



PUBLIC DEFENDER  
(OMBUDSMAN) OF GEORGIA

**CHILD'S RIGHTS CENTER**

**SPECIAL REPORT**

**VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN IN GENERAL  
EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS**

**TBILISI**

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# INTRODUCTION

This paper is a special report on the results of the monitoring conducted by the Child's Rights Center at the Office of Public Defender of Georgia during the 2016-2017 academic year to study violence against children in general educational institutions. The monitoring was carried out within the framework of the project "Strengthening the Capacity of the Public Defender's Child Rights Center" supported by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

Georgia still faces problems in the prevention of violence against children, timely identification of such incidents, and effective implementation of measures designed to protect and assist children. Deeply-rooted stereotypes coupled with shortcomings in rendering services adversely affect the level of protection of children against any form of violence. This is further aggravated by wrong stereotyped methods of upbringing, which are widely spread in society.<sup>1</sup>

When overviewing the human rights situation, the Public Defender of Georgia places a special emphasis on violence against minors and factors causing this violence. The monitoring of state educational or care institutions carried out by the Public Defender's Center of Child's Rights over the period from 2013 to 2017 as well as the analysis of cases filed with the Office of Public Defender showed that a general approach towards children remains largely abusive in the country while the state fails to implement effective measures for the improvement of the situation; moreover, according to the results of monitoring conducted and cases studied by the Public Defender, violence is often applied against children by those people whose official duty is to take care of, raise and educate children.

This special report addresses the above-mentioned issue. It has been prepared on the basis of analysis of monitoring results of general educational institutions (public schools, boarding schools and private schools) and pursued the aim to contribute to ensuring a safe environment for children in educational institutions and protecting them from physical and psychological abuse.

This aspect of general educational schools has been monitored for the first time ever within the mandate of the Public Defender of Georgia. Representatives of the Public Defender paid visits to **109 general educational institutions** countrywide, including 98 public schools, five private schools and six boarding schools.

The results of the monitoring made it clear that the protection of children from abusive approach and improper treatment remains a challenge in the system of general education: psychological and physical abuse of children by adults and peers is observed frequently; bullying<sup>2</sup> among pupils is a widespread form of interaction among minors; awareness of pupils of their rights is poor; responsible persons lack competence regarding the mechanism of response to all forms of violence against children and hence, response is not undertaken in the best interests of the child; there is a shortage of psycho-social rehabilitation services for child victims.<sup>3</sup>

The monitoring showed the need to strengthen the state policy and relevant legislation as well as internal mechanisms operating in this area in order to ensure the respect of the rights of pupils in schools, namely, to protect them against violence and ensure their safety and welfare.

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1 Violence against Children in Georgia, UNICEF, 2013. [https://www.unicef.org/eca/Unicef\\_VAC\\_ENG\\_final.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/eca/Unicef_VAC_ENG_final.pdf)

2 An aggressive behavior in which someone intentionally and repeatedly causes another person injury or discomfort. Bullying includes almost all forms of violence. It can take the form of physical contact, words or more subtle actions.

3 Psychological service center of the LEPL Office of Resource Officers of Educational Institutions operate in Tbilisi, Rustavi, Telavi, Kutaisi, Batumi, Gori and Poti.

# 1. MONITORING METHODOLOGY

The process of monitoring was based on basic principles developed by the High Commissioner for Human Rights<sup>4</sup> such as: gathering reliable and accurate information, confidentiality, credibility, impartiality, objectivity, sensitivity and professionalism, do no harm, respect the mandate, know the standards, exercise good judgment, seek consultation, respect the authorities, security, understand the country, accuracy and precision, integrity, visibility.

The aim of the monitoring was to contribute to the prevention of violence against pupils and the protection of pupils from alleged violence in general educational institutions. Consequently, the objective of the monitoring was to identify systemic and individual violations of pupils' rights in general educational institutions, to study the situation in the area of prevention of violence and protection against alleged violence, inter alia, to evaluate the awareness and the efficiency of persons<sup>5</sup> or entities<sup>6</sup> which, under the Ordinance of the Government of Georgia of 12 September 2016 On the Approval of Child Protection Referral Procedures, are responsible for a response mechanism and mandatory referral procedures in case of violence against children.

The monitoring was carried out within the scope of powers specified in the Organic Law of Georgia on Public Defender; the monitoring group followed the Constitution of Georgia, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Law of Georgia on General Education and other international/national legal acts.

**Stages of monitoring** – The initial stage of the project involved the identification and development of main monitoring tools; the gathering of statistical and other necessary information from the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia, the Ministry of Labor, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia and the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

The first stage of planning determined a sample design for a quantitative survey as a two-step stratification – the entirety of pupils was distributed proportionally by municipalities, with a minor correction, while the number of school administrators, teachers and resource officers in each municipality was determined in equal amounts, also with minor correction. Schools in cities/district centers and villages were randomly selected for monitoring in all districts of Georgia.

**Monitoring tool** – The monitoring of general educational institutions was conducted by applying quantitative (questionnaires for employees and higher grade pupils) and qualitative (interviews with resource officers and administrative staff, focus groups involving pupils of 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grades) methods of sociological survey.

The qualitative survey was carried out by means of thematic questions developed in advance, which concerned the rights of pupils in school, the identification of incidents of violence, a mechanism of management of such incidents by a school, a professional liability for issues of violence against children, et cetera. As many as 124 in-depth interviews were conducted within the scope of the qualitative survey, including 93 interviews with school directors, two with acting school directors, six with deputy directors and 23 with school resource officers.

In addition, the total of 83 **focus groups** were conducted, involving 584 pupils from 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grades, which aimed at identifying incidents of violence experienced by pupils. The method was based on the principles of random selection, free will, anonymity and confidentiality, the right of the child to express their views and to have their views considered and the best interests of the child.

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4 The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), *Training Manual on Human Rights Monitoring*, Professional Training Series No. 7, Chapter V: Basic Principles of Monitoring; Geneva, ISBN 92-1-154137-9.

5 A person responsible for referral procedure in an educational institution is a resource officer whereas in schools which do not have resource officers, a director or a deputy director.

6 The Ministry of Labor, Health and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

The quantitative survey involved the filling in of anonymous questionnaires by administrative staff and employees of general educational institutions, school resource officers and pupils. The questionnaires were specifically designed and included statements and questions related to the topic of research. The questionnaires were filled in by 1,861 pupils from 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades and 1,729 school employees, including representatives of administrations, teachers and resource officers.

As a result of the conducted monitoring, the Public Defender initiated the study into 47 individual cases of violence against children.

The monitoring also envisaged the study of internal regulations of general educational institutions, decrees/ordinances of school directors and other responsible persons and other mandatory documents.

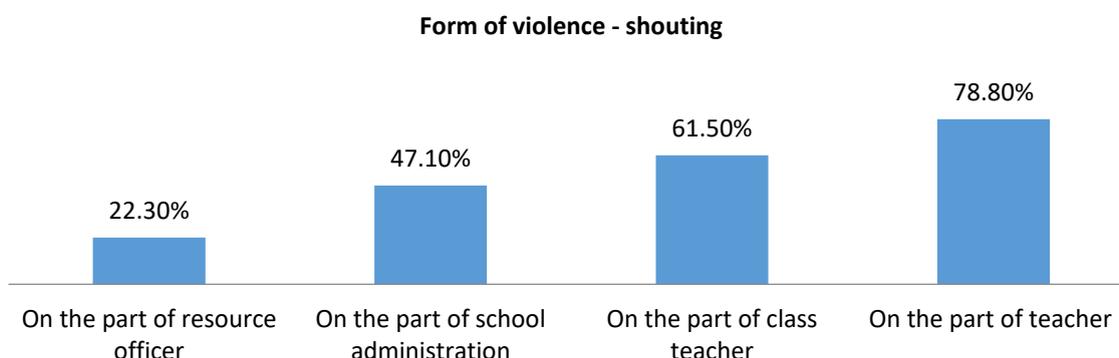
Special recommendations were drawn up on the basis of all the above said; the consideration of these recommendations by the state will largely contribute to the prevention of violence against minors and the protection of minors from violence.

## 2. RESULTS OF THE MONITORING

The monitoring revealed that pupils are aware of the child's rights and various forms of violence, though their knowledge is superficial and they confuse their rights with their responsibilities. Forms of psychological and physical violence are commonplace in schools, but violence among pupils, especially incidents of bullying are often ignored. The majority of pupils have no hope and experience of receiving assistance or the information about ways of receiving assistance.

According to quantitative data, the majority of respondents correctly identifies and defines violence and is informed about several forms of violence; however, the perception of violent actions by respondents, especially by pupils, is somewhat "light" especially when it concerns "light" forms of physical abuse. Among adults in school, violence is most frequently applied by those who are in intensive communication with pupils – i.e. teachers and class teachers. Shouting is the clear leader among various forms of violence as it was named as a form of address on the part of adults by the majority of pupils (see Figure N1).

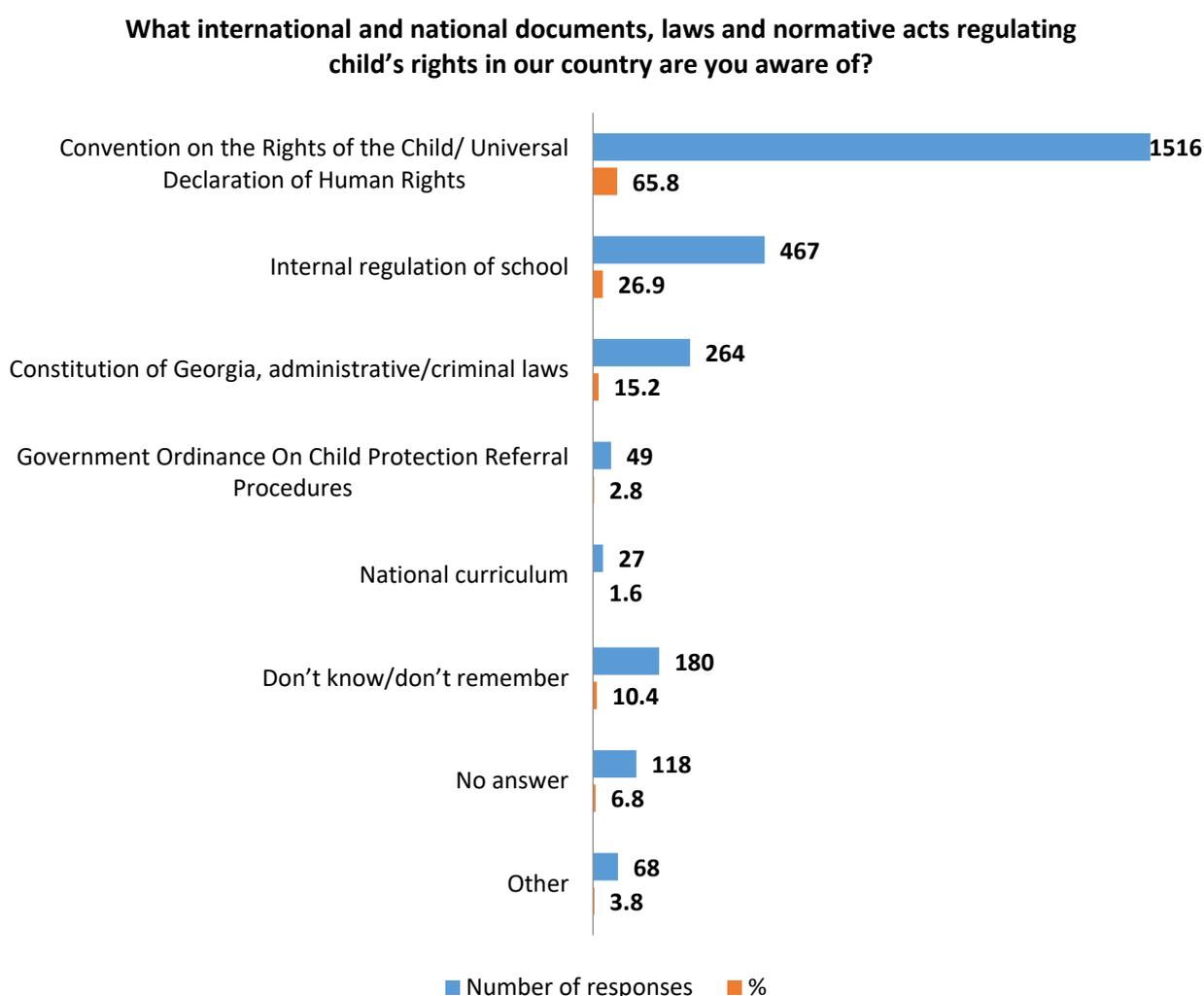
Figure N1



In the majority of cases, school employees do not speak about violence applied by their colleagues towards pupils, though they willingly talk about violence against pupils outside school, specifically in families. The survey results revealed that the main measure which school employees undertake when a pupil is abused by a parent or other legal representative is the notification of the school administration and a parent again. However, respondents also mentioned state entities and nongovernmental organizations<sup>7</sup>.

In response to a question “What international and national documents, laws and normative acts regulating child’s rights in our country are you aware of?” the administrative staff, teachers and resource officers named the following documents: the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (65.8% of responses). Internal regulation of school was also named somewhat frequently (26.9% of responses). However, the Georgian government Ordinance On the Approval of Child Protection Referral Procedures was named by a mere 2.8% of the respondents; this provides a ground to assume that school employees have a poor understanding of their professional duty in the area of prevention and management of violence; that the knowledge of child referral procedures is poor as well as the understanding of own responsibility in this regard; that a person responsible for referral, which in the majority of cases is a school director, often lacks information about the relevant legal document.<sup>8</sup>

Figure N2



<sup>7</sup> Only seven respondent said that they apply referral procedures.

