the operation did they not "find" male genitalia. They realized that it was biologically female. Also once psychiatrist advised a patient to use a heterosexual marriage to solve the "problem" of homosexuality, etc.

This problem for transgender people is even more difficult because of the legal obstacles related to changing the sex on the ID card. Participants note that even in cases where medical staff are sensitive to the needs of transgender patients, the rules of the medical institution oblige them to place the patient in a ward according to their biological sex.

"I got COVID twice and ended up in the hospital… a transgender person works in this hospital, and that's why I chose it, and they knew everything. My friend, a transgender woman, asked me if I had a problem sleeping in the men's ward. I answered that, of course, it was not a problem. On the contrary, I didn't want to be in the women's ward. She said so, but they put me in a separate ward because, by the hospital's rules, it was forbidden for men and women to be in the same ward… When the doctor came, he/she/apologized that they had to follow the information from my ID.… It's female written there, I'm using the state in Strasbourg and that they did not change it "(individual interview, transgender man, Tbilisi).

The respondents note that the health services they need are largely available in Georgia. However, the challenge is economic availability on the one hand and, on the other hand, the incompetence and insensitivity of the medical staff.

When discussing the necessary services, the services of a psychiatrist and a psychologist are the most often mentioned since the community members often have to live in a traumatic environment, both in the family and society.

„The community in need of a lot [of services], especially of psychologist, psychiatrist, when you are all the time victim of the violence and bullying... It means providing safe services and not only their existence... Nobody has the feeling of confidentiality, I think so if it's not the doctor of years and who you trust. It's no way that you just go to the hospital and are satisfied with the service, especially for the community members " (Individual interview, non-binary, Tbilisi).

Community organizations provide these and other necessary services to the community members. However, since their budgets are limited, community organizations cannot meet the needs of all the members for whom it is crucial to receive various health services, nor do they have access to all services. The issue of unequal access to services based on residence was also noted. Suppose community organizations provided mental health services online during the pandemic, after the transition to physical delivery of services. In that case, these services are no longer available to members living in regions.

Generally, the "vital" healthcare services explicitly needed for transgender people, especially during the transition process, are economically unavailable - endocrinologist services, hormonal therapy, plastic or surgical intervention, etc. According to the respondents, state or community organizations provide those services to transgender citizens in many countries.

Alongside the economic availability, the incompetence and the harm caused by improper treatment to the community members, especially transgender people, were named: *„We have awful endocrinologists, who drive women in Tbilisi crazy, because of incorrect prescriptions. That is a big problem too"* (Focus group, transgender woman, region).

8. SOCIAL PROTECTION

8.1. International standard

Social protection and access to adequate housing are fundamental human rights, and their provision is one of the main elements of the positive obligation of the states. According to the UN International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, the state's parties recognize the right of everyone to social security, including social insurance.[73] Also, the state's parties recognize the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing, and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions.[74]

The United Nations Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights has underlined that the right to adequate housing should not be interpreted narrowly. Instead, it should be seen as the right to live somewhere in security, peace, and dignity. The characteristics of the right to adequate housing are clarified mainly in the Committee's general comments No. 4 (1991) on the right to adequate housing and No. 7 (1997) on forced evictions.

UN-Habitat also repeated and extended these essential characteristics: "adequate housing must provide more than four walls and a roof."[75] These elements are just as fundamental as the existence of the shelter. A number of conditions must be met before particular forms of shelter can be considered "adequate housing." These conditions must, at a minimum, meet the following criteria:

- Security of tenure: housing is inadequate if its occupants do not have a degree of tenure security that guarantees legal protection against forced evictions, harassment, and other threats.

- Availability of services, materials, facilities, and infrastructure: housing is not adequate if its occupants do not have safe drinking water, adequate sanitation, energy for cooking, heating, lighting, food storage, or refuse disposal.

- Affordability: housing is inadequate if its cost threatens or compromises the occupants' enjoyment of other human rights.

- Habitability: housing is inadequate if it does not guarantee physical safety or provide adequate space, as well as protection against cold, dampness, heat, rain, wind, and other threats to health and structural hazards.

- Accessibility: housing is inadequate if the specific needs of disadvantaged and marginalized groups are not considered.

