



9-MONTH CONTRACT

Directed by | Ketevan Vashagashvili

Produced by | Nino Chichua and Anna Khazaradze for 1991 Productions, Martichka Bozhilova for AGITPROP, Sylvia Nagel for Vincent Productions

International Sales | CAT&Docs

Runtime | 1hr 18m

Trailer | [HERE](#)

International Sales | CAT&Docs

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Synopsis

9-Month Contract follows Tbilisi-based Zhana, who has intermittently experienced homelessness since leaving the orphanage she was raised in, and resorts to work as a surrogate to provide for her own teenage daughter, Elene.

While the subject of her pregnancies remains unspoken between her and Elene, Zhana's financial struggles persist – and she is exposed to shadowy surrogacy agencies who operate with impunity, volatile relationships with the prospective parents whose children she carries, and constant income insecurity. With no proper regulations in place, she pushes her body to the extreme through multiple childbirths, taking a dangerous toll on her mental and physical health, and eventually risking her life.

Through the director's decade-long friendship with the pair, the film sensitively explores the evolving dynamics of their mother-daughter relationship, as Elene becomes aware of her mother's work and the impact it is having on them both. *9-Month Contract* bears witness to the experience and profound fallout of a job which is often made invisible.

CPH:DOX 2025 Selection

Strand	HUMAN:RIGHTS
Screening Schedule	Wednesday 26th March 7pm [World Premiere with Q&A] DFI / Cinemateket Saturday 29th March 2.30pm [Including a Debate on Surrogacy, Ethics and Inclusion] Park Bio Sunday 30th March 4.45pm Kunsthall Charlottenborg
In Attendance	Ketevan Vashagashvili (Director) Nino Chichua (Producer) Anna Khazaradze (Producer) Zhana and Elene (Documentary subjects) Giviko Tukhareli (Director of Photography) Veronica Scotti (Editor)

Q&A with the Director - Ketevan Vashagashvili

Can you give an introduction to *9-Month Contract* and what it explores?

For me, *9-Month Contract* is a story about a mother's sacrifice and one which explores a central question of how a far mother will go out of unconditional love for her child. Beyond that, the film looks at the intersection of motherhood, surrogacy, commodification of women, and homelessness within the socio-cultural landscape of contemporary Georgia - all underpinned by a universal quest of motherhood, dignity and security.

Can you explain how you came to be involved with Zhana and her daughter, Elene?

I first met Zhana and Elene while filming a short TV documentary in 2012 about the lives of orphans once they have left the orphanage they've grown up in, which aimed to explore how they are now living and navigating this transition.

During the process, I met several girls from an orphanage in Georgia and was shocked with the challenging conditions they were facing - with most of them turning to sex work or battling with alcohol addiction. Zhana was one of the orphans I met, but she was different - she was living on the streets with her four-year-old daughter, Elene, and was struggling not to leave her own daughter in the orphanage. Her strength and tenderness towards Elene touched me. I filmed her for my short and helped her find a safer place to stay. I managed to raise money for her rent and helped her to find a job, to get social assistance and support. Since then Zhana and Elene have both stayed in my life.

Why did you decide to build on the initial short film you'd shot with them and make them the subject of a feature length documentary?

In every documentary filmmakers' career, there is a subject who enters their lives, finds their place and never leaves. Zhana is such a subject for me. Having spent all her childhood on the streets and in an orphanage without a family, she was struggling to offer something more than the same two options to her daughter. As a human, I felt admiration for her strength. As a director, I felt curious to discover the unique characteristics in her and her ability to survive as a human being in this horrible life she went through.

The short TV format I was working with at that time, naturally didn't give me the chance to explore her character deeply or to portray her with all the layers she had. However, Zhana stayed in my life, someone I empathised with and supported all these years.

As life is very difficult in Georgia for mothers like Zhana, four years after we first met, she made the decision to become a surrogate mother in 2016. I was already interested in this topic and had already attempted to cover the issue of surrogacy for television. She suggested herself as the main subject for my documentary, and my empathy towards her as a mother, combined with my interest in surrogate motherhood, became the driving force for this film.

