## NEED FOR SOCIAL SERVICES AND DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

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Annotation. Three parts appeared in this concept: aid in money, aid in goods, aid in services. *The main goal of social services* is to create conditions for a single person or family to develop, strengthen abilities, opportunities to solve their problems, teach them to function independently in society, thus overcoming social isolation. Social assistance is provided when the aim is to prevent the emergence of social problems of clients, when it is necessary to ensure the safety of the society or community. Groups of recipients of social services – elderly persons and their families; persons with disabilities, their families; children left without parental care; children experiencing social risk, their families, families fostering and/or looking after children; etc.

Keywords: social services, rural community, social exclusion, poverty

#### **INTRODUCTION**

As social exclusion increases, poverty problems worsen, and the population ages, the need for social services grows. The need for social services is increasing every year and it is increasing in all client groups. The five-year data published on the official website of the Lithuanian Statistics Department (https://www.stat.gov.lt/) only confirms that the need for such services is only increasing. For example, in 2015 2.5 thousand persons of working age and children with disabilities in day care centers received social services, and in 2020 there were 16.2 thousand of such recipients already. In the children's day centers operating in Lithuania, 8396 children from families experiencing social risk received services in 2016, and in 2020 there were 8132 children. This number has decreased, possibly due to a decrease in the number of families experiencing social difficulties. Services provided to children with disabilities in day care centers - 2016 - there were 2582 children, in 2020-4032 children. This number has increased significantly over the past five years. The website of the Department of Statistics of Lithuania publishes relevant statistics on the care of elderly and disabled persons, which is becoming more and more relevant in our society. These are nursing home institutions. This need is also increasing. According to official statistics, 117 such persons were accommodated in state (county) care homes in 2016, and in 2020 - 333. In municipal care institutions in 2016 2564 people lived there, and in 2020 2,921 residents have already been settled. In public organizations, parishes and private care homes 2041 people lived there in 2016, and in 2020 - 3033 persons. Accommodation and care are a very relevant problem for this age group. Therefore, there is a need and opportunity for communities to create nursing homes and provide the necessary services. From the official statistics, we can see that social services are needed by people in their homes (elderly, disabled), as well as the payment of aid money to buy these services: in 2016 there were 18,741 such persons, and in 2020 - 22100. This could also be provided by rural communities. The topical problem of transport is also not left aside. In 2016, municipalities provided transportation services to 12,000 people. persons, and in 2020 13.2 thousand received such services. persons. Rural communities can also develop this service. life house etc. Paragraph 8 of Article 13 of the Law on Social Services of the Republic of Lithuania (2006) stipulates that every municipality must have an institution or institution that plans, administers and organizes social services. Supervision and control of these services must also be carried out in municipalities.

The network of social services is being expanded, therefore it is relevant to analyze which organizations provide social services and it is relevant, after conducting research, to assess the need and development opportunities for social services for residents of rural communities.

**Problematic questions** - What are the possibilities for the development of social services in rural communities? How could rural communities contribute to the development of social services?

**Research object** - The need for social services and development opportunities in terms of the opinion of the members of the rural community.

The purpose of the research is to analyze the need for social services and development opportunities in rural communities.

#### **Research tasks:**

1. Based on the analysis of scientific literature, analyze the need for social services and their possible development in Lithuania and Latvia.

2. Using a qualitative research method (semi-structured interview), reveal the need and availability of social services in rural communities.

3. Based on the results of the qualitative research, present opportunities for the development of social services in rural communities.

Research methods: Analysis of scientific literature and documents. Semi-structured interview. Qualitative content analysis.



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### NEED FOR SOCIAL SERVICES AND ANALYSIS OF DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In order to analyze the need for social services and development opportunities in rural communities, a semistructured interview method was chosen. Qualitative research data (semi-structured interview texts) were processed using the qualitative content analysis method.

Some researchers also call this interview semi-structured. The main advantage: interviews provide more detailed, structured data (Rupšienė, 2007). Based on this provision, the semi-structured interview method was chosen for the study, which allows collecting a variety of data, there is no need to "frame" the informant in a strict order, questions can be presented out of order. This study was chosen due to the fact that the chairmen of rural communities know best what the community members need and are best able to identify existing problems.

