

'The Sun is our mother, the Moon is our father, the Stars are our brothers and sisters'

This is what the members of the community for people with special needs say before the meal. Instead of a family that should have supported and cared for them, they were exploited, kicked out to the streets, or ended up in the institutions where they had only two options - to become the abusers or to be abused. Nowadays, they are living in communities around the country where they were able to recover from trauma and build a decent life. Their family is now each other, and the nature surrounding the communities, which are mainly located in the villages.

I have lived and photographed people in two of such communities. One, "Temi" is the oldest and one of the largest ones, where beneficiaries already created families and are surviving mostly on agriculture, while the other one "Qedeli" is smaller but intensively expanding community with anthroposophic approach. During my stay there, I've realized how strong is the stigma of the mental health in Georgian society - I've recognized the stereotypes in myself as well, until I was able to open up to them in the same way they opened up to me. In these communities I found bonds that transformed me; my quest now is to build this understanding through the images. These communities are the islands where the beneficiaries remain comfortably invisible to the society that belittles them.