



# National and Municipal Social Programs in Georgia



# Methodology



- **Three types of programs reviewed**
  - Food programs
  - Energy Programs
  - Cash Support
- **Programs reviewed on two levels**
  - National
  - Municipal (Tbilisi, Rustavi, Kutaisi, Poti, Batumi)
- **Source of information**
  - Social Services Agency (SSA)
  - Program budgets and their respective annexes
  - Consultations with target municipalities
- **Observed indicators (2019 – 2022)**
  - Program budgets
  - Number of beneficiaries
  - Share of programs in overall municipal budget and among social support programs
  - Changes in programs during crisis (COVID-19, Invasion of Ukraine)



### **Program Planning:**

- Municipal programs have the role of **“additional support” to national programs**
- **Municipalities actively use databases of SSA to identify pool of potential beneficiaries** and plan own programs
- **Dining programs are planned based on nutritional norms and support received by beneficiaries is “neutral” to changing prices**
- Municipal programs are normally long-term programs, while crisis support is provided using Mayor’s reserve funds

### **Informing Beneficiaries:**

- Municipalities primarily use “word of mouth” approach, both to design programs and spread the word
- Social networks and regional TV channels are also used for spreading information, however vulnerable beneficiaries might not have access

### **Use of electronic systems:**

- Electronic systems used by municipalities are mainly provided by MSDA, that integrate software for circulation of documentation, as well as GIS systems for mapping.
- MSDA software allows to unify the information about a single beneficiary. However, access is limited for local population.
- There are no online portals to apply for social support

