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**MYWEB (Measuring Youth Well Being)**  
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**WP4: Direct engagement with children and young people (CYP)**

**Deliverable 4.1: Country level reports on interviews and focus groups from delivery partners (Georgia)**

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## 1. Introduction

The CRRC-Georgia report for MYWEB WP4, “Well-being and Happiness, as Seen by Children and Young People” summarizes the results of four focus groups and twenty interviews conducted between November 12-20, 2014 in Tbilisi, Georgia with children aged 10-12 and young people aged 15-19. Contact was made with children from public school and young people aged 15-16 from private school. Young people aged 17-19 were selected based on their social involvement and participation in clubs, volunteer organizations, art and music circles, etc. A second group of young people were also selected based on non-involvement in extra-curricular activities.

The main topics explored in the research project include children and young people’s understandings and definitions of well-being and happiness, levels of satisfaction with life and understandings of the needs and wishes society has for young people and children.

Although discussed separately, well-being and happiness were described in similar terms and often used interchangeably or as constituents of each other. For children 10-12, well-being centred on parents and school. Unlike children, young people prioritized friends, health, financial stability and freedom as major domains of well-being.

While children had modest requirements for feeling happy such as spending time with their parents, having fun with their friends and enjoying toys and candy, young people reported that they need the company of friends and people they enjoy being with, success in the world of work and self-fulfilment through doing things they love in order to be happy. Young people are quite positive about their age and appreciate it for being full of energy, for having abilities to study more easily, for being free and carefree more generally, for having more opportunities than in the past, and for having more time not only for everyday matters but more time to shape and start their futures. Young people university students in particular feel a greater sense of independence, but they also demonstrate an understanding of the responsibilities that come with age and independence including more significant demands on them in terms of studying and accountability for their lives and actions.

The future is commonly viewed as something positive. Respondents of all ages picture themselves having families and children in the future, being healthy, having jobs and careers, and taking care of their own children. Notably, this is what they report well-being looks like at their parents’ age.

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Most of the focus group and interview participants expressed satisfaction with their lives. They have the things they need and are surrounded by people they love and people who support and take care of them. Studying is their main task, and they realize the importance of what they do now as it relates to their futures. This concerns not only studying, but also gaining life experience. At the same time, even though respondents generally say whatever they do is valuable and they use time on the 'right' things, many focus group and interview participants pointed out computer games, social networks and entertainment as time-stealers that distract them from spending time acquiring invaluable knowledge.

Satisfaction with life is not overwhelmingly high among focus group and interview. Some focus group participants claimed that the standard of living in Georgia does not meet their needs, and this resonates with their dissatisfaction in life. For instance, respondents cite young people's lack of access to many things, when discussing poor standards of living. They say there are very many talented young people, who might not be able to continue their studies at university, because they cannot afford it. Therefore, they report that they have little chances of self-realization. This leads to dissatisfaction with life among some young people.

Additionally, teenagers are unhappy with the way people in Georgia treat those who are different including representatives of other ethnic groups and migrants with different skin colours. Sadly, dissenting opinions are often criticized and condemned by society. Of all groups researched, teenagers expressed the idea that the society does not understand them most frequently. They also disapprove of gender discrimination in the form of more intensive criticism of girls than boys for the same behaviours.

This report provides details on fieldwork and respondents, results summarizing understandings of well-being and happiness among children and young people, as well as satisfaction with life and society hearing children and young people's voices. Focus group and interview summaries are brought to life by illustrative quotes from focus group and interview participants. The report also explores the difficulties in operationalizing well-being and differences in understandings of well-being and happiness based on several factors. Finally, the report provides suggestions for subsequent rounds of research.

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## 2. Fieldwork characteristics

### 2.1. Fieldwork

For MYWEB's WP4, CRRC-Georgia conducted four focus groups and twenty interviews with children and young people between November 12 and 20, 2014. For the fieldwork, CRRC-Georgia selected two contrasting schools in Tbilisi: a public school (#82), which is located in the suburbs of Tbilisi and a private Waldorf Free School, located in the centre of the city.

In order to organize focus groups and interviews at the schools, the CRRC-Georgia team met with the school principals, teachers and children one week before fieldwork to introduce them to the project, its goals and objectives.

Public School #82 (PS82) is located about 1.5 hours from the city centre by public transport, and generally is quite well organized. The school building was recently renovated and is quite large. It has a large yard. The principal of the school and teachers were friendly, enthusiastic and ready to help with organizational issues. They assisted CRRC-Georgia in obtaining parent permission and provided all documentation in time for fieldwork. In addition, they prepared warm and comfortable rooms for the focus group and interviews. In PS82, the focus group participants and interview respondents were aged 10-12. In total, CRRC-Georgia conducted one focus group with nine participants and five interviews in PS82.

The Waldorf Free School is a private school located in a central district of Tbilisi, about 15-20 minutes from the city centre by public transport. It is easily accessible. The Waldorf Free School building is relatively small and has not been renovated recently. Teachers were also friendly and helpful, but less organized than in PS82. They experienced difficulties in attempting to provide the CRRC-Georgia team with rooms to conduct interviews, and the interview process was interrupted several times as the interviewer had to change rooms. Parent permissions were obtained in time for fieldwork activities. In the Waldorf Free School, the focus group participants and interview respondents were aged 15-16. In total, CRRC-Georgia conducted one focus group with five participants and five interviews in the Waldorf Free School.

In both schools, focus groups and interviews were conducted after classes in order to avoid interrupting the teaching process.

Apart from schools, the CRRC-Georgia team conducted one focus group and five interviews with young people actively engaged in extracurricular activities and one focus group and five interviews with young people not engaged in extracurricular activities. These focus groups (2 in total) and interviews (10 in total) were conducted

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at the CRRC-Georgia office, located in a central district of Tbilisi. The snowball method was used in selecting participants and respondents.

CRRC-Georgia staff members<sup>1</sup> conducted focus groups and interviews. All of the interviewers and moderators have worked with CRRC-Georgia for a minimum of three years and have experience working on similar projects. Prior to fieldwork, they worked together to review documents and guidelines provided by MYWEB, participate in the translation process, and make final logistical preparations.

