



Supporting the improvement of service provision for women offenders who have experienced violence and discrimination and their vulnerable children

### Mid-term evaluation



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# Executive Summary

## Introduction

Penal Reform International's South Caucasus office has been implementing the project "Supporting the improvement of service provision for women offenders who have experienced violence and discrimination and their vulnerable children" funded by the European Commission since December 2016. The project is planned for 26 months and this evaluation has been conducted just after its mid-point.

The project has three planned outcomes:

1. To provide relevant rehabilitation and re-integration support services to women offenders who have experienced violence and/or stigma and discrimination
2. To increase accessibility of support services for vulnerable children affected by their mothers' imprisonment or conviction
3. To improve capacity and coordination of state and non-state service-providers for better service provision for vulnerable women offenders and their children.

The project is being implemented in partnership with national service providers including the following NGOs: Article 42 of the Constitution, the Georgian Association of Professional Psychologists, Georgian Association 'Women in Business' and Development Charity Centre Tanazari and the following state institutions: The Ministry of Corrections, Women's Prison No. 5, the National Probation Agency and the Crime Prevention Centre.

## Purpose and methodology

The purpose of this mid-term evaluation is to assess progress of the project so far and to identify lessons learnt that can inform amendments to the project design. The evaluation was conducted jointly by PRI's Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Officer and social workers from the Georgian Association of Social Workers. The evaluation aimed to examine the quality and effectiveness of services and their impact on women, beneficiary satisfaction and sustainability.

Data collection for the evaluation was conducted jointly by the MEL Officer and GASW social workers and included in-depth semi structured interviews with staff at the partner NGOs, staff and senior management from state institutions and women who have used and taken part in the services offered.

## Analysis of findings

*Outcome 1: Provision of relevant rehabilitation and re-integration support services to women offenders who have experienced violence and/or stigma and discrimination*

The project, through NGO partners, has provided essential rehabilitative services to women prisoners, former prisoners and those serving probation. The services provided so far include legal aid, psychological counselling, financial support for medical care, training and work opportunities, accommodation for homeless former prisoner in a temporary shelter and support maintaining regular contact with their children. These services have, for the most part, been very well received by service users and there have been high levels of satisfaction and appreciation among women interviewed in this evaluation.

The legal aid has provided women with solutions to their often-long-standing legal problems related to custody, divorce and property rights, allowing them to take steps towards their reintegration and moving on with their lives. This was because the project had been able to set aside funds to pay court fees or for identity documents.

The psychological counselling provided by the project was also very welcomed, especially by those women still in prison. There is a significant level of distrust levied at prison psychologists as they are perceived to be part of the prison system and lack the flexibility that psychologists from GPPA have. Women said psychological counselling provided them with space for emotional release and expression as well as hope and a feeling that they are not alone. It also helped them become more self-assured and assertive.

Training skills courses and paid work opportunities for women in and outside prison are provided by the Georgian Association 'Women in Business'. These have included culinary skills, hairdressing, beauty therapy, traditional felt making and sewing, including opportunities to work and earn money in the sewing workshop fulfilling large contracts. Many women were optimistic that the skills they learned would help them find work after prison, although the actual extent of this is yet to be seen. However the main benefit of these activities has been the boost to women's self-esteem and confidence, the structure they brought to women's lives and opportunities for socialising. The priority for most women interviewed was finding long-term employment but they recognise the stigma and discrimination they face in Georgian society because of their involvement in the criminal justice system.

*Outcome 2: Increased accessibility of support services for vulnerable children affected by their mothers' imprisonment or conviction*

At the time of the evaluation, there were four children living with their mothers in the mother and baby unit at Women's Prison No. 5. Mothers are visited once a week by psychologists from GPPA and twice a week by a childminder who was recruited as part of this project. The mothers interviewed said both the psychologists and childminder were very helpful in providing emotional support and in helping them with their babies and providing a few hours respite. The childminder also provides advice on child development and upbringing. Respondents from the MoC and the NPA also commended the work of the childminder in allowing mothers time for their own rehabilitation and to look after their own needs.

Many respondents commended the project for having a strong family component although some also said more could be done to support this. The family is a very important institution in Georgia and central to offenders' reintegration and rehabilitation. Although there has been focus on helping women connect with their children and re-establishing trust some respondents said more could be done to assist women with adult children and with extended family.

*Outcome 3: Improved capacity and coordination of state and non-state service-providers for better service provision for vulnerable women offenders and their children*

The project has benefitted from significant buy-in, participation and cooperation by both state and non-state service providers. This element has proved to be key for the functioning and success of the project as it has meant that women and their children are offered a comprehensive package of services which aim to meet women's often very complex and ongoing needs. Although there was cooperation between state institutions and NGOs before the project, especially after the introduction of individual sentence planning which, according to some stakeholders really sparked the need for cooperation between service providers, this project has increased cooperation and relationships have been created and built which will last beyond the project period. Where this has not always been the case is with more junior staff who did not feel as informed as they would have liked about the project and the services on offer and were not confident in referring clients to other services.

*Project design, monitoring and sustainability*

The project represents a real partnership between PRI, state and non-state parties, all working towards the same common goal. The project has allowed NGOs to focus on service provision for vulnerable women and has put their needs, which are often overlooked or forgotten due to their small number in proportion to the prison and probation population, at the forefront. In addition, state bodies are enthusiastic about the project because it contributes to their own goals for rehabilitating the prison population.

There has been a lack of comprehensive monitoring of the project and of the service delivery in particular. Because of this, it is difficult to make confident claims about the changes the project has brought about, especially changes to women's lives and their rehabilitation.

At the time of the evaluation, there was no plan for continuing service after the end of the project apart from ad hoc plans from the partner NGOs. Although the relationships built between service providers through the project will likely be sustained, there needs to be a proper plan in place so that vulnerable women are offered some continuity of care.

### **Conclusion and main recommendations**

The project has just passed the half-way point and is fulfilling its goal of improving service provision to women offenders and their children who have experience violence and discrimination. The project has been very successful in building a network of effective service providers to deliver essential and comprehensive services to women offenders and former offenders in need. This service provision also supports the transition from prison to the community in that the same service providers provide the same services in both locations.

A strong component of the project has been the synergies produced by both state and non-state institutions working together for the benefit of women. The coordination and cooperation between stakeholders has meant that women accessing one service can be referred on to further services if they require them.

It is too soon to determine the project's long-term impact on women's employment chances or on their long-term rehabilitation, reintegration with their families and communities and risk of reoffending however these should continue to be monitored and a plan for sustainability and continuation of services needs to be developed. It is important that women continue to feel supported after the end of the project and that services do not simply end. Furthermore, there are many factors which influence former offenders' access to employment including the wider jobs market and economy and society's attitudes towards women in the criminal justice system, which this project has not and cannot address.