Why did you think it was important to highlight the story of Zhana and Elene in particular?

Motherhood is a subject of particular interest for me. My previous short film *Online Mother* explores this same topic - it's a half personal story about immigrant mothers and long distant relationships. Because of my curiosity towards motherhood, surrogacy became a natural subject of interest and research for me.

As Zhana is a woman who did not have a mother herself, and one who follows her maternal instincts and is eager to do anything for her daughter, I empathised with her deeply. So, my two interests converged in Zhana and I could not find a better person through which to explore the themes which were personally affecting me.

After growing up, Elene added the perspective of daughter to the story which completed the puzzle and gave me further meaning for why I was so interested in this tragic story. Zhana and Elene's dynamic is the same I had with my mother, who gave up her life for us, her children.

Surrogacy and Zhana's will to speak up is also a big reason for making this film specifically about Zhana and Elene, and not other mothers and daughters. Zhana, as a mother ready to risk everything for Elene - who herself has questions about if she needs her mother's sacrifice and surrogate motherhood, created a unique perspective for the story I wanted to tell.

What was the most challenging aspect of bringing this story to the screen?

Access may seem very unique and challenging in this story, as the majority of surrogate mothers in Georgia are not eager to speak up, hiding their 'job'. But strange in this story is that I never tried to convince Zhana to participate in this film, it was her wish to tell her story. If not for her determined wish to make this film, it would never have happened.

There were two real challenges for me while making this film. Firstly, was the closed door of the surrogacy agencies and hospitals, who avoided being covered, unless very necessary.

Secondly, another situation which needed to be navigated with care was Elene, and involving somebody of her age in a sensitive film such as this. Though she is very happy and eager to be included, I still feel a lot of personal responsibility towards her, given that I've seen her grow up in these challenging circumstances. We are taking great care to ensure once the film is released, her personal well-being remains a priority and that she will have access to professional support as she wishes.

I'm also committed to staying closely involved with Elene's studies - often bringing her books and having empowering, insightful conversations together. We plan to fundraise in order to support her studies and hope we can play a small part in helping her build a successful and happy life.

Did anything surprise you during the process of making the film?

The indifference and lack of empathy towards surrogate women from doctors, and those individuals working in the surrogacy industry, surprised me the most.

Please tell us more about any research you conducted while filming this project - and how this informed the shoot?

The main difficulty of the commercial surrogacy industry in Georgia is that there's limited data openly available about surrogate women or the babies born through surrogacy. Also, the stigma which exists in society towards surrogacy, is another barrier for it to be a research topic.

After reading and watching the very limited material about this issue, I started to research the theme through the surrogate mothers at the very beginning, before Zhana became the central focus. Soon, too frightened to be filmed, all of them closed the door to me. Most of the things I've learned about surrogacy happened during the process of filming with Zhana. She went through four pregnancies, so I learned a lot about the industry in Georgia.

What was your experience working with the team at 1991 Productions to bring this story to the screen?

I have worked on this film project since 2014. It was going quite slow, which caused me quite a few doubts and concerns. After meeting Anna and Nino in 2021, I received a lot of support from them - their experience and interest towards the project motivated me a lot.

We created a pitch deck for the project together and brought it to the various international development platforms and pitching opportunities, which helped to develop the film quite smoothly. We found funds and discovered the best direction of the project together. So, our cooperation turned out very productive and successful.

Can you describe the visual style of the film and some of the artistic choices you made?

My visual approach to the film came naturally in the process of filming. I started filming by myself with the purpose of researching, with just a small camera and no crew, to mostly check the accessibility of the spaces, such as the hospitals, surrogacy agencies and other places Zhana was going to while being pregnant.

Of course, it was easier to gain trust and enter these spaces alone, without a crew. But in the process of researching, I realised that I was filming very interesting material, which would be impossible to get at a later stage. Mostly worried about getting a good quality sound recording, I was trying to be as close with Zhana as physically possible. Later, while looking at the material, I liked the closeness I was forced to have with Zhana. Zhana and her emotions were captured very naturally, mostly in close-up shots. After some time, I took on a small crew consisting of a DP and a sound mixer and we continued filming in the same style. However, because of the intimacy of the film, I often tried to film independently.

