

# WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT IN GEORGIA

Analysis of Existing Policies and Initiatives



Sapari / Laogahh

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Summary</b> .....	5
<b>Introduction</b> .....	6
(In)Equality Statistics .....	6
(In)Equality According to International Indexes .....	8
Women's Economic Empowerment Analytic Framework .....	11
<b>Aim of the Research</b> .....	13
<b>Objectives of the Research</b> .....	13
<b>Methodology</b> .....	13
Scope of the Research .....	13
Sampling .....	13
Field work .....	14
<b>Results of the Research</b> .....	16
The mechanisms, legislation and policy of the State in the context of gender equality and women's economic empowerment .....	16
Institutional Mechanisms .....	16
International Commitments .....	17
Government Policy .....	18
Women's Engagement in State Projects .....	20
Produce in Georgia .....	20
Program on the Development of Cooperatives .....	21
StartUp Georgia .....	23
Women in Rural Areas - Projects of the Ministry of Agriculture .....	24
Main Findings .....	26
<b>Projects on Women's Economic Empowerment Financed by Different Donors</b> .....	27
Origins of Women's Economic Empowerment .....	27
Experience of Beneficiaries .....	30
International Approaches and Experiences: Planning of Women's Economic Empowerment Projects .....	31
Main Findings .....	32
<b>Women's Economic Empowerment: Corporate Sector, Policy and Practice</b> .....	32
Main trends .....	33
Main Findings .....	34
<b>Main Challenges of Women's Economic Empowerment in Georgia</b> .....	35
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	36
<b>Recommendations</b> .....	36
Public Sector .....	36
State Policy .....	36
Empowerment of Women Living in Rural Areas .....	37
Women at Workplace .....	37
State Programs .....	38
Donors and Local Non-Governmental Organizations .....	38
Corporate Sector .....	39

**Appendix #1** ..... 40

**Appendix #2** ..... 41

**Appendix #3** ..... 45

**Appendix #4** ..... 46

## SUMMARY

Women's economic empowerment is an important part of international agenda. Although Georgia too attempts to take steps towards building gender-equal society, it stills faces many obstacles on this road. At the same time the scale of poverty and unemployment makes women two times more vulnerable. In addition to economic problems of the country, various cultural-religious and social impediments which the State as well as international and local non-governmental organizations are trying to overcome should be emphasized.

The aim of this research is to contribute to the formulation of the policy in Georgia that would be focused on women's economic empowerment. In particular, it studies the work undertaken by the State and international and local non-governmental organizations in respect to women's economic empowerment as well as the attitude of corporate sector towards this issue. Based on feminist analytical framework of the women's economic empowerment, we tried to learn: what is the main challenge in regards to women's economic empowerment in Georgia; mostly what type of activities are implemented for women's empowerment; and what is the international best practice on women's economic empowerment.

This is a qualitative research within the framework of which 31 in-depth interviews were conducted with the representatives of the State and international and local non-governmental organizations as well as with the beneficiaries of the projects implemented by them. With respect to the corporate sector, the data was collected based on questionnaires and telephone interviews. In addition, we requested some quantitative data from the relevant agencies the descriptive analysis of which contributes to understanding of the complete picture.

The research shows that the main challenges for women's economic empowerment are access to financial resources and support to women's agency. There exists no policy on women's economic empowerment in Georgia. Although proper institutional and legislative bases are in place, they are not effective. Through the analysis of the programs and initiatives, we concluded that during the last ten years only the programs implemented by international and local non-governmental organizations have been directed at women's economic empowerment while the corporate sector faces the problem of awareness raising.

## INTRODUCTION

Women's economic empowerment takes an important part in the process of achieving gender equality. Elimination of economic violence and access to economic resources is an important instrument for economic development. Because women's economic empowerment represents a cornerstone for achieving gender equality, developed countries along with international organizations and local actors attempt to eradicate economic violence against women and to improve many such aspects as: equal access to economic resources; provision of land and other ownership rights; equal participation of women at all levels of decision-making, especially on leadership positions; and, recognition of unpaid family work.