Based on the findings of the evaluation the following recommendations are made to PRI:

1. Ensure engagement and participation of all staff involved in the project, including those who may not be high-level decision makers. Junior or front-facing staff may have valuable insights about the target group and their needs, due to their daily interactions with them and this should not be ignored.
2. Establish a comprehensive monitoring plan with achievable indicators which measure outcomes for women. Indicators could include women's confidence levels, feelings of reintegration, relations with their family and community, training and employment, satisfaction levels.
3. Lobby state bodies on the importance and necessity of state funding for these services.
4. Support the sustainability of partner organisations through providing training on fundraising and proposal writing so they can continue to function and provide these services to vulnerable women

5. Ensure service providers communicate their services in a clear and accessible way to clients both verbally and in writing. Processes should be explained to women throughout their interaction to ensure they know what they can and cannot expect.
6. Monitor the employment of service users to assess the effectiveness of the skills training (this should only be one indicator among others). PRI should also undertake a proper assessment of the market to ensure that these are indeed the skills which are in demand
7. Lead an open discussion with the MoC and Women's Prison No. 5 to allow social workers to work with prisoners and their families before they are released, promoting healthy transitions for prisoners back into the community.
8. Ensure all stakeholders and staff on this project are well communicated with and feel ownership over the project. This could be in the form of leaflets (similar to those produced for service users) which detail what can be provided and by whom. This would ensure efficiency and improve satisfaction among service users.
9. Discuss with the NPA how it delivers services to female probationers to minimise stigmatising and retraumatising them. This could be achieved through probation officers meeting clients in neutral locations or through providing more services through civil society organisations.
10. Consider supporting efforts aimed at combatting negative stereotypes towards former offenders through campaigns in the media. PRI and project partners could also consider working with the private sector and industry to encourage employment of former prisoners and probationers.



## Acronyms

<b>CPC</b>	Crime Prevention Centre
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organisation
<b>EC</b>	European Commission
<b>GASW</b>	Georgian Association of Social Workers
<b>GAWB</b>	Georgian Association 'Women in Business'
<b>GEL</b>	Georgian Lari
<b>GPPA</b>	Georgian Professional Psychologists' Association
<b>MEL</b>	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
<b>MoC</b>	Ministry of Corrections
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organisations
<b>NPA</b>	National Probation Agency
<b>PRI</b>	Penal Reform International



## 1. Introduction

This report details the findings of a mid-term evaluation undertaken in March and April 2018 of the European Commission-funded project “Supporting the improvement of service provision for women offenders who have experienced violence and discrimination and their vulnerable children”. The project is being implemented by Penal Reform International’s South Caucasus office with the goal of the project to empower women offenders who are subjected to violence and discrimination, and their vulnerable children, through improved access to support services.

This evaluation, which takes place at the mid-point of the project, aims to establish what change has made so far for the purposes of adapting the design for the remainder of the project. The evaluation examines the outcomes of the project on women and its effectiveness and sustainability.

This mid-term evaluation falls under PRI’s commitment to learning and sharing which is set out in the Learning and Sharing Strategy launched in 2016. The strategy aims to ensure that all of PRI works in synergy, is reflective, and uses and builds internal and external expertise. Learning is embedded at every stage of the project cycle to ensure that projects are evidence-based, which in turn, contribute to the pool of knowledge of effective methodologies for doing criminal justice reform.

Under this strategy, PRI aims to evaluate 90% of its projects and, where possible, the evaluation should be midterm to allow findings to influence the remainder of the project. Evaluation reports are also to be made available on PRI’s website <https://www.penalreform.org/about-us/impact-2/>.

## 2. Background and context

Georgia has made great strides towards reforming its penal system over the last five years since the change of government in 2013.<sup>1</sup> This reform has resulted in positive outcomes for the women and child prisoner population with the introduction of individual sentence planning and improved services and rehabilitation opportunities in prison and upon release. In 2012, the Crime Prevention Centre was established with the focus on reducing recidivism in Georgia by providing various in-house rehabilitative, training and educational opportunities as well as referring former prisoners to other service providers.

This project comes within this context and also within the context of a larger European Commission (EC) programme tackling prisoner rehabilitation and managing the transition from prison to the community. This larger programme aims to consolidate reform plans and strategies, strengthen capacities of penitentiary and probation staff, improve prison administration and detention conditions, expand rehabilitation and resocialisation services and develop efficient probation and non-custodial regimes.

PRI’s work in the South Caucasus on women offenders has included a study commissioned by UN Women entitled *Needs and Priority Issues of Women Prisoners in Georgia*.<sup>2</sup> The study focused on the compliance of existing law and practice with respect to women offenders to the Bangkok Rules as well as the characteristics and rehabilitative needs of women prisoners, former prisoners and probationers. Prior to this research, in 2013 PRI

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<sup>1</sup> In 2012 videos were released showing large-scale abuse and torture of prisoners by prison officers at Gldani No. 8 Prison. The videos caused mass demonstrations in the lead up to the parliamentary elections which the incumbent party led by, Mikheil Saakashvili lost. Saakashvili was barred from standing for a third term at the 2013 Presidential elections.

<sup>2</sup> UN Women (2014) Commissioned Study: Needs and Priority Issues of Women Prisoners in Georgia <http://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20georgia/attachments/publications/2014/needs%20and%20priority%20issues%20of%20women%20prisoners%20in%20georgia.pdf?la=en&vs=3447>

conducted its own research into the characteristics of women prisoners in a study called *Who are women prisoners? Survey results from Georgia and Armenia*.<sup>3</sup> More recent work by PRI in Georgia on women offenders has been on developing evidence-based recommendations<sup>4</sup> for introducing gender-specific approaches in the criminal justice system including a greater use of non-custodial sentences and raising awareness of the specific needs of women in the criminal justice system and the negative impact of imprisonment on their lives.<sup>5</sup>

## 2.1 The female offender population of Georgia

There are 274 women prisoners in Georgia as of 31 January 2017.<sup>6</sup> Nearly all are housed at Prison No. 5 near the town of Rustavi in the southeast of the country. The prison is the only women's prison in Georgia and houses nearly the entire female detainee population (some pre-trial detainees are housed in other facilities). The prison comprises cell blocks and training facilities, a mother and baby unit and an administrative building, all within tarmacked grounds. Each cell block has its own training room for vocational courses and there is a well-stocked library with Georgian and foreign language books.

Women offenders worldwide are generally characterised as having experienced multiple inequalities and suffered from complex and very often gendered traumas such as poor mental health, physical and sexual abuse, unhealthy and sometimes violent intimate partner relationships, low self-esteem, drug and alcohol use and abuse, high levels of unemployment, and mental health problems.<sup>7</sup> Women prisoners have usually been charged with non-violent and minor crimes, often related to poverty and they do not pose a threat to the public.<sup>8</sup>

Recent research into the female prisoner population of Georgia largely reflects this. The PRI research commissioned by UN Women showed that most of the 104 respondents (out of a total women prisoner and pre-trial detainee population at the time of 257) were serving sentence for non-violent or drug-related offences (40 and almost 28 per cent respectively).<sup>9</sup> The population is older compared to female prisoner populations in other countries, with 60 per cent over the age of 41. Only 16 per cent were under 30.<sup>10</sup> More recent figures show that prisoners in the 41-49 age bracket comprise the largest age group, with 25 per cent of female prisoners and pre-trial detainees falling in this age range.<sup>11</sup> This is mainly due to the type of crimes committed by female offenders in Georgia which tend to be poverty and drug-related. Almost 40 per cent of respondents in PRI's study said that financial reasons or