Information on focus groups and interviews are provided in the tables below. All focus group and interview participants received incentives.

**Table 1. Socio-demographic characteristics of the focus group participants and interview respondents**

	<b>Interviews</b>	<b>Focus groups</b>
<b>Pupils from primary school</b>	5 – 10-12 years old 2 girls, 3 boys 5 – lived in the neighbourhood of the school (in the suburbs of Tbilisi) 4 ethnic Georgians, 1 – ethnic Armenian.	9 – 10-12 years old 2 girls, 7 boys <sup>2</sup> 9 – lived in the neighbourhood of the school (in the suburbs of Tbilisi) All ethnic Georgians.
<b>Pupils from secondary school</b>	5 – 15-16 years old 2 girls, 3 boys 5 – lived in different parts of Tbilisi including central districts and suburbs All ethnic Georgians.	5 – 15-16 years old 3 girls, 2 boys 5 – lived in the same district of the school, Saburtalo (a central district of Tbilisi) All ethnic Georgians.
<b>Non-organised young people</b>	5 – 17-18 years old 4 girls, 1 boy All ethnic Georgians. All high school students, in their last year of school.	6 – 17-19 years old 3 girls, 3 boys All ethnic Georgians. 5 university students, 1 school student.

<sup>1</sup> Ketii Chubinishvili, Kristina Vacharadze, Mariam Kobaladze and Tsisana Khundadze.

<sup>2</sup> The focus group composition changed on the day it was carried out. Two selected participant girls became ill and were substituted with boys by the teacher.

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<b>Involved young people</b>	5 – 17-18 years old 3 girls, 2 boys All ethnic Georgians. 2 university students, 3 students in their last year of school. One seasonally employed. Involvement of young people: School orchestra, Girl Scouts Organization, Dance and Art School, Chess Club, Volunteer Organization “Helping Hand”.	5 – 17-18 years old 2 girls, 3 boys All ethnic Georgians. 4 university students, 1 student in the last year of school. Involvement of young people: School orchestra, Urban Explorer, Volunteer Organization “Helping Hand”, European Youth Parliament, Pioneer Film Studio.
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## 2.2. Methodological differences between interviews and focus groups

Differences between focus group and interview results among young people aged 15-16 and 17-19 were very modest. Focus group participants touched upon a broader variety of subjects, whereas interview respondents were more focused on specific questions. In interviews, respondents often shared opinions based on their personal experiences, while in focus groups answers were often more general.

In regard to children aged 10-12, the focus group had a distinct leader who seemed quite smart, well rounded, and apparently enjoyed the trust and respect of his peers. Whatever this participant said, everyone agreed and repeated. In interviews, children mentioned their personal experiences more often than in the focus group. However, it was sometimes difficult for the children to think of and formulate answers.

In focus groups, participants often pointed out that they had not thought of these issues before, but found them very interesting and would probably continue thinking about the issues further. They also mentioned they were now more motivated and prepared to participate in further research, be it a survey or another focus group discussion.

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### 3. Main empirical findings

#### 3.1. Understanding and measuring well-being among children

##### Global understanding/definition of well-being Major domains

Well-being among young children, according to focus group discussions and interviews, is associated with good academic performance and positive relationships with parents, friends and teachers. As one student stated, “When I get good grades and I spend time with my family” (Focus group, Tengiz, male, 11 years old). Other children agreed with this sentiment. When discussing feeling well when spending time in the company of family and friends, another student stated, “It is when you spend time with your family, friends and relatives” (Focus group, Zaur, male, 11 years old). Moreover, parents are the most important people in children’s lives and having a good relationship with them means almost everything to the children. As one child noted, “My parents are the most important people for me. I love them a lot. They are the ones who bring me up and take care of me” (Interview, Mzia, female, 12 years old).

Children also associate well-being with their own health and the health of family members – “When you and your family members are healthy” (Interview, Duru, male, 10 years old).

One interview respondent particularly stressed the importance of mutual respect and love in society as an important part of her well-being. She stated, “Well-being is when you love and respect the people around you, and they also respect you” (Interview, Makvala, female, 10 years old).

Participants acknowledge that children’s well-being is not equally provided for in the country. Some participants noted that many children do not have families, which negatively affects their well-being. For instance, one child noted “There are children in the community who do not have parents, and there is no one who can take care of them. I do not think they are happy” (Interview, Makvala, female, 10 years old). Also, there are children who have health issues, which prevent them from gaining an education. Some of them may be handicapped and insulted as a result of their disabilities. One participant noted, “I think that handicapped children do not feel as happy as healthy children. Especially, if handicapped children are [insulted for being different]” (Focus group, Darejan, female, 12 years old).

Families and relatives are important in the lives of young people in Georgia as well, but, unlike young children who consider family to be the primary source of their well-

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being, teenagers prioritize personal relationships, financial stability, and independence. As one student noted, “For me well-being is independence, doing what I want. I feel well because no one restricts me from doing the things I like” (Focus group, Lazare, male, 16 years old). In addition, being a full-fledged member of society is an essential component in their sense of well-being. One teenage respondent noted, “Well-being is when you feel comfortable, when you are a part of a community and can freely express your opinions/feelings” (Interview, Tinatin, female, 16 years old).

However, with time, understandings of well-being may change as a focus group participant noted, “It has changed a lot. In the past it was very important for me that mom was at home at 6:30 pm” (Focus group, Nestan, female, 17 years old). Nonetheless, some key values remain the same regardless of age. An interviewee noted, “Important things have not changed. My parents, siblings and relatives made me happy in the past and they make me happy now” (Interview, Tinatin, female, 16 years old).

Young people are often unhappy with the way people in Georgia treat those who are different. Sadly, dissenting opinions are often criticized and condemned by society. This affects the well-being of teenagers, as they struggle to establish themselves in society.

“We are all different here, but we have never faced problems at school in this regard. However, as soon as we leave the school building, the situation changes dramatically. There is a big problem in our society. You cannot freely say what you think or behave the way you want, because you may be criticized for this and may even lose [a] close friend. People in Georgia do not respect different opinions” (Focus group, Ia, female, 16 years old).