- Location: housing is inadequate if it is cut off from employment opportunities, healthcare services, schools, childcare centers, and other social facilities, or in polluted or dangerous areas.

- Cultural adequacy: housing is not adequate if it does not respect and take into account the expression of cultural identity.

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[73] ICESCR, Article 9
[74] ICESCR, Article 11
[75] UN Habitat, The Right to Adequate Housing, Fact Sheet no. 21/Rev.1, p. 3, see: https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/FS21_rev_1_Housing_en.pdf

Non-discrimination and equality are fundamental human rights principles and critical components of the right to adequate housing, absence of which not only increase risks of the segregation and violence, but also can result poverty and economic marginalization.[76]

According to the Report of 2005 of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, lack of access to housing leads to homelessness, which is the result not only of individual circumstances but also of specific factors. A human rights approach to homelessness recognizes its relation to individual dynamics such as psycho-social challenges, loss of job, etc. However, it is also caused by ineffective state mechanisms failing to respond to the needs of individuals with respect for their dignity and compassion.

Thus, a human rights approach must respond to the structural causes of homelessness seen in national policies, programs, legislation, and international financial/development agreements that promote and create a suitable environment for homelessness.[77]

The report of IESOGIESC from 2019 also refers to this issue, according to which the barriers to social protection and access to housing for LGBTQI people arise not only from individual factors but also from structural inequality, the result of which is violence, discrimination, and stigma. However, in addition to the mentioned ineffective state mechanisms of the state, faulty legislation and social policies, including the non-recognition of same-sex couples, become one of the main determinants of social exclusion.[78]

8.2. National obligations and the challenges in practice

The existence of social protection mechanisms and their effective operation is one of the crucial elements of population poverty prevention. Even though the state constantly produces statistical information on population/household incomes, economic status, and poverty indicators[79], the mentioned indicators are not translated into policy and the implementation of the state's targeted programs, which will meet the needs of all vulnerable groups. The state has not understood sufficiently the factors causing poverty and the risks of homelessness linked to it for different groups of society, which lead to the violation of the right to adequate housing or risk of its violation.[80]

„In conditions where entering the labor market is increasingly difficult, school and higher education are not the basis for enjoying essential social goods, and social security benefits are not available, the state leaves young people dependent on their families."[81] Consequently, socially vulnerable members of the LGBTQI community, who are subjected to physical, psychological, or other forms of domestic violence, among other reasons, due to sexual orientation and gender identity, remain completely vulnerable and alone with socio-economic challenges.

Based on the above, the crime committed in the family can not only cause physical and psychological harm to LGBTQI people but also significantly hinder the individual development of a person, creating risks of poverty and actual barriers to his/her/their well-being. In case of

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[76] Ibid, p. 10

[77] Report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, Miloon Kothari, 2005, par. 13

78 IESOGIESC, A/74/181, 2019, par. 18,

[79] See: www.geostat.ge

[80] Jalaghania L. „A Study of Social Exclusion of the LGBTQ Group in Georgia", 2020, Social Justice Center

[81] Jalaghania L. and Chutlashvili K. „Domestic Violence Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity: Legal Gaps and Policy Challenges", 2018, p. 21, see: https://socialjustice.org.ge/uploads/products/pdf/Domestic-violence-based-on-SOGI-final-2018_1544786801.pdf

violence resulting from coming out about their sexual orientation and gender identity, they are forced to either leave the family place (by their own decision or at the request of family members) or stay and limit their expression to avoid violence and exclusion. Exclusion and isolation of the LGBTQI community members from the family are accompanied by the disappearance of economic and other types of support. This is also related to the loss of educational opportunities, the ceasing of economic assistance, and the real risk of homelessness.