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<sup>3</sup> [https://www.penalreform.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/PRI-Research-report\\_Armenia-and-Georgia\\_Reprint-2014\\_ENG.pdf](https://www.penalreform.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/PRI-Research-report_Armenia-and-Georgia_Reprint-2014_ENG.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Penal Reform International (2016) Women's Gender-specific Needs in Georgia's Criminal Justice System: Research Report, Tbilisi, available at <https://www.penalreform.org/resource/gender-specific-need-in-georgian-criminal-justice-system/>

<sup>5</sup> Penal Reform International (2016) Women Behind Bars, <https://www.penalreform.org/resource/ქალები-გისოსებს-მიღმა-women-behind-bars/>

<sup>6</sup> World Prison Brief Georgia <http://www.prisonstudies.org/country/georgia>

<sup>7</sup> Bevan and Wehipeihana, 2015

<sup>8</sup> UNODC (2014) Handbook on Women and Imprisonment [https://www.unodc.org/documents/justice-and-prison-reform/women\\_and\\_imprisonment\\_-\\_2nd\\_edition.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/justice-and-prison-reform/women_and_imprisonment_-_2nd_edition.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> UN Women pg. 11

<sup>10</sup> Ibid pg. 10

<sup>11</sup> Georgian National Statistics Office (April 2018)

[http://geostat.ge/cms/site\\_images/files/english/crime/Unified%20Report%20on%20Criminal%20Justice%20Statistics%20\(April,%202018\).pdf](http://geostat.ge/cms/site_images/files/english/crime/Unified%20Report%20on%20Criminal%20Justice%20Statistics%20(April,%202018).pdf), pg 104

supporting family were who drove them to commit offences.<sup>12</sup> 80 per cent of respondents in the UN Women study said they were mothers.<sup>13</sup>

Self-reported drug and alcohol dependency among women prisoners is low, with only 6 per cent of the UN Women study respondents considering themselves to be drug dependent.<sup>14</sup> In PRI's study, only four per cent of respondents said they had drug dependence and one per cent alcohol dependence.<sup>15</sup> However, it noted that there were probably high levels of underreporting in the survey as other sources have suggested drug and alcohol is a more significant issue than this. Mental health problems are prevalent among the women prison population; 72 per cent of respondents reported experiencing insomnia, almost 60 per cent depressions and over a third anxiety.<sup>16</sup> Fifteen per cent had had suicidal thoughts and 16 per cent had self-harmed.<sup>17</sup>

28 per cent of women said they had been a victim of abuse from prison staff, family members, other prisoners, other members of society or another person. PRI's 2013 study found that 13 per cent of respondents said they had experience domestic violence, and 3 per cent said they had experienced sexual abuse once or twice in their lives, although again, these are both likely to be underreported.

Education levels are high among the women prisoner population, the UN Women study found that 30 per cent had completed secondary education and 42 per cent had completed higher education.<sup>18</sup> 43 per cent of respondents said they had an average family income and a quarter said they were poor or very poor. Just over half had a paid job at the time of their arrest.<sup>19</sup>

There is no publicly available data on recidivism rates in Georgia however the UN Women study found that a quarter had offended before.<sup>20</sup> In terms of obstacles to reintegration after release, 58 per cent said their criminal record prevented them from finding employment, a quarter said stigma from society was the main obstacle and a further quarter said drug or alcohol dependency.<sup>21</sup> Stigma and discrimination probably played a role in many women being unable to find work. 86 per cent said they had not received any kind of reintegration assistance after their previous release.<sup>22</sup>

Execution of non-custodial sanctions, including probation, is the responsibility of the National Probation Agency (NPA) which falls under the authority of the Ministry of Corrections (MoC). As of March 2018 there were 1,231 women serving probation sentences in Georgia. Women can be sentenced to a period of probation instead of a prison sentence and be put on probation after release from prison. Probation sentences require offenders to report every week to their probation officer but there are exceptions made for socially vulnerable women, women with some caretaking responsibilities, people with disabilities, the elderly and those with serious health conditions. Probation officers will visit these people in their own homes. The weekly check-ins can also be reduced through a formal decision made by the head of the probation bureau. There is no restriction on women serving probation being employed although they may find it difficult to obtain work and meet the conditions of their sentence or they may face discrimination from employers if they are found out to be serving probation. Courts may oblige women serving probation to also carry out community service orders as

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<sup>12</sup> PRI pg. 16

<sup>13</sup> UN Women pg. 10

<sup>14</sup> UN Women pg. 21

<sup>15</sup> PRI pg. 17

<sup>16</sup> UN Women pg. 20

<sup>17</sup> UN women pg. 20

<sup>18</sup> UN Women pg. 11

<sup>19</sup> UN Women pg. 11

<sup>20</sup> UN Women pg. 33

<sup>21</sup> UN Women pg. 33

<sup>22</sup> UN Women pg. 33

part of their sentence. Participation in rehabilitation programmes or other services is optional.

## 2.2 The importance of comprehensive social services for female offenders and former offenders

There is a large body of research on the impact of imprisonment on women and families and importance of providing a range of rehabilitative services to support their time in prison and their transition back into the community.

As stated above, many women in the criminal justice system have experienced multiple inequalities and traumas and these may have contributed to them committing crimes and becoming imprisoned in the first place. It is therefore essential that they are provided with support and services which can address the causes or contributors of their initial offending.

A literature review of what works in women offender rehabilitation programmes found that holistic programmes which address the multiple problems faced by women offenders such as housing, abusive partners, drug and alcohol misuse, relationships with partners and employment were most effective and that services should be linked between prison and the community to ensure a smooth transition between the two.<sup>23</sup> Studies illustrate the importance of children's visits to their parents in prison in helping parents adjust to both prison and back into society once they leave and the importance of making these as child-friendly as possible.<sup>24</sup>

## 2.3 Project description

The project's goal is "to empower offenders who are subjected to violence and discrimination, and their vulnerable children, through improved access to support services." This is to be achieved through the following outcomes (these were written as objectives in the original proposal but have been rewritten as outcomes, that is, what is expected to have been achieved by the end of the project):

1. Provision of relevant rehabilitation and re-integration support services to women offenders who have experienced violence and/or stigma and discrimination
2. Increased accessibility of support services for vulnerable children affected by their mothers' imprisonment or conviction
3. Improved capacity and coordination of state and non-state service-providers for better service provision for vulnerable women offenders and their children.

The activities to achieve these include:

### Outcome 1

- Survey to identify the target group and their needs
- Provision of services – medical, psychosocial, raising awareness of women about the existence of these services and how to access them, counselling, training/therapy on non-violence, legal rights
- Temporary shelter – support services and crisis interventions
- Education and vocational training, providing basic business education, vocational training, employment support, social enterprise at the shelter
- Small-scale business start-up supporting grants for women offenders to begin new lives with their children

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<sup>23</sup> Trotter and Flynn, 2015

<sup>24</sup> Casey-Acevedo and Bakken, 2002

## Outcome 2

- fostering improvement in contact between women prisoners and their children
- assisting the Ministry of Corrections with day nursery in the mother and baby unit, developing parenting skills of mothers, advocating for setting standards of care and service delivery for children in prison with their mothers

## Outcome 3

- conducting roundtables, working meetings to improve capacities and coordination for delivery of needed services for the target group

This project only serves women prisoners, former prisoners and probationers who have been subjected to violence, discrimination and/or stigma. Various respondents were asked to define discrimination and stigma and summarised it as the perception, attitudes and approaches experiences by women in conflict with the law. It can come from the prison and justice system itself, family members, employers as well as their community and society as a whole.