# **Main Findings**

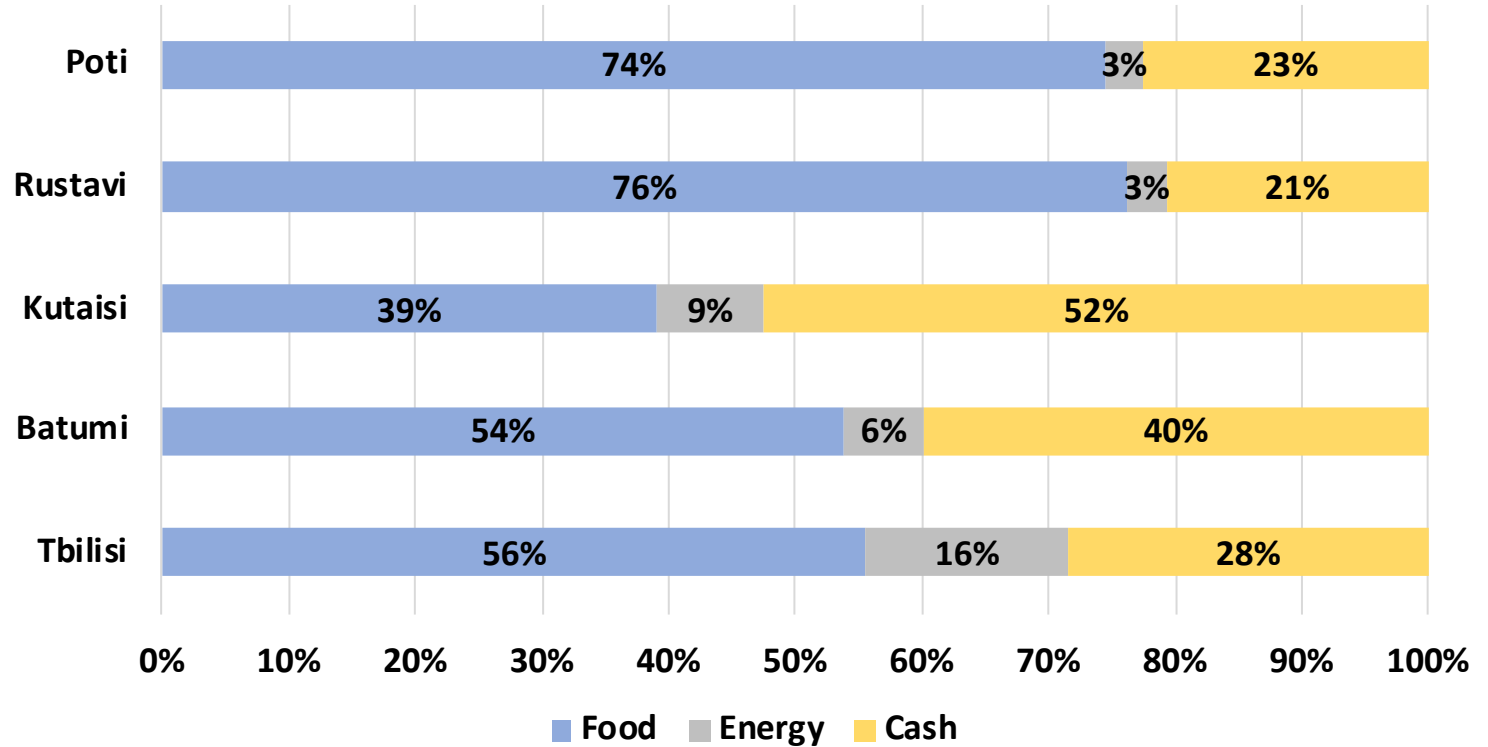




# Main Findings



Shares of selected programs by categories in 2023



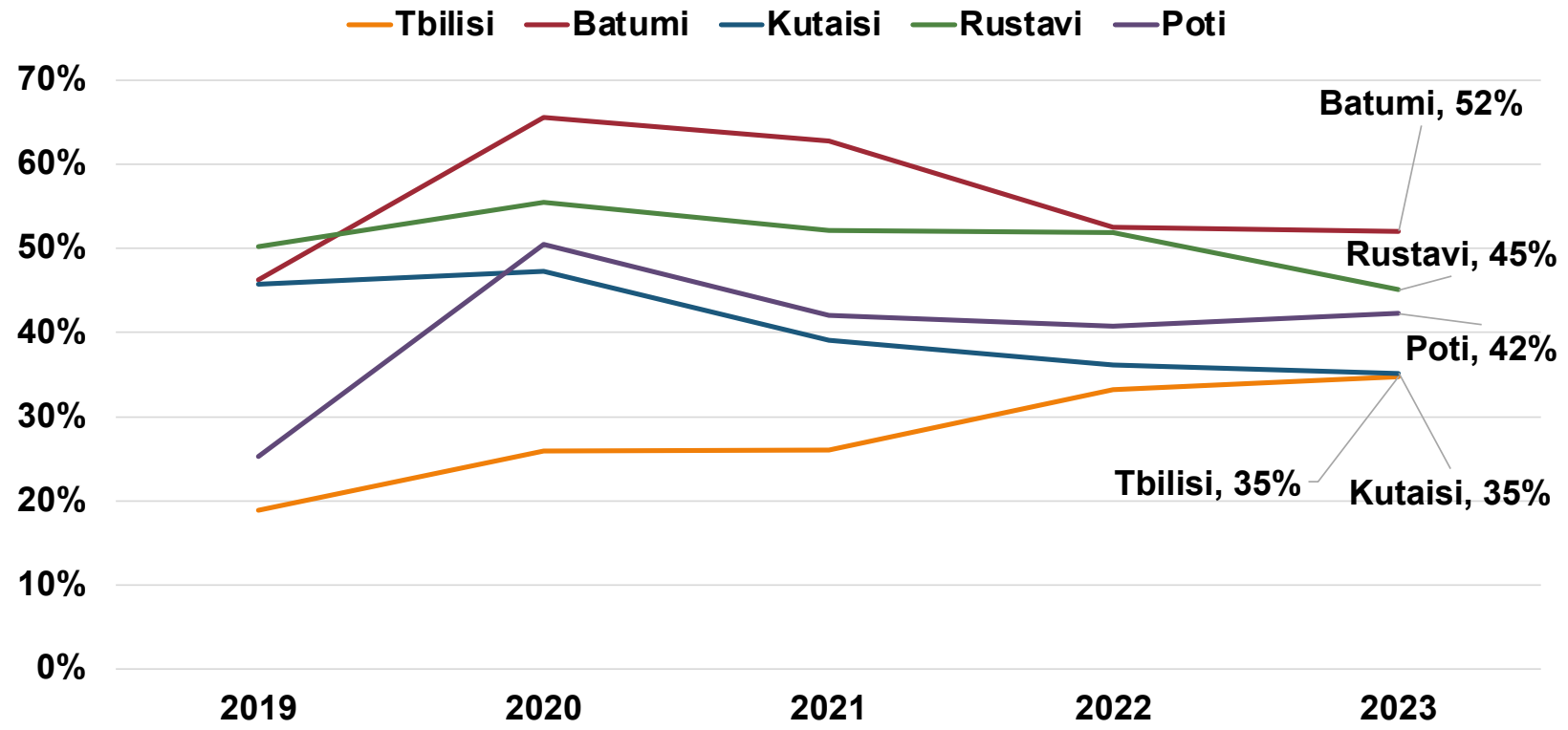
- Energy programs are least prioritised in municipalities
- Food programs have largest share, but this is mostly financing of free dining
- Cash programs dominate targeted assistance that supplements SSA programs