<sup>8</sup> According to information of the Legal Entity of Public Law Social Service Agency, during the 2015-2016 academic year, the Social Service Agency received 130 applications from general educational institutions in accordance with the child protection referral procedures. (Correspondence N 04/50079).

It is important to note that according to directors of private schools, they had not been notified about the government ordinance.<sup>9</sup> They, based on their personal experience, apply to law enforcement authorities and the Social Service Agency for the response to facts of violence against children. However, the study of individual cases and the monitoring revealed that an effective mechanism of response to violations of pupils' rights in private schools is not determined either on normative or on practical level.

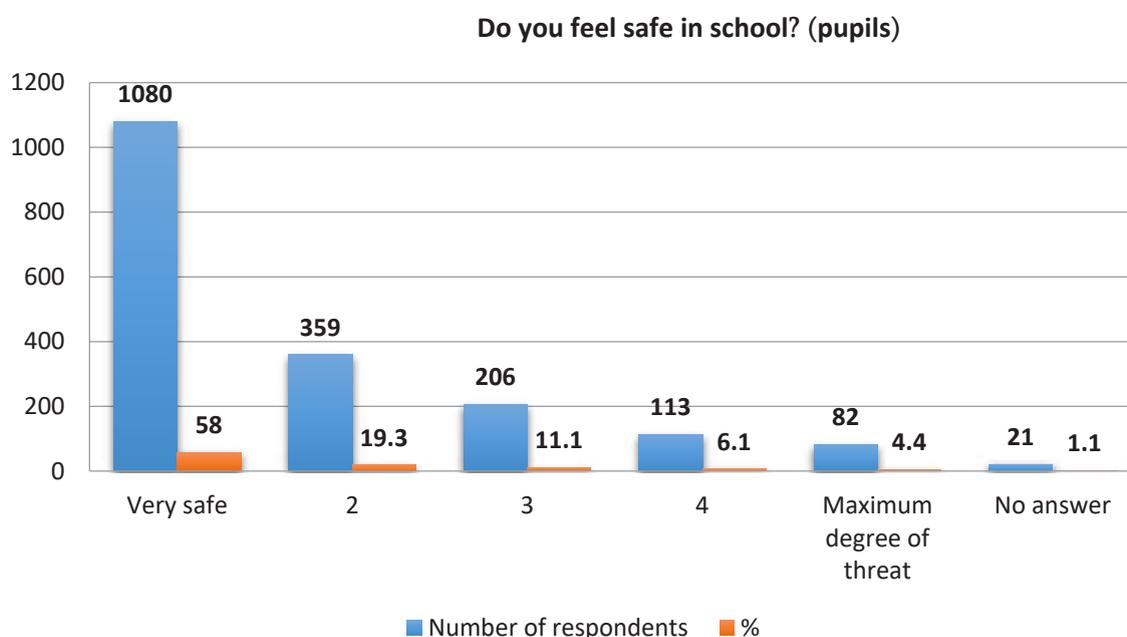
## 2.1. Assessment of school safety

A school safety was also assessed within the scope of monitoring and it involved issues such as bullying, penetration of strangers into the territory of school and neglect of safety in schools.

According to Paragraph 9 of Article 9 of the Law of Georgia on General education, schools have an obligation to ensure safe environment for health, life and property during school hours, as well as on school grounds or adjacent areas. Respondents assessed their schools as safe on all counts. At the same time, however, it was revealed that bullying and penetration of strangers into a school remain unsolved problems.

According to the responses to a question about a sense of safety among pupils, the majority of pupils feel safe in school, however, a segment of pupils noted a high degree of threat (10.5% of respondents). It is important to note that a higher number of pupils feel "very safe" in the schools with low enrollment (75.5%) than in the schools with high enrollment (55.5%), which suggests that the sense of safety is affected by the size of enrollment – the higher the number of pupils the more intensive the sense of threat (see Figure N3).

Figure N3<sup>10</sup>

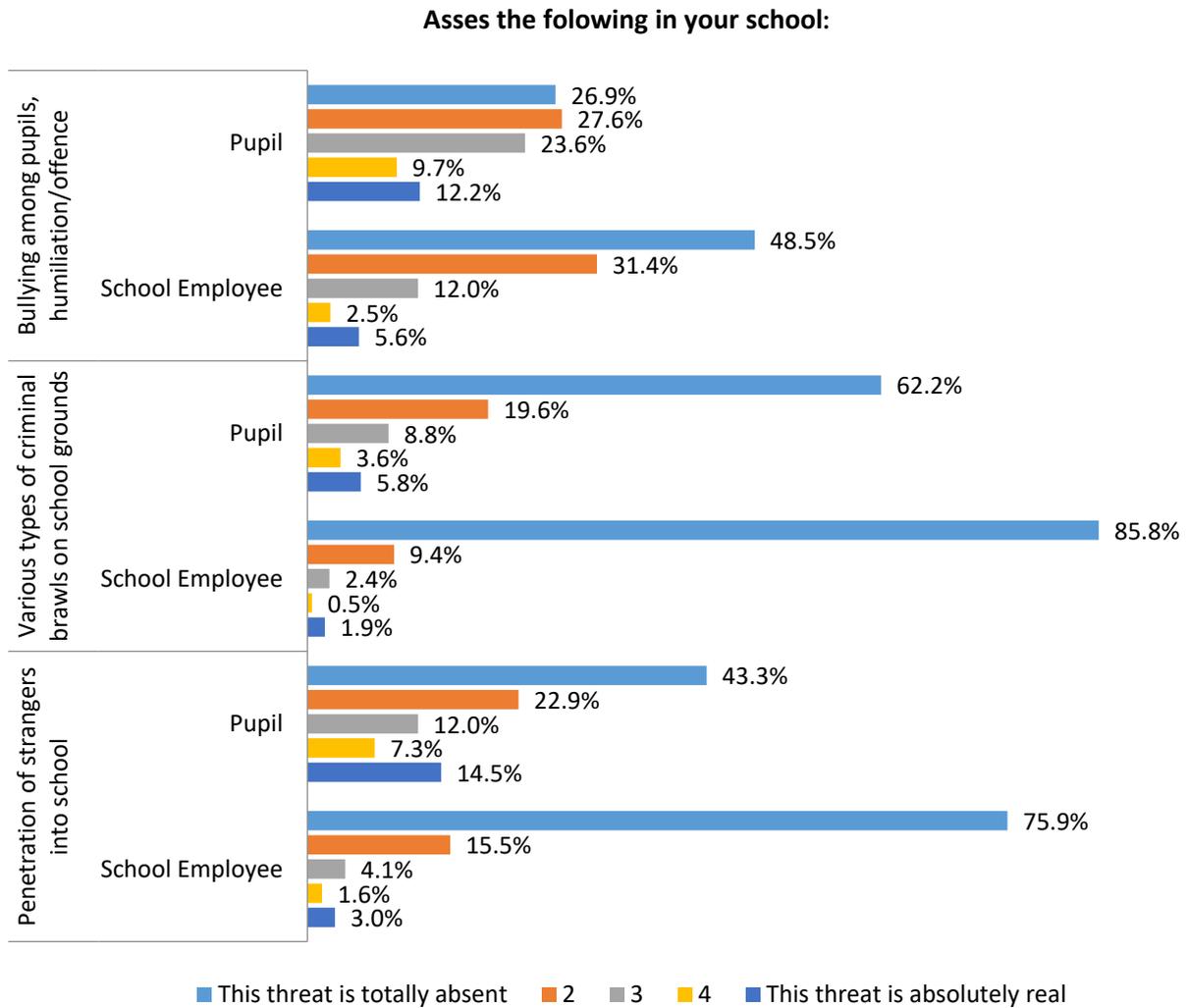


The results of the survey showed difference between opinions of school employees and pupils; employees consider a school to be safer by various parameters (see Figure N4).

9 The Government Ordinance №437 On the Approval of Child Protection Referral Procedures. 12 September 2016.

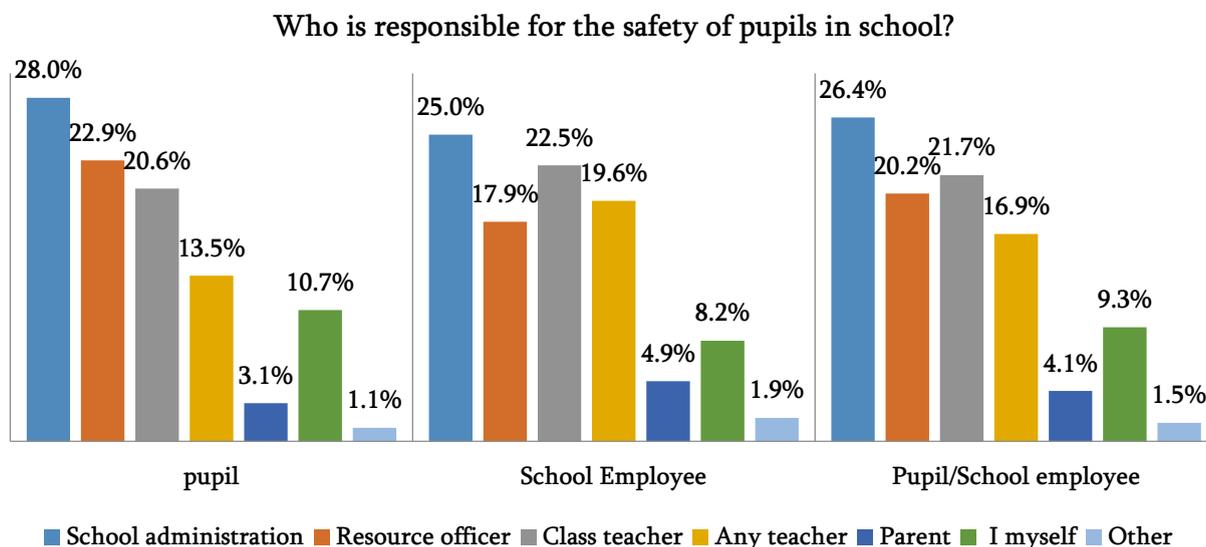
10 Data is calculated on a five-point scale where 5 means a high degree of threat and 1 means the absence of threat. A neutral point on the scale is 3; indicators above 3 correspond to a positive assessment field while below 3 correspond to a negative assessment field.

Figure N4



When it comes to identifying persons responsible for safety of pupils in school, respondents (pupils and school employees alike) believe that the safety of school must be ensured by the administration and hence, the responsibility mainly lies with it. This common trend reflects the attempt to avoid personal responsibility and lay it entirely on others. A personal responsibility in this regard is acknowledged by only 8%-10% of pupils and school employees. The analysis of data by cross sections (schools with resource officers, with high/low enrollment, in mountainous/lowland regions) showed only subtle differences, including the following: schools with low enrollment attach less importance to the responsibility of resource officers in ensuring safety than schools with high enrollment (see Figure N5).

Figure N5



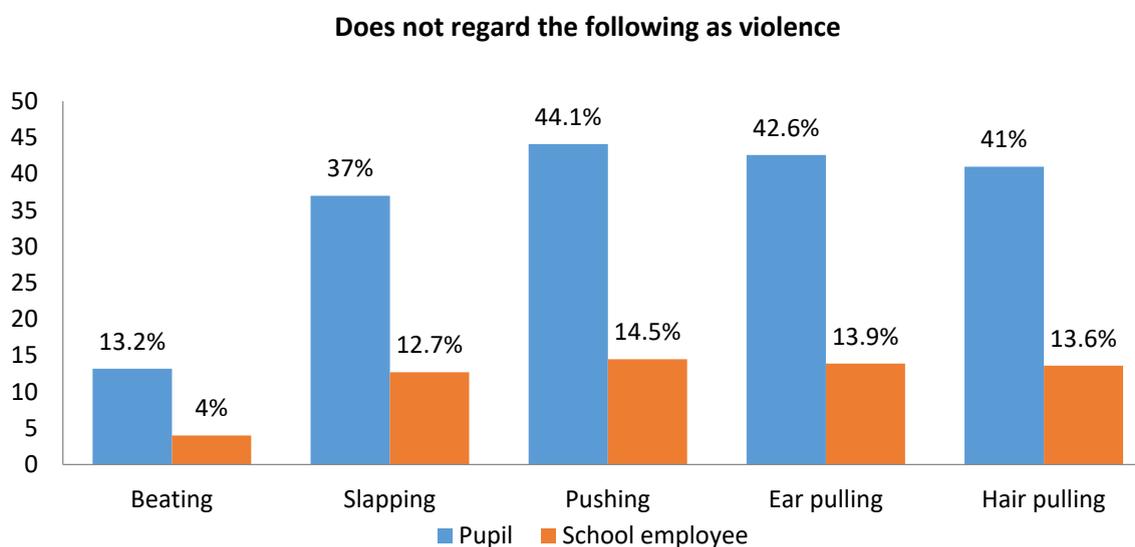
## 2.2. Perception of violence and forms of its manifestation in school

### *What actions are perceived as violent by school employees and pupils?*

The interviews revealed that the degree of identification of violence among pupils by responsible persons is minimal and does not reflect a real scale of the problem. Representatives of school administrations and resource officers lack basic knowledge of the forms of violence; they find it difficult to define violence; **schools lack a uniform mechanism of identifying and responding to violence.**

Although in the qualitative survey the majority of respondents correctly identified a violent action among the listed actions, the number of those respondents who did not perceive instances of apparent abuse as violence - for example fully disagreed or rather disagreed than agreed with even such apparent manifestations of physical violence as beating, slapping on head, pushing, ear pulling, hair pulling, et cetera - cannot be disregarded.