## Happiness

Children report that celebrating birthday parties, getting presents and spending time with friends make them happy, as one boy stated, “I am happy when I have a birthday party at the [celebration] centre, and I have a good time with my friends” (Focus group, Kakha, male, 11 years old). They also love going to amusement parks and vacationing at sea resorts with their families. Consequently, the best days of their lives are mainly associated with such events. As one girl stated, “My best day was last summer when my parents took me to the amusement park Tsitsinatela in Kobuleti” (Interview, Mzia, female, 12 years old).

Unlike other children, one interview respondent, noted that the best day in her life

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was when she helped a stranger and was appreciated for it. She stated, “One day I saw how a kid fell down and hurt her leg. I helped her to get up and brought her water. She was very grateful, and told me that I was a good person. I felt very happy” (Interview, Makvala, female, 10 years old).

Children view it negatively when parents interfere in their relationships with friends. As one focus group participant stated, “It is bad when parents intervene in your relationships with friends and may forbid you to be friends with somebody” (Focus group, Kakha, male, 11 years old). They also become upset when parents break promises. As another focus group participant noted, “It is bad when parents do not keep their promises. For example when they promise to take you somewhere and afterwards change their mind” (Focus group, Darejan, female, 12 years old).

Children believe that a lack of monetary resources can affect happiness. As one noted, “It is really sad when you meet a very poor family on your way to Wendy’s (a fast-food restaurant)” (Focus group, Demna, male, 11 years old).

Children associate their worst days with pain, accidents and death. The death of a loved one was identified as one of the most negative events in life. As one student noted, “The most horrible thing is when you lose a person who you love a lot” (Interview, Lazare, male, 10 years old). Another noted:

“Once, I was spending my summer time in Manglisi. One day something horrifying happened. I heard a gun shooting, and when I came out, I saw that our neighbour killed a dog that gave birth to several puppies several days ago. I felt very sorry for these puppies, because no one would take care of them” (Interview, Mzia, female, 12 years old).

Older participants believed that being a teenager nowadays is great. One noted, “I am happy that I am a teenager now and not in the ‘80s” (Focus group, Nestan, female, 17 years old). They are full of energy, are relatively free, have fewer obligations and have lots of opportunities to make life choices. One noted:

“I am young and I am relatively free, because I do not have many obligations. I can spend lots of time with my friends and have fun. Also, it is great that you have the right to choose what you want to do in the future” (Interview, Asmat, female, 16 years old).

Negative sides of being a teenager include bullying and the fights among friends that often happen in this period. “It is bad when you make fun of someone, and it often happens at our age” (Focus group, Nestan, female, 17 years old). It also upsets them that because of their age, sometimes, people do not take them seriously. As one respondent noted, “It is bad when people do not take you into account, because you

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are not old enough" (Interview, Tinatin, female, 16 years old).

One of the focus group participants expressed strong concern about the possible return of a "street mentality" among Georgian teenagers. She stated:

"It is sad when I see that the old mentality is coming back. I see guys standing in the streets and doing nothing. When I was reading a book "Dogs of Paliashvili Street" by Aka Morchiladze, I thought that everything described there was in the past, but unfortunately, I see such things happening now" (Focus group, Ia, female, 16 years old).

### Life-satisfaction

Children who participated in the focus group discussions and interviews appeared quite satisfied with their life. Life satisfaction for them was associated with having loving parents and good relationships with their siblings, classmates, and teachers. Academic success was also important. One young person stated:

"I am happy, because I have great parents, relatives and very good friends and teachers at school. When I was little, I had only parents and relatives, and now I am happier, because I have lots of friends at school."(Focus group, Genadi, male, 11 years old).

Negative facets of their lives centred on problems with friends. One student noted, "Once I had problems with one of my friends. When I was telling her something in secret, she was not keeping [the secret]. This made me very sad and angry" (Interview, Mzia, female, 12 years old). Also, financial difficulties and the death of a family member or relative are troubling. One boy stated, "I do not like when I lose people that I love. First my grandpa died, [and] then my uncle died" (Interview, Lazare, male, 10 years old).

Life satisfaction among young people is influenced by factors similar to those given by children. Factors provided included having a good school, family, and friends. A student at the Waldorf Free School noted:

"I am very pleased with my life. I have great friends and family. Also, I go to the best school. The school plays a big role in my life. This school made me what I am now, and I am really sorry for children who have not studied in the Waldorf Free School." (Interview, Asmat, female, 16 years old).

They are happy with the fact that they can explore a variety of opportunities and

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have the time as well as the freedom to determine their own futures. The same student above noted that, “I am happy that I have more time now to choose the direction of my life. I am deciding now what I want to do in the future” (Interview, Asmat, female, 16 years old). One interview respondent noted that playing the violin is a very important thing which affects his life satisfaction:

“I am satisfied with the fact that I play violin. There was a time when I wanted to give it up, but everybody assured me that I would regret it in the future. They were right. I continued playing, and I am very happy now” (Interview, Taniel, male, 16 years old).

Some teenagers were concerned that they often lacked dedication to studying, reading books, and quitting smoking. One teenager noted, “I do not have the willpower to sit and read or do my homework. I spend more time with friends having fun than studying. This I do not like” (Focus group, Elza, female, 16 years old; Interview, Taniel, male, 16 years old).

One interview respondent appeared troubled by Georgian society’s inability to accept people who do not follow established norms:

“I think society in Georgia is very critical and cannot accept different/unusual people. I have many friends who look different. They dress up in a different way or behave differently and society does not understand them. If I had power, I would change this” (Interview, Misha, male, 16 years old).

Surveyed teenagers think that, generally, young people in Georgia are satisfied with life. Still, they recognize that some people are depressed, do not study well, or want to leave the country and/or emigrate. One teenager noted that, “Some of my friends are quite depressed, because they take everything too seriously. They cannot relax and enjoy life. Also, lots of young people want to leave Georgia and emigrate” (Interview, Tinatin, female, 16 years old).