Respondents said discrimination is when a woman has been disadvantaged because of her status as a former prisoner or probationer. Discrimination is prohibited in Georgian law and there are many statuses included in the law which women may have been discriminated under. However, the status of prisoner, former prisoner, or probationer is not explicitly stated (it may come under “or other characteristics” outlined in Article 1).<sup>25</sup> Many employers, for example, would not tell women that the reason they have been unsuccessful in obtaining a job or have had their contract terminated is because of their status as a former prisoner or probationer.

Stigma, according to respondents, refers to an overall negative attitude or approach by society to women who have been imprisoned. According to respondents, Georgian society is prejudiced against women who have been in prison because it contravenes expected gender norms of women in Georgian society as caretakers, having been in prison makes these women no longer trustworthy. Respondents said this attitude is more prevalent in rural villages which tend to be more socially conservative and traditional than urban areas. There are also some regions of Georgia where this attitude is more common. This stigma from society manifests itself in bullying, violence, repression and rejection by the family, neighbours and community.

The United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-Custodial Measures for Women Offenders known as the ‘Bangkok Rules’ offer guidance for prison and sentencing authorities, prison and probation staff, legislators and policy makers on ensuring the needs of women in the criminal justice system are met. This project is in line with several of the rules on rehabilitation in prison (rules 12, 40 and 41), provisions for children living with their mothers in prison (rules 48 to 52) and transition from prison to the community (rules 46, 47 and 60).

The project is managed by PRI and implemented in partnership with four Georgian NGOs – Article 42 of the Constitution, the Georgian Professional Psychologists’ Association (GPPA), the Georgian Association ‘Women in Business’ (GAWB) and the Rehabilitation and Development Charity Centre Tanaziari and with participation from the Ministry of Corrections, the National Probation Agency and the Crime Prevention Centre.

### **3. Evaluation purpose and methodology**

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<sup>25</sup> Law of Georgia on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination  
<http://www.ombudsman.ge/uploads/other/1/1662.pdf>

### 3.1 Purpose

The primary purpose of this mid-term evaluation is to establish what change the project has made so far for the purposes of adapting the design for the remainder of the project. The evaluation examines the outcomes of the project on women and its effectiveness and sustainability.

### 3.2 Methodology and data collection

The evaluation uses a method known as rapid appraisal, which is an approach which uses several data collection methodologies when time is limited, and analysis is needed quickly.<sup>26</sup>

Data collection for this evaluation was carried out using the following methods:

1. Semi-structured interviews with the following stakeholders:
  - 29 Women prisoners, probationers and former offenders participating in the project's activities and services<sup>27</sup>
  - Lawyers from Article 42
  - Psychologists from the Georgian Professional Psychologists' Association (GPPA)
  - Director and staff from the Georgian Association 'Women in Business' (GAWB)
  - Social workers from the Crime Prevention Centre (CPC)
  - Director of Women's Prison No. 5
  - Deputy Head of Social Services and Deputy Head of the Penitentiary Department at the Ministry of Corrections (MoC)
  - Deputy Head of the National Probation Agency, Head of Rehabilitation Programmes and Head of International Relations and Public Relations at the National Probation Agency (NPA)
  - PRI's South Caucasus Regional Director and the Programme Manager for this project

Analysis of the following project documents:

- Project proposal, logframe and budget submitted to the EC (submitted June 2016)
- Interim report to the EC (submitted January 2018)

Analysis of the following documents produced under the project:

- Needs assessment survey form and results (translated into English using Google Translate)

### 3.3 Roles, scope and limitations

The evaluation was undertaken by PRI's Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Officer alongside researchers from the Georgian Association of Social Workers (GASW), led by its Chairperson. The role of the MEL Officer was to evaluate overall impact and the achievement of objectives, effectiveness, sustainability, project design, management and

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<sup>26</sup> USAID (2010) Performance monitoring & evaluation tips using rapid appraisal methods  
[http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf\\_docs/Pnadw105.pdf](http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/Pnadw105.pdf)

<sup>27</sup> In this report, women benefiting from the project's services and activities are referred to as clients or service users.



identify lessons learned. GASW focused on the effectiveness of services, outcomes for women and their levels of satisfaction.

The evaluation takes place just after the mid-point of the project and therefore some activities have not yet been carried out. These include the full results and analysis of the needs assessment selection and disbursement of grants for small businesses to former prisoners and probationers, building a nursery at the mother and baby unit at Women's Prison No. 5 and the evidence-based framework on care and service delivery for children in prisons and the advocacy report on setting standards of care and service delivery for children in prisons with their mothers.

The selection of women service users to participate in the interviews was undertaken by the partner NGOs involved in the project and by GASW. The initial interviews were conducted with women who had been selected by NGOs where they are accessing services. For later interviews conducted by GASW, GASW selected women to interview at random from lists provided by partner NGOs. It was expected that there might be bias in the responses from respondents selected by NGOs and that those selected by GASW might be more critical, however there was no marked difference in the responses of respondents selected by GASW and those selected by NGOs.

Due to ethical and access considerations, the component of the project on improving relationships between women prisoners and their children was not explicitly examined. Although there had only been nine children involved in this component, they are spread all over Georgia and travelling to interview them would be a substantial undertaking. Additionally, there was concern over re-traumatising them or stigmatising them and this risk was deemed too high for the purposes of this evaluation. Additionally, while a few women interviewed mentioned their children, the same concerns were also taken, and this issue was not examined explicitly during interviews and focus group discussions as they may have had children living far away and the issue may be distressing for them. Women living with their infant children at the mother and baby unit in the women's prison were explicitly asked about this component.

## 4. Analysis of findings

### 4.1 Outcome 1: Provision of relevant rehabilitation and re-integration support services to women offenders who have experienced violence and/or stigma and discrimination

#### **Activities delivered under this outcome**

The services provided to women under this outcome are largely delivered by the partner NGOs in the project and include legal aid, psychological counselling, financial support for medical care, education, training and work opportunities, small grants for start-up businesses (this had not taken place at the time of the evaluation) and accommodation for homeless former prisoners in a temporary shelter. These support services were decided upon after PRI and the partner NGOs conducted a needs assessment of women prisoners, former prisoners and probationers, analysed prisoners' individual sentence plans and consulted with the women's prison on what activities would be allowed in the women's prison (certain training courses are not allowed by the MoC and prior permission had to be obtained for others).

Legal aid is provided by two lawyers at the NGO Article 42 of the Georgian Constitution. According to Article 42, 84 women had been given legal advice under the project at the time of the evaluation. Most were civil cases related to property, divorce, custody of children and

obtaining legal and identity documents. But a few women have brought cases disputing their sentences and appealing for pardoning or shortened sentences. Property is the main legal issue for clients, mainly because many former prisoners are rejected by their families or spouses and denied rights to their property. The two lawyers have also conducted awareness sessions to inform women of the law pertaining to gender discrimination, domestic violence, gender equality, social subsidies, healthcare and labour rights and the state's obligations to their legal protection.