The members of the LGBTQI community noted challenges related to their economic vulnerability and issues of adequate housing in research conducted even before the pandemic. The survey conducted in 2020 shows that only 6.1% of surveyed community members own a house/apartment.[82] The latter indicates not only community members' dependence on family and income to pay rent but also the essential weakness of Georgia's existing housing policy, which has made housing utterly unaffordable for the entire population. 20.9% of respondents were at risk of homelessness, and 13.4% avoided answering the question. 70.1% of the respondents who experienced homelessness (N=63) lived with a friend, 35.8% - with a relative, and 26.1% had to live on the street.[83]

However, a study conducted by the Women's Initiative Support Group (WISG), which studied the impact of the economic and social crisis caused by the pandemic on the LGBTQI group, notes that „as a result of aggravation of economic situation due to COVID-19 and anti-crisis measures, almost one in ten respondents, that means 12.8% (N=27) faced a housing problem, while one in three respondents (34.6%, N=73) found it difficult to pay rent".[84] Noteworthy, during the lockdown, the share of respondents who rated their situation as extremely severe was 75.8% in Tbilisi and 79.3% in regions. The situation has changed after the pandemic - respondents living in Tbilisi have improved more than in regions.[85]

It should also be emphasized that the restrictions caused by the pandemic and the economic crisis have severely impacted trans people involved in commercial sex work. According to the study mentioned above, during the lockdown, the financial situation of the participants changed dramatically - 17 out of 23 participants indicated the answer "extremely severe," 4 of them - "severe," and only two indicated "average." [86] The reason for this situation was the loss of a source of income, reflected in the disappearance of the ability to meet basic needs and the availability of housing. Because the mentioned group was not incorporated in the anti-crisis plan of the state, community organizations, including the Equality Movement, were the ones who provided financial support to the community members. Including paying rent for the community members and supplying them with basic hygiene and food products in Tbilisi and the regions.

8.3. Analysis of Qualitative Research

Access to social services

Social protection is significant for the population because these protection mechanisms are the main elements of overcoming poverty and ensuring the creation of primary conditions for a good life for people or households. However, the research shows that a large part of

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[82] Jalaghania L. „A Study of Social Exclusion of the LGBTQ Group in Georgia", 2020, Social Justice Center, p. 175
[83] Ibid.
[84] Aghdgomelashvili E. and others, Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on LGBT(Q)I Community in Georgia, WISG, 2022, p. 50
[85] Ibid., p. 57
[86] Ibid.

Georgia's leading social protection systems are not functioning or are imperfectly administered, which also implies the problem of information availability. In particular, the present study also shows that members of the LGBTQI community do not have information about state programs that provide specific, albeit limited, support to the socially vulnerable population in Georgia. However, as already mentioned, a large number of social services, such as support for the homeless and providing them with adequate housing, are not available or are created with insufficient resources, although the existing services are not gendered sensitive, which may indirectly lead to the exclusion of community members. Based on this, the community members participating in the research have minimal experience in terms of using social services. However, according to their information, community members generally do not have access to state social protection or housing services, which is also due to the lack of communication between the state and the public about social protection services.

> „The state provides only a few services. In fact, they don't even exist. In this respect, the state is completely passive, and they, so to speak, don't care about the fate of these people and don't try to provide them with some kind of help. Then until there are no lethal consequences, they don't react, and after that, it's no point in responding because it's too late" (Focus group, gay man, Tbilisi).

Today, due to the deficiency of the social protection systems from the Georgian government, non-governmental, mainly community organizations provide the services mentioned above and accumulate financial resources for those. In this way, they often combine the functions of the relevant state agencies, which creates a severe problem in ensuring the sustainability of these services because the community organizations have limited resources, therefore, cannot address the needs of the community members. This cannot be considered part of their activities. vAs a result, respondents report that social services - housing for several months, food vouchers, etc. - are provided only by non-governmental community organizations. Some of the respondents have received similar services from non-governmental community organizations or know the community members who have benefited from these services.

A discriminatory environment also limits access to social services. Several transgender participants talk about cases of discrimination and bullying based on gender identity when requesting social services. These respondents claim that they have filed lawsuits over the incident, which have ended in their favor.

The respondents have different experiences of relationships with their families. Some have shared information about their gender identity or sexual orientation with the family and have a good relationship. In the case of some, the family is not informed, and therefore, their gender identity or sexual orientation does not affect their relationship with the family. For the rest of the respondents, after revealing their gender identity or sexual orientation, complex and problematic relationships with their families were formed.