Later, I found that close-up framing helps me convey the connotation that Zhana is trapped in a situation from which she finds it difficult to escape from. This sort of framing may cause a claustrophobic feeling in the audience, which will be released periodically in long rhythmic shots of hospitals and the city showing the world around Zhana, like a conveyor belt full of indifference. With this approach, I was looking to communicate that Zhana feels like an outcast in this society.

How did you find the transition from working in the TV space to directing your first feature length documentary?

The specifics of working in TV are very different, but the experience I've had while working in TV has helped me a lot with the making of this documentary. The process of bringing to life a creative documentary is very different and, of course, much more pleasant. I wouldn't call it work, it was more living with Zhana and Elene for either years, sharing their troubles and joys. It was like having another family. Working in TV is a job for me, making this film was my passion and allowed me to live my life fully.

Can you explain why audiences are not given more of the backstory or a more in-depth introduction to some of the additional individuals in the project, for example Roberto and those who work at the surrogacy agencies?

At the very beginning of the project I thought that surrogacy, intertwined with motherhood, might be the main theme of the film. But development of the project took the film to the direction of the intimate story about mother and daughter. There are two main reasons for this.

Firstly, the dynamic between Zhana and Elene went to a depth I had never imagined it to go. So I soon realised that this would be a very intimate story about a woman sacrificing her body and life for her daughter. I feel sure that the perspective I chose would touch the audience deeper and I left space for audiences to imagine what might be happening behind these illegal deals.

Another reason why the backstories of individuals like Roberto and the surrogacy agencies have little space in the film is the following: I had more or less understood what was the extent of the surrogacy business, but I did not expect to encounter something so opaque and dark. Of course, Roberto's story is interesting, but following this would have directed the film to a path which would not have given the chance to make such an intimate story and would have turned the film to a different genre. Additionally, agencies and clients like Roberto would never agree to participate in the film, so the film would take the direction of investigative narrative and hinder the intimate portrait of a mother and daughter. Though I have followed Roberto's story while gathering material, after the failure to involve police, I even went to the UK embassy, but during the edit I decided not to include this darker side. I think of returning to this issue, but it would definitely be in a separate film or reportage.

What do you hope audiences will take from this documentary?

It mostly depends on the audience. Firstly, I hope the audience is able to empathise with Zhana. I remember one of the decision makers for a funding round after seeing Zhana in the footage, told me that you have to work hard to make people empathise with this subject, and I have worked a lot on editing in this direction. While provoking the empathy in the audience, I seek to foster meaningful dialogue and advocate for greater understanding and support for individuals navigating unconventional paths to parenthood, like surrogate mothers in the complex and modern world.

Q&A with Producers Nino Chichua and Anna Khazaradze

How did you come to be involved with the *9-Month Contract* project and Ketevan Vashagashvili?

The Georgian film industry is relatively small, which fosters a strong sense of community and collaboration. This project came to us through a colleague who was intrigued by its premise. After meeting Ketevan and learning more about the story and its potential, we too became equally captivated. Anna was personally affected as she was pregnant at the time and found the concept of a mother parting with a child, even if not biologically related, after carrying them for nine months, to be emotionally stirring. Driven by our collective curiosity, we embraced the project.

What drew you to this particular story of Zhana and Elene?

At its core, the story revolves around Zhana, a single surrogate mother willing to go to any lengths for her biological child - Elene. While there exist films that delve into the subject of surrogacy, often from the perspective of families receiving surrogate babies, what drew us to this story was the opportunity to tell it from the perspective of a surrogate mother, through the lens of a filmmaker from a country where surrogacy is thriving but is often unregulated. This insider viewpoint felt essential in shedding light on the experiences of the women on the providing side of this industry. Our initial objective was to authentically capture and present this distinct perspective through one specific surrogate mother's story.