### Psychological well-being

Children think that what they do is worthwhile. Parents and teachers play important roles in this process, because they are the ones who educate children. As one student noted, “I learn everything about life from my parents and teachers” (Interview, Mzia, female, 12 years old). Sometimes, children learn from their own mistakes as well. One boy stated that, “From time to time, I learn from my mistakes. I make mistakes and then realize that I should not have done this” (Interview, Lazare, male, 10 years old).

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When asked whether they were better or worse three years ago, most of the children said there was not a significant difference, although there were some who felt better in the past. They provided the following reasons for feeling better in the past: having parents make their wishes come true more often; not going to school; having lots of free time; and parents having a better paid job. One boy noted, "I was better three years ago, because my father had a better job and a better salary" (Interview, Lazare, male, 10 years old).

All of the children were positive about their future, and they think that the future holds better things for them. When they grow up and reach their parents' age, they think they will have families of their own. One boy stated that "First of all having a wife and children will play a big role in my well-being" (Focus group, Bondo, male, 10 years old). They also believe that successful careers will largely determine their well-being. One child noted, "When I become a businessman and own my own firm [my well-being will be high]" (Focus group, Kakha, male, 11 years old).

Teenagers also think that what they do is worthwhile, and that this period in their life is very important as they are not just studying, but gaining life experience. One student noted:

"I think what I do now is worthwhile for my future. I mean not only studying, but also the experience that I gain. I feel that this period is the most important in my life, because what I choose now will be my life" (Interview, Tinatin, female, 16 years old).

Sometimes, young people report not taking advantage of their time and spending it in vain. One teenager noted that, "Sometimes I do not spend time properly. I spend too much time on social networks, when I could be reading a book or doing my homework" (Interview, Asmat, female, 16 years old).

Interviewed teenagers did not identify any actors or factors negatively affecting their ability to achieve their goals. However, the focus group participants identified fear of being misunderstood as a potential factor. A number of students agreed on this point, and one noted "Fear of freely expressing your views, because you feel the negative attitude of society" (Focus group, Nestan, female, 17 years old). They also note inferiority complexes and a closed minded society as factors negatively affecting their success in life. One young person noted, "Our Society is closed. Such a society may also interfere in achieving your goals" (Focus group, Ia, female, 16 years old).

Just like young children, teenagers also think about having families of their own and about their friends. One teenage boy noted, "Family and friends will be very

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important for my wellbeing” (Interview, Misha, male, 16 years old). They also believe that a successful career will determine their well-being in the future. A teenage girl noted, “[My] job will be the most important [thing] for me when I grow older. I am a very job-oriented person, and do not think much about family and [finding true love]” (Interview, Asmat, female, 16 years old).

### 3.2. Understanding and measuring well-being among young people

#### Global understanding/definition of well-being

Young people aged 17-18 have similar perceptions of happiness and understandings of well-being whether or not they are involved in extracurricular activities. Generally, well-being and happiness are largely used as interchangeable concepts. For them, well-being means happiness and happiness implies well-being. A 17-year-old boy from Tbilisi described well-being as a state “when there are no problems; happiness” (Focus group, Shalva, male, 17 years old, involved).

In addition to the overall answer of happiness, participants of both focus groups with 17-18 year olds identified the following constituents of well-being: their own health and the health of those around them, professional success, and financial prosperity. A young woman stated, “Well-being is health, being with people you love who are well and healthy, a good job, and career success” (Focus group, Eter, female, 19 years old, non-organized). When explored further, these groups brought up the environment including the people around them as some of the most important determinants of well-being. One student noted that, “Being in a comfort zone is well-being for me. Relations with people that I enjoy, the environment, people around me” (Focus group, Teoline, female, 18 years old, involved).

Interview respondents generally shared the opinions of focus group participants. However, they also add some aspects to the definition of well-being that show signs of their personal experience. One 18-year-old girl, for example, stated that well-being means “cosiness in the family. There should not be conflict situations in the family so that a person, especially a child feels good” (Interview, Dodo, female, 18 years old, non-organized). Another teenage girl understands well-being as independence – “The ability to fulfil your dreams without the help of others and doing what you want without your mother and father” (Interview, Natia, female, 17 years old, involved). An employed teenage boy spoke about the necessity “to do the job that you love, treat your job with responsibility [so as] to feel good and to make the people around you feel good as well” (Interview, Grisha, male, 18 years old, involved).

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A few other definitions of well-being include peace and stability, spending time in nature, having friends, and freedom of choice. Otherwise, a quote from a female interview respondent summarizes the main definitions of well-being shared by the majority of focus group and interview respondents: “Well-being is probably having a normal rhythm of life, [i.e.] a nice family, a job, and achieving what I want now” (Interview, Martha, female, 18 years old, involved).

Even though focus group participants share many of the same definitions of well-being, some highlighted that understandings and perceptions of well-being are different for different people. One focus group participant noted:

“Well-being is a very individual concept. It is subjective. For some, well-being might be having a dog [while] for others [it might be] being alone and not socializing with society – just walking around listening to music in their ears” (Focus group, Emma, female, 18 years old, non-organized).

This is also true, according to an 18-year-old female participant from the involved focus group, because people live in different environments, and they often do not have equal access to financial resources and define well-being differently. Financial prosperity was named as one of the factors, which leads to inequality of well-being. On teenager stated, “There is no equality in well-being as some have more [financial] abilities, others less. Those who have less, have lower chances of [maintaining/reaching] well-being” (Interview, Natia, female, 17 years old, involved).

Moreover, one participant noted that one’s understanding of well-being can change. She noted:

“Well-being is not a constant concept, even for one person. For me the meaning can change as well. Health was mentioned... As soon as the issue of health comes up, then well-being might start and end with health, and I may not have other demands for well-being” (Focus group, Teoline, female, 18 years old, involved).

On the other hand, an 18-year-old female interview respondent reported infrequently coming across individual ideas about well-being among young people. In her view, they just copy each other’s opinions. She said, “It is rare for a person to have specific individual ideas and not be afraid to speak up. Well-being means more or less the same [thing] for everyone” (Interview, Martha, female, 18 years old, involved).