As mentioned, some participants maintain a good relationship with their family despite revealing their gender identity or sexual orientation. However, participants often realize that such cases are rare. Sometimes, family members find it difficult to understand their child's gender identity or sexual orientation. However, this did not affect the relationship negatively because the parents had or are trying to accept this. A case was also mentioned when the participant's mother had a homophobic attitude/behavior. However, when she heard about her son/daughter, her attitude changed to a more positive one.

„I have an excellent relationship with my brothers, aunt, almost everybody knows, and I'm lucky in this regard. I haven't had problems, which is very, very rare, because I know many community members who faced a lot of aggression coming from the family, especially from fathers and mothers - to take them to the monastery, when they'll treat you, etc." (Focus group, lesbian woman, region).

The part of respondents who have not shared information about their gender identity or sexual orientation named homophobic attitudes in the family as a reason. Some respondents hear such phrases from their family members about LGBTQI people as "they will burn in hell," "they are stepping into deadly sin," etc. Some participants stated that they did not think it appropriate to talk about their sexual orientation with their family, did not want to, and did not try. Respondents also refrain from disclosing their relationships on social networks so that the information does not reach the ears of the family.

There are more frequent cases when respondents have shared information about their gender identity or sexual orientation with some family members but not others because they know about their homophobic attitudes. In such cases, it is more common that they share information with the mother or sibling than with the father.

„The family, of course, doesn't know, and I don't plan to tell them yet, because they will have a terrible reaction, and I'm afraid. Only my sister and a few relatives know who are my age. I have a good relationship with my father and mother, but in the future, I don't plan to talk with them about this issue because I know it will be hard, and I will have to choose between my orientation and my family. That's why I avoid it and try to hide this information from the family" (Focus group, lesbian woman, Tbilisi).

Part of the participants, who had come out with the family themselves, or the family heard from someone else about their child's gender identity or sexual orientation developed a rather complicated and problematic relationship with the family. Respondents experienced psychological or physical violence from family members. Traumatic experiences are also common - respondents recall attempts to bring them to a psychologist forcibly, undergo drug treatment, send them to a monastery, forcefully marry, and others. Some participants cannot enjoy the privileges that heterosexual family members have, such as, for example, a partner's visit to the family, holding hands and kisses in the presence of family members, posting a photo on social networks, etc. Some respondents also had limited personal space, and parents had complete control over their movement, personal correspondence, etc. There were cases of threats and beatings as well.

"[When they heard about it], I had problems. There were also cases of violence in my family. My dad was trying to beat me up. I have awful memories of how he punched me in the stomach; they told me that I had to leave the family and wouldn't accept me unless I changed. My mom was controlling me, like, I had no private space when somebody called me on the telephone… I feel like telling her, 'mom, I don't have a traditional sexual orientation,' yet, because of her homophobic attitude, I'm forced to remain in the shadows and not come out (focus group, lesbian woman, region).

Various threats were mentioned, along with the threat of being thrown out of the house, including death threats from the mother and threats from the family members of the respondents' partners to tell family members about their sexual orientation.

„Currently, I'm living with my family, and I don't have the best relationship with my parents… My mother is against my existence. She even threatens me with death… I don't feel safe because there are a lot of threats and a lot of negative energy. Now I'm trying to go abroad" (Focus group, gay man, region).

In addition to threats, there have been cases of eviction. On the other hand, there were also cases when the respondent him/her/themselves ran away from home to avoid violence but had to return, and they were separated from their partners. The problem of being kicked out or running away from home is also widely discussed among the respondents who do not have similar experiences but know about the community members who have faced a similar problem. Some may not have been kicked out of their homes, but they have to live in a toxic environment, under stress and psychological pressure because they could not leave their homes due to economic difficulties.

Accordingly, the respondents agree that homelessness is expected in the community, mainly explained by the family's non-acceptance of gender identity or sexual orientation. The problem of homelessness is especially noticeable for transgender people, together with the problem of moving out or being thrown out of the family. There is also the problem that even while renting an apartment, they often have to leave the apartment due to the negative attitude of the owner. In this case, non-governmental organizations, friends, and other community members are named as the only helpers.