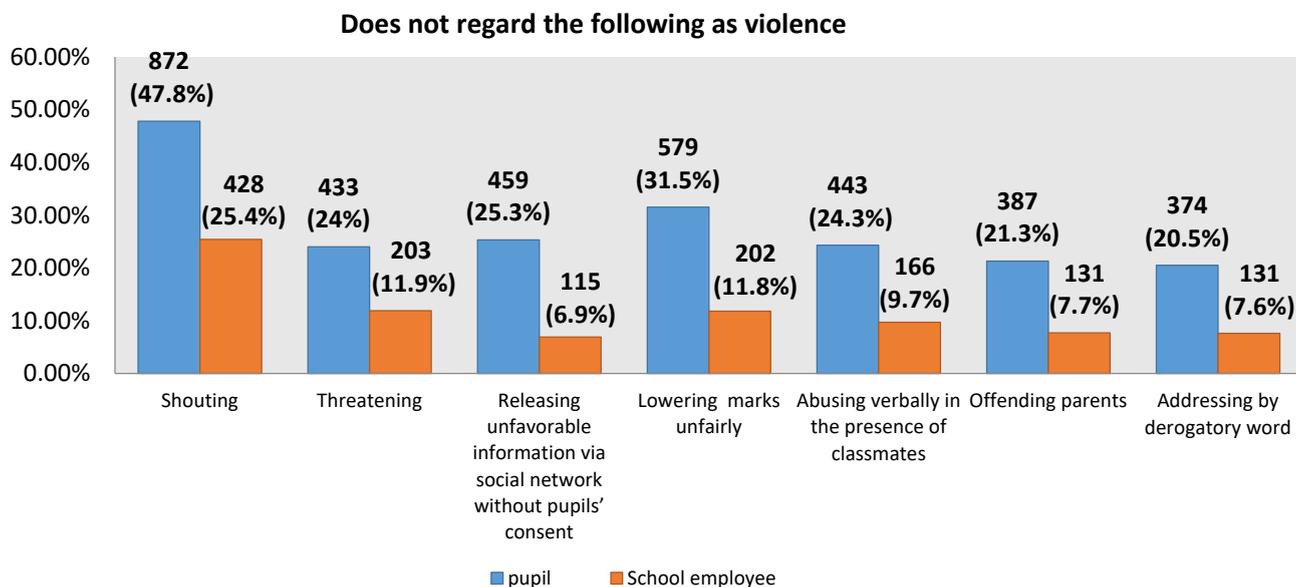
Figure N6



A significant segment of school employees and particularly, pupils do not perceive the following applied as a form of punishment as violence: causing a pupil to stand throughout a lesson (51% of pupils and 21% of school employees); causing to clean a classroom/yard/school corridor/toilet (29.1% and 25.6%, respectively); summoning pupil (pupils) to provide help in household activities (31.9% pupils and 11.4% school employees).

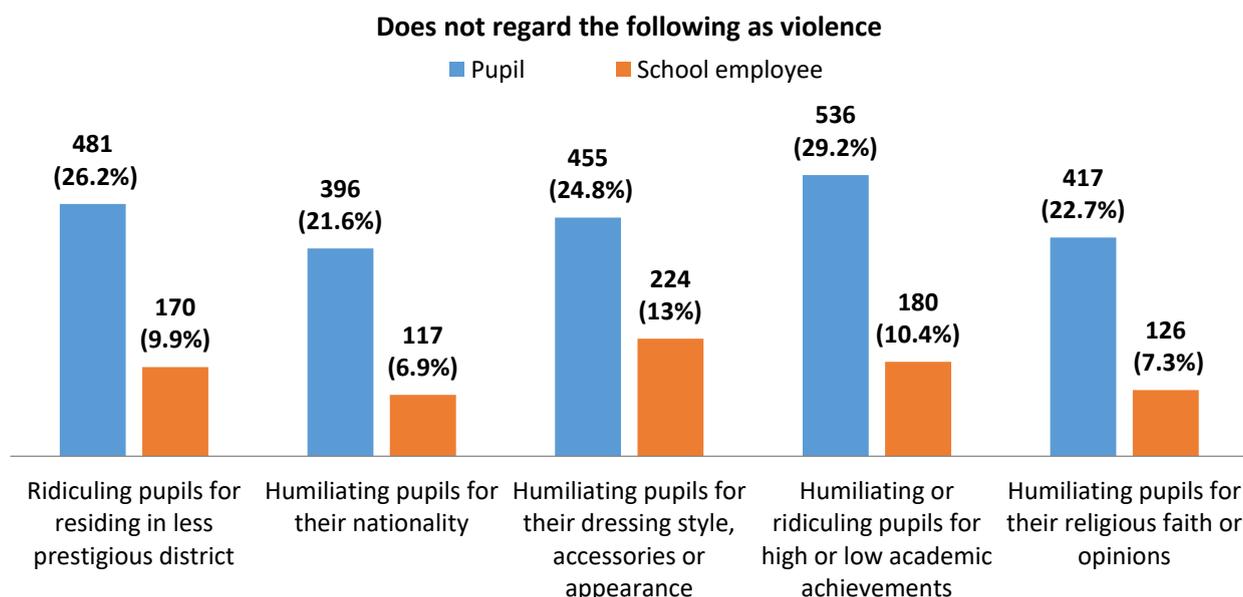
As the data of quantitative survey shows, the share of those pupils and school employees who does not perceive this or that apparent form of abuse as violence is not small (see Figure N7).

Figure N7



Discrimination on the ground of ethnicity, religious denomination, residence in non-prestigious district, low/high academic achievements, dressing style and accessories, et cetera are not strange to schools.<sup>11</sup> In the opinion of a segment of pupils and school employees, humiliation or oppression of a pupil on various grounds is not violence.

Figure N8



11 A fourth of the pupils indicated about such attitude.

## 2.3. Violence by school employees

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child prohibits a physical abuse and corporal punishment of a child. It is important for the States Parties to the Convention to ensure that this principle is observed and a relevant effective legislative basis and enforceable mechanisms are in place. Despite the abovementioned obligation, the use of corporal punishment against children is a problem both on legislative and practical levels in Georgia.

According to Paragraph 8 of Article 3 of the Code of Ethics of Public School Directors, a school director ensures safe, effective, organized and friendly learning and working environment in school. Paragraph 17 of the same article requires from a school director to maintain peace in conflict situations, hear opinions of conflicting parties and take an objective and fair decision, while Paragraph 18 states that a school director does not offend, in any way, a pupil, parent, teacher or any other school employee and does not exert emotional (psychological) pressure on them. Article 4 of the Code of Professional Ethics of Teachers sets criteria of teacher's interaction with a pupil. Pursuant to Paragraph 2 of this article, a teacher shall not offend a pupil verbally or physically or exert psychological pressure on a pupil.<sup>12</sup>

Children in 78 focus groups, out of 83 focus groups conducted during the monitoring, noted that they were abused physically as well as psychologically. This, according to them, is a form of response applied widely by teachers to pupils' misbehavior. Children in five focus groups spoke about a psychological violence. They said that physically and verbally abusive forms of response are largely applied by teachers when boys misbehave. Both boys and girls confirmed that boys are subject to tougher punishment.

Pupils named derogatory words and phrases applied by teachers when addressing pupils: "imbecile," "stupid," "fool," "Down's child," "shrimp," "empty-headed," "ducks," "dull-witted," "donkeys," "bastards," "do not whine like a dog," "like breeds like," "you all will rot in jail," "damn you all to hell," "are you not raised in a family?!" "were you my child I would not feed you," "were I your parent I would not allow you to leave the house," "you are good for nothing," "vagrants," "idiots," "you are raised in a pig farm," "go and tell everything to your imbecile mother."

Children spoke about forms of physical violence such as: ear pulling; hair pulling; manhandling/beating; pinching; causing a pupil to remain standing or to stand in the corner throughout a lesson; hitting with a ringed hand, ruler or stick, book; damaging personal item; prohibiting to leave a classroom during a break time. According to them, these are forms of response to pupil's talking during a lesson, making noise, coming late for a lesson, failing to do homework and other disciplinary violations. To give an example, children recalled two such incidents: "a teacher pulled the ear of a pupil so hard that it started bleeding. To buy his silence, the teacher bought four biscuits to this pupil. In another similar incidence, a teacher put the highest mark to the pupil." "During a lesson, a pupil hurled a bit of paper and the teacher forced him to put that bit of paper into the mouth."

Children recalled instances of teachers humiliating/ridiculing pupils for expressing their own views, not for misbehaving. **"You look like a crushed frog," "your ears are as big as elephant's," "I was repeatedly told by a teacher that compared to my classmates I am too small and the entire class laughed at that," "there is one teacher who ridicules everyone who cannot learn; for example, she knows that one child cannot read fluently and says about that child ironically – 'children, now let's listen to the best reader in the class'"**

The focus groups also revealed instances of improper treatment by teachers of pupils representing ethnic and religious minorities. According to children, a history teacher makes the entire class to pray at the beginning of lesson. Representatives of religious and ethnic minorities among pupils have to stand up and remain standing throughout the prayer. Participants of a focus group included a child with special educational

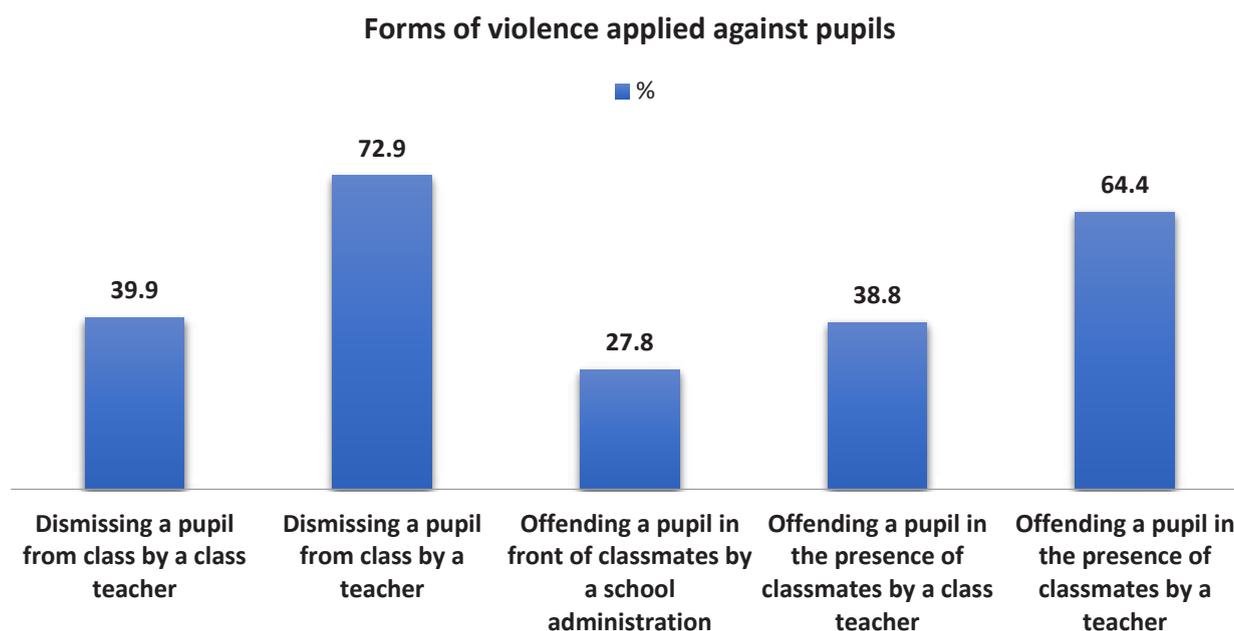
12 According to the Internal Audit Department of the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia, inquiry into alleged facts of violence against pupils by school employees were carried out in 32 public schools in 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 academic years (correspondence MES 9 17 00901831); according to the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia, in the 2016-2017 academic year, a disciplinary proceeding was initiated on 76 cases of alleged violence against pupils by school employees (correspondence MES 7 17 00864345).

needs and another child representing ethnic minorities. A teacher in the class referred to one as “inclusive” and another as “non-Georgian-speaker” and told us not to select them for the focus groups as they would be unable to say anything. Those two pupils felt ashamed.

Interviews with representatives of administration and resource officers revealed instances of discriminatory treatment of several minors, for example, a child with a Down syndrome, a beneficiary of small family-type home and a socially disadvantaged child. A school director said about the child with a Down syndrome “I was looking forward to this child leaving the school.” An especially negative attitude was observed towards beneficiaries of small family-type home. A school director said that children from such homes are not enrolled in his school and he had no desire to have any such child because they would adversely affect other children. Yet another school director, in the presence of representatives of Public Defender, said about a pupil: “give a pen to that indigent, he is socially disadvantaged.”