Psychological counselling is provided by psychologists from the Georgian Professional Psychologists' Association (GPPA) and Tanaziari (to women from the Samegrelo region), this includes individual and group counselling. Psychologists from GPPA visit the women's prison to conduct individual and group sessions and former prisoners and probationers visit GPPA's office in Tbilisi or Tanaziari's office in Zugdidi for counselling. One GPPA psychologist also visits women outside Tbilisi. GPPA has also conducted awareness raising sessions on domestic violence for 23 women.

Some former prisoners and probationers have been provided with funds to cover the cost of medical care. All prisoners are provided with healthcare in prison and some former prisoners and probationers obtain a special status in the Georgian welfare system which covers most of the cost of medical care. Women can receive money towards the costs of healthcare through a partner NGO as long as they have proof of need for both the treatment and the financial support. The fund is managed by partner NGOs, but PRI makes the payments directly to the relevant hospitals and clinics.

Skills training and work opportunities have been provided by the Georgian Association 'Women in Business' (GAWB). Training courses for women in prison include hairdressing, beauty therapy and traditional Georgian felt making (other educational courses and college courses are provided by the Ministry of Education). There is also a sewing workshop where women learn to sew and can earn a salary through working to fulfil contracts obtained by GAWB. At the time of the evaluation, around 50 women prisoners were working on a contract for the MoC to make mattresses for men's prisons. A previous contract had been signed with the Georgian Patriarchate to produce choir uniforms. Some women have also established themselves as entrepreneurs in felt making and have sold their products online and through public exhibitions organised by GAWB and PRI. GAWB runs business and entrepreneurial skills and other skills training at its centre in Tbilisi for former prisoners and probationers. At the time of the evaluation a culinary skills course was taking place. GAWB also owns and manages a shelter for homeless former prisoners with 12 beds (at the time of the evaluation there were 10 women living there). Women can live there for six months and then renew every six months if their situation has not changed. At the time of the evaluation, several women had been living at the shelter for over three years. Each woman has their own room and there are cots and beds for children (no children were living there at the time of the evaluation), as well as a small library, a living room and kitchen. The shelter also runs a sewing workshop fulfilling the same contracts as the workshop at the women's prison. Four former prisoners not living at the shelter were coming to the shelter to work in the sewing workshop daily.

GAWB manages the small-scale business start-up grants component of the project and has run similar schemes in previous projects. The grants are given to women through a competitive process and are intended to help women kick-start their own small business enterprises. The selection of candidates and distribution of grants had not taken place at the time of the evaluation.

## **Analysis**

The selection of services provided in this project was based on analysis of the needs assessment conducted at the start of the project. The needs assessment asked similar

questions to those asked in the UN Women commissioned study - demographic information, information about the crime the respondent was convicted of, recidivism rates, reintegration after their previous conviction and questions about their basic needs and how these could be met including health needs, basic living and hygiene needs, contact with children and other family members, as well as needs for services. A full analysis of the results has not been undertaken yet but for the purposes of designing and organising project services, respondents were sorted by the service they required. Most respondents needed legal aid, education and professional training, help finding employment, and access to information on services available after release. The UN Women study found that the most requested services by women in prison were treatment of health problems (47 per cent), vocational and educational courses (40 and 38 per cent respectively) and legal aid (35 per cent). Classes on self-esteem and life-skills were the seventh most requested service with 23 per cent of respondents requesting this.<sup>28</sup> Similarly, PRI's *Who are women prisoners?* study asked survey respondents about their needs following release, 70 per cent stated employment, followed by housing and treatment for health problems (43 and 40 per cent respectively). Both PRI and GAWB explained that the choice of courses offered are based on what skills are in demand on the job market and because due to the stigma faced by women who have been involved in the criminal justice system, these kinds of skills can also enable women to become self-employed. The evaluator was not able to see the market analysis however.

Women interviewed for this evaluation were largely satisfied with the services they had received through the national NGO partners, including with the frequency of services and their quality. Many said the services had boosted their self-esteem and confidence and had improved their relationships with their families and communities.

Two women were interviewed at Article 42 who had received legal aid on civil cases. Both were extremely happy with the service, mainly because Article 42 had been the only NGO which had been able to resolve their cases by covering the cost of court fees and legal documents (it costs 100 GEL – around 33 EUR – to submit applications to court and this fee is unaffordable for most clients). Both women said that these legal issues, which included obtaining identification documents and disputing a household bill, had been pending for several years and that they had sought legal aid from other NGOs but to no avail because they could not afford the legal fees. Both women said they had been treated with respect by the lawyers at Article 42 and felt able to move on with their lives and progress in the rehabilitation process. No participants of the awareness sessions were interviewed and there was no monitoring data for this activity, so little can be said about its effectiveness and impact.

Women in prison and former prisoners said it was extremely important to have psychologists visit from outside as they trusted them more than the prison psychologists who were perceived as being part of the prison regime and were too rigid in their approach and procedures. Psychologists said the most notable impact of their work with the target group was that women are provided with a space for emotional release and expression. The counselling provides them with hope, and a feeling that they are not alone as well as helping them become more self-assured and assertive. Although some women have been suspicious of the counselling service or not willing to participate, the psychologists have been able to be patient and flexible in their support. Where women have children, the psychologists said it was easy to gain their trust by paying attention to the children, women were more open to discussing the problems their children had rather than their own.

Psychologists from GPPA also spend some of their time drafting recommendations to judicial authorities regarding individual sentences. These recommendations have no legal status according to the Code of Imprisonment and other bylaws and regulations. However, they are still considered important because they help the prison authorities measure and

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<sup>28</sup> UN Women (2014) Commissioned Study: Needs and Priority Issues of Women Prisoners in Georgia pg. 31

assess interventions for women in compliance of their individual sentence plans. The assessment of services and engagement of the women in their sentence plan would affect their chances of early release. Recommendations also come from the prison administration and are usually based on security or other regime concerns.

Most women, with a few notable exceptions, were happy with the training courses and job opportunities and thought these would prove to be useful for finding work upon release. One respondent was frustrated with the training she had been offered while in prison and outside (from a previous project) as she had been unable to find work: "I have ten certificates from [training courses], but the only thing I've used them for is teaching my family embroidery, I've never got a job because of them". Other women noted that the training skills had helped to boost their self-esteem and confidence. A former prisoner taking part in the culinary skills course was proud that she was once again able to cook for herself and her family and found it therapeutic: "It's good to learn how to cook again after 8 years in prison where I couldn't cook for myself." This feeling was echoed by another woman who had established a pig farm with a small grant in a previous project, she said killing her first pig to feed her family helped "regain my status as the caretaker of my family". A former prisoner living at the shelter for homeless women said, "it was not easy to spend seven years in prison doing nothing, [GAWB's] courses are proper rehabilitation". Women in prison emphasised that the skills and job opportunities were useful for providing their days with structure and teaching them time-management and organisation. A respondent in prison said, "courses keep us occupied; I worry less, and my psychological condition improves". Women working in the sewing workshop in the prison were able to earn money but worked long hours doing sometimes physical tasks (filling mattress covers with cotton for example) and this offered woman experience of working on the outside. Another benefit of the skills courses and craft exhibitions, especially for former prisoners and those on probation has been the opportunities to socialise and meet new people.