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## Major domains

All focus group and interview respondents agree that parents, family and friends have a significant influence on well-being. For some, parents are natural influencers as they transfer their qualities while raising their children. At the same time, parents can be the ones to look from the outside and say if a person did something wrong. One teenager noted, “They look at me from the outside, and I am the type of person who prefers to be told when I make a mistake” (Interview, Rusudan, female, 17 years old, involved).

While all of the focus group and interview participants acknowledged parental influence on young people’s well-being as significant, some indicated that the influence can sometimes be negative and that it differs case by case. As one student stated:

“For me, they [parents] have the influence. For some it might be very important, for others, not so important. Some might have a parent that they don’t want to have any relations with, or not have one of their parents at all” (Focus group, Guram, male, 18 years old, involved).

One 18-year-old female participant from the non-organized focus group shared how much it affects her if she argues with her parents and how strongly she desires their trust:

“Parents have a very big influence. On a day when I have an argument with [my] parents, [it] might be followed by feeling bad [for an] entire day. There [have been] few moments when we [haven’t] come to an agreement, and I am very happy that they trust me fully” (Focus group, Emma, female, 18 years old, non-organized).

For the majority of both the involved and non-organized focus group and interview participants, friends are identified as equally and sometimes even more important for well-being than parents since “friends have a big influence on shaping you as a personality” (Focus group, Guram, male, 18 years old, involved). Moreover, “friends’ opinions and ideas, as well as their advice are very important” (Interview, Grisha, male, 18 years old, involved).

Inequality in terms of finances and social status was named by the non-organized focus group participants as an influence on well-being. They specifically mentioned preferential treatment in relation to either of the above statuses as problematic. A 19-year-old female participant of the non-organized focus group provided the example of a teacher from her school who gave preferential treatment to a well-off schoolgirl, and this offending the children around them. She stated:

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“Social status [is an important influence on well-being]. I will provide one example. A teacher in my school gave preferential treatment to one of the girls who was well off. After classes, the teacher talked to the girl about clothes [and] travel. Others in our class did not have so much money and children in that case are very offended. It hinders their well-being!” (Focus group, Eter, female, 19 years old, non-organized).

The influence of the location of young people’s neighbourhood (i.e. in the suburbs or in a central district) was also mentioned. Students pointed out that “attitudes and ways of thinking” are different in central and peripheral districts (Focus group, Shalva, male, 17 years old, involved). One of the participants enjoys the suburbs more as people are closer to each other. One young person voiced his disapproval with the central district in which he lives. He stated “I live at Marjanishvili Square. When I go out and it is noisy and crowded, it affects me. It irritates me and spoils my mood” (Focus group, Iason, male, 18 years old, involved).

In the non-organized focus group, one respondent with three siblings outlined the importance of their relationships and influence on one another. For example, he discussed how he used to try to hide his smoking so as not to provide a bad example to the younger siblings:

“I have three brothers and sisters. We are radically different people but we have achieved a high level of mutual understanding. For my younger brother, I am a role model. Therefore, I would not like to show him something that will have a negative influence [on him], e.g. smoking ”(Focus group, Omar, male, 18 years old, non-organized).

The environment was considered an important domain in relation to well-being. Environment was understood quite generally and often referred to the situation in the streets and beggars encountered in the street. One student stated “If you go out in the street and the situation is bad and everyone is sad, it will affect you” (Interview, Natia, female, 17 years old, involved). The cleanliness of the streets and environmental pollution were identified as important influences on moods and therefore well-being. One student stated, “When the environment is polluted and [there is litter everywhere], it has a bad influence on well-being. These factors affect people’s moods” (Interview, Rezo, male, 18 years old, involved).

Some of the respondents stress more individual factors. For example, a 17-year-old dancer and actress said that partaking in her profession is the most important domain for her well-being and happiness. She stated “At that time, I feel like transiting to a different world, a surreal world, being away from this reality at least for some time and it feels great!” (Interview, Rusudan, female, 17 years old,

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involved).

An interesting and quite different domain mentioned by an interview respondent is common language and trust between people. “People should manage to find common language to feel good. They should have trust for each other” (Interview, Grisha, male, 18 years old, involved).

Differences in perceptions of well being are largely similar between teenagers and children and among the involved and non-organized focus group participants. In their childhood, candy, toys, playing games with friends, watching cartoons, missing school, sleeping in, hugging parents, and going on holidays were the factors that constituted well-being. Some of these such as spending time with friends and having pets remain unchanged between childhood and the teenage years but, for the most part, demands for well-being become more sophisticated. For example, playing with toy cars is replaced with driving real cars. Moreover, with age, respondents note greater responsibilities. Comfort also becomes important. As one respondent noted, “When you are little, you don’t think of many things, such as how to pay tuition fees. Then you grow up and think [about] how to pay communal fees. Well-being is having some comfort” (Focus group, Mimoza, female, 18 years old, involved).

In addition, in getting older, they understand different aspects of the world such as war better. This adds questions and concerns to their life. One student noted “I was happier as a child as I did not understand many things... wars for example. Now I understand [and] reflect on it – what, how and why, I have more questions” (Interview, Martha, female, 18 years old, involved).

One interview respondent noted that prohibitions and instruction received from parents was something that she perceived very negatively in childhood, but very constructively and positively now, as she understands that it was done for her well-being. One change in perceptions about well-being is a shift from thinking only about oneself in childhood to thinking about the people around the young adults today (such as their parents).

## Happiness

Happiness was largely discussed when elaborating on well-being. In fact, responses of young people show similar understandings of well-being and happiness. While describing specific situations, from real life when the young people felt happy, within the previous week or so, the first things that came up were spending time with friends, going to birthday parties, on holidays, celebrations, dancing, having fun, having free time, and listening to music. An interviewee noted, “Last week there was one moment that made me happy. I met with friends. We danced and played”

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(Interview, Martha, female, 18 years old, involved). A focus group participant stated, “[I feel] good when I have free time and can be calm and listen to music” (Focus group, Vika, female, 18 years old, non-organized).