"Transgender persons have the biggest problems in the community. It's challenging for them to find a job, and they're also forced to leave home at a very young age because their orientation is very conspicuous when it comes to appearance. They're in the most difficult situation. I believe so. (Focus group, lesbian woman, Tbilisi)

There are different experiences while renting an apartment. In the case of some of the respondents living in a rented apartment, the owners know about the gender identity or sexual orientation of the tenants. They have a neutral or excellent and warm relationship. There are also cases of gossip from the neighbors and expulsion from the house. Despite this, respondents believe this is rare, as members of the LGBTQI community find it difficult to find an apartment, regardless of budget.

„For example, my partner was kicked out of the house after the neighbor saw us together… When the owner came, she thrown away all the stuff, she kicked out her violently, in the middle of the night" (Focus group, lesbian woman, respondent 1, Tbilisi)

To avoid similar incidents, some respondents try to hide their gender identity or sexual orientation from the apartment owner. For example, a lesbian respondent states that she and her partner are known to the apartment owners as cousins - "we have to live in lies and fear."

Issues related to shelter

Research participants agree that shelter is undoubtedly essential for LGBTQI community members. Some participants have information that community organizations/organizations have opened such shelters. However, they believe it is insufficient to meet the current demand and will be available only to a small part of those in need of shelter.

"A lot of community members need a shelter because they're often forced to leave home since parents cannot accept them. So they end up in the street and considering the economic situation in Georgia, it's not at all easy to find a job." (Focus group, bisexual woman, respondent 3, Tbilisi).

The respondents also name and agree on the critical aspects that must be considered in the case of the shelter. However, there are issues with the different opinions. Respondents believe that if there is a shelter for members of the LGBTQI community, its location should be kept strictly confidential since the residents may become the addressees/victims of aggression from society. However, some participants felt that maintaining anonymity would be difficult and residents would not feel safe, so the shelter should not have to be a single building where community members gather. This problem is strengthened by the fact that the participants do not expect support from the police and the state in case of aggression and do not feel safe. In this regard, the respondents also talk about the rude attitude of the police. One of the respondents recalls that he/she/was arrested and then taken to a psychiatric hospital, where he/she/they became a victim of sexual violence, calling the police "the biggest lawbreaker" and "spectators of the show." Transgender participants report that the police respond to their calls late, that they do not exist expected safety from them, that they did not find help for a transgender woman who came to the department after physical violence on the street, and more.

"Whether we want it or not, this information will leak, and certain persons will be notified of their location. And these people, who have already had very traumatic experiences in life and, in addition, need help from the government, are basically forced to be on the run and are in constant fear of being assaulted. And we can be sure that the law enforcement organs will not show much sympathy for these people... It can happen at any moment that somebody gets killed in the street, and it will be seen as something normal (Focus group, gay man, respondent 3, Tbilisi)

Some respondents oppose the idea of a shelter specifically for LGBTQI people based on the principle of equality and integration into society. Shelters for victims of violence and the homeless should be available to everyone, including LGBTQI people, provided that discrimination and bullying are dealt with appropriately.

According to the participants, the greatest demand for shelter will probably be in Tbilisi, although there is a need for shelter in other cities. Therefore, when planning the shelter policy, the demand and need at the local level should be considered. Not everyone likes the idea of having a shelter in the regions, again due to the security issue, since outside of Tbilisi, especially in small settlements where everyone knows everyone and everything, it will be even more challenging to ensure the anonymity of such a shelter, and therefore to protect it. The reason for this is also the view that it may be better for a community member who has been thrown out of his/her/home or is a victim of violence to leave the place and take refuge in Tbilisi. For such cases, and not only for them, it may also be better to provide transport so that the people left outside could move to the shelter.

There are different opinions on whether the shelter should be temporary or permanent. Some participants believe that the shelter for the community members should be temporary. Although the possible terms of staying in the shelter should not be defined, the community members should be able to stay in the shelter until they can live independently and start work. To ensure the latter, the shelter must offer specific services to residents. -*"It definitely*

should be temporary, but it does not mean it should be for one-two months... It should not be an exact duration of stay. It should be the person is settled down" (Focus group, bisexual woman, respondent 4, Tbilisi). On the other hand, since it is difficult for community members to start a job and rent an apartment, even if they have the financial resources, having a permanent residence is also important.