Although overall women felt that the services had contributed significantly to their reintegration, there was still dissatisfaction with the inability to obtain long-term employment, and this remained an unsatisfied need. There was also some frustration with the level of support being given on this:

"NGOs do their best, but it doesn't mean anything unless we can get jobs...I have been applying for jobs for a year, every institution knows I need a job but all they offer is more training. I am no longer motivated to do training because it doesn't result in anything" – woman on probation.

This frustration with NGOs' support could be due to unrealistic expectations from some women and some miscommunication on what NGOs could provide them. Women were more satisfied with the legal aid and psychological counselling possibly because these offered concrete solutions and outcomes whereas obtaining employment is dependent on many uncontrollable external factors including an already high unemployment rate in Georgia and age discrimination (some women mentioned it was difficult to get a job over the age of 35), in addition to the stigma and discrimination faced by women who have been involved in the criminal justice system.

The project set aside a budget to support women with medical bills, however, only some of this has been used and as of March 2018, only 12 women had accessed this support. Women in prison have access to comprehensive healthcare in prison but there is a lack of continuity of this care when they are released. In prison they may have been included in a state programme for example to treat Hepatitis C but this ends after their release, so treatment becomes a priority. Although medical care was stated as a pressing need for former prisoners by some respondents from state institutions as well as by respondents to the UN Women study and PRI's study it was not mentioned by women themselves in this evaluation. This is partly due to changes in the way healthcare is financed for vulnerable groups in Georgia with most costs being covered by state now. It is also the responsibility of

the woman to prove that they have a medical need through documentation from a doctor or hospital and this may be difficult to provide. PRI has decided to reallocate some of the unspent funds to other areas of the project due to the lack of need in this area.

## 4.2 Outcome 2: Increased accessibility of support services for vulnerable children affected by their mothers' imprisonment or conviction

### Activities delivered under this outcome

As stated previously, children not living with their mothers in prison who were given support to maintain regular contact with their mothers were not included in interviews due to concerns around retraumatizing them and logistical difficulties in contacting them for interview. This section will therefore only focus on the childcare support for mothers living with their children in prison.

At the time of the evaluation there were four children under the age of three living with their mothers in prison. Mothers and their children live in a dedicated mother and baby unit, a building separate from the rest of the prison. Each mother has their own room where they live with their baby and there is a living room/play room for residents to spend time during the day.

Mothers in the unit are visited once a week by psychologists from GPPA and twice a week by the dedicated childminder who was recruited as part of this project. The psychologists offer one to one and group counselling. The childminder looks after the babies for a couple of hours while their mothers can attend to other things, and she gives advice on child development and upbringing.

Other support for vulnerable children affected by their mothers being in the criminal justice system include legal aid to help mothers gain custody of their children or help them obtain identity documents. Psychologists from GPPA have also referred nine children not living in prison for examinations by neuropsychologists. GPPA psychologists have worked with families to support women after they are released from prison and have assisted mothers and families tell children that their mothers are in prison. The women's shelter for homeless former prisoners can also accommodate children. Although there were no children living there at the time, a mother and her two children had recently moved out.

### Analysis

The visits by both the psychologists and child carer are new additions to the weekly schedule at the mother and baby unit. According to the mothers, the psychologists had only been visiting for a month (since the beginning of February) and the childminder had only been recruited and started working at the start of the year. It is therefore too soon to establish the effect of each service. Two mothers in the unit interviewed found utility in the visits of both the psychologists and the childminder. They said the psychologists provided much needed emotional support. They requested the childminder visit more often and for there to be more than one. This may be due to enjoying visitors and contact with the outside world. Mothers also said that they do not have enough toys as the prison has only provided a few and they cannot afford many. They would like the psychologists to bring toys and baby equipment. Respondents from the MoC and the NPA also commended the work of the childminder in allowing mothers time for their own rehabilitation and to look after their own needs as well as teaching them about child development and raising healthy children.

Psychologists from GPPA said one of the most successful aspects of the project had been in helping women to re-establish trust with their children. However they recommended that there should be a stronger family component and more support for the partners and adult children of women offenders, given the primacy of the family in Georgian society. Women in

the prison also said not enough was being done by psychologists to support their families. Respondents from the MoC commended the project for specifically targeting family members and helping offenders rebuild and make stronger connections with their family members and for helping to strengthen prisoners' confidence. This aspect needs further examination and assessment in a final evaluation.

Respondents from the MoC and the NPA were very enthusiastic about the work of the childminder and very keen in having a proper nursery at the mother and baby unit so that mothers can take part in the prison regime activities. PRI has asked the EC to reallocate funds from the medical services budget line in order to assist with the infrastructure costs to set up a dedicated space for babies and the childminder to encourage and build on their interest in this with the expectation that the MoC will maintain the budget for the childminder and the nursery once the project ends. Again this should be monitored closely and evaluated in a final evaluation.

### 4.3 Outcome 3: Improved capacity and coordination of state and non-state service-providers for better service provision for vulnerable women offenders and their children.

#### **Activities delivered under this outcome**

A core element which is embedded into the project, is the bringing together of state and non-state institutions to improve services for women offenders and their children. State institutions refer prisoners, former prisoners and probationers onto services provided by the project's partner NGOs and they in turn refer their clients to each other.

In order to support this, regular coordination meetings have been taking place with all the stakeholders involved in the project. These meetings take place once a month where representatives of the partners exchange information on the services they are providing.

#### **Analysis**

Although this was planned as a discrete outcome under this project, it is a crucial element to the functioning and success of outcomes 1 and 2. As a result of the coordination and referrals system between state and non-state service providers, women and their children are offered a comprehensive package of services which aim to meet their often very complex and ongoing needs.

Several respondents noted that it was the introduction of individual sentence planning which was the main contributor to bringing state and non-state actors together to coordinate addressing the needs of prisoners: "now sentence planning allows us to request and apply for services when they need them... This coordination was non-existent before because we didn't have individual sentence planning" – Respondent from the MoC. Sentence planning was introduced to the women's prison in 2015 after assistance from EC justice programme experts. Individual sentence plans include information about the offender's crime, their family background, psychological condition and suggests rehabilitation programmes the offender should take part in. Participation in rehabilitation programmes is only obligatory for those convicted of violent crimes.

Although it may be the case that the introduction of sentence planning initiated coordination and cooperation of state and non-state services, this project has worked to strengthen cooperation through scheduling regular meetings between all stakeholders. "We have regular communications and meet on a monthly basis to exchange information... This ensures overall coordination and no overlap but also ensures healthy competition, evaluation

and quality”—respondent from the MoC. All stakeholders said that coordination had improved among NGOs and state providers:

“Although there are many partners and players we all act together, from the beginning, we planned topics of courses, we discuss results and progress achieved...[that] the project is managed under a single umbrella and single framework is a big achievement” – respondent from the MoC;

“It helped us to improve coordination with the probation bureau because ... we had to cooperate with each other. These processes are now very smooth.” – respondent from Article 42.