According to quantitative data, pupils say that class teachers and teachers most frequently abuse them; as regards school administration and resource officers, a percentage indicator of the use of various forms of violence by them is significantly lower, but one should not disregard the number of respondents who mentioned the use of this or that form of violence by them: for example, beating of pupils by representatives of school administration was mentioned by 135 respondents while slapping on head by 240 respondents; also, beating of pupils by resource officers was mentioned by 40 respondents, slapping by 84 respondents and ear pulling by 89 respondents. As noted above, shouting is the clear leader among various forms of violence against pupils; relatively frequently applied forms of violence also are (see Figure N9):

Figure N9



The analysis of schools by cross sections (schools with resource officers, with high or low enrollment, in mountainous/lowland regions) showed only subtle differences in the form of the following trends: in schools with high enrollment and resource officers, a relatively higher number of pupils mention instances of psychological or/and physical abuse by the administration, class teachers, teachers and/or resource officers. The explanation to this may be that the instances of violence and consequently, the number of individuals applying violence are higher in schools with high enrollment because they are attended by more pupils and the resource officer service mainly operates in such schools.

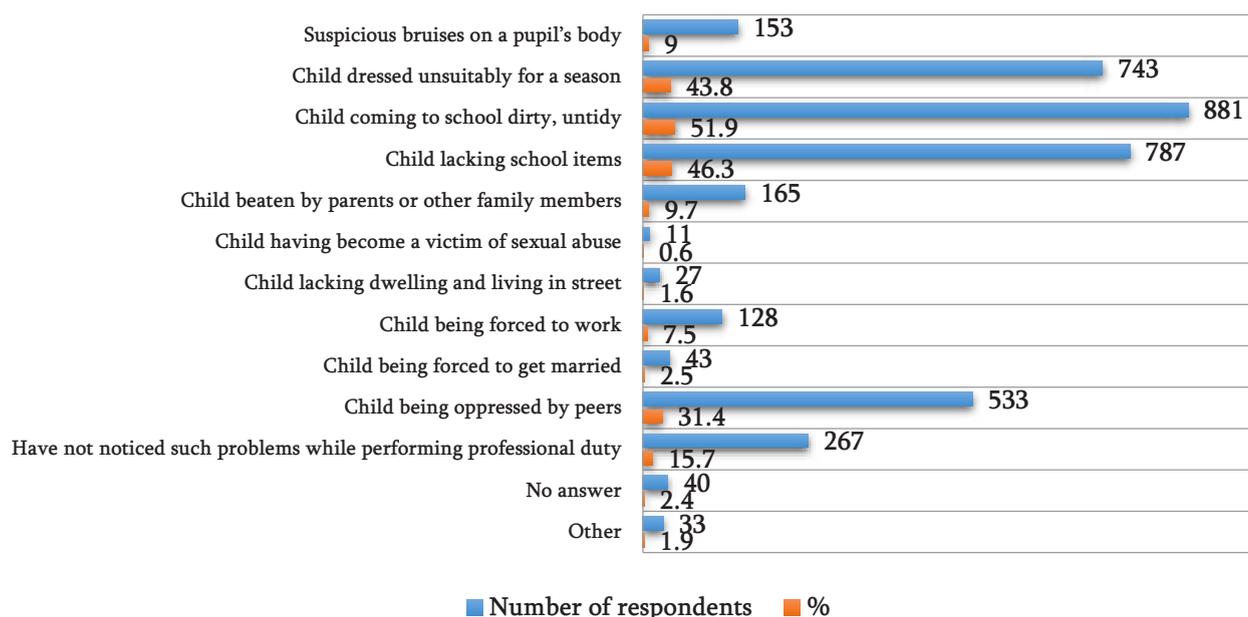
According to school employees, “frequent” or “almost daily” instances of abuse of pupils by their colleagues are rare. Consequently, the share of the response “never” is high (72%-96% in each case). The response

“sometimes” also got a relatively higher share (the indicator ranges between 5% and 22%). The least frequently named forms of violence were the extortion of money (27 respondents) and ridicule/oppression on the ground of ethnicity/religion (52-53 respondents).

School employees spoke about facts of violence against pupils in a “lighter” tone than pupils did; at the same time, their responses show that oppression/humiliation/violence against children happens not only inside school, but outside it too (in a family, et cetera<sup>13</sup>). Only 15.7% of school employees (267 respondents) said that they had not noticed any form of violence against children while performing their professional duty. 2.4% of them refrained from answering. Other respondents mentioned, with a certain degree of frequency that children had become victims of psychological, physical, economic or sexual abuse.

Figure N10

Within the scope of your professional duty, have you noticed...  
(school employees)



That segment of employees who either completely denied the threat of bullying in school or assessed it as minimal still noted that they had observed oppression of a child by peers during their professional activity.<sup>14</sup> Oppression of a child by peers was also noted by those school employees who said that the threat of criminal brawls on school grounds either does not exist or is minimal.<sup>15</sup>

13 In contrast to the information received from the LEPL Social Service Agency, the information provided by the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia show that in the 2016-2017 academic year, based on forms filled in by resource officers of educational institutions, 271 incidents of violence/alleged violence were referred to the LEPL Social Service Agency; school directors/deputy directors referred 252 incidents to the Social Service Agency and 88 incidents to the Ministry of Internal Affairs. (Correspondence MES 7 17 00864345).

14 134 respondents from those school where the threat of bullying was denied; 207 respondents from those school where the threat of bullying was assessed as minimal, at point “2”.

15 401 respondents from those school where the threat of bullying was denied; 81 respondents from those school where the threat of bullying was assessed as minimal.

## 2.4. Violence among pupils

Pupils in 64 focus groups spoke about various forms of bullying both by peers and higher grade pupils.<sup>16</sup>

Pupils rarely perceive ridiculing and nicknaming peers as a problem. From pupils' talks it becomes clear that nicknaming is seen as a norm. Verbal bullying because of appearance and physical qualities, social standing as well as academic achievements is a widely spread violence: **"child is ridiculed if he/she is plump;" "children invite a pupil who cannot run fast to compete in running; they first run slowly but then outpace him and ridicule him;" "once a child came to school in her mother's high-heel shoes because she did not have any other and everyone ridiculed her. After that that child did not attend the school during a week"** and so on and so forth.

Moreover pupils, in focus groups named instances of various types of bullying: fighting, hair pulling, hand twisting, smashing into someone, pulling, damaging or seizing personal items on purpose, dangling lower grade pupils from windows, extorting money to let a child enter a toilet, forcing to smoke. Yet another widespread form of bullying by upper grade pupils is seizing younger children at a school toilet and forcing them to engage in a fight.

Pupils often report above described incidents to teachers but children repeatedly say that "it makes no sense." According to them, there were instances when teachers witnessed the above described facts themselves but despite repeated reprimands bullies did not change their behavior.

The focus groups revealed that cyberbullying is not perceived as violence at all. The degree of identification of such violence both adults and pupils is very low. Children in one of focus groups talked about cyberbullying and recalled facts of release of offensive information about them; their parents spoke to resource officers about those facts but resource officers blamed both sides and told parents that they were not able to do anything in such cases.

Pupils mistreat persons with disabilities and pupils with special educational needs. Pupils told about the following facts: **"one child in our school is invalid and everyone thinks that he is a no-good, ridicule him and at the same time, task him with various assignments – fetch a ball, do this, do that. That child is happy about being noticed but he is ridiculed and used by other children;" "there is one retarded child and everyone calls him 'lousy' and chase after him with a stick and when that child becomes frightened he starts hurling stones;" "one 'sick' child attends our school and everyone ridicules him."**

Pupils in focus groups also talked about ridiculing others because of different religion or/and nationality. A participant in one of focus groups said that although he had lived in Georgia for several years now, he was not fluent in Georgian and had been repeatedly ridiculed by his classmates for that; another foreign pupil who learned Georgian within a short period of time still became a subject of ridicule from classmates because of his foreign accent.

Minors from three schools noted that bullying on the ground of gender is a frequent occasion. The level of awareness in this regard is especially low among minors and teachers. Teachers often contribute to the formation of stereotyped reasoning. A minor noted that she often has to argue about gender issues. She tries to defend her position and the LGBT community, but often becomes a victim of aggression for that.

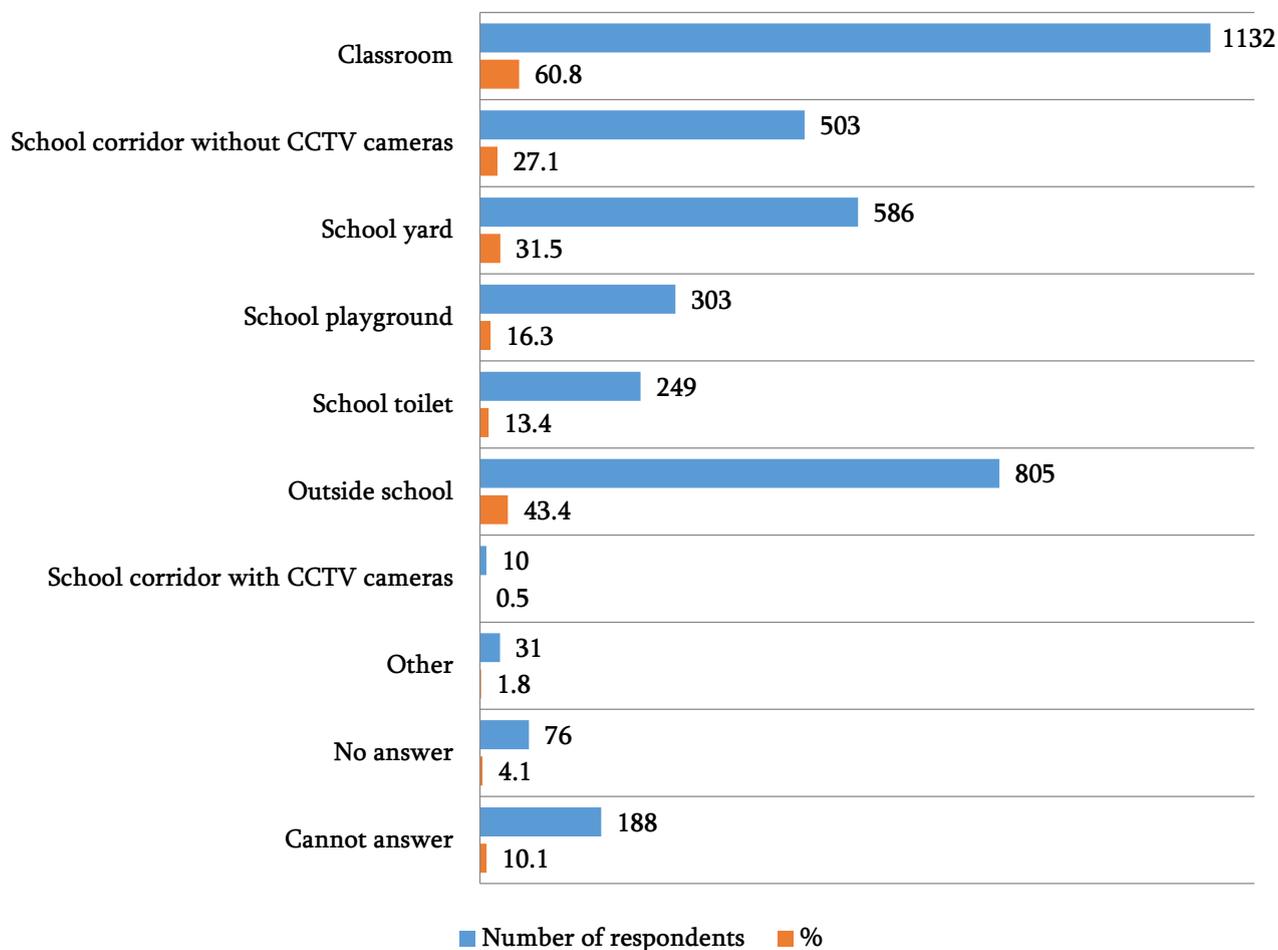
The results of quantitative survey support all the above said. In particular, a certain category of pupils admit to committing various violent actions against their classmates or/and schoolmates. The most frequently committed such action is hiding personal items for entertainment purposes (111 pupils). Other violent actions committed by pupils rather frequently ("sometimes") are, for example, derogatory nicknaming (34.1%), making rude comments (28.6%), ridiculing (27.8%), hiding personal items for entertainment purposes (38.5%), slapping/kicking (20.8%), smashing into other pupils (19.9%).

<sup>16</sup> According to information from the Ministry of Education and Science, a disciplinary proceeding was initiated on 305 incidents of alleged violence among pupils in the 2016-2017 academic year. During the 2016-2017 academic year, 1561 pupils were referred, while 380 applied themselves, to psychological service center of the LEPL Office of Resource Officers of Educational Institutions (MES 7 17 00864345).

According to pupils, the above mentioned violent actions were mainly performed inside a classroom (60.8% of incidents) or outside a school (43.4% of incidents). Moreover, such actions are also often performed in a school yard (31.5% of incidents) and a school corridor which is equipped with CCTV cameras (27.1% of incidents). Ten pupils said that such violent actions were performed in that part of the corridor that is fit with CCTV cameras (see Figure N11).