However, as often happens with documentaries, the film evolved beyond its original premise. As Ketevan continued filming, deeper layers emerged. Ultimately, it became a mother-daughter story, questioning the necessity and cost of a mother's sacrifice. As we follow Zhana, it's impossible to ignore the growth of an equally important and compelling character—her daughter, Elene. She evolves alongside the story, confronting her own identity while grappling with her mother's difficult choices. In the end, the film weaves a beautiful and complex love story, shaped by hopes and dreams.

Of course making this film would not have been possible without Ketevan's extraordinary access to the main character who trusts her. Despite being her first feature documentary, Ketevan's passion, compassion, and unwavering dedication were evident from the start. Her decade-long bond with Zhana further convinced us of the story's potential.

Why do you think it is important to bring this Georgian rooted story to the global stage?

Rather than offering easy answers, we want to open Pandora's box, raising difficult but necessary questions that societies often shy away from. As surrogacy continues to grow worldwide, we hope the film challenges audiences to confront their assumptions about non-traditional parenthood and reproductive labour, while also exposing the sometimes questionable systems that make this industry possible. The reality is, many intended parents

are drawn to Georgia not just for affordability, but for the lack of regulation, an issue that deserves attention.

This story takes place within Georgia and at the end we witness Elene attending a protest - how does this story fit into the broader political context in the country?

Throughout the filming process, Elene blossomed into a bright young woman, while Georgia itself began experiencing a profound political shift. On November 28, 2024, the governing party announced it would suspend the EU accession process until 2028, a move widely seen as driven by Russian influence, sparking nationwide protests that have continued every day since. Over the past year, the government has systematically dismantled civil liberties and creative freedoms, cracking down on the cultural sector, with Georgian cinema also facing censorship. For instance, although we secured first place in the Georgian National Film Center's 2023 funding call with *9-Month Contract*, you won't see their name in our credits, as they refused to release the funds when our project entered production, without explanation or comment to this day.

Our story fits into the broader political context not only by showing how unregulated industries, like surrogacy, reflect the consequences of compromised governance, but also by highlighting how larger political instability shapes personal and societal struggles. Elene attending the protest hints at what's been going on in the country recently and how her generation is fighting for its future on the street, resonating with the larger movement against the erosion of democratic values we are witnessing globally.

Can you please tell us about the impact campaign and strategy behind the project?

Our immediate goal for the impact campaign is twofold: first, to spark immediate action by launching a fundraising campaign to collect donations for Elene's education. Second, we aim to initiate a broader conversation around the providing side of surrogacy and through partnerships with human rights organizations and advocacy groups to amplify the voices of women like Zhana. Through this, we'd like to advocate for the shift from an unregulated industry into one that prioritizes fairness, human rights, and transparency.

We hope the film will serve as a starting point for discussions around surrogacy, as there are many complex themes our film does not, and never intended to, address but are still highly relevant. These include questions of motherhood: Who is the mother? Is it defined by biological connection, carrying the fetus, raising the child, or simply the desire to be one? Other crucial issues include the rights and citizenship of children born through surrogacy and the inherent power imbalance between the parties involved - economically affluent prospective parents versus socially vulnerable surrogates.

Our longer term goal is to advocate for the urgent need for stronger regulations in the surrogacy industry, both in the countries that are on the providing side (such as Georgia) and in the countries where intended parents come from.

We are a part of Good Media Network's 2025 lab where we plan to develop a concrete action plan together with impact producers.

How was your experience working with Ketevan to develop this project?

Putting this film together was a long journey that required a great deal of patience to put together all the pieces. Throughout this process, it was incredibly comfortable to work with Ketevan, as she is an immensely hard-working professional who combines rare sensitivity with pragmatism.

What sets her apart is her attitude toward the people she films and her long-term commitment to Zhana and Elene, building a deep, trusting relationship with them. This not only allowed for intimate access but also ensured that the film was rooted in authenticity and compassion. It's evident in the film that she became an insider, she earned the right to be in the room with Zhana and Elene, and her presence is ethically and morally justified. Ketevan demonstrated the ability to navigate the complexities of the film's sensitive subject matter with respect and understanding while maintaining a clear vision for the film.