“Once the project is there we have to cooperate more closely and this happens, it’s inevitable. We meet regularly, they are interested in our feedback.” – respondent from the NPA

The MoC also mentioned that coordination between them, the NPA and the CPC has increased due to the EC project on transitional management.

One caveat to this is the involvement of more junior staff in coordination and management efforts. Unfortunately, no senior staff member was available for interview from the CPC, instead two social workers were interviewed, a supervisor and a case worker. Both were aware of the NGOs involved in the project and knew that they could refer clients onto them, but they said they were not fully aware of the services being provided by each NGO and there had been occasions when they had referred clients onto NGOs for particular services that it soon transpired they did not provide:

“We would also refer women to partners but how the NGO does its work, we are not involved, we don’t get this information... maybe we could have cooperated better with the partner NGOs, it would be better to have more precise information about what they do provide and do not provide for example I would refer a person for medical assistance, but they find out that the organisation cannot provide this. if we had more detailed information about what is possible and what is not possible this would have helped us and would help us improve the quality of our services.” – respondent from the CPC

The project has produced brochures about the project and conducted several meetings to alert referral staff to the services and activities on offer and staff from every state institution have attended coordination meetings. More may be needed to empower these social workers to seek out this information or to ensure that it is provided. It is notable that staff from the NGOs working directly in service provision (lawyers and psychologists) did not mention this as a problem they faced, they were well aware of the services provided by the other organisations involved in the project.

There is huge support from state institutions for this project. The prison director, MoC and the NPA all commented on how necessary and valuable the services are. Having NGOs fulfil these functions takes the burden off the state when really it is the state’s role to provide these. However civil society plays another role which cannot be fulfilled by anyone else and that is providing an addition and neutral voice in prisons, counter to that of the state penal system. Some respondents expressed discomfort with visiting the NPA because they were worried about being labelled an offender or former offender by passers-by. Other respondents said they really benefited from the participation of civil society in rehabilitation programmes, for example, the participation of psychologists from GPPA whom women said they trusted far more than prison psychologists.

#### 4.4 Project design, monitoring and sustainability

##### **Project design**



Overall the project partners felt a great deal of ownership over the design and implementation of the project; respondents from the Ministry of Corrections even went so far as to say the project had been designed by them. The input into the design of the project and decisions over what kind of services would be provided was however limited to the more senior staff at each partner. Lawyers and social workers said they had had no input but that perhaps their managers had, however they were satisfied that the project design was meeting the needs of clients. This kind of project relies on substantial levels of participation and ownership at all levels to ensure its success from the start, so it is commendable that PRI project staff in Georgia have achieved this so successfully.

On the whole, women said the services provided met their needs, especially the legal aid and psychological counselling provided by Article 42 and GPPA. However, when asked whether they had felt able to articulate their own needs and communicate these to their social workers, probation officers etc. several women said they were not able to do this, partly because they did not know what assistance was on offer and so did not know that they could ask for this. The project does not and cannot fully address the need of former prisoners and probationers to find permanent, sustainable employment. It is too soon to assess the extent to which the project has contributed to the long-term employment prospects of women, this will require an additional in-depth evaluation after the project ends.

The skills training offered under the project are traditional women's skills – hairdressing, beauty therapy, traditional handicrafts and sewing. Many of the women said they were happy and satisfied with the skills they were able to learn and there were high levels of participation observed in all the classes provided at the prison and outside. Stakeholders also explained that the selection of training courses was based on an analysis of the labour market and assessment of the skills required. However, as most of the women interviewed (by no means a representative sample) had been unable to get jobs using the skills they had acquired, the selection of courses perhaps needs some rigorous reassessment. If women are unable to get sustainable jobs which pay adequately, they may risk returning to the abusive and violent situations which led them to crime in the first place.

## **Monitoring**

So far there has been no comprehensive monitoring done of activity outputs and outcomes. No kind of satisfaction survey or assessment of what participants gained from an activity is carried out. Some ad hoc monitoring of proxy indicators is done by partners, for example if women keep coming back to use services or take part in training courses it means they are happy with them, however this does not constitute a proper assessment of services. Although during interviews and focus groups with women, they did say they were satisfied with services, they did express desire for additional services and support, the extent of this can only be gathered from a comprehensive survey or focus group with a sample of service users. It is acknowledged that NGOs have to obtain permission from the MoC before carrying out any kind of questionnaire in prisons and this can be time-consuming but this time-delay can be factored in in the MEL planning process. Other, more informal qualitative methods for activity monitoring can also be used. Respondents from the MoC state that they are currently developing a programme assessment and evaluation process with questionnaires for prisoners which will allow them to comment on the quality of services and provide feedback. PRI should try to be involved in this to access the findings for this project. Proper, comprehensive monitoring of services and activities needs to be undertaken to comprehensively measure their impact and contribution to women's reintegration and rehabilitation.

## **Sustainability**



The project is due to end in February 2019 and at the time of the evaluation, there was no overall plan for continuing services after this date. Some partner NGOs said they would continue serving existing clients but not take on new ones and GAWB said it would fund its services, including the shelter, from its own funds (GAWB had previously had a gap in funding of 18 months and had funded the shelter from the proceeds of its business contracts). GAWB staff said eventually they would like the government or private sector to help provide funding. Although these services should be provided or funded by the state, both the MoC and NPA said they were not able to do this.

The main services may not be able to continue; however the project has improved networks and relationships between service providers: “this institutional memory will remain. When the project ends we will be able to capitalise on the experience that we had” – lawyer from Article 42.

PRI should start planning for the end of the project and, with input from stakeholders, put together a sustainability plan which provides some continuity for women accessing these services, especially for the most vulnerable such as those living in the shelter and those who are at risk of domestic violence.

## 5. Conclusion

At the mid-point of the implementation period, the project is making significant progress towards the achievement of impact. Although it is too soon to assess long-term impact of the rehabilitative services, it can be confidently said that the services provided have supported and aided women’s rehabilitation and reintegration back into the community. The ultimate goal for most women interviewed in the project was long-term employment which the skills training and job opportunities aim to support, although this was not a goal of the project. However there were other outcomes of these which can be measured and are just as valuable as measure of success and effectiveness including boosting confidence and self-esteem and providing structure for women in and outside prison. Other measures of rehabilitation should be measured such as their feelings of self-sufficiency, ability to cope with adversity, reoffending behaviour etc. It is important that women continue to feel supported after the end of the project and that services do not simply end.

There are many other factors which this project cannot influence which effect former prisoners’ and probationers’ access to employment including the already high-level unemployment in Georgia and societal stigma towards those involved in the criminal justice system and older women. PRI and partners may want to reassess the skills training courses offered to ensure they are giving women the skills to access available jobs and should consider increasing the employment support offered to women. PRI could also consider working with the private sector and industry to encourage employment of former prisoners and probationers.