Figure N11

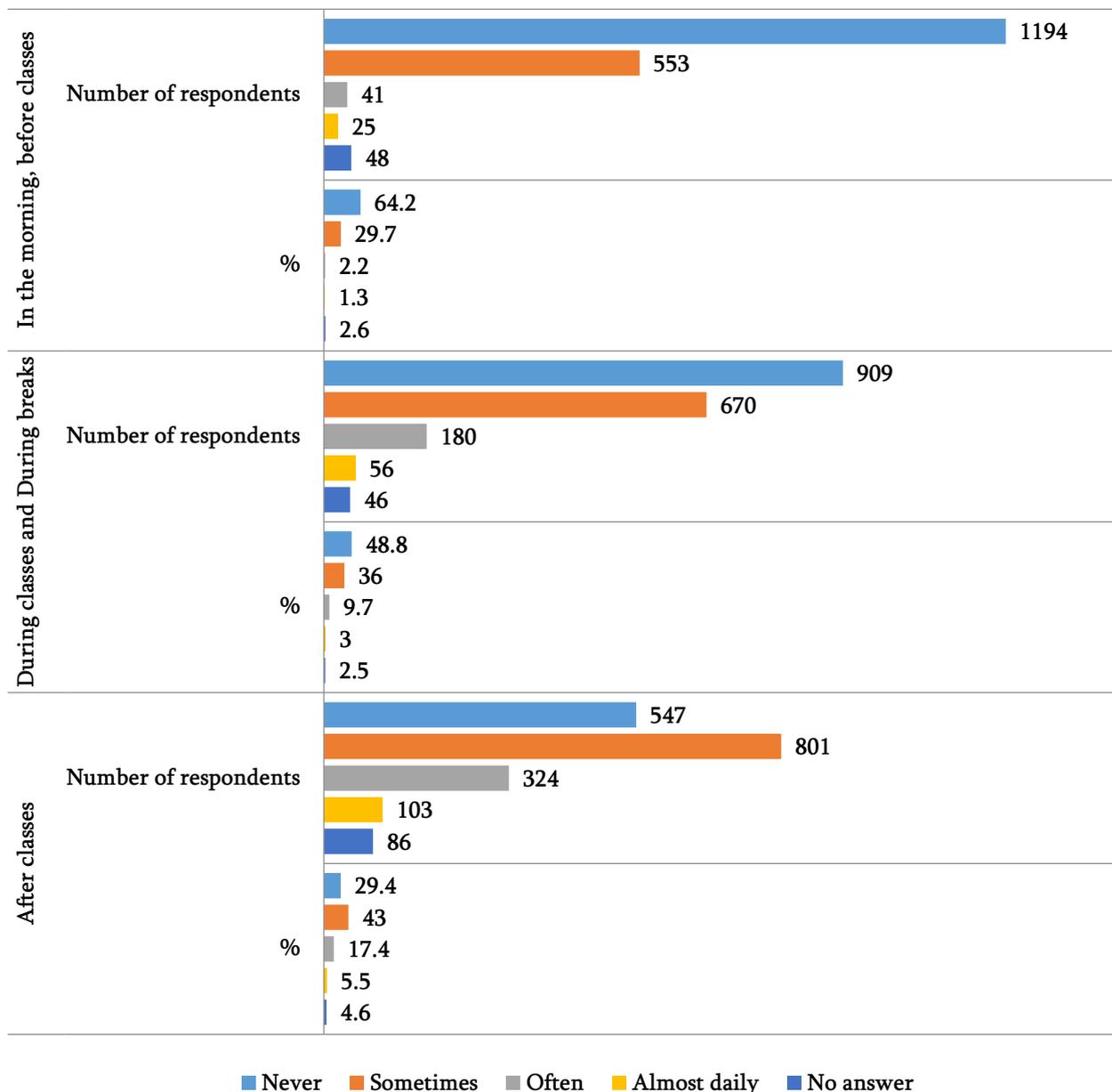
Where were the mentioned actions performed over the past year? (pupils)



According to pupils, violent actions were performed both before and after classes as well as during breaks, though most frequently after classes (sometimes – 43%; often – 17.4%) (see Figure N12).

**Figure N12**

When did abovementioned actions happen most frequently over the past year?



It proved difficult for pupils to talk about violence they experienced. That small segment of pupils who did admit that they were subject to violence, mainly named the forms of violence such as: addressing by derogatory nicknaming - "often" (90 pupils), making rough comments - "often" (150 pupils), hiding personal items for entertainment purposes - "often" (252 pupils), spreading rumors "often" (124 pupils). The situation changes when it comes to similar actions carried out against their classmates/schoolmates. The share of specified forms of violence and frequency of instances of violence increases.

School employees were also asked to assess the frequency of the use of various forms of psychological and physical violence against children by their peer (by the analogous list of violence, which was assessed by pupils). Responses of school employees differed from those of schoolchildren. In particular, the most striking difference is that when assessing the frequency of violence, school employees mainly opt for the answer "sometimes" in regard with all forms of violence. In case of several forms (mainly, psychological violence), the share of this response is either close to or exceeds 50%; for example, addressing by a derogatory nickname

(60%), making rough comments (51.5%), ridiculing (51.5%), manhandling (47.4%), hiding personal items for entertainment purposes (58.4%).

In the opinion of school employees, least frequent forms of violence are (i.e. the majority of respondents selected the response “never”): ridiculing/oppressing because of nationality (“never” – 88%); surreptitiously taking a photo and posting it on social networks (“never” – 80.2%); sending offensive SMS (“never” – 75.8%).

## 2.5. Disciplinary misdemeanors of pupils and measures against violence

The monitoring revealed that disciplinary sanctions applied in schools and mechanisms of response to violence are not oriented on child, i.e. on the best interests of the child and the rehabilitation of victims of violence and child offenders. Even for identified violence, schools have not developed and established a common vision of how to manage the process. Therefore, their response to incidents of violence lacks uniformity. Dismissal from classes as a disciplinary sanction is not fully regulated on a legislative level and creates a risk of breaching the child’s right to education. The application of this disciplinary sanction in this form may bring about adverse effects such as lagging behind the learning process, losing interest in education, developing a negative attitude towards a child, et cetera.

Neither the Law of Georgia on General Education nor internal regulations of public schools provide guarantees for the protection of pupil’s right to education when pupils are dismissed from classed for up to five days or for the period from five to ten days. Neither the role of school in such cases nor the aim pursued by such a disciplinary sanction is apparent; nor is it clear whether this is a proportionate, adequate and result-oriented action.

**Schools often lack competence in the application of proper response to misconduct of pupils. Instances identified during the focus groups and the practice of responding to such instances reveal that rules established in school are not available to and comprehensible for all schoolchildren.** One and the same behavior may or may not be qualified as an undesirable action and accordingly, may or may not be responded to, depending on which of the pupils violates the rule and which of the teachers witnesses the fact. A response to misconduct is mainly in the form of warning and “threatening.” **This practice may prove effective in the short-term as it “stops” pupils and pushes them to observe the rules, but in the long-term it heightens risks that pupils will observe only those rules which entail sanctions. This practice of threatening cannot be qualified as a warning, it is unhealthy and impedes moral development and therefore, contradicts the best interests of the child.**

It is commendable that the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia established the procedure of disciplinary proceedings regarding teachers; however, disciplinary proceedings regarding pupils are not regulated by a separate normative act that would ensure a higher standard of protection of minors’ rights during disciplinary proceedings. One should also note here that in contrast to Georgian legislation, the General Rules of the European Schools require a school to have two discipline councils – one for primary school and another for secondary school.<sup>17</sup>

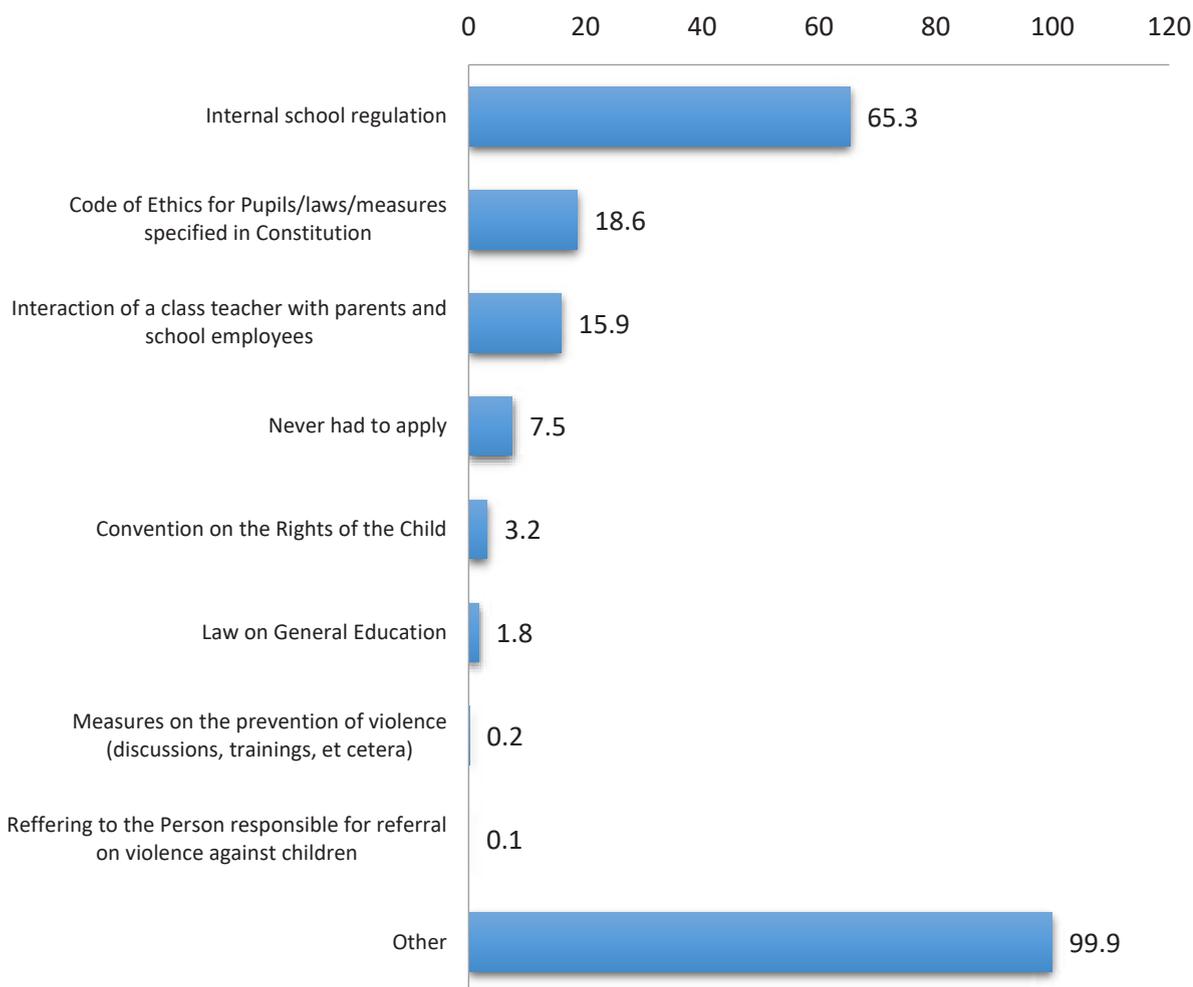
### ***What means/ways school do employees apply in case of violence against pupils?***

School employees named those internal documents, regulations or other measures which they apply when working on the topic of violence against pupils. According to their answers, they use internal regulation of a school most frequently, approach a person responsible for referral least frequently and use educational measures of preventing violence (discussions, trainings, et cetera) rarely (see Figure N13).

17 General Rules of the European Schools. Chapter 6, art.44, para. 1, p.26.

Figure N13

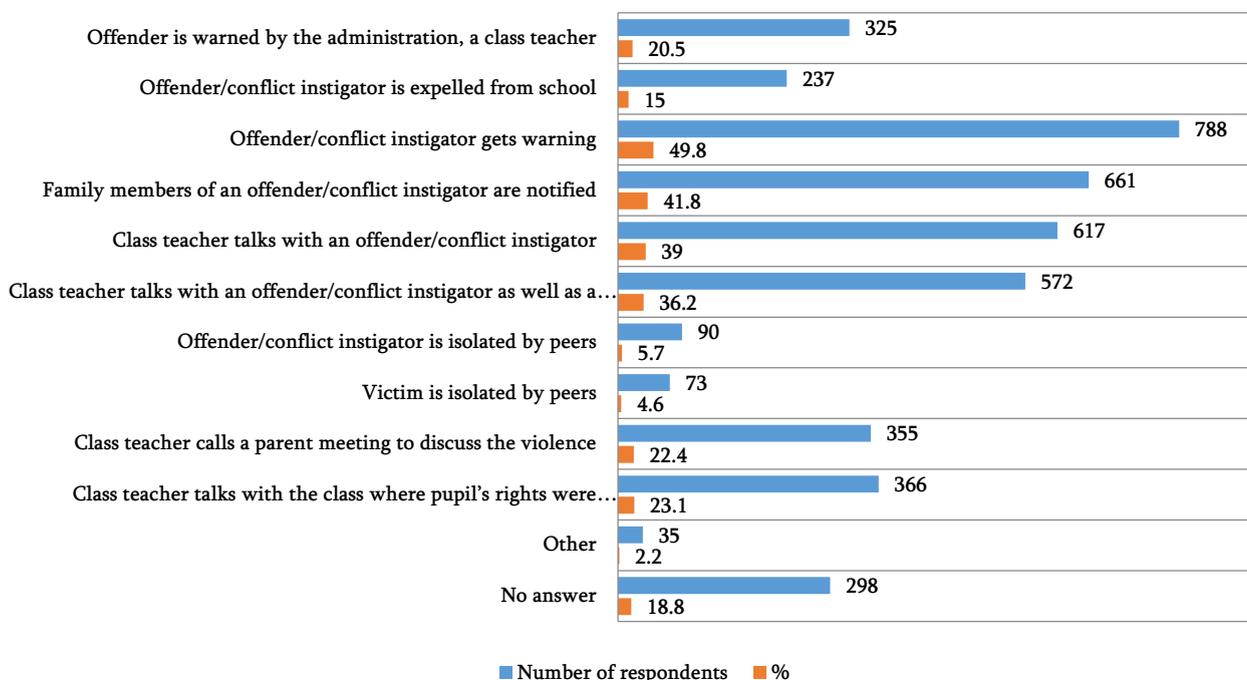
**Which internal school documents, regulations or other measures do you apply when working on the topic of violence against pupils?(%)**



Questionnaires concerning manifestations of and response to violence were filled in by pupils too. According to them, violence is prevented and conflicting situation defused in school in the following ways: most frequently, adults warn an offender or conflict instigator and most rarely, peers isolate a victim (see Figure N14).