The semi-structured interview consisted of demographic data on the informants (gender, place of residence, education, age). Another block of questions is dedicated to the analysis of social services provided in communities. The third block of questions is dedicated to assessing what services the communities lack and what hinders their organization. The fourth block of questions is dedicated to community suggestions on how to improve the situation in the field of social services. In this case, the demographic block is not so important.

Members of the rural communities of the Taurage district participated in the study (6 informants). The research took place in October - November 2022. The research was organized in accordance with the principles of ethics, confidentiality, and anonymity, so the exact location of the participants is not disclosed, only the district is mentioned. The names of the informants are coded with a number.

#### **DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH RESULTS**

In order to analyze the need for social services and development opportunities in rural communities, it is appropriate to examine diagnostic areas that can reveal the purpose of this research. Just to say that the villagers receive social services is enough to say nothing. There are institutions providing social services in rural communities, but are they sufficient to meet all the needs of community members? What do the informants themselves think about the services provided, their need, development possibilities? What can communities offer to their residents to adapt to changing situations and meet needs? Therefore, it is appropriate to listen to the needs, wishes and vision of the community members. This study will help analyze this.

Table 1 presents the situation of what services are currently organized in the communities, who are the providers of those services. Which population groups are these services intended for, and what are the funding sources. Also, the variety of services, what kind of help residents currently receive.

Table 1

	The range of social services provided in rural communities				
Category	Examples of statements	No. of statements			
Activities of organizations.	"<> services are more administrative <> home assistance for elderly, disabled persons"(1). "<> is organized and provided by soc. services". (2). "Organized activities, lesson preparation, educational trips"(3). "<> provides stationary social services. Integral assistance to the home <>. " Respite services <> ". "<> reorganization towards the independence of the disabled"(4). "<> administration functions." "<> helps residents manage various benefits, allowances, and supports." "<> distributes food packages from the European Aid Fund". "<> trips, holidays, cooking, sports <>"(5). "<> to provide social care, social care <>. "Satisfy the psychological, social, cultural and spiritual needs of every nursing home resident <>". "<> to ensure their self-expression, motivation, encourage and help them integrate into the community, ensure quality medical rehabilitation services for individuals"(6).	27			
Diversity of social services.	"<> on various social issues <> "<> receiving allowances, other benefits, organizing help at home <> accommodation services <> "<> employment services for children (preparation of lessons, organization of educational programs)." "<> daily skills (housekeeping, cooking, hygiene)"(1). "<>soc. services <> "Other services <> consulting, information, mediation, representation <>".">> children's employment (preparation of lessons, organization of lessons, organization of lessons, organization of free time, drawing, sculpting, excursions)"(2). "<> meetings with psychologists are organized. Community, tolerance, citizenship are cultivated"(3). "<> it is possible to bring a disabled relative to stay in the institution for 10 days"(4). "<> accommodation, care services". "<> general	19			



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	services, administrative. Consults, informs <>"(5). "<> care, day care,	
	comprehensive assistance, respite services"(6).	
Recipients of residential services.	"<> for all population groups <>". "<> with all population groups". "<> elderly, elderly or persons with disabilities". "<> for children <>(1). "<> for all residents of our community". "<> for the children of the community"(2). "For children, teenagers, parents"(3). "<> for those with disabilities and/or special needs or complex disability, for elderly persons"(4). "<> for elderly and single persons, persons with disabilities". " for all population groups"(5). "<> for persons with mental, mental disabilities". "<> for the elderly <>"(6).	19
Funding sources.	"<> is financed from the state and municipal budget". "<> from the municipal budget and part of it is paid by the residents themselves from their income". "<> projects are written, submitted to the municipality and the municipality allocates funding"(1). "Maintained from the municipal budget." "<> is supported from the municipal budget, according to the submitted <> projects"(2). "<> municipality and ministry". "<> we write projects to receive these financings"(3). "<> Nursing homes financed by the Ministry of Social Security and Labor <>"(4). "<> municipality <>"(5). "<> budgetary institution <>".(6)	12
Social service institutions, organizations.	"<> seniority <> care home for the elderly", children's day care centers".(1) "Eldership, children's day centre".(2) "<> children's day centre".(3) "<> social services home <>".(4) "Elderly care home, seniority".(5) "Social services home".(6)	10