In terms of women's economic empowerment the situation in Georgia needs to be sharply improved. Various factors, such as cultural, religious and economic obstacles hinder the economic empowerment of Georgian women. Although Georgian legislative framework is in compliance with best practice, women suffer systemic oppression in real life. They are completely neglected as a work force.<sup>1</sup>

### (In)Equality Statistics

According to the data of Georgian statistical service as of January 1, 2017, 52.08% of Georgian population are women. At the same time, **the number of women born alive is less than – men**. This indicates the problem of sex-selective abortion which is widespread in the country as well as in the region. Also, we receive important information from marriage statistics. Namely, out of married individuals **aged from 16 to 19, 85% are women**.<sup>2</sup> This reflects the practice of early marriage. Early marriage, in turn, limits the ability of women to participate in a work force. This happens because married young women in most cases put their resources in unpaid family work and professional development of an individual is hampered.

Knowledge and skills are important components of women's economic empowerment. But **educational fields in Georgia are still gender-segregated**. The number of women students is lowest for agricultural programs while the number of male students is lowest for education programs. Traditionally, most students in engineering and construction (STEM)<sup>3</sup> fields are men. They also outnumber women at science and agriculture programs.

Statistics show that gender stereotypes in Georgia have not changed over the years. **In villages as well as in cities men are mostly considered as head of households**. According to 2017 gender statistics which is based on the data from 2016 and in some cases of 2014 census, in 62% of households men are the head. It should be noted that the number of households where women are the head is less in village communities.<sup>4</sup>

According to 2016 data, 42% of **women of the age 15 and above in Georgia are economically inactive**, while for the same age category only 22% of men are economically inactive. Concerning employment – 67% of men are employed (see chart #1).

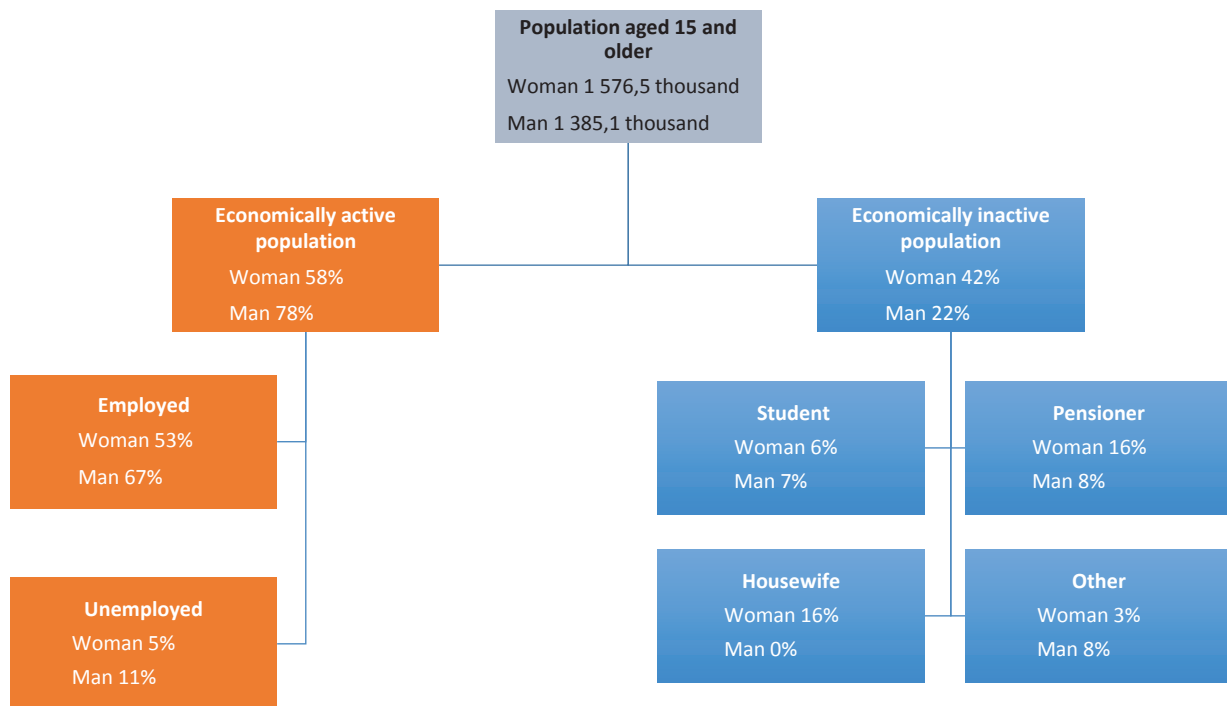
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1 Hunt A & Samman E.; *Women's Economic Empowerment. Navigating Enablers and Constraints*. Overseas Development Institute, 2016 September. p. 12.