Figure N14

### How is violence prevented/conflict defused in your school? (pupils)



Teachers have a crucial role in identifying violence and responding to it; however, interviews revealed instances when, according to resource officers, teachers often refused to cooperate with resource officers because of disciplinary sanctions it may entail. Facts of preventing resource officers from performing their duty by school directors were also revealed. According to resource officers, directors are notified of facts of violence in school, but these facts are often ignored. As some resource officers said, directors call on children not to report such incidents to resource officers or they exert pressure on resource officers not to document such incidents. As an example, resource officers recalled how, concerning once such incident, a school director told them they could not prove anything because of lack of evidence. **“I beat and we will always beat [children],” “I will beat and don’t he dare come to you to tell you anything about it,” “you do not have evidence and can do nothing to me,” the director said.**

School administrations and teachers openly express their dissatisfaction with resource officers for identifying and responding to incidents of violence. As resource officers say, directors also support the opposition of teachers. Teachers often dismiss pupils from a class without notifying resource officers, though, in such a case, a child may be left unattended. Teachers do not notify resource officers about a conflict among children until the conflict aggravates, thus preventing resource officers from undertaking a timely and effective response.

According to a resource officer of that school, discipline is disregarded by both teachers and pupils on a daily basis. Among disciplinary violations, they stressed the bringing of prohibited items, for example, sharp cutting objects to school, which, according to them, is often ignored by the school administration and teachers. It is worth to note that the rule of personal search of pupils and the Law of Georgia on General Education, prohibit personal search of pupils unless the evidence indicates about a particular person, and there is a reasonable assumption that a personal search may reveal misconduct specified in internal regulations of a school. The monitoring showed ambiguity about the observance of procedural norms stipulated in the law for such cases, including, whether minor(s) are properly warned and a personal search of pupil(s) is justified.

### **What means/ways do pupils use in case of violence against them/breach of their rights?**

According to pupils, no one seeks their opinions, listens to them and considers their views. Teachers perceive the expression of views by pupils as impoliteness. This sometimes gives triggers aggression in children. For example, children in a focus groups noted that **“they turned desks and a blackboard upside down in order to be heard, hoping that by making noise they will, at least, attract someone’s attention.”**

As many as 89% of focus group participants do not seek help from anyone as this might aggravate the existing conflict. If violence is committed by peers or upper grade pupils, children do not turn for help to anyone as this may result in ridiculing them or branding them snitches and informers.<sup>18</sup> This opinion was largely shared by children in focus groups, especially, by boys although the above described incidents mostly affect boys. They may turn for help to a class teacher or a parent but they prefer not to do so. According to children, adults, including parents, do not listen to them, do not allow them to explain what happened, to defend themselves, et cetera. Presumably, adults (teachers, administration, parents) do not deem it necessary to hear opinions of younger pupils and to find out their attitudes and needs. Disregard of child’s needs, opinions, on the one hand, and a fear of heightened oppression from upper grade students prompt younger children to remain silent and not to seek help.

As regards teachers’ violence against pupils, pupils think that they cannot complain about this to a class teacher, teachers or administration as none of them would believe children and the complaining would cause irritation of that teacher whom they turned for help to. Pupils also lack information on whom to refer for help outside school in case of violence. Only 11% of participants believe that they can seek help from parents, teachers or resource officers, but, as children said, there is no need of doing that as “nothing extraordinary happens.”

In contrast to the focus groups, the quantitative survey showed a different picture as it was designed for pupils of other age groups.<sup>19</sup> Pupils more frequently refer for help to various persons when they are abused, i.e. their rights are violated by adults or peers; when adults violate their rights, children frequently seek help from a class teacher, a parent and a classmate. When their rights are violated by peers, children seek help from a classmate and a class teacher. They also relatively frequently approach a teacher whom they trusts the most (see Figure N15).

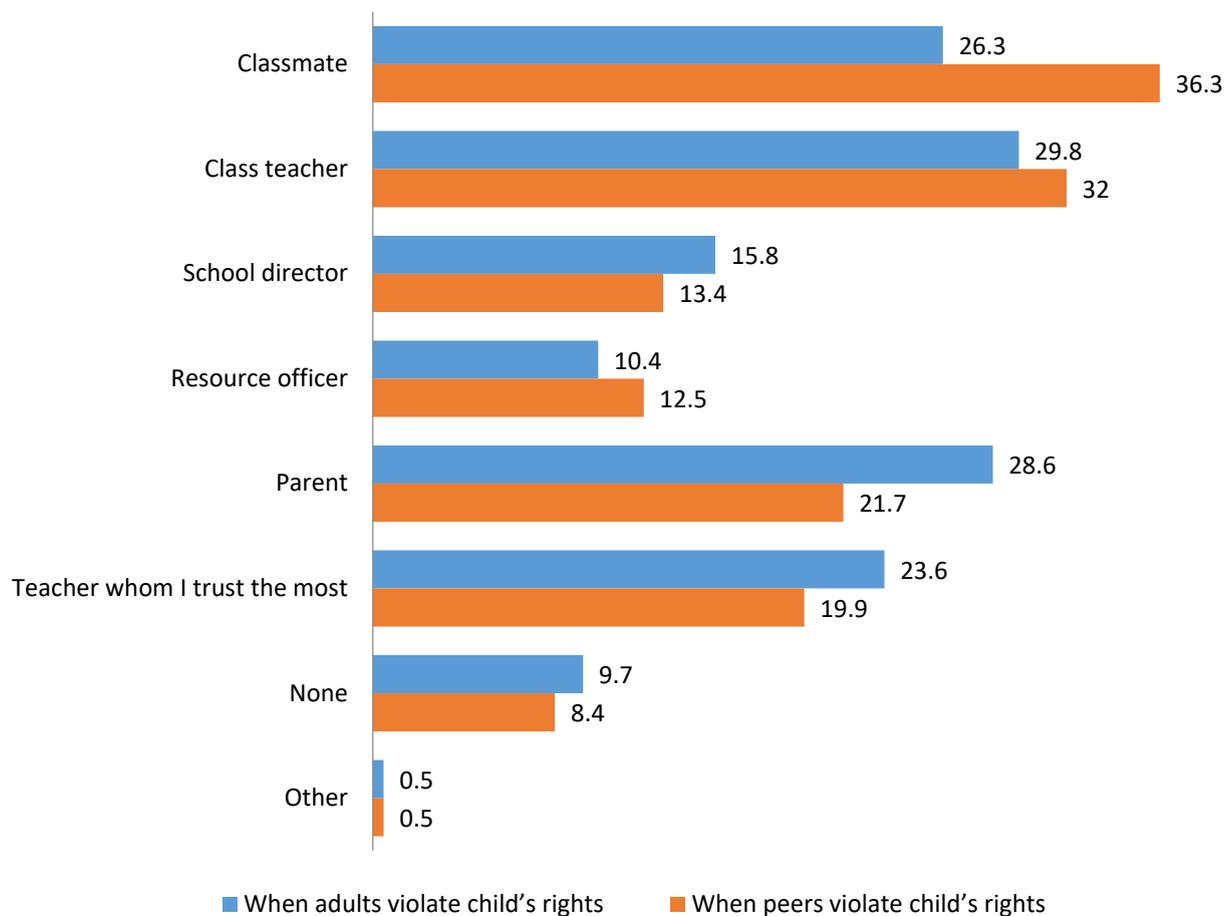
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18 “Children conceal because they are threatened that worse will happen if they say,” “we do not tell adults, we defuse it ourselves because when adults get involved the conflict deteriorates further, including between parents,” “I tell my friend,” “I rely on myself,” “I do not tell anyone, do not want to draw anyone else into the conflict,” “I cannot tell a teacher because he/she will say that it is nothing since it was just a joke,” “I cannot tell anyone but parents, nothing will change anyway,” “even teachers will call you a snitch.”

19 Participants of focus groups were pupils from 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grades while questionnaires were filled in by pupils of 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades.

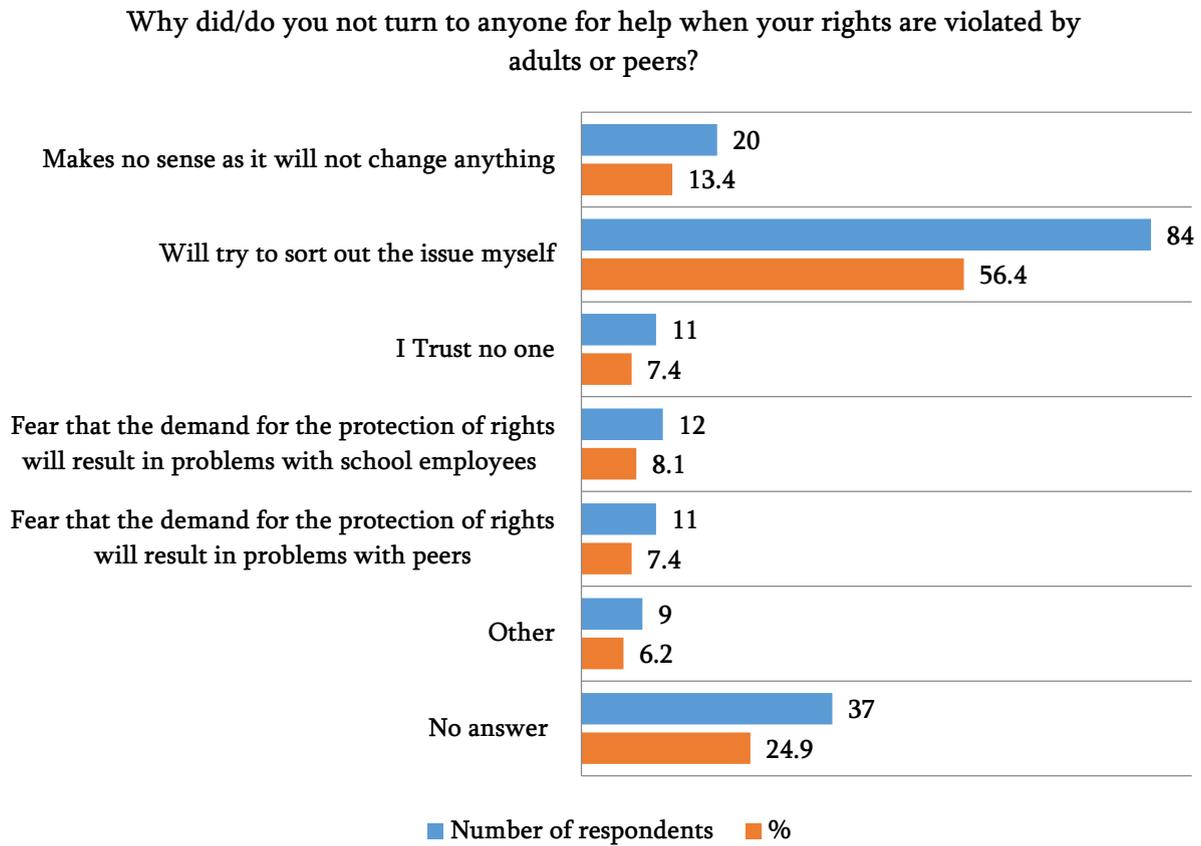
Figure N15

**When adults or peers violate pupils' rights, whom do pupils turn to for help... (%)**



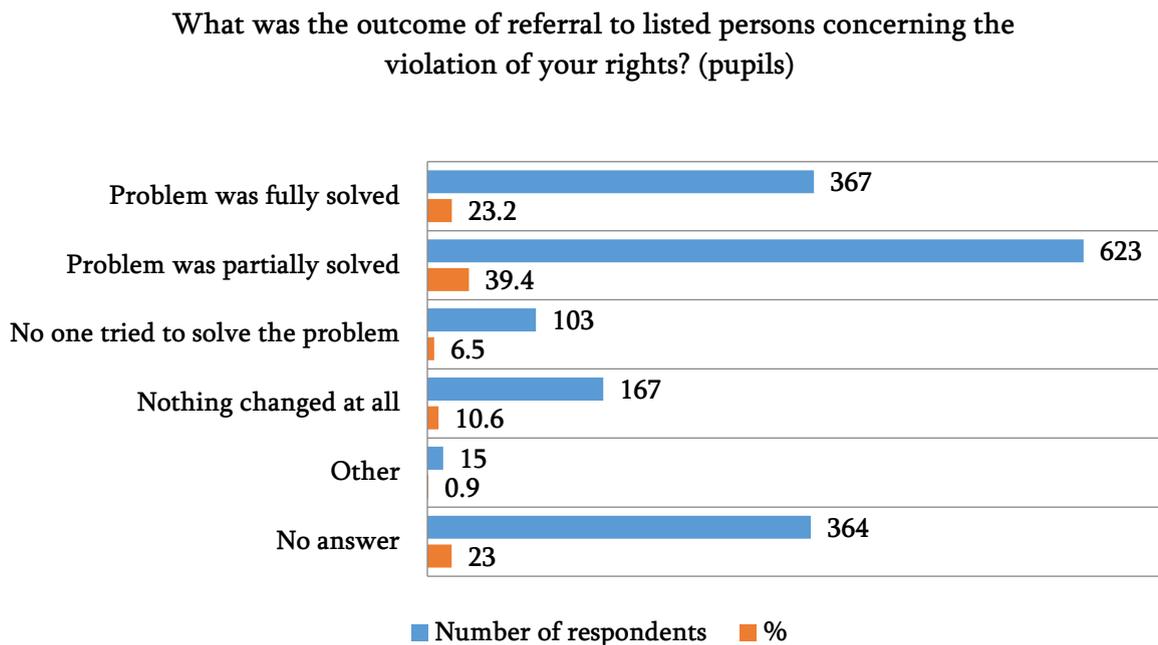
A question in a quantitative survey as to why they do not turn to anyone for help, was not answered by 149 pupils. The majority of the remaining pupils said they would try to sort out the issue themselves (56.4%). Also, the share of response “makes no sense as it will not change anything” was somewhat high (13.4%). 12 pupils fear problems that may emerge in relations with school employees while 11 pupils do not trust anyone (see Figure N16).