Young people associate negative and sad feelings with being alone and remembering bad situations when they placed others in poor situations or parents heard complaints from their schools. One focus group participant noted, “Feeling bad when I broke a glass at school, and they summoned my father and my mother and [it] complicated their day because of me” (Focus group, Shalva, male, 17 years old, involved). Other negative feelings include situations when young people failed to meet family members’ hopes, hear bad news about someone close, have no Internet, have too much to study in a limited time, watch a favourite football team lose, or are in situations where one does not belong.

Participants of the involved group mentioned that the determinants of happiness and sadness also depend on individual situations, e.g. parents, social status, financial situation. One cannot ask people living in poverty to have fun with friends, as they may not have heating at home during the winter. A focus group participant noted:

“[It] depends on the social status. In Georgia, there is no middle class, and unfortunately, for happiness-sadness financial well-being is very important. There are people who live below the level of poverty. You cannot tell them, go and have fun with your friends. They might have no money to have heating at home” (Focus group, Mimoza, female, 18 years old, involved).

Some of the focus group participants agree that, different people have different understandings and measurements of happiness as was the case with well-being. They report that it largely depends on self-perception. A focus group participant noted, “People judge other people’s happiness based on their own understanding, but there are different things that make people happy” (Focus group, Teoline, female, 18 years old, involved). An interview respondent recalled her success on a hard exam as one of the happiest moments in life.

Interview respondents and focus group participants perceived the advantages and disadvantages of their age in a similar manner. They are quite positive and inspired by their age, saying it is the most important period in a person’s life – “Now we have the opportunity to learn, and everything good lies in the future. [We hope that] we will use our knowledge and education, and it will be rewarded” (Focus group, Mimoza, female, 18 years old, involved). Young people mention being full of energy and carefree are positive aspects of being young. They also note the opportunity and available time which they can use to define their own futures.

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“The advantages of being young are more opportunities, more time... I don’t mean being or not being busy, just having more time ahead and the ability to define your future. You have the right to choose how to live” (Interview, Martha, female, 18 years old, involved).

Other positive aspects of being 18 were related to greater freedom, including freedom from parents, for which becoming a university student was an important benchmark which came with additional rights including using banks, drinking alcohol, obtaining a driver’s license, being old enough to enter casinos, etc. One respondent noted, “I turned 18, and I gained some rights. I am getting a driver’s license, for example. I opened a bank account, not to mention alcohol and cigarettes” (Interview, Rezo, male, 18 years old, involved).

At the same time, more limitations and responsibilities come with the freedom and rights named by the participants. A focus group participant noted, “More responsibilities are added. For example, studies – I am a student now and have more work to do. There is more people demanding [things] of you now, both family members and everyone” (Focus group, Vika, female, 18 years old, non-organized). While previously, parents were in charge, now they have to take responsibility for their lives. Generally, respondents reported that life becomes more complicated at that age. As a focus group participant noted:

“Sometimes this age is not so cool. You get tired of all these things and responsibilities. Childhood was great when you had nothing to worry about. You did not hear all the bad news and did not care about many things” (Focus group, Guram, male, 18 years old, involved).

It all gets worse when people have their own families and children. Responsibilities skyrocket and freedom is lost. An interviewee noted, “When you have a job and children, you have much more responsibilities and are not free anymore” (Interview, Nestan, female, 18 years old, non-organized).

In addition to responsibilities and limitations, generally concerns increased at the age of 17, 18, 19. According to an 18-year-old female focus group participant, life becomes complicated, because it opens up the uncertainty of the future. She noted:

“When you turn 18, life becomes more complicated. Before that, you can somehow locate yourself and know what you should do, i.e. you are in a comfort zone. When you turn 18, life is not so simple any more. There is more entertainment and freedom, but I don’t think it outweighs” that (Focus group, Teoline, female, 18 years old, involved).

Among disadvantages, lack of life experience and, thus, an increased probability of

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making more mistakes were named. Respondents noted lacking the wisdom to use all opportunities to study and grow in preference to having fun instead. One participant of the non-organized group spoke negatively about the young generation being dependent on technologies and the changing values which resulted.

### **Life-satisfaction and psychological well-being**

Most of the young people aged 17-18 indicated that they are satisfied with their lives overall. They say that they have everything they need, are doing what they please and are supported by people they love. Respondents claim that they are happy and satisfied with their friends and families, as they do not constrain, but rather support them in any way they can. One student stated that, “I am satisfied with my life, because I have everything I want, for sure, and I also have support from everyone, and I am happy about that. This has a positive influence on me and encourages me” (Interview, Natia, female, 17 years old, involved). However, some respondents say that they are not very satisfied with their lives. This was largely due to the fact that they could not choose a profession that they wanted to pursue. Some respondents had to give up on hobbies such as acting or sports, which they cannot follow due to the fact that they have no time to allocate to them due to the studying that is required of them. An interviewee noted:

“In our country, there are no opportunities in regard to sports. To achieve something in this field, you have to be one of the best and very lucky. In contrast, studying is always valued everywhere. In your country and also abroad, where there are a mass of opportunities” (Interview, Rezo, male, 18 years old, involved).

In addition, some focus group participants claimed that the quality of life in Georgia is not satisfactory, and therefore they are not satisfied with their lives.

Young respondents also talked about others around them and said that in general terms the young people around them are satisfied with their lives. However, some pointed out that their friends are going through hard times, which is caused by either problems in their families (separated parents) or issues related to financing their education<sup>3</sup>. Some focus group participants claimed that young people often do not think about whether they are happy or not, but rather they just live their lives without analysing it. One participant stated:

“For example, one of my friends has problems in the family. He/she<sup>4</sup> is

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<sup>3</sup> Tertiary education requires tuition fees in Georgia. The fees are beyond the reach of many families.

<sup>4</sup> Georgian pronouns do not indicate gender, and hence, a clear gender is not identifiable in this context.

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not very well, because his/her parents have a conflict, and he/she is very worried about that at this age, that they are getting divorced and therefore he/she cannot be satisfied with his/her life the way I am now. And things like that happen to many [people]. The rest is ok [laughs].” (Interview, Natia, female, 17 years old, involved).