When not filming alone, Ketevan worked with a small but incredible crew, including Director of Photography, Giviko Tukharreli, and Sound Mixer, Tamta Mandzulashvili, who shared her vision and approach. This small setup allowed the crew to establish a special bond with the main protagonists, who granted them access to their lives, particularly in intimate moments.

What was the most challenging aspect of bringing this story to the screen?

A challenging aspect of bringing this story to the screen was structuring the co-production, which involved a long and meticulous process. From the development stage, we were fortunate to draw interest from international funds, which helped secure crucial backing for the film. We won a variety of grants, partnered with the German broadcaster MDR in collaboration with Arte, and established a three-country co-production between Georgia, Germany, and Bulgaria. Eventually, we also secured support from Eurimages, rounding out the project in line with our ambition and the director's vision.

The more significant challenge, however, probably lay in navigating the ethical complexities of the subject matter. We were aware of the power dynamics at play, particularly in regards to Zhana and Elene, and it was crucial to ensure that the film's approach was respectful and did not exploit their situation. This responsibility is ongoing, it extends beyond the production phase and continues to affect the film's premiere and distribution. Especially for teenage Elene, given the social and cultural sensitivities surrounding surrogacy in Georgia.

Why do you think it's important to have this story as part of the Human Rights strand in particular at CPH:DOX?

Human Rights strand is one of the festival's five competitive sections, launched last year. Premiering *9-Month Contract* in the setting of one of the world's leading documentary film

festivals is a unique opportunity for us to bring our story to an engaged, socially conscious audience that values both cinema and human rights stories.

This decision feels particularly timely, given the shifting global political landscape and the festival's emphasis on human rights this year. This premiere serves as a crucial launching point for the film, and the festival's strong industry presence will help ensure it subsequently reaches wider audiences, not only at the festival but also across various territories and through different platforms.

And we are thrilled to be able to bring Zhana and Elene with us to Copenhagen for this significant occasion.

Biographies

Ketevan Vashagashvili (Director)



Ketevan Vashagashvili is a documentary filmmaker based in Tbilisi. She is a Chevening Alumni with an MA in Digital Documentary from the University of Sussex (UK). Her main interest lies in social and human rights issues. Ketevan has 15 years of experience in working at various Georgian TV channels and online platforms, directing and producing TV documentaries, TV-series and programmes. Ketevan works at the Georgian Public Broadcaster and has completed her first feature-length documentary film, *9-Month Contract*, produced by the Georgian company 1991 Productions.

1991 Productions' Anna Khazaradze and Nino Chichua (Producers)



Anna Khazaradze and Nino Chichua are the founders of 1991 PRODUCTIONS, a Tbilisi- and London-based film production company dedicated to developing, financing, and producing director-driven fiction and documentary films

Their latest co-production, *Crossing* by Levan Akin, opened Berlinale Panorama 2024 and won the Teddy Jury Award. Their feature documentary *9-Month Contract* (2025) by Ketevan Vashagashvili is set to premiere at CPH:DOX 2025. The company's credits also include documentaries *Smiling Georgia* (Karlov Vary IFF 2023) and *Glory to the Queen*, which won Best Documentary in Georgia in 2021.

Their upcoming projects include Uta Beria's narrative feature *Tear Gas* (supported by ZDF, CNC, GNFC, winner of HBF Empowerment Award).

Anna, an alumna of the London College of Communication, and Nino, an NYU Tisch graduate, founded 1991 Productions in 2017 with a commitment to nurturing talent and championing diverse narratives across borders, a vision they continue to uphold today.

Martichka Bozhilova (Co-Producer)

Producer at Bulgarian company AGITPROP, Martichka's films have been selected and awarded at Cannes, Berlin, IDFA, Toronto, Sundance, Tribeca, Pusan and other festivals, and broadcast all over the world. Her notable works include *Touch Me Not* (Golden Bear Winner, Berlinale, 2018), *Palace for the People* – film (Dok Leipzig, Dok Buster Award) and four-part TV docu series for ARTE, aired on BBC, ARTE, MDR, NHK, SVT etc.; *Georgi and the Butterflies* (Silver Wolf, IDFA), *The Mosquito Problem and other stories* (Cannes), *Corridor #8* (Berlinale), *Omелlette* (Sundance).