**Figure 16**



According to information obtained through questionnaires, from those pupils who reported violation of their rights to a school director, a resource officer, a class teacher or a teacher they trust, 39.4% said that a problem was partially solve while 23.2% said that a problem was fully solved (see Figure N17).

*Figure N17*

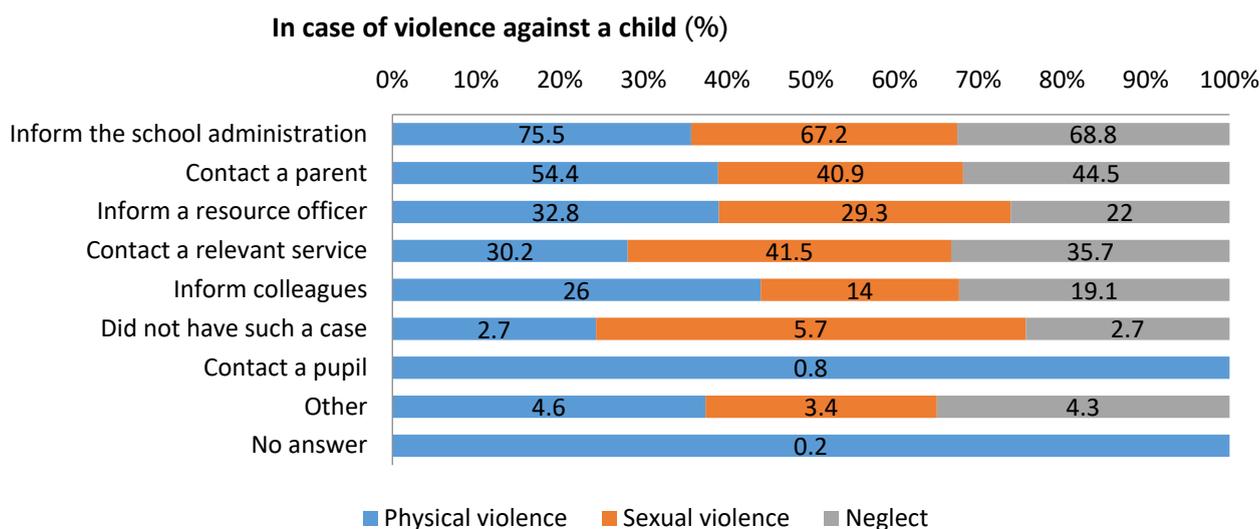


**The monitoring also showed that schools lack a uniform strategy for managing incidents of domestic violence.** When an alleged domestic violence is identified, there are problems in the implementation of measures provided in the referral procedures of the protection of child's rights – referral to responsible entities – by professionals working with children. According to several school directors, they refrain from reporting early marriages to a responsible entity to avoid confrontation with a family.

Also several interviews revealed a seasonal engagement of pupils in regions in agricultural works to assist their families. During this period they do not attend classes.

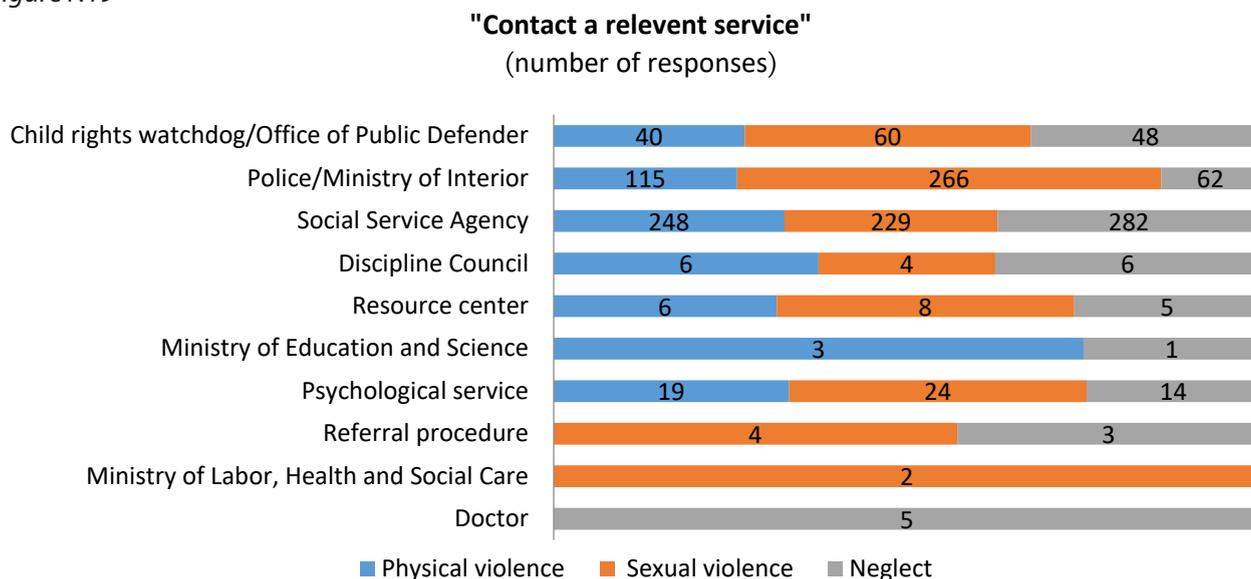
The results of quantitative survey revealed that when a school employee learns about a physical or sexual abuse or neglect of a pupil by parent/parents or legal representatives, the main measure taken by school employees to deal with the problem is the notification of a school administration or parent about it. The cross section analysis of schools (schools with resource officers, with high/low enrollment, in mountainous/lowland regions) revealed similar tendencies (see Figure N18).

Figure N18



When choosing the response "contact a relevant service," school employees implied the following entities/ persons:

Figure N19

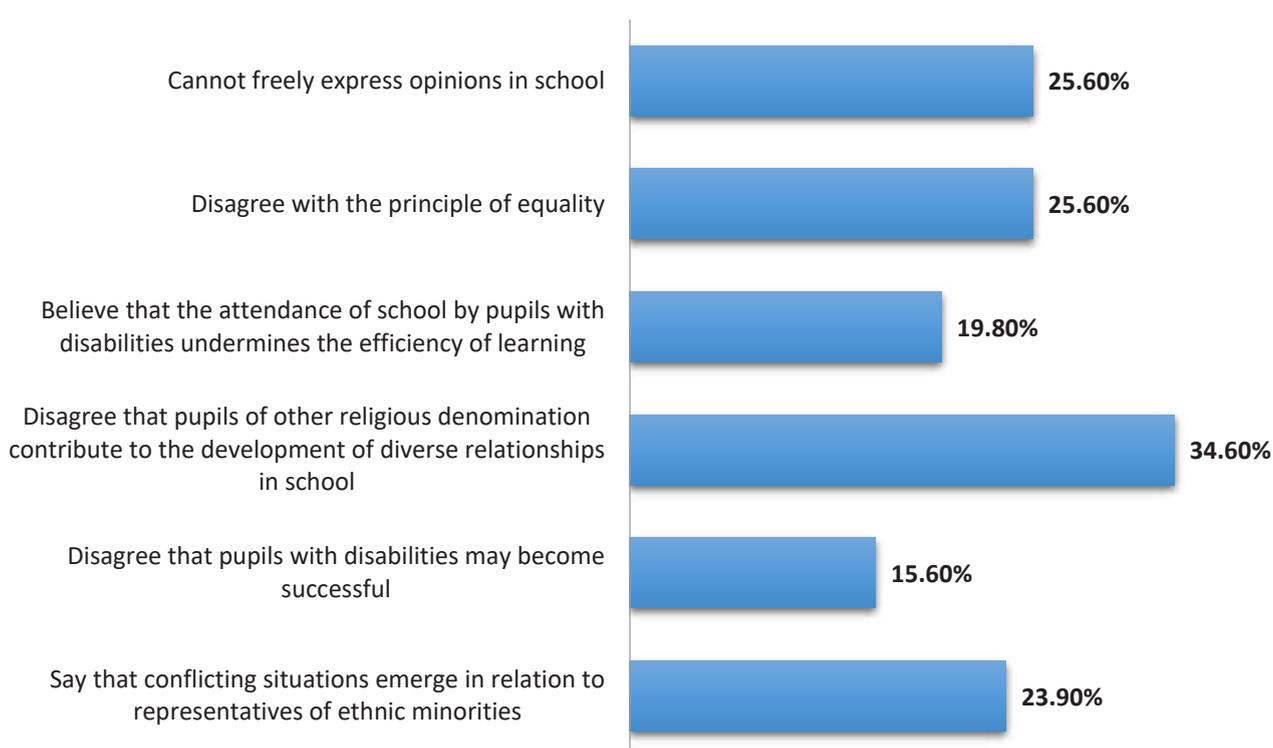


## 2.6. Pupils' attitudes towards tolerance

To assess the degree of tolerance among pupils, they were asked to assess the level of their agreement to six various statements listed in the questionnaire: 1. We can freely express our opinions in our school at any time; 2. All are equal in our school regardless of their ethnicity, religion, social standing or condition of health; 3. Attendance of school by pupils with disabilities undermines the efficiency of learning; 4. Pupils representing other religion contribute to the development of diverse relationships in school; 5. Pupils with disabilities may become successful; 6. Conflicting situations emerge in relation to representatives of ethnic minorities.

The assessments of the above statements by pupils on the “agree-disagree” scale<sup>20</sup> revealed the following:

Figure N20



The comparison of the above results with the responses in other blocks of the questionnaire reveals a rather interesting data, in particular: the principle of equality is supported by 53% of that group of pupils who do not perceive the ridicule for residing in a less prestigious district as a violence; by 48% of those pupils who deem it acceptable to humiliate peers for their nationality; by 53.7% of those pupils who do not view the ridiculing of peers for their style of dressing, accessories or appearance as violence; and by 54.9% of those pupils who do not view the humiliation of peers for their academic achievements as violence.

Moreover, the statement on the equality was favored by 73.7% of those pupils who noted that the attendance of school by pupils with disabilities undermines the efficiency of learning and 41.8% of those pupils who denied that pupils representing other religion contribute to the development of diverse relationships in school.

The survey data also showed that pupils agree to the following conflicting statements: 30% of those who do not view the humiliation of peers on the ground of their nationality as violence, note that pupils representing

<sup>20</sup> Data is calculated on a four-point scale where 4 means “fully agree” and 1 means “completely disagree.” A neutral point on the scale is 2.5; the data above 2.5 corresponds to a positive assessment field whereas data below 2.5 corresponds to a negative assessment field.

other religion contribute to the development of diverse relationships in school, while 48.6% of those pupils who do not think that the humiliation of peers on the ground of their religious denomination or opinions is violence fully agree with the statement that all are equal in school regardless of their ethnicity, religion, social standing or condition of health.

All this suggests that a true attitude of respondents/pupils towards different/minorities somewhat differs from the attitudes they declare and proves that there is a problem of proper understanding of principles of tolerance and equality in schools and that the problem of violence against children is pressing.

### 3. CONCLUSION

The results of the monitoring made it clear that Georgia still faces a number of challenges in the fulfillment of obligations assumed under international and national legislation in the area of prevention and elimination of violence against children in educational institutions.

Obtained results from those schools where the Office of Public Defender carried out the monitoring showed that psychological and physical forms of violence are applied in educational institutions by pupils as well as by adults, especially by those teachers who are in close interaction with pupils. Moreover, the monitoring revealed a stereotyped and sometimes, discriminatory reasoning among pupils and teachers; it also revealed a problem in preventing violence, identifying such instances and focusing on child's interests. Consequently, the number of identified facts of violence in school is minimal and do not reflect a real scale of the spread of violence. Awareness of rights and responsibilities and the essence of violence is poor among pupils; schools lack a common policy on the fight against violence.

The Public Defender calls on the state to develop and implement a coordinated policy for the prevention of violence and improvement of response mechanisms in educational institutions. This will contribute to a comprehensive protection of pupils of educational institutions by considering the best interests of the child.