In Table 1, we can see what social services community members currently receive, what organizations and institutions operate, what their activities are, what population groups the services are provided to, and who finances them. From the statements presented in the table, we can see that there are few social service institutions in rural communities. After surveying the members of 5 communities in the district, we get almost identical answers about the following institutions: "<...> eldership <...> care home for the elderly", children's day care centers, social services houses". From the received answers, we can see that the main institution that contributes and organizes or provides social services to residents is the municipality. The communities are located in different areas of the district, but they operate within the boundaries of the elderships. Therefore, the main helper and provider of assistance to the communities becomes precisely the eldership. Children's day care centers are also classified as this type of service, although they are not available in all communities. They are just getting started. Day centers are established by the communities themselves, receiving funding from the municipality. The municipality also allocates premises for the centers and pays utility bills. It remains for the communities to find volunteers and employees who work for remuneration (part of the employees are paid their earnings from project funds) and to organize the activities of children's day care centers. There are also not many nursing homes or Social Services homes. They operate in several communities and provide services to residents of the entire district, not just their own. Such a situation is limited by funding. The municipality pays for the services of residents of care homes and has the right of priority to accommodate persons who receive their turn in such institutions. The community alone would not be able to sustain the care home, and the residents are not solvent enough to cover the full amount required to live in a care facility. The services of these institutions are non-stationary and stationary.

According to the Social Services Catalog (2019), social services can be divided into general and special. General social services include such services as "<...> receiving allowances, other benefits <...> consulting, informing, mediation, representation <...>""<...> general services, administrative. The main provider of these services is the eldership. This institution is a structural unit of the municipality and carries out administrative work with partially integrated special social services. Such services as "<...> employment services for children (preparation of lessons, organization of educational programs)." "<...> daily skills (housekeeping, cooking, hygiene), <...> meetings with psychologists are organized. Community, tolerance, citizenship are fostered by day care centers operating in the community. In this area, the rural communities themselves do an excellent job. They know the children of their community best, they know their needs and wishes, they know how families live and in which direction the child can be directed, how to educate him. A more complex population group is the elderly or disabled adults. Specialized accommodation and health care services are provided here "<...> accommodation, care services" are provided by nursing homes for the elderly. These are institutions where life is bubbling, but it is already stationary and the recipients need special care and assistance. The range of services of the "Social Services House" has expanded. If earlier only accommodation and health care services were provided, now inpatient <...> care, day center <...>, integral assistance in individual homes, respite services "<...> disabled relatives can be brought for 10 days" leave in the institution".

It can be said that the services are being improved and their range is expanding. The activities of both day and inpatient institutions cover various areas "<...> home help for elderly, disabled persons", "Organized classes, lesson preparation, familiarization trips, education", "<...> Integral home help <. ...>. "Respite services <...> ". <...> distributes food packages from the European Aid Fund", "To meet the psychological, social, cultural and spiritual needs of every resident of the nursing home <...>", "<...> to ensure their self-expression, motivation, encouragement and support