Some respondents stated that young people lack many things in general. According to them, there are very many talented young people, who might not be able to continue their studies at the university, because they will not receive scholarships and cannot afford tuition. They note that studying at the university is expensive, and without 100% funding they might not be able to study. Due to these issues, some young people do not feel satisfied with their lives.

Interviews and focus groups demonstrate that young people believe the things they do in life are worthwhile. Most of them talk about the importance of studying and about the projects they are involved in. Some are proud to play in a band, while others are happy to do whatever is required from them at their age. In addition, most of them think that they are taking advantage of their time and distributing time in an appropriate manner. One student stated, “Yes. I try to do everything I can. I try not to waste time and to distribute it in a way that I can manage [to do] everything I want to” (Interview, Rusudan, female, 17 years old, involved).

Only a few participants indicated that they are not using their time appropriately, because they are spending it on the computer or with friends, instead of studying, which should be a priority at this point in their lives. One student noted:

“I think I can do more, but as I already said, I am lazy...I waste my time mainly with computers....I have time, and I could study for exams, but there are many temptations in our epoch. [There is] internet and television...” (Interview, Martha, female, 18 years old, involved).

A few of the focus group participants pointed out that they could do more good or useful things than sitting on the computer using Facebook for two or three hours a day. Instead of spending time browsing the internet and posting on Facebook, respondents regret not allocating more time to reading and studying.

The issue of computer use also came up when young people discussed factors and actors that make their goals in life more difficult. Some respondents mentioned that “sitting at the computer for a long time hinders them from [achieving] their goals in life. I love watching movies, and I often think that instead of spending one or two hours on Facebook, I could spend it on something else. For example, on studying or exercise or anything else that would add something to your life” (Interview, Rezo, male, 18 years old, involved). More broadly, young people also talked about

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economic conditions and the low level of education in the country as obstacles to achieving their goals. A student noted, “I think that the economic situation in the country [is a factor which hinders me from achieving my goals]. And the level of education is not high enough to satisfy me” (Interview, Martha, female, 18 years old, involved).

Some of the focus group participants mentioned that in Georgia, there are only a few possibilities for self-realization. One student noted, “In my opinion, the country I live in [is an obstacle]...there are [little or no] prospects...less chances for self-realization...and less appreciation” (Focus group, Teoline, female, 18 years old, involved). On the other hand, some focus group and interview respondents mentioned that they themselves and their laziness are the most important hindrances that keep them from reaching their goals. One student noted:

“My goal is to be successful and to have a nice job. This is my aim at this stage in life and what can keep me from that goal is myself, [especially] if I do not do what needs to be done and even more. I don’t think anything else hinders me, because I think my future depends on my actions” (Interview, Natia, female, 17 years old, involved).

One member of the focus group said that the opposite sex could keep her from her goals. According to her, falling in love and getting married could hinder her from studying and making her career. She points out that, at her age, love can get in the way of professional development.

When talking about future well-being and factors related to this, most respondents associate this with building a family and having children. Some of them mention health and future careers as important determinants of their future well-being. One student noted:

“It all depends on who I will be at that time. If I will have a family, the well-being of my children will be most important. If I follow my career and do not have a family, then progress in [my] career will be important....But I think combining these two [family and career] is a little difficult” (Interview, Martha, female, 18 years old, involved).

In addition, respondents say they want to ‘have more’ when they reach the age of their parents. Focus group participants also mentioned self-realization and being valued as determinants of future well-being. One teenager noted:

“Of course, children are the most important [for well-being]. I hope everyone will have children and their well-being is important and also, most important will be self-realization, when you will be valued and

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when you achieve something in your profession...that is very important”  
(Focus group, Mimoza, female, 18 years old, involved).

Young people also talked about their requirements, desires and needs, and how these are considered by the society they live in. In general, respondents think that young people are different from the older generations which are considered full members of the society. A student noted:

“I think that young people generally have different thoughts, and the society [consists of] elder generations, and they have difficulties understanding young people, because there are new tendencies now. Young people have very different interests compared to what society had before, and society finds it hard to understand and to consider”  
(Interview, Martha, female, 18 years old, involved).

Young people report having different views on many issues, and that the older generation finds it hard to understand them. Some respondents claim that society is quite strict in regard to the youth. Furthermore, the society often criticizes the youth for being different. A respondent noted:

“At some point, I think that the society is very strict, because if a child of my age has, for example, blue hair or a piercing, it causes aggression in the society and I do not like this because, first of all, it all has an influence on the youth. They are suppressed, and people waste time to say bad things about others and this is very bad. The pressure is on [a teenager] who is different, [who] either dresses differently or is visually different. Society says bad things about them” (Interview, Natia, female, 17 years old, involved).

Furthermore, focus group participants claim that the older generation does not accept the independence of young people in Georgia. They spoke about how mothers always want to take care of their children, even when these children are already grown-ups. A respondent noted:

“For whatever reason, people who are 18 are still considered children in Georgia. It is understandable that for parents their children are always too little or something like that... but abroad, there are also mothers, but they do not think this way. When someone turns 18...they give [them] the opportunity to move out, to live separately. I have a friend who has an apartment, but does not live there. It is not like they are renting the apartment out... It is just that his/her mom does not want him to live there [separately]. She thinks that he/she is still little, even though he/she is already 20, and [hence] they live together. I don't

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know what it is. It is an issue of mentality” (Focus group, Mimoza, female, 18 years old, involved).

### 3.3. Remarks on the definition and operationalization of 'well-being' in the fieldwork

The concept of well-being was hard to operationalize for respondents, and interviewers/moderators often had to repeat and rephrase questions to get respondents talking. Often, concepts of happiness and well-being were used interchangeably. Happiness was always mentioned when defining well-being and well-being was a constituent of happiness.

An interesting observation was that some of the domains of well-being, such as health, financial prosperity, and friends and family were unanimously recognized as very important. However, there was a deep understanding that well-being was an individual and subjective concept which largely depended on a person’s particular circumstances including issues related to having or not having parents, being rich or poor, suffering or not suffering from health problems, etc.

Parental influence, for example, was taken as something very natural, almost something that one would never say no to. However, in the involved group of young people aged 17-19, factors influencing their well-being was directly understood as factors and actors shaping their personality, e.g. parents, friends and the environment in which they lived.