As for the services mentioned above that respondents believe shelters should offer residents, these include educational programs and social services that help residents develop and live independently after leaving housing. The shelter may have a food facility, a farm, greenhouses, or something else where the residents themselves can be employed. Also, the services of a social worker will help the residents get an education and find a job.

> *"If there will be programs that will help a person to grow professionally and be able to leave the shelter and continue their life. I don't think it's ideal to stay permanently in the shelter. It would be helpful if there were programs that could facilitate redirecting one's life." (Focus group, lesbian woman, Tbilisi).*

According to the participants, there should be no age limit for shelter use. However, priority should be given to minors thrown out of their homes because of their gender identity or sexual orientation. Many respondents note that it will be vital to provide the services of a psychiatrist and psychologist in such a shelter.

> *"[...] I'm sure there will be many of those with various problems. Some might have inclinations to attempt suicide; some might have aggression, some - have psychological problems, and I think they should be around those who can help them at a given place and time... In this way, we can save many of them, and we can even achieve to help many of them in staying away from unwanted sex work...." (Focus group, bisexual man, region).*

It was also mentioned that in the case of the shelter, it would be necessary to train the staff to increase acceptance of diversity, not only sexual diversity, and to eliminate discrimination. Regarding discrimination, it was also noted that if the state does not have a systematic approach to eliminate discrimination and does not work with representatives of the educational system, employers, and society in general, members of the LGBTQI community will always be vulnerable and always face the problem of homelessness. According to some respondents, the state has a more significant role in raising awareness than any other actor since it can introduce LGBTQI issues into the school curricula. In addition, the state is more trusted by representatives of the education field and society in general than non-governmental organizations. One of the respondents also remembers the case when the community organization was not allowed to organize training on LGBTQI issues in one of the educational institutions. In this regard, the role of the media is also essential, which mainly covers issues surrounding the LGBTQ community in a negative context, which has a negative impact on the moods and attitudes of society.

> *„I came to the shelter, have been here three months, and then went, what's next? My life doesn't change. A lot more is needed, it's necessary to control the market in this regard, but the most important is to provide the beneficiary with education. If not, the university, the college, and the college must be free from discrimination. There is a lot of work to do, it doesn't work that way, that we have a shelter and that's it" (Individual interview, transgender man, Tbilisi).*

Therefore, since the issue of social protection includes many intersecting issues and is equally related to unequal treatment, domestic violence, economic independence, and access to healthcare, this study shows that a multilateral approach from the state is critically necessary for community members to have a positive impact on the quality of life of the LGBTQI group.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The main goal of the following study was to study the social and economic situation of the LGBTQI group, identify its causes, and reveal the challenges in politics. The research shows that despite the significant progress in the country in terms of eliminating discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity at the legal level, the state's policy still focuses only on surface problems and their formal solutions, which essentially complicates putting the social and economic needs and rights of the LGBTQI group on the agenda. The gap between legislation and actual policy is still visible in the country. This calls into question the effectiveness of the legislative framework and its goals, manifested in the maintenance of oppression against the LGBTQI group and the deterioration of their quality of life. The latter was clearly shown in the qualitative research conducted within the framework of the present analysis.

Based on the study's findings, it is clear that there is a deep connection between the various manifestations of inequality against LGBTQI people. Therefore, solving the challenges facing the LGBTQI group requires political/cultural recognition, fighting the root causes of inequality, and focusing on existing social and economic needs.

The problems identified in the research allow the development and design of concrete ways to improve Georgia's social and economic situation. Thus, the socio-economic challenges of the LGBTQI group must be overcome with tough measures that consider the creation and implementation of policies through the participation of various agencies, non-governmental organizations, and the community itself. This will not only solve the social problems that LGBTQI people face but also help those members of society whose well-being is negatively affected by low access to social and economic rights and a lack of understanding of the importance of rights on the state's behalf.