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integrate into the community". These community-based institutions create a variety of services and try to bring them closer to people. A few years ago, services such as respite and integral help at home did not even exist. Since 2005, food support from the European Aid Fund (EPF) has been distributed in the elderships. It is provided on a voluntary basis, the eldership employees do not receive remuneration for it, and they have a lot of work to do - they need to collect applications, check whether they meet the requirements for receiving support, process them, enter data into the Social Support and Information System (SPIS), distribute products and submit data municipality. Not all services are provided on a voluntary basis. Since these institutions are state-owned, they are financed "<...> from the municipality's budget and part of it is paid by the residents themselves from their income", "<...> projects are written, submitted to the municipality and the municipality allocates funding", "<... > Nursing homes financed by the Ministry of Social Security and Labor <...>". Thus, the sources of funding for these services are state and municipal budgets, and only persons living in care homes pay part of the amount themselves from their own income. 20 percent of the received income remains for residents to satisfy their own needs and desires. As a result of state policy, nursing home residents are usually fully supported. In their residential areas, all population groups can receive services "<...> elderly, elderly or persons with disabilities". "<...> for children <...>, "<...> for all residents of our community", "For children, teenagers, parents", "<...> with disabilities and/or special needs or complex disability". The spectrum of social services is expanding, more diverse services are offered, adapted to all population groups. In this case, state institutions try to meet the needs of the population. But are these services enough, are they efficient and appropriate? Table 2 provides an overview of the possibilities for the development of services provided in communities. In order to analyze the need for social services and development opportunities, it is necessary to analyze which population groups such services would be aimed at, what the need for those services would be, and what factors might hinder the development of services.

Table 2

	opportunities for the development of social services provided in the commu	iicy
Category	Examples of statements	No. of statements
Factors hindering the development of social services.	"<> far from the city <> communication problem". "<> unwillingness of state institutions to help, advise <>" "<> are not able to provide all services". "There is no NGO <>".(1) "There is a lack of qualified workers <>". "<> we lack properly educated community members <>".(2) "Lack of team". "<> leaves for work in other areas." "<> can no longer due to health condition".(3) "<> people are afraid to leave the house during the pandemic <>". "There is a lack of enterprising people." "<> does not want action for "thank you". (4) "Small population, the village is far from the city center, poor communication, lack of motivation".(5) "<> lack or employment of social workers, excessive workloads".(6)	19
The need for social services in rural communities.	"<> transport services". "<> in the help home <>". "<> help raising children, <> parenting training".(1) "<> come, sit, chat, drink a cup of tea." "<> buy and bring food <> make food".(3) " <> Silver Line <> "<> telephone conversations <>. "<> conversations, emotional, informational support <>".(4). "<> children's day care centers, leisure spaces".(5)	14
The population of the rural community.	"For the elderly <>". "For families <>".(1) "<> children and seniors". "<> for seniors".(3) "<> many elderly people <>. "<> for the elderly".(4) "<>for families raising children <>".(5)	8

Opportunities for the development of social services provided in the community

The research revealed which part of the population of the rural community would most need such services. These are - "For elderly people <...>", "<...> for older people", Pareigienė, Kuliešis (2013) after conducting a study revealed that there is a rapid aging of the population in rural regions. The rapid aging of the population, the departure of young people from the countryside to the cities or emigration to foreign countries, creates a need for the provision of services to the elderly. Often, such persons can no longer take care of themselves, and they have no relatives who can help them. There is a need to provide such services in residents' homes. This is a good practice because elderly people do not want to leave their homes, they feel good and comfortable in them. They need daily help (buying food, cooking, taking them to the doctor, etc.), but they can live independently in their own home. Another group of service recipients is "<...> children", "<...>for families raising children <...>". It's employment for families with children who also need services. This is a smaller proportion of the population than the elderly. If the municipality and state institutions provide more and more diverse services to the elderly, children and families lack them. This should not affect the fact that the recipient group is smaller. In order to keep young people and families in rural areas, it is necessary to make more efforts and provide quality services. Unable to meet the needs of themselves and their children, young people leave rural areas and go to live where "life boils", in the cities. Therefore, the potential for the development of services is high, and state institutions should contribute to it by offering families various services and preferential conditions, e.g. to purchase housing.