Sylvia Nagel (Co-Producer)

Sylvia Nagel is a German producer. As deputy editor in chief for NDR/Arte she commissioned various documentaries. Many received awards such as 2008 Adolf-Grimme-Award for *Luise – A German Muslim* (D: B. Schwehm), 2006 German TV Award nomination for *I am Al Qaeda – The Life of Zacarias Moussaoui* (D: V. Thurn). Her film *China's Public Enemy No. 1. Rebiya Kadeer's Battle for the Uyghurs* has been shown at festivals worldwide.

Credits

Director:	Ketevan Vashagashvili
Director of Photography:	Giviko Tukhareli, Ketevan Vashagashvili
Editors:	Veronica Scotti, Bernadett Tuza-Ritter
Music:	Kalin Nikolov
Production Sound:	Tamta Mandzulashvili, Tengo Mandzulashvili
Sound Designer:	Nika Paniashvili
Production:	1991 Productions
Producers:	Nino Chichua, Anna Khazaradze
Coproduction:	Agitprop, Vincent Productions, MDR/Arte
Co-producers:	Martichka Bozhilova, Sylvia Nagel, Enzo Maaß
Cast:	Zhana Vakhtangishvili, Elene Kukhtinovi

Project Research Summary - Conducted by Elene Gavashelishvili, Associate Professor at Ilia State University for 9-Month Contract

Surrogacy in Georgia

- Surrogacy has been legal since 1997, with the first child being born in 2007, but until 2012 there was limited data available.
- Recent data shows that Georgia has become a sought-after country in the international surrogacy market, but it is rarely discussed publicly - only if negative information is spread in the media.
- The Christmas Epistly the Orthodox Patriarch of Georgia (the highest church official) openly criticised IVF and surrogacy in 2014, causing negative media stories and perception - although this didn't impact the number of surrogacies.
- Media coverage on surrogacies became more negative after the government announced a plan to ban surrogacy in 2023.

Surrogacy Across the World

- Different countries have different legislations, some ban commercial surgery (e.g. France, Belgium, Bulgaria) and some define the woman who carries the child as the mother (e.g. Germany, Austria). In countries only allowing altruistic (non-commercial) surrogacy, there is a black market for commercial surrogacies (e.g. Australia, Canada, Spain).

Current Legislation in Georgia

- Only heterosexual couples can use a surrogate woman's assistance - the mother must have a health certificate and parents must prove they have been married or cohabiting for at least one year.
- The egg donor or surrogate mother does not have the right to be recognised as a parent - local authorities issue the birth certificate in the name of the take-home parents.
- The law regulates the pre- and post-procedural periods of surrogacy but not the surrogacy process itself. The law does not mention the selection standards of surrogates or the number of children born through surrogacy.

Surrogacy as a Stigmatized Practice in Georgia

- Stigmas arise because of the third party (surrogate mother) involvement and questions what constitutes motherhood.
- The most stigmatised party is the surrogate mother, accused of selling their children despite emphasising the lack of biological connection to the child.
- Stigma pushes surrogates to cover up their activities by hiding pregnancies, changing places of residence, moving to rented apartments, and using temporary labour migration as reasons for absence.

Vulnerability of Surrogate Women in Georgia

- Poverty and the need to provide for their own biological children are the main reasons women in Georgia engage in surrogacy programmes.
- The more convincing the story of financial hardship, the more legitimate the decision to engage in a surrogacy programme is perceived by both medical personnel, agency representatives, and the surrogate women themselves.
- Many women participate more than once in surrogacy programmes to achieve their financial goals, despite an increase in health-related risks.
- Many women interviewed believe surrogacy offers them better opportunities than previous jobs, for example as cleaners or grocery store staff, as the pay is higher and they feel like they are doing valuable and rewarding work.

