

# MY RIGHTS MY VOICE

## GEORGIA PROJECT OVERVIEW



OXFAM

## MY RIGHTS, MY VOICE IN GEORGIA

- Children and young people in Georgia have huge potential to transform their lives and communities. With the right skills and support, they can be a driving force to break the cycle of poverty so many are born into.
- To help them achieve their potential, their right to health must be fulfilled. That is why Oxfam is running a three-year project in Georgia as part of the international My Rights, My Voice programme, to empower young people to voice their needs and help drive policy changes that protect their right to health care.
- Through a network of youth clubs, the project enables Georgian children and adolescents to promote health care improvements. It also trains family doctors to protect their rights and supports civil society to push for policy changes.
- Working with children and young people, and those who influence their lives, My Rights, My Voice is empowering them to achieve lasting changes in policies, practices and beliefs, so their health and education needs are met – now and in the future.

## THE CHALLENGE

Georgian legislation upholds its people's right to universal, affordable and good-quality health care. But recent reforms have fundamentally undermined this right by moving towards a private model of health-care delivery. As a result, only children aged 1-3 years old are covered by free state-funded treatment. This leaves up to 70 per cent of the population with difficulty accessing care. A wide lack of awareness about child and youth health-rights means young people and their parents do not push to receive the services that are available. Family doctors are also unaware of the rights of children and young people, and most are unable to inform families about available health-care services.

Children and adolescents in post-conflict regions, and especially from communities of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), are particularly at risk of missing out on basic

health care – let alone support in crucial areas such as nutrition and hygiene. To halt this erosion of health rights in Georgia – particularly those of younger people – children and adolescents in marginalised areas urgently need to be able to voice their needs and work with doctors and civil society to drive policy change that protects their right to health care.

## OUR SOLUTION

Working with children and young people, parents, doctors and Georgia's Public Defender's Office (the country's health ombudsman), My Rights, My Voice is promoting child and youth health-rights among IDPs in the two post-conflict regions of Samegrelo and Shida Kartli (each with a quarter of its population aged from 0-16). Together with our local partners WF, DEA and PDO, we are using the experiences and views of young people from these two regions to

inform wider debates and national policy-making which will benefit all of Georgia's children and adolescents. The project has three parts:

**Empowering youth leaders to lobby for change**

Through a network of 30 youth clubs, the project will help empower Georgian children and young people to drive changes in the health care they receive.

We are establishing new clubs and strengthening existing ones, so children and young people can organise events, consider the health-rights issues affecting them (including those of girls), and share their views with communities and the authorities. Through activities such as sports, music, drama and art, we are encouraging them to join campaigns around World Health Day and the International Day of the Child, to promote key messages to the government around child and youth health-rights. We are

also training members to engage the media and policymakers and lobby for their rights. Thirty youth leaders are being trained to take part in special Youth Forums where they can use their skills to share their experiences and influence policy-makers directly. This campaigning is raising awareness across society about child and youth health-rights.

**Training doctors and parents to protect young people's rights**

Through community meetings and the media, My Rights, My Voice is raising awareness among parents and family doctors so that they can identify children's rights issues and advocate with civil-society organisations (CSOs) for fulfilment of those rights. We are creating a model to enable local CSOs to identify health-rights violations, and either address them directly or bring them to the attention of the Public Defender's Office. And we are training 150 family doctors – serving 20,000 people – in child and youth health-



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rights, and how they can protect them or tackle violations by involving the CSOs and the Public Defender. These training modules are designed to be replicable for family doctors across the country.

### **Driving policy change**

We are strengthening 20 CSOs working on rights issues so they can monitor state health policies and programmes and make policy recommendations, based on surveys in the two targeted regions, to the Public Defender for inclusion in its annual report to the government. In particular, we are working for an extension of free healthcare for children aged 0-5 years old (in line with the Millennium Development Goals). By working with the Public Defender in our policy and advocacy work, we will increase its credibility and chances of success. To help promote the work of the Public Defender's Office, we will generate media coverage to build widespread support for its championing of people's health rights.

### **A LASTING LEGACY**

My Rights, My Voice empowers children and young people to bring their concerns about health rights to the attention of policymakers. It will strengthen family doctors, CSOs, parents and the Public Defender's Office to monitor fulfilment of children's and young people's health rights and advocate for improvements – in particular, for an extension of free child health-care to include children aged 0-5. This and other changes to state policies will improve the health of children and adolescents across the country – helping them to transform their lives and their societies.

### **FIND OUT MORE**

My Rights, My Voice is a three-year programme which aims to engage marginalised children and youth in their rights to health and education services. It is being jointly implemented by Oxfam GB and Oxfam Novib, and involves Oxfam Quebec in Niger. Working through our local partners in eight countries, My Rights, My Voice has significant funding from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida).

To find out more about the programme please mail us at: [mrmv@oxfam.org.uk](mailto:mrmv@oxfam.org.uk) or visit us at [www.oxfam.org.uk/myrightsmysvoice](http://www.oxfam.org.uk/myrightsmysvoice)

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