A strong component of the project has been the synergies produced by both state and non-state institutions working together for the benefit of women. The coordination and cooperation between stakeholders has meant that women accessing one service can be referred on to further services if they require them: “it’s a partnership of NGOs – there are psychologists, legal aid and job opportunities – we meet all the needs of these isolated persons. This makes them feel more comfortable and trust us more” – lawyer from Article 42.

The project aims to support women who have been victims of violence and/or discrimination in that only women who meet these criteria have access to services. Although the project has achieved in supporting these women with their rehabilitation, little has been done to combat the negative societal attitudes towards this group. It is perhaps outside the remit of this project and PRI’s mandate but supporting public campaigns which aim to combat discrimination and stigma faced by former women offenders would contribute to the

achievement of outcomes of this project, especially helping these women find long-term employment.

## 6. Lessons Learned and Recommendations

General recommendations for the remainder of the project	
<b>Lesson learned</b>	The design and implementation of the project has been a truly collaborative effort with participation and ownership from all stakeholders from the start. PRI should be commended for managing and leading such an effective partnership. The NGO partners were very carefully selected for their extensive experience and expertise providing support services to offenders and former offenders and vulnerable women. The staff at these organisations obviously care a lot about the women they serve. Senior staff at state institutions also feel considerable ownership over the project and there is a collective and mutual understanding of the importance of meeting the often very complex needs of vulnerable women in order to facilitate their reintegration into society. The coordination of state and non-state partners has been smooth and cooperative with everyone on the same page and aiming for the same goals. Where there is concern it is over the participation and buy-in of more junior members of staff from some institutions who, during interviews, were unaware of some aspects of the project and the services being provided by some of the NGOs.
<b>Recommendation</b>	PRI should ensure engagement and participation of all staff involved in the project, including those who may not be high-level decision makers. Junior or front-facing staff may have valuable insights about the target group and their needs due to their daily interactions with them and this should not be ignored. Steps should be taken to ensure they are involved and feel ownership over the project rather than just meeting targets and demands.
<b>Lesson learned</b>	Careful thought and planning went into the selection of services and the NGOs that would deliver these, however there has been an opportunity missed in measuring the effectiveness and outcomes of these services. It is clear that women are benefitting from the services and the coordination between service providers, however it seems a lost opportunity that clear aims were not stated for the purposes of the services and the outcomes for women have not been monitored in a meaningful way. The monitoring data gathered can be used to demonstrate the effectiveness and value of services to stakeholders and potential donors.
<b>Recommendation</b>	Establish a comprehensive monitoring plan with achievable indicators which measure outcomes for women. Indicators could include women's confidence levels, feelings of reintegration and relations with their family and community. The data should be disaggregated by prisoner, former prisoner and probationer. This kind of monitoring should be carried out at regular intervals throughout the project and compared against the baseline.  PRI should also ensure proper monitoring of the new nursery in the mother and baby unit to ensure it is being used as specified and that mothers are able to take part in the prison regime and that they feel comfortable with this.
<b>Lesson learned</b>	All NGO partners are well-established entities and have long experience providing these services to prisoners and other vulnerable groups. However, the provision of services to this particular group was new for Article 42 and GPPA (they had provided services to former prisoners before but not

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specifically for women who had been of violence, stigma or discrimination). The project is also due to end in February 2019 and at the time of the evaluation there was no provision for continuing the services beyond the project period. All NGOs said they would continue to support existing clients after the project ended but could not take on new ones without ongoing funding. State bodies also stated they would be unable and unwilling to fund the services after this project ends.

**Recommendation** Lobby state bodies on the importance and necessity of state funding for these services. It is the state's obligation to support vulnerable groups and provide for their rehabilitation and there is an important role for NGOs to play in prisons and prisoner rehabilitation.

Support the sustainability of partner organisations through providing training on fundraising and proposal writing.

### For outcome 1

**Lesson learned** There were some raised expectations and dissatisfaction among some clients interviewed especially around obtaining employment. This may be down to miscommunication or complicated referral processes.

**Recommendation** Service providers should ensure they communicate their services in a clear and accessible way to clients and service users both verbally and in writing. Processes should be explained to women at the start and throughout their interaction to ensure women know what they can and cannot expect. This information could also be displayed at each service provider via a public information board which also states the aims of the service.

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**Lesson learned** The selection of skills training courses was partially based on an analysis of skills needed on the market however few women (of those interviewed for this evaluation) had been able to obtain long-term employment. As stated above, there are many contributors to this including the high unemployment rate in Georgia but outcomes of this objectives should nevertheless be monitored.

**Recommendation** Monitoring employment of service users should be undertaken to evaluate the effectiveness of the skills training (this should only be one indicator among others). PRI should also undertake a proper assessment of the market to ensure that these are indeed the skills which are in demand

### For outcome 2

**Lesson learned** The evaluation revealed the importance of prisoners maintaining bonds with their families, especially children for the rehabilitation and resocialisation process. Stigma and discrimination often come from family members and families can breakdown as a result of prolonged separation.

**Recommendation** PRI should lead an open discussion with the MoC and Women's Prison No. 5 to allow social workers to work with prisoners and their families before they are released. This would promote healthy transitions for prisoners back into the community.

### For outcome 3

**Lesson learned** For the most part, the project has managed to obtain enviable levels of buy-in and commitment from state and non-state partners, including direct service providers and senior staff. All are committed to the same aims of the project and serving women prisoners, former prisoners and probationers and were

dedicated to working together to providing comprehensive rehabilitation services. However this level of commitment cannot always be assumed, and it is important to ensure all partners, including those doing front-line service delivery are informed about how the project is run, the other stakeholders and what they can provide.

**Recommendation** Ensure all stakeholders and staff on this project are well communicated with and feel ownership over the project. This could be in the form of leaflets (similar to those produced for service users) which detail what can be provided and by whom. This would ensure efficiency and improve satisfaction among service users.

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**Lesson learned** Civil society organisations play a crucial role in the rehabilitation and resocialisation of offenders and former offenders. Not only do they provide necessary services which may not be available through the state, they also provide a neutral, third party voice to offenders because they do not represent the penitentiary or state institutions which offenders may have negative views of. Because they are not the penitentiary system, there may be less stigma associated around accessing their services.

**Recommendation** Some respondents noted they did not like visiting the NPA because they feared being seen entering the building and thus being identified as an offender or former offender. PRI should discuss with the NPA how it delivers services to female probationers to minimise stigmatising and retraumatising them. This could be achieved through probation officers meeting clients in neutral locations or through providing more services through civil society organisations.

### Recommendations for future projects

**Lesson learned** Although this project aims to meet the immediate rehabilitative needs of vulnerable women involved in the criminal justice system, these women continue to face discrimination and stigma from their families and society in general. The project has contributed to raising the self-esteem and confidence levels of these women and has provided very practical support to help them reintegrate back into society. However they continue to struggle to find long-term employment and face discrimination and stigma in their daily lives.

**Recommendation** PRI SC could consider supporting efforts aimed at combatting negative stereotypes towards former offenders through campaigns in the media. PRI and project partners could also consider working with the private sector and industry to encourage employment of former prisoners and probationers. There is a network of businesses in Georgia called CSR-Club (Corporate Social Responsibility) which, among other activities, promotes the employment of vulnerable persons, including former offenders.

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