The conducted research informatively showed what services would be needed in the communities. "<...> transport services". "<...>help at home <...>", "<...> come, sit, chat, drink a cup of tea." "<...>buy and bring food <...> "<...> Silver line <...>. The results of the study showed that the spectrum of services focuses on elderly people. Therefore, it is not possible to move away from the demographic situation in rural areas. After all, the main services and service recipients are seniors. Very often, seniors feel lonely, no one needs them, so there is a need not only for such help as buying, bringing or cooking food, but also for much-needed emotional support and communication. With limited opportunities to visit the elderly, the "Silver Line" and its telephone support would be very necessary and useful for the elderly. Parents also need services and help <...> parenting training', and children need employment "<...> day care centers, leisure spaces". However, good wishes alone are not enough, we need funding, proactive community members, and volunteers. When planning and organizing activities, factors hindering the development of services appear, such as "<...> communication problem", Small population, the village is far from the city center <...>. Remote areas, small population influence poverty and minimal services. Due to such factors, the development of services is stalled. The message often "comes" from the authorities that the population is small and investments will not be useful, it is better to do nothing. The village is often given less attention, no organization is created "<...> unwillingness of state institutions to help, advise <...>", "<...> we lack properly educated community members <...>", "Lack of team" . These statements prove that young, able-bodied residents of the community are leaving for work in other areas, and as a result, there is a lack of enterprising, skilled workers in the community. And when it is not possible to form a good community active team, the idea of creating attractive, dignified conditions for the remaining members of the community is stuck. Specialists and social workers are needed to provide social services, and there is also a great shortage of them in communities. Communities want help from state institutions, but even these do not always help and contribute to helping communities. The covid-19 pandemic, which is now in its second year, has also had a negative impact on people "<...> people are afraid to leave their homes during the pandemic <...>". Restricted people's freedom, fear of getting sick exacerbated existing problems and helped to create new ones. One of them is that people are afraid to leave the house, they are afraid of contracting a viral infection. And staying at home causes many problems, not only social, but also medical and psychological. The most sensitive group for this problem is also the elderly. Often these are lonely, disabled persons. Young people work, study, have other activities, so the impact of the pandemic is less for them than for seniors who spend a lot of time at home. Rural communities are proactive and active enough, with no shortage of ideas. Table 3 presents community members' suggestions, reflections on what services the residents would need, what groups of residents lack services, and what community members' own resources are for contributing to the creation of services.

Table 3

	Possible initiatives of community members to enrich community services	Table 3
Category	Examples of statements	No. of statements
Supply of social services.	"<> organize transport services, help at home, laundry service". "<> organized meetings <>". "<> specialists from various fields can come and conduct lectures and trainings". "<> wash the clothes <>". "<> can come to bathe <>". "<> shuttle services". "<> to help clean the rooms, prepare food, buy food, bring in firewood".(1) "<> ride, daily occupation". "<> to provide employment services - education, organization of interviews <>".(3) "<> establishment of social workshops <> we would organize employment services <>". "<> buy food products or medicine <> before the doctor's office".(4) "Organize <> camps <>". "<> a useful children's day center." "<> it's great to have a group of volunteers <> help <>".(6)	25
Plans of community members, organizing social services.	"More active cooperation with social service providers, greater communication between social service institutions". "More active involvement of community members <>".(2) "We plan to write a project about the ride <>". "Provide voluntary assistance by offering ideas <> contribute to the organization of <> assistance".(3) "Members of the community could volunteer <> for a ride <>".(4) "Involve young people <> to the process of helping the community <>". "<> of more proactive people, volunteers".(5) "<> could benevolently help "<>". "<> to provide their ideas, suggestions, observations, help <> to get involved in activities".(6)	14
Community members, recipients of social services.	"<> for elderly people <>".(1) "Seniors <>". "<> for seniors <>".(3) "<> persons with mental or mental disabilities, seniors".(4) "<> families of <> children" . "<> for elderly neighbors <>".(5) "<> for single people". "<> for the elderly".(6)	10
Community resources.	"We have premises <>". "<> automatic washing machine <>". "<> shower <>". "We are planning to buy a car <>".(1) "<> to buy a car". "We have premises <>".(3)	6