Therefore, the state agencies need to consider the following recommendations:

Government of Georgia:

- Should ensure the development of a government human rights strategy and action plan which, among other things, covers the needs of the LGBTQI group, both to eliminate violence and discrimination and to improve their social and economic situation;

- The inter-departmental commission of Georgia working on the issues of gender equality, violence against women, and domestic violence should ensure the monitoring of the relevant government agencies on the implementation of measures to be taken for the protection of their rights and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity;

- We should take appropriate measures to eliminate negative attitudes, stigma, and prejudices toward the LGBT+ group in society. These measures should be based on examining the causes of existing attitudes and analyzing their impact on the LGBT+ group and society. Equality-oriented education policies should ensure the active inclusion of these issues in formal and non-formal educational spaces in the relevant curricula on both civic education and human sexuality[87].

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[87] The following recommendation is issued by Public Defender of Georgia - Assessment of the Rights of the LGBT+ People in Georgia, 2021

For The Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia

- To ensure safety in educational institutions, take all necessary measures per international standards. This means strengthening efforts to raise the awareness of teachers and other school employees;

- Should strengthen the inclusion of inclusive education on human sexuality in formal and non-formal educational spaces, to achieve the objective, it is necessary to constantly inform the public/parents concerning the need for education on sexuality and its crucial importance. This also includes monitoring disinformation and preventing the spread of misinformation by anti-gender groups;[88]

- Strengthen efforts to overcome all forms of inequality to ensure access to education for all, including eliminating social, economic, geographical, and other barriers and fighting against other cultural barriers.

- It should ensure that the challenges of gender equality, sexual orientation, and gender identity are taken into account in developing the unified strategy of Education and Science of Georgia and defining the necessary ways to solve them in the new action plan related to it.

Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Affairs of Georgia

- Should ensure the development of appropriate social mechanisms to overcome the crisis caused by the pandemic, which will allow LGBTQI people and socially vulnerable families to receive appropriate assistance.

- Strengthen cooperation with the private sector to promote awareness of the principles of protection of the right to decent work and its implementation in practice.

- Should ensure full access to health services free from stigma, discrimination, and disgraced treatment. Along with the other measures, the mentioned one includes the development of appropriate quality monitoring mechanisms at the Ministry level.

- Should ensure high-quality protection of patients' confidentiality on the part of entities offering medical activities, promote the observance of the mentioned policy, and, in case of its violation, the implementation of appropriate responsibility mechanisms in healthcare institutions.

- Begin working on creating trans-specific healthcare guidance documents and protocols to ensure that the healthcare needs and rights of trans people are protected.

- Develop a national strategy for overcoming homelessness, which will consider the development of the definition of "homelessness" by international standards, ensure the introduction of effective mechanisms to fight homelessness, and data collection. It is crucial to ensure the involvement of all interested parties in the work process. It should include both the homeless people and groups at risk of homelessness, including LGBTQI people.

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[88] The following recommendation is issued by Public Defender of Georgia - Assessment of the Rights of the LGBT+ People in Georgia, 2021

- It is vital that sectoral policy documents (social protection, healthcare, labor, and employment policy) take into account and integrate the needs of the LGBTQI group and the relevant measures necessary for their elimination.

Georgian Parliament

- Should ensure the effective implementation of the EU obligations and directives in practice and carry out effective monitoring of the measures taken by the Government of Georgia within the framework of its oversight mandate.[89]

- The Permanent Parliamentary Gender Equality Council should carry out a thematic study to assess the fulfillment of the obligations imposed on the Government of Georgia regarding the improvement of the social and economic (employment and labor rights, social protection and access to housing, healthcare system, and accessibility) situation of LGBTQI people. Also, to monitor the implementation of the recommendations issued as a result of the research.

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[89] The following recommendation is issued by Public Defender of Georgia - Assessment of the Rights of the LGBT+ People in Georgia, 2021

Characteristics of Participants	Number of Focus Groups and Interviews	Distribution According to the Place of Residence		Total
		Tbilisi	Outside Tbilisi	
Participants of the Focus Groups				
Gay men	2	6	6	12
Lesbian women	2	8	7	15
Bisexual men	2	7	6	13
bisexual women	2	6	6	12
Transgender women	2	4	3	7
Number of In-Depth Interviews				
Transgender men	4	2	2	4
Non-Binary People	4	2	2	4
			Total	67

For Note