Children's Rights/Citizenship Issues

- Due to the stigma, doctors and agency representatives say they have to constantly fight to ensure that surrogates carry their pregnancies to term.
- Agencies and clinics have also identified a drug that is used to induce delivery earlier, which surrogates deliberately take (some offer surrogates a special payment scheme to prevent this)
- There is also a risk that children whose parents' countries prohibit surrogacy will face legal problems.
- In this regard, the Covid period was especially difficult, when borders were closed and children born through surrogacy had to stay in maternity hospitals or specially rented houses with nannies.
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The Issues Facing Georgian couples Diagnosed with Infertility

- Despite pronatalist calls, in vitro fertilization is not funded in Georgia, and even more so, the much more expensive surrogacy.
- Georgians are unhappy with the increased remuneration of surrogates and believe that prices are adjusted to foreigners.

Increased Demand, Shortage of Georgian Surrogates and a Changed Ethnic Picture

- Until 2022, Ukraine was considered the largest country providing reproductive services, but the Russian invasion of Ukraine directed the flow of foreign reproductive tourists in various directions, including Georgia.
- This was compounded by the bill announced by the Prime Minister of Georgia in the summer of 2023, which would have prohibited surrogacy for foreign couples and prevented the commercial side of the process.
- The initiation of the bill put both agencies and couples wishing to become parents in an accelerated regime, since the law could not have the right to operate retroactively and the process that had begun could not be jeopardized.
- This has led to a shortage of surrogate women and an increase in their salaries, although Georgia, due to its population and the stigmatization of this practice, is unable to meet the increased demand.
- This has led to an increase in the number of surrogates from Central Asian countries.

Absence of a Unified Donor Database

- A problematic issue is the absence of a unified registry, where the processes of medical manipulations would be fully reflected.
- The government expressed its readiness to resolve this problem, but nothing became known about this issue later.

Support Systems for Surrogate Mothers

- Support for surrogates is not systematic.
- Due to the stigmatization of the surrogacy practice, surrogates avoid talking about their experiences out loud.
- Several of our respondents had bad experiences with agencies, but none of them had ever been made to work without a contract or not paid. The interviews revealed that psychological support is scarce, and there are frequent cases when the monthly salary of \$300-400 is not enough.
- It is also evident that the resources and legal rights of the parties are often not equal. The contract is drawn up by the couple's hired lawyer, and the surrogate has little voice.

Announcement of a Ban on Surrogacy

- On June 12, 2023, the Prime Minister of Georgia (Irakli Gharibashvili) announced the government is working on a draft law that would ban surrogacy in Georgia for foreign couples.
- It was clear that the draft law, if enacted, would significantly change the situation for agencies and clinics.
- After this statement was made, the researcher conducted interviews at one of the agencies and it seemed that demand and, accordingly, prices increased, because in the case of a process that had already begun, the law would not have the right to stop it/act retroactively.
- It seemed that the field was trying to adapt (for example, opening a branch in Armenia, deepening cooperation with Central Asia), but at the same time they also expected the legislative initiative to fail.
- The bill on tightening the rules for surrogacy and in vitro fertilization was withdrawn from the third reading. As seen in the media, the government stated that work on this issue would resume in the summer, but so far there is no news.

Statistics

- Information on the number of children born through surrogacy is only available upon request, and that too since 2012.
- The information is provided by the "State Services Development Agency". The data in this table does not reflect the situation as of August 3, 2023.

წელი	სუროგაციის გზით დაბადებული სამოქალაქო აქტების რაოდენობა
2012	36
2013	99
2014	207
2015	250
2016	329
2017	424
2018	504
2019	601
2020	817
2021	312
2022	830
	4409

How the data requested in 2024 looks (2024 is shown incompletely, up to August):

აქტების რაოდენობა (არ შუდის მკვდრადშობილები)	
წელი	რაოდენობა
2019	601
2020	817
2021	310
2022	833
2023	1172
2024	941
ჯამი	4674

Fundraising Campaign

The film team are using the Sharedoc platform to raise funds for Zhana and Elene - at each of the screenings at CPH:DOX, audiences can scan the below QR code to contribute:



Further info: <https://www.share-doc.org/my-documentaries/94001/editor/9-month-contract>