## 4. Differences in the understanding of well-being depending on certain factors

Participants of focus groups and interview respondents were of both genders, aged 10 to 19, and lived in Tbilisi. Children aged 10-12 were public school students, in the fourth grade. Young people aged 15-16 were private school students in the ninth and tenth grades. In the groups of young people of 17-19, several were university students and several were in their final year at school. Only two focus group participants were employed. Except for one school student, all respondents and participants were ethnic Georgians. None of the participants or respondents was physically or mentally disabled. Therefore, differences in understandings of well-being can be analysed based on two main factors – gender and age.

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In terms of gender, focus group and interview results revealed no differences in the understanding of well-being or its major domains. There are common factors, shared by both genders that are considered “most important” including health, success, family, and friends. No significant difference of opinions was found even in the past-future perspectives of well-being. In the past, it was parents, toys, and games, while in the future, it is family and children, jobs and professional accomplishments.

When it comes to respondents of different age groups, there are certain differences. Children of 10-12 years described the same priorities for well-being at the current moment as young people’s recollections of well-being in their childhood. More emphasis was placed on parents than in older groups. Among young people, 15-19, well-being is more focused on health, career and friends. Interestingly, young people aged 15-19, mentioned freedom, not only in the sense of independence, but also freedom of choice and freedom of action as the main domains of well-being.

Students that were part of focus groups and interviews generally demonstrated a more thoughtful approach to life, the fulfilment of responsibilities, and the complexity of life. At the same time, they exhibited greater independence. There were only two employed participants, which makes it difficult to compare their answers to others. Still, it is noteworthy that these two individuals mentioned the importance of the right job and doing a job that one loved for well-being.

Several interview respondents shared details of their family situation (a jobless father or divorced parents). These respondents showed signs of concern related to these problems. In the first case, an 11-year-old public school boy pictured his future well-being as his father having a job. In the second case, a 17-year-old non-organized focus group girl said the most important factor for well-being was peace in the family i.e. without any fights or conflict.

## 5. Having their voices heard and survey engagement

### Children

The question about whether society understands children well was generally not appropriately understood in the younger focus groups. There were several focus group and interview participants who understood it and said that part of the society understands children’s needs well. One of the participants noted that their rights should be protected more, and ethnicity and/or skin colour should not make any difference in society. This student noted:

“I think that our rights should be protected. Children should have the

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opportunity to walk freely in the country [regardless of] ethnicity or skin colour. I have seen how people address [black people] –“Hey you’re Niger” or other foreigners “You are from Iraq,” and I do not like this. Ethnicity and skin colour should not matter” (Focus group, Bondo, male, 10 years old).

All children who took part in the focus group discussion and interviews reported that they would be happy to participate in future research. The primary reason given was their readiness to share their thoughts and learn more about what their peers think. All participants received small presents (chocolates) for taking part in the discussions and were really happy about it, but none of them mentioned the incentive as a trigger to participate in a future survey. A boy noted:

“Having such a survey is very important, because on TV I can hear only what adults think and not the children of my age. Children should also have the opportunity to express their thoughts and feelings” (Focus group, Bondo, male, 10 years old).

Teenagers think that society does not understand them, and that their needs and/or wishes are not always taken into consideration. One teenager noted:

“ociety does not understand us, and sometimes I even feel hostility towards us, mostly from elderly people. For example, you give up your seat on a bus, and they look at you with a judging face. If you don’t give up your seat they still judge you. So, you just do not know how to act to please them” (Focus group, Ia, female, 16 years old).

Also, respondents noted that that, unfortunately, people have different attitudes towards girls and boys and that girls are more likely to be criticized for certain behaviour than boys. One teenager noted, “What irritates me is that we, girls, are more likely to be criticized for smoking than boys” (Focus group, Ia, female, 16 years old).

Teenagers also showed willingness to participate in future research. They think that conducting research on well-being is very important in order to better understand the needs of teenagers. The teenage participants also received small incentives (mobile phone credit) and were happy with it. One student noted, “Research on well-being is very important, because this way, the government will learn what is more important for teenagers and try to adapt policies accordingly” (Interview, Tariel, male, 16 years old).

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## Young people

As with children and teenagers, young people talked about the importance of their voices being heard within society and the usefulness of research for this purpose. Young people often mentioned that it is important that society hears what they are saying. Consequently, they reported that measuring young people's well-being is quite important, as the voices of young people should be heard. According to the respondents, such interviews help to better understand what young people in society want and what their needs are. An interviewee noted:

"[This kind of research] is important [if] all of this will be taken into consideration by someone or some organization...Or if people will take this into regard, then it will be important and will have an impact. If no one sees this, then consequently, people will not know, and it will result in nothing" (Interview, Natia, female, 17 years old, involved).

Young people reported that they should be given more freedom to state their opinions. In addition, all of the respondents were willing to participate in future research, where they will be better prepared, as they will have more time to think about the issues, which were raised during these interviews. Focus group and interview participants pointed out that they had not thought about the issues, which were raised during the discussion. A respondent noted:

"I would participate [in future research], because the questions you asked now, I have not heard about these issues, and maybe I answered unconsciously, but then I will think about this and form other ideas about this. Why not?"(Interview, Martha, female, 18 years old, involved).

Some respondents talked about factors that could make participating in a survey more interesting for young people. Advertising it or using applications was named by some respondents. Others said that incentives could encourage more young people to participate. One student noted:

"I don't know. Everyone is waiting for some incentives or something like that, because, generally, when you get encouraged, you want to get more involved. So in that regard, more young people will participate" (Interview, Rusudan, female, 17 years old, involved).

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## 6. Other recommendations informing MYWEB project

Almost all focus group and interview respondents expressed willingness to participate in any further study on the well-being and happiness of children and young people.

In order to have a more thorough analysis, a suggestion for next larger-scale studies would be to have a more targeted sampling strategy. It would enable making comparisons not only by age or gender but, for example, by ethnicity, social status, family income, settlement type.

This study confirmed feasibility of conducting a further large-scale study. However, a recommendation would be to add incentives to participants of the qualitative part of the study.

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