# Main Findings



Share of selected programs from the total social program budget



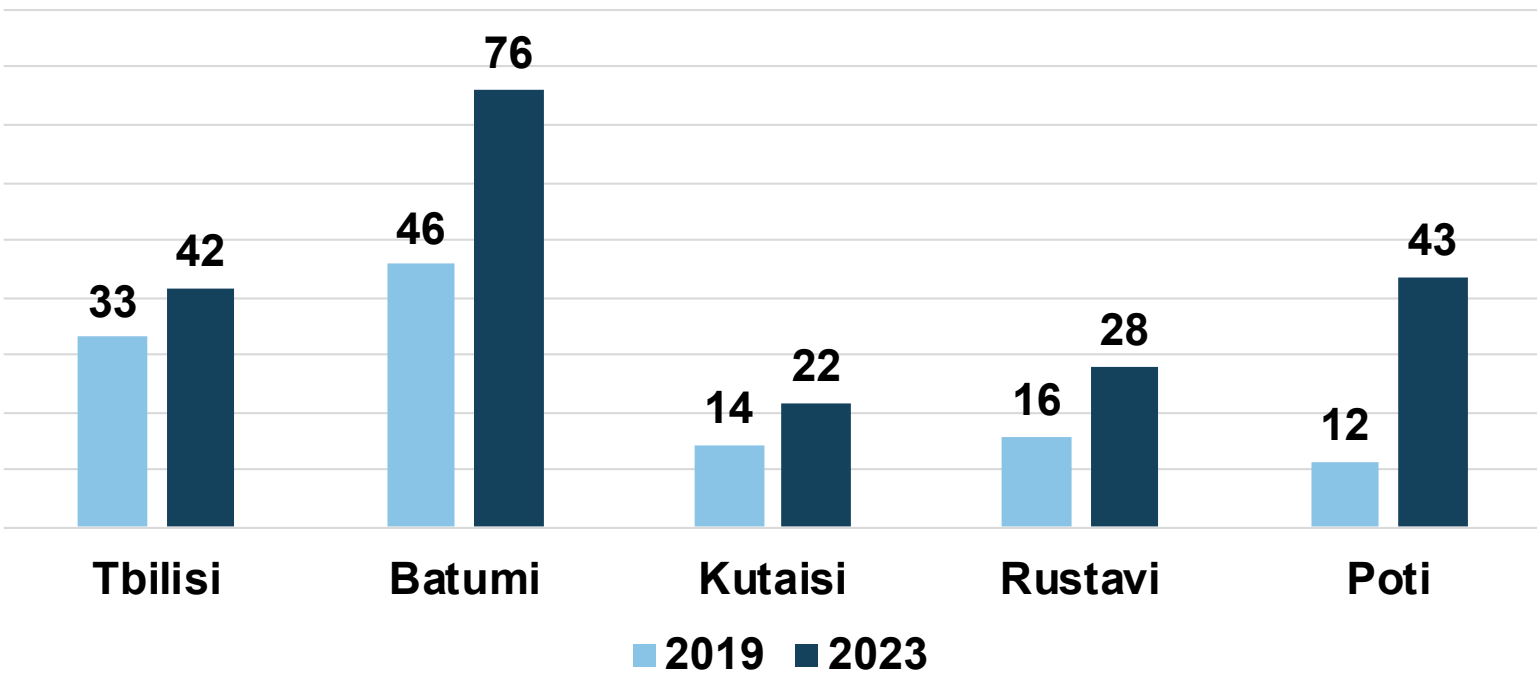
- Shares of selected cash, energy and food programs in total social program budget in 2023 vary between 30% - 50%
- Over the past 5 years we observe convergence of shares among municipalities



# Main Findings



Per capita spending on selected social programs (GEL)



- Per capita spending is increasing in all municipalities
- In all municipalities except Tbilisi, per capita spending on selected programs was increasing faster (average 20%) than inflation (average annual inflation 7.9%)



## Recommendations



1. **Introduce systematized methodology for flexible, evidence-based program planning and implementation:**
  - Methodology for identification of needs and assessment of effectiveness of programs can help addressing medium and long-term food and energy needs
  - Specific methodology can help better identify emerging needs and allow adaptability to changing economic circumstances
  - Use SMART approach to formulate program objectives
  - Use multi-criteria approach to assess effectiveness of programs
2. **Introduce economic measures in program design to adapt to changing circumstances (emerging crisis)**
  - Linking support programs to energy and food price measures to increase efficiency of programs
3. **Enhance use of electronic systems for engagement of beneficiaries:**
  - Development of web-based application portals could increase transparency, help with better data management and analysis
  - In addition to existing efforts actively using web-based platforms and social networks for informing beneficiaries and helping them apply for support



# Annex







## National Programs



- National Programs are oriented at providing cash support to different vulnerable groups
- Largest cash support program is targeted social assistance (TSA)
- Other cash programs include cash subsidies for improving living conditions of specific groups, such as veterans, IDPs, etc.
- SSA also has electricity subsidy program:
  - for people living in settlements that have high mountain status (GEL 13.4 mln. in 2022)
  - for large families (GEL 602 thousand in 2022)
  - Short-term program to cover increased cost of electricity from January to October 2022 (GEL 12 mln.)
- SSA does not have any programs for providing natural gas or heating
- SSA does not run any food program



## Municipal Programs



- Majority of Municipal Food programs are similar:
  - ✓ **Free dining programs are in all municipalities**
  - ✓ In some instances child food support programs are implemented in partnership with donors
  - ✓ Food vouchers, or other similar programs are not implemented
- Majority of municipal energy programs are:
  - ✓ **Oriented at financing of utilities**
  - ✓ In some occasions, programs support provision of energy infrastructure (connection to gas network) to vulnerable groups, however these programs do not provide further support for affordability of energy use.
- Majority of municipal social programs are oriented at supporting specific vulnerable groups with cash, that can be used for food and energy needs.
- Most municipalities use **Mayor's reserve fund for crisis response**