### 4. RECOMMENDATIONS

#### To the government of Georgia

- Within the framework of Action Plan on the Protection of Human Rights, develop special measures for the elimination and prevention of violence against children in general educational institutions.
- Create a common database of investigation into and responses to identified incidents of violence against children in general educational institutions with the involvement of relevant responsible entities.
- Undertake effective measures to fully implement mechanisms determined by Child Protection Referral Procedures, inter alia, support the coordination among responsible entities and conduct an effective monitoring on the fulfillment of requirements specified in the ordinance.
- Conduct intensive information campaigns, in a user-friendly format, on the elimination and prevention of violence against children, with a special focus on raising awareness of school personnel, teachers and parents.

## To the Ministry of Education and science of Georgia

- Actively implement measures oriented on the improvement of the situation with the rights of pupils in public and private school.
- Regularly raise awareness of pupils of their rights and responsibilities, mechanisms of protection from violence and negative consequences of bullying.
- Focus attention on the establishment and strengthening of principles of diversity, equality and tolerance in general educational schools for the aim of prevention of discrimination and inequality and elimination of similar incidents in schools.
- Improve the training-retraining system of teachers and school personnel in the area of main mechanisms of protection of the child's rights and protection against violence.
- Regularly retrain school directors, teachers and resource officers on issues of prevention, identification of and proper response to incidents of violence against children; pay particular attention to positive methods of behavioral management.
- Raise the level of awareness of professionals (teachers, administrative staff, resource officers) working in general educational institutions about mechanisms defined by the child protection referral procedures.
- Elaborate the rule and procedures of disciplinary proceedings against teachers and minors in schools to ensure a timely, adequate, proportional and proper response from the state to facts of violation of the child's rights; also, to this end, specify the rule and procedures of disciplinary proceedings against teachers and minors in private schools.
- Define an effective mechanism of response to violations of the child's rights in private schools, which will specify the functions of the monitoring body and procedures of the inquiry into incidents of violence against children.
- Grant a monitoring body the right to conduct proactive and unplanned monitoring to ensure effective response to violations of the child's rights in public and private schools.
- Develop a rule of observing - and when need be, observe - anonymity of a child to avoid probable pressure from an offender, when a child declares about alleged violence against him/her.
- Ensure that children's views are considered in decision making concerning them in general educational institutions.
- Increase the number of psychological service centers of the LEPL Office of Resource Officers of Educational Institutions and strengthen the capacity of existing ones.
- Ensure that resource officer service operates in public schools in accordance with the established number of pupils and needs.
- Inform parents about a problem of violence against children and its impact on the development of children, also about ways of protecting children from violence in families and society and identifying signs of violence.

## To the Parliament of Georgia

- Ensure that the obligation to observe a legal principle of prohibition of corporal punishment of pupils is provided in all legislative acts that regulate the child's rights.
- Improve the rule of disciplinary proceedings against pupils, teachers and school administration in the Law of Georgia on General Education.

## 5. ANNEX – PUPILS' COMMENTS IN QUESTIONNAIRES

A 10<sup>th</sup> grade schoolgirl: "I am very glad that you came, I like this organization. I had a conflict with the director once. He disagreed with the opinion I expressed when he offended one pupil with humiliating phrases concerning her mental ability. That was confining a child to one ideology, which I disagree with and will always oppose because all people have the right to express their views. There are instances when you want to explain to a teacher that you have not misconducted but he/she instructs to shut up, offends you if engage in arguments with her."

A 9<sup>th</sup> grade schoolboy: "Conditions are very good in our school. I am very happy. However, I cannot help noting that several months ago one child stole something from a shop and it was made known to the entire school. At one of the teachers' lesson he was ridiculed and called a thief. The teacher herself ridiculed and offended him and the child was very embarrassed."

An 11<sup>th</sup> grade schoolgirl: "Dear human rights defenders, I have often heard dissatisfaction from various teachers about not being allowed to apply violence against children or shout at them when children misbehave. They say that not only children have rights but they have the rights too and their rights are also violated, not only those of the child. I lack proper arguments to debate with them why the violence is unjustified in any case; it would be good to raise awareness of this topic not only among school teachers but also various teachers outside school, for example, those of dancing, singing, et cetera."

A 10<sup>th</sup> grade schoolgirl: "There were instances in our school which, normally, required attention; however when something serious happens, the school administration, the director, the deputy director and teachers try to conceal it. Theft is a widespread crime, money is lost but no one reacts to that although we often complain about it loudly. There are teachers in the school who abuse children over trifles. These forms of abuse include ear pulling, hair pulling, addressing by derogatory words, tactless conversation, beating with a stick and instead of taking measures against such teachers and dismiss them from the job, they warn children to not tell about these facts to their families. Strangers easily enter the school grounds and talk to children even during lessons. We all have the right to freely express our views, without any restriction but if our opinions do not coincide with those of teachers they start offending pupils."

A 10<sup>th</sup> grade schoolgirl: "Theft happens quite often in school. I myself experienced this, but the school administration, a class teacher, teachers do not undertake any measures. They tell us not to leave a bag or a purse in the classroom because they cannot do anything about that; however, I think this problem can be easily solved. Sometimes I witnessed how a teacher abused younger pupils bringing them to tears, which is an example of humiliation and infringement of rights."

An 11<sup>th</sup> grade schoolboy: "It is not necessary to call the protection of human rights a profession to defend human rights. This is the obligation of any person irrespective of their professions."

A 9<sup>th</sup> grade schoolgirl: "Teachers exert psychological pressure on pupils, asking them to do more than mandatory and if children fail to fulfill, teachers threaten them."

A 9<sup>th</sup> grade schoolboy: "Teachers often humiliate pupils in this school, often differentiate pupils by various criteria."

A 9<sup>th</sup> grade schoolboy: "Unfortunately, there are instances in our school when teachers humiliate pupils, differentiate pupils and treat them unfairly."

A 9<sup>th</sup> grade schoolboy: "Often teachers treat you unfairly and constantly reprimand you without any reason."

An 11<sup>th</sup> grade schoolboy: "The situation among the youth is terrible; unfortunately, the Public Defender

will not be able to change that but can improve it to some extent. We cannot boast about our level of development, on the contrary, our level is too low to claim anything. Thank you for your attempt.”

A 10<sup>th</sup> grade schoolboy: “I wish my school had a sports hall and a canteen and children studied in a healthier environment.”

An 11<sup>th</sup> grade schoolgirl: “I wish teachers did not offend and humiliate children or their parents in the presence of classmates.”

A 10<sup>th</sup> grade schoolgirl: “Often teachers offend and curse parents. As for the trust in teachers, I do not trust any of them and it is only owing to our new director that we can boldly express our opinions at any time.”

A 9<sup>th</sup> grade schoolgirl: “A teacher psychologically abused me almost daily. She sidelined me from any event. I complained about it to a class teacher. Although the situation has partially improved, it continues in almost a similar vein. The teacher does not ask me a lesson and does not assess my homework.

A 10<sup>th</sup> grade schoolgirl: “I think our school is very well protected and does not face the problems listed in the questionnaire. We faced such problems in our class about four or five years ago, but everything was sorted out with the help of our class teacher and now, classmates have normal relations among one another.”

A 12<sup>th</sup> grade schoolgirl: “Thank you for coming here. In reality, violence is more pressing than we think. Timely response is necessary. Violence impedes the development of a pupil into a fully-fledged individual, which is damaging not only for a particular person but also for the entire nation.”

An 11<sup>th</sup> grade schoolgirl: “I would change a protectionist attitude towards teachers in my school. For example, there are teachers in the school who physically and verbally abuse pupils but because of their long working experience and age, these misdemeanors are left without adequate response.”

A 9<sup>th</sup> grade schoolgirl: “The majority of teachers take bribes in exchange for marks.”

**A 9<sup>th</sup> grade schoolgirl: “1. When during a lesson pupils ask to let them go to the toilet, teachers have only one answer – what were you doing during the break? Or personally humiliate us by saying why we do not/cannot hold in. 2. Teachers manhandle pupils. 3. Often reprimand pupils for their hairdos and prohibit them from wearing loose or curled hair. 4. There is no hygiene observed in school toilets and there are no sinks. 5. The school territory is not protected and dogs easily penetrate the territory. 6. Children abuse one another. 7. A teacher lowers your mark if you take private lessons with other teacher. 8. School canteen is a real mess. 9. There is no healthy potable water in school.”**

**An 11<sup>th</sup> grade schoolboy: “Human rights is a priority for me. I am against any form of violence. I think that teachers, especially in rural schools, should consider and assess minors’ rights in a more realistic light and treat the minors as it is appropriate for human beings. I personally had an experience when I was not able to do a concrete act because the teacher imposed a certain restriction on me. I would advise her to keep up with the time and start reasoning appropriately. I wish attitude of teachers towards children changed radically for the better and they accepted a different opinion as it is appropriate for civilized persons. I think that some teachers are doing something opposite than performing educational job.”**

An 11<sup>th</sup> grade schoolgirl: “The situation in schools, especially in the regions, is not as it looks. You arrived and you were hosted well – everyone got busy hosting a guest, hiding away coffee cups into the drawers to make impression that they are really doing their job. The situation is, however, the opposite. I was beaten by the teacher and guess, what happened. I will tell you everything exactly as it happened. The teacher (who beat me) pushed me out of the classroom with a derogatory comment. I stayed in the library waiting for a bell, frightened because I knew full well that things would go wrong. The bell rang and I saw my mother with an expression on the face saying ‘if you don’t kill yourself, I will kill you.’ The class teacher looked at me with almost the same expression. They started questioning me about what happened at the lesson. Before finding out anything the class teacher told me that I was guilty. I was taken to the director’s office and the director met me with a terrible impression, his face turns frightful when he gets angry. I was put in the middle

of the room with my mother standing next to me and teachers and the director surrounding us. They started questioning me about what happened. I told them what really happened. After a minute of silence, they told me altogether 'we doubt that this is how it happened.' In other words, **they put you in such a situation that even if you are not guilty you experience such pressure that you are made to say what they want to hear. Then came a spate of offences and comments of teachers such as 'like breeds like.' I came under heavy psychological pressure. I was being offended for one hour and everyone vented their anger on me.** The spate of offences ended with the words 'we will forgive you this time, only once; do not repeat it.' They forgave me! I went into my class and the class teacher told me 'shame on you' and this is how it ended. **No one asks you what happened, why, how? You are necessarily guilty. As for the rights... are you kidding? Here, no one has the right to have the rights. A child is always guilty whereas there is always an excuse for teachers because, as we are told, they are also human beings and they also have temper. Children must tolerate their "fits of rage." No one is interested in the rights – in what happened and how it happened. If you say something publicly you are a spy and a snitch, while if they harm you too much, they should be forgiven because their grandmothers and great grandmothers are your relatives and therefore... Had this questionnaire not been anonymous maximum two children would have agreed to fill it. When we leave this room they will start inquiring how and what we have done, but no one will tell them. The situation is terrible and it would be good to pay attention to it before someone becomes a victim."**

**An 11<sup>th</sup> grade schoolgirl: "I want fairness in all schools of Georgia or any other institution. This is very important. First of all, our rights must be protected and firstly, we should do that and then, relevant entities should assist us in that. People have their rights from birth and no one has the right to violate those rights. No to violence!"**

**An 11<sup>th</sup> grade schoolgirl: "A teacher must not violate the child's rights in school. Children must not have to tolerate teachers' offences. Teacher must be able to calm down children without shouting at them and offending them. All children must be equal in school and children must not be differentiated."**

A 9<sup>th</sup> grade schoolgirl: "1. Is it necessary to control the dressing style and accessories in school? Is it necessary to impose some limits on that? 2. Should we be or not be responsible for our health and safety in school? 3. Teachers are trained in psychology and informed about methods of punishment, but does anyone monitor that? Why this has not been eliminated yet and remains a problem?"

An 11<sup>th</sup> grade schoolgirl: "1. Unfortunately, in our school, pupils are humiliated by teachers and administration for their dressing style. If they do not like distressed jeans, et cetera, then let them introduce uniforms. 2. Teachers make humiliating comments about non-Georgian origin of pupils as well as a condition of health."

An 11<sup>th</sup> grade schoolgirl: "1. Oppression, offense, humiliation of pupils. 2. Humiliation, oppression because of dressing style. 3. Threats, manhandling. 4. Oppression of pupils by other pupils."

A 10<sup>th</sup> grade schoolgirl: "If a teacher is unable to calm down pupils or professionally deliver an interesting lesson then such a teacher must leave his profession. By so doing a teacher will, at least, avoid the violation of pupils' rights. There are teachers who unfairly treat pupils. For example, if a pupil cannot draw, teacher physically abuses him (there were such incidents), if a pupil does not take private lessons with the teacher who teaches her this subject at school, her marks are lowered or she is not asked a lesson and she is left with no other option but to take private lessons with the school teacher when there are 60-70 specialists in school and only 5 or maximum 10 of them have certificates. Unfortunately, it happens sometimes that teachers are not selected by their professionalism and are recruited only because they are representatives of director or other organizations. By doing so, I think, rights of pupils are violated, who want to obtain education in a professional way. Also, we have resource officers who are only focused on drawing up reports. There were instances of drawing up such reports without studying the situation. Pupils manhandle one another or misbehave in the corridors, bring into school New Year crackers and explode them everywhere. Resource officers do nothing or just make remarks which is ineffective and such a behavior does not change. I hope the state will read all this and take relevant measures to ensure that pupils receive proper education and develop into personalities because, as you know, school, society and family largely influence the development of personality."