2 National Statistics Office of Georgia. *Woman and Man in Georgia*. 2017. p. 52

3 Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics

4 National Statistics Office of Georgia. *Woman and Man in Georgia*. 2017. p. 52



**Chart #1: distribution of population of the age 15 and above in accordance with economic status, 2016**  
(source: gender statistics, 2017).

The chart shows that the highest rate of unemployment (29%) is in women between 15-24 years and the lowest (2%) in women over 55 years. The women seem to be most active in the age group of 45-54 years (81%), while men become economically active at earlier age: 15-34 age group (94%). The highest unemployment rate in men is also in the age group of 15-24 years (18%). This situation generates acute inequality in the job market. First of all, this inequality is reflected on salaries.

According to the latest (2016) data, the average nominal monthly salary of women amounts to 731,2 GEL while that of men equals 1116,6 GEL.<sup>5</sup>

According to the study conducted by the United Nations Development Program, 18% of unemployed women say that they will have difficulties to combine job with family labor and therefore they prefer not to work. The study also revealed that most women do not have income, and one fifth of women say that the spouse/partner has more income than them. Unpaid family labor is considered to be the main duty of a woman. This, most respondents say, excludes the possibility for women to be employed on a paid job. With respect to the fields where women's employment is acceptable, the respondents claim that women may be teachers, pharmacists, doctors, journalists, bank operators, designers as well as employed in small business and non-governmental sector.<sup>6</sup>

Despite the fact that proper legal framework of labor rights is in place, the condition of employed women is still severe: the workplace does not provide adequate conditions for pregnant and nursing women.<sup>7</sup> Here we should also note the issue of increasing the effectiveness of labor inspection with regards to creating equal environment in the workplace. It is noteworthy that labor inspection in Georgia did not exist from 2005 till 2015 and nowadays it is in a rudimentary condition and needs to be strengthened. Amendments to the Code aimed at broadening the responsibilities of the Labor Inspection are planned in 2017. At the initial stage these amendments envisage stricter control of working conditions only at the workplaces with severe, harmful and hazardous conditions.<sup>8</sup>

5 National Statistics Office of Georgia. *Monthly Salary of Employees based on Sex*. 2017. Available at: [[http://www.geostat.ge/?action=page&p\\_id=148&lang=geo](http://www.geostat.ge/?action=page&p_id=148&lang=geo)]

6 United Nations Development Program in Georgia; *Public Perceptions on Gender Equality, Politics and Business*. 2013. p. 29.

7 *Alternative Report Concerning Women's Rights and Gender Issues in Georgia*; To the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Tbilisi. 2014.