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The activities of rural communities are focused on the organization of cultural and sports events, the organization of leisure activities for youth and seniors, environmental management, and various healthy lifestyle programs (Pareigienė, Kuliešis, 2013). Members of rural communities are sufficiently active and active. Informants named where community members could "stretch", what services and help to offer. "We plan to write a project about the ride <...>", "Provide voluntary help, <...>" Involve young people <...> in the process of helping the community <...>", "<...> provide their ideas, suggestions, observations, help <...> to get involved in activities". Informants mentioned activities such as writing projects, getting involved more actively in the aid process by helping other community members. The idea of volunteering is most evident in the informants' answers. The activities of the communities are based on the foundations of volunteerism. Members work for their community for free. Achieving beautiful goals does not require large financial resources. Voluntary activities bring communities together and enable them to achieve their goals. When planning the provision of services, rural communities have wishes that could help achieve results "More active cooperation with social service providers, greater communication between social service institutions". "More active involvement of community members <...>". it is encouraging that communities are self-oriented, ready to invest their time in creating better wellbeing. Population groups that need services do not change "<...> for elderly people <...>", "Seniors <...>". "...for persons with mental or mental disabilities", "for families of <...> children". "<...> for elderly neighbors <...>", "<...> for lonely people". Elderly persons dominate again, and a new group also appears, namely persons with mental or intellectual disabilities. However, all population groups require similar services (home help, communication, organization of health care, organization of leisure time, etc.). Communities are proactive and full of ideas. The informants expressed what services they could organize and provide to their residents themselves "<...> organize transport services, help at home, laundry service", "<...> can come to bathe <...>", "<...> to help clean the rooms, prepare food, buy food, bring in firewood". From the answers given, we can see that communities could provide everyday services that do not require special training, education or financial resources. These are simple but much needed services. Educational, employment organization services "<...> daily employment". " <...> educations, organization of interviews <...>", "<...> establishment of social workshops <...>" Organize <...> camps <...>", " <...> a useful children's day center", " <...> it's great to have a group of volunteers <...> "<...> specialists from various fields can come and conduct lectures, trainings" "<...> meetings are organized < ...>". The ideas presented by informants are important and useful, involving community members in various activities. The greatest desire of communities is to attract volunteers. Many activities can be carried out on a voluntary basis, but not all. Other activities require funds or use of available material base "We have premises <...>", "<...> automatic washing machine <...>", "<...> shower <...>". "We are planning to buy a car <...>". Rural communities actively participate in the field of social services, provide proposals and projects. Communities do not have their own funds, do not earn, and the idea of social business is not developed.

According to Ramaškienė, Šumskienė (2020), the mission of social business is not only profit, but it is necessary to create social value that promotes social impact and solves poverty problems. The mission and vision of social business is the future. The financial benefits will have to wait, because few such businesses are created and there is no significant deposit yet. Currently, the main supporter of communities is the municipality. The municipality allocates premises to the communities and pays utility taxes according to the use contract. Community members can use the facilities. Some communities are starting to develop social business ideas. Writes projects, plans to buy cars, provide transportation services.

#### CONCLUSIONS

1. The theoretical analysis of the literature revealed new trends in the field of social services. In the past, the social services system was limited to the minimally provided social services. Now the situation has fundamentally changed. After looking at the network of institutions, it is observed that social services are provided by state institutions, non-governmental organizations and new participants in the system - communities. The most widely developed network of state institutions. NGOs are chasing him. Communities are just trying to start providing such services. One can find the beginnings in the development of volunteering, when human resources are used for help - relatives, neighbors.

2. The research results showed that social services are provided in rural communities, but they are still lacking. The main service providers are state institutions, there are no NGOs, and the communities are still trying to find out the need for such services, study their environment, and consider what kind of help they could offer.

3. Rural communities are active, proactive and have potential. Therefore, based on the results of the qualitative research, the possibilities for the development of social services in rural communities have great potential and opportunities for creating and developing a network of these services. The members of the communities themselves identified how the services could be expanded, how the communities themselves could contribute to this: by writing projects to receive services or funding. Authorities can contribute to the development of services by showing greater attention to communities, helping and contributing to the improvement of infrastructure in rural communities (maintenance of roads, organization of public transport, arrangement of public spaces).

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