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SDG-focused Social work education in Georgia

Project 1: Psycho-educational YouTube video channel for children

Social Work students prepared psycho-educational YouTube video channel[[1]](#footnote-1) aiming to make lives of street connected youth more productive and enjoyable while staying in the 24-hour centers. The videos had three different focus: (1) discussion on animation and teaching empathy and pro-social communication skills; (2) arts and crafts; (3) physical exercises and sport (Partskhaladze et al. 2020).

The videos were shown at all existing 24-hour crisis centers in Tbilisi, capital city, where most of the street kids reside. The children provided their self-reflection to the students in the YouTube comment section of the videos. The feedback was very positive and showed the children’s interest and motivation, promoted their informal education, psychological rehabilitation and enhanced their life skills.

Project 2: Online concert for the Tbilisi Municipality Shelter for homeless in Lilo settlement

Based on needs assessment of beneficiaries of Lilo shelter, students developed project that aimed to develop video-concert for beneficiaries. The video lasted about two hours. Students asked different artists (singers, poets, musicians and etc.) from different regions of Georgia to record videos of their performance and also addressed them with their kind wishes[[2]](#footnote-2).

Students also made an introduction speech and welcomed them. This concert was very timely for people who were kept in the shelter and felt very isolated. The process of engagement of artists was very intensive and time consuming. This project also served as a way of increasing awareness of homeless people among famous artists. Prior to the project preparation, students form “student social workers club” at Ilia State University.

Project 3: Increasing awareness on gender-based roles

Responds to SDG #5 Gender equality

Students studied literature on gender-based violence, feminist theories, laws and bylaws on this issue existing in the country as well as the recent annual reports from the ombudsman office of Georgia. Based on the desk research study, students developed self-awareness raising videos. One video was about gender roles and stereotypes[[3]](#footnote-3). Another video was made on gender-based discrimination at work place[[4]](#footnote-4). Students disseminated these videos to pupils and their parents of one of the public schools in Tbilisi. Children were asked to reflect on these videos by writing a short note how it affected them and what do they think about gender based stereotypes and discrimination. Based on their notes students developed poster cards and shared for families living in the shelters. Both videos and poster cards aimed at raising gender based violence among families living in the shelters.

Project 4: Donate a book to the Municipality Shelter for homeless in Lilo settlement, Tbilisi

Responds to SDGs No Poverty #1; Zero Hunger #2 and Good Health and Well-Being #3,

The project comprised of different stages and its purpose was to increase awareness about homelessness among children, connect children with shelter and create library at the shelter[[5]](#footnote-5).

At the first stage of the project students arranged informational meeting with school children of one of the public schools in Tbilisi. Teachers as well as pupils received information about shelters and social housing and issues related homelessness and poverty. After this meeting pupils expressed their willingness to participate in the social action “donate a book to the shelter”. This campaign facilitated pupils’ empathy and charity towards homeless people. Pupils were asked to record welcoming videos for beneficiaries and also send messages expressing their kindness. For instance, these messages were: “do not worry, we can build future together”, “ I send you warmth”, “read the books, you will feel better”, “your life is good, do not worry, we are with you”. These videos and posters were presented at the final event that was organized in the shelter.

At the second stage, students started informational campaign “donate a book to the shelter” in the social network, in particular, “Facebook”. They created several posters and distributed among their social network members. As a result of this campaign more than 500 books for adults and children were collected.

At the final stage, students invited the general director of the [National Parliamentary Library of Georgia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Parliamentary_Library_of_Georgia) to provide a literature night at the shelter. The director gave a talk about literature and role of the book in a human’s personal life. The students treated beneficiaries with sweets and drinks.

Conclusion

Social work programs have pivotal role in maximizing their impact on the SDGs which are national identified as national priorities. They carry fundamental role in the country with various socio-economic problems, which discloses itself even more explicitly day by day on the background of ongoing pandemic.

Two case examples showed that field work teaching can promote SDGs through SDG-focused teaching and learning processes within and outside the classroom. It is revealed that students’ active engagement in designing and accomplishing social/service learning projects could lead towards achievement of SDGs. Moreover, it serves as an effective tool for enhancing their self-awareness and social responsibility towards accomplishing their professional social work roles within the wider social development context of the country.

Though majority of social workers are state employees, social workers can not be defined in terms of statutory duties only, mainly focusing in controlling function of the profession, focusing on intervention in the best scenario instead of strengthening and empowering their service recipients. Majority of social problems do not disappear simply by legislative changes. Even in the best legislative framework social changes are carried by or supported by professionals alike social workers. Changing social norms, therein increasing sense of solidarity, compassion, social justice, by increased awareness on various social problems and accountability to others, by self-identification about needs and desires, strengths and limits is not a solitary route. On this route people are struggling alone, to support them professionals are struggling even more if not clearly defined goals and frameworks, realization of obligations, responsibilities and sense of accountability in front of profession and service recipient. This route is leading way through Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development Framework in line with the SDGS.

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2. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d5qfzZ8phC4> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. <https://www.facebook.com/979097208905587/videos/552050189124465> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. <https://www.facebook.com/Research-Center-For-Advancing-Science-In-Social-Services-And-Interventions-979097208905587/photos/pcb.1974389512709680/1974388542709777/> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)