8 Ministry of Labor, Health and Social Protection of Georgia; *New Draft Law on "Labor Safety"* was approved by the Cabined. 2017, May 25. Available at: [<http://www.moh.gov.ge/news/3682/>]

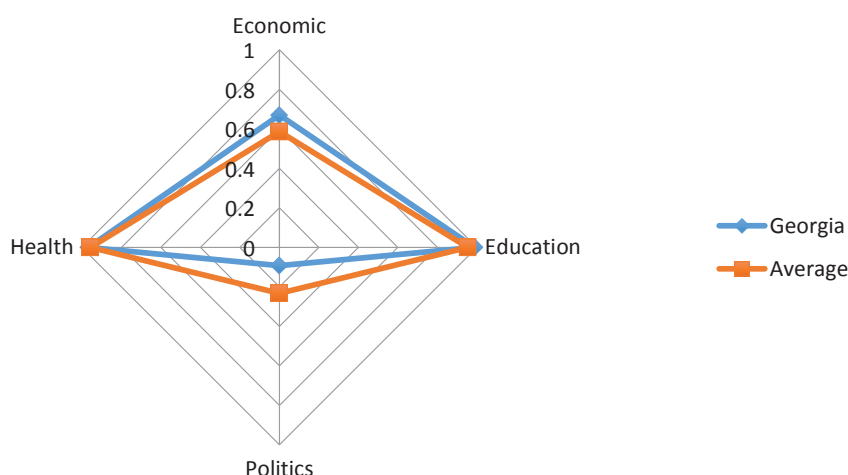
## (In)Equality According to International Indexes

It is also important to analyze what positions Georgia holds regarding gender equality in the international arena, as this information will give us an opportunity to see where (in which countries) to find best practices and experiences. According to the **Human Development Index** published by the United Nations in 2015, Georgia belongs to the countries of Medium Human Development and occupies the 70th place behind countries such as Belarus, Bulgaria, Kazakhstan, Serbia and Iran. For the gender part of the Human Development Index (GDI – Gender Development Index) Georgia is in the second group which indicates that the human development index is equally or on average equally distributed among women and men. With 0.970 points, Georgia is close to Belgium, Israel and Great Britain.<sup>9</sup> The Gender Development Index consists of three equally weighted components which are the following: education, income and health.

The Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) is also a part of the Human Development Index. GEM measures the empowerment in three directions which are the following: (1) Women's participation in politics and decision-making; (2) their inclusion in the economy and decision making; and, most importantly (3) economic resources.<sup>10</sup> As data from GEM shows, Georgia's index has improved from 1997 to 2007 and by 2007 it was 0.408. Unfortunately, next year's UN Human Development Report does not include GEM and the developments of subsequent periods are measured by Gender Inequality Index.

**Gender Inequality Index** measures equality in three directions. These include: reproductive health, empowerment and involvement in the labor market. Georgia improves its indicators in this direction. Namely, 2015 estimate gives Georgia 0.361 points and 2012 estimate - 0.375 points. However, compared with 1995 estimate which was 0.426, the situation has not changed radically as the improvement only by 0.065 points over 20 years indicates unsatisfactory developments in this regards.<sup>11</sup> The problem is that Georgia's index is only improving at the expense of the refinement of the legislation while the practice remains the same. To refer to Lithuanian data, they have improved from 0.305 points in 1995 to 0.121 by 2015, which is impressive if we consider the country's political history. The same trend of development is in Latvia, Slovenia and the Czech Republic. These countries have achieved significant success in terms of gender equality.

Among significant indexes for our research is the **Gender Gap Index of the World Economic Forum**. According to 2017 report, Georgia, with 0.679 points, ranks 94th among 144 countries. Unlike UN indexes, on the scale of WEF index "1" means "equality" and "0" - inequality. The world's Gender Gap Index is measured based on the following components: economic participation and economic opportunities; access to education; health and life expectancy; and political engagement.



**Chart #2: Gender Gap Index for Georgia, 2016 (source: World Economic Forum)**

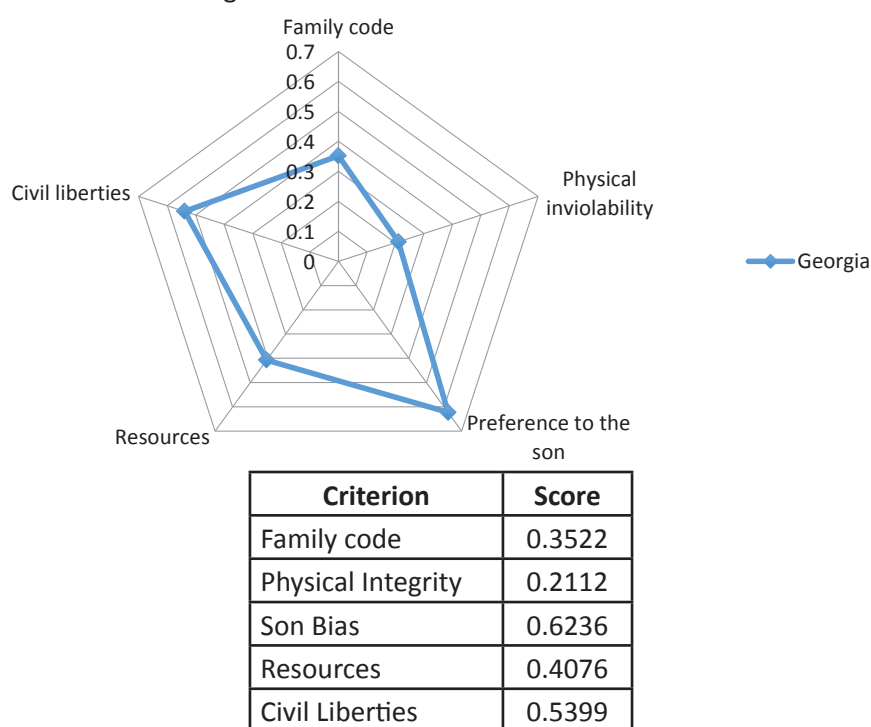
<sup>9</sup> United Nations Development Programme; *Human Development Report, Gender Development Index*. 2016. Available at: [<http://hdr.undp.org/en/composite/GDI#b>]

<sup>10</sup> Bendeliani N.; "Assessment of Gender Equality in Georgia based on International Indexes and Rankings." Social Sciences Center, UNFPA, 2012. p.18

<sup>11</sup> United Nations Development Programme; *Human Development Report, Gender Development Index*. 2016. Available at: [<http://hdr.undp.org/en/indicators/68606>]

As the diagram shows, Georgia's index - 0.679 - is slightly higher than median index - 0.586, and in terms of economy Georgia takes 75<sup>th</sup> place. As for education, Georgia gets a slightly lower index by taking 81<sup>th</sup> place with 0.989 points. Georgia has the lowest indexes in terms of political empowerment and health, especially with respect to political empowerment where Georgia takes 114<sup>th</sup> place. In this case the country has 0.093 points, which is lower than the median index of 144 countries.<sup>12</sup> According to the GGI index, as in the case of the GII index, development trend is quite unsatisfactory. If Georgia took 54<sup>th</sup> place with 0.670 points among 115 countries in 2006, we take 94<sup>th</sup> place with 0.679 points in 2016.

One of the most important indicators of gender equality worldwide is the Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI), developed by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). According to the data of 2014, Georgia, with 0.2035 points, belongs to the list of countries with medium level of gender discrimination. This index estimates the main causes of inequality – it measures the influence of institutions reflecting cultural and social practices and legislative norms that create inequality and promote stereotypes about women. “0” means that the impact of institutions does not occur at all or occurs for only a small portion of women, and “1” means that the influence of social institutions affects the majority of or all women.<sup>13</sup> The data of 2014 shows that the most alarming indicator for Georgia is the one which reflects the practice of giving preference to sons. Here the phenomenon of the so-called disappeared girls is reflected, as well as the share of men in the last children is calculated after which women do not want to give birth anymore or prefer to be sterile. With 0.6236 points, Georgia belongs to the list of countries where there is a high rate of preference for boys. As for the physical integrity index, it equals to 0.2112 points and the lowest indicator in this category is for the law regulating sexual harassment as well as for the number of victims of domestic violence. This indicates the scale of the problem in Georgia in this regards. It also highlights the inefficiency of the legislative framework preventing sexual harassment and of the steps undertaken for preventing domestic violence. As for the index of family related legislation, Georgia, with 0.3522 points, is among the countries of middle category. There are no shortcomings detected in terms of women's access to financial resources and thus is evaluated by 0 points. Access to/ownership of land and other movable and immovable property is evaluated by 0.5 points which is then explained in detail and means that women have a guarantee of access to land and other property by legislation. However, cultural, religious or social norms limit the possibilities of practical implementation of these rights and thus women are discriminated.<sup>14</sup>



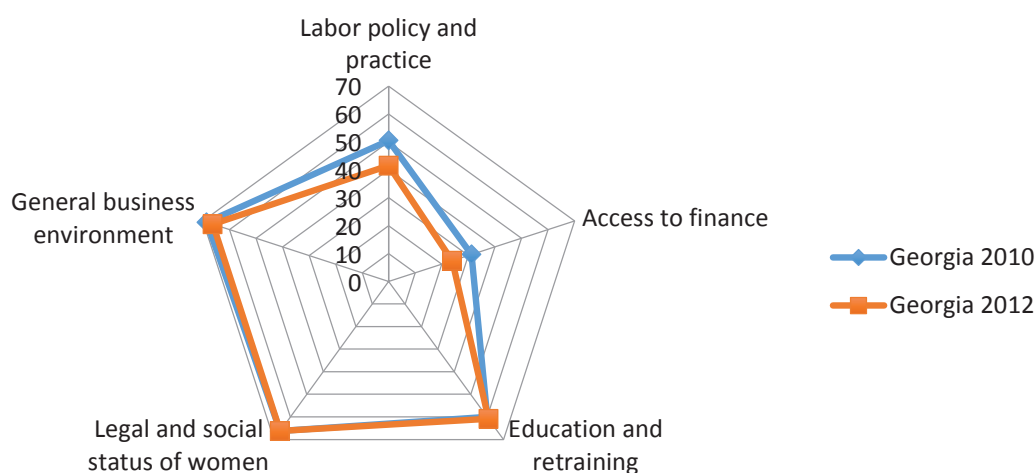
**Chart #3: Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI), Georgia Indicators. 2014 (source: OECD).**

12 World Economic Forum; *The Global Gender Gap Report 2017*. Available at: [[http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_GGGR\\_2017.pdf](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2017.pdf)]

13 Bendeliani N.; "Assessment of Gender Equality in Georgia based on International Indexes and Rankings." Social Sciences Center, UNFPA, 2012. P.31

14 OECD Development Center; *Social Institutions & Gender Index 2014*, Available at: [[http://www.genderindex.org/country/georgia/#\\_ftn88](http://www.genderindex.org/country/georgia/#_ftn88)]

Intelligence Unit of the Economist, one of the leading publications of the world, also publishes Women's Economic Opportunity Index. Two publications are published in 2010 and 2012. According to 2012 data, Georgia ranks 59<sup>th</sup> out of 128 countries with 54.5 points. However, considering the revenue classifiers, Georgia is ranked fifth among the lower middle-income countries and is behind Ukraine, Albania, Tunisia and Thailand. As for the change in time, compared to 2010, Georgia has only 4.4 points improvement in 2012. Looking at a broader picture makes it apparent that Georgia is not distinguished by leading ranks even among the countries of Eastern Europe and Central Asia. According to 2012 report, Georgia ranks 18<sup>th</sup> among 29 countries. It should be noted that the region's leader is Lithuania, followed by Slovenia, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Bulgaria. The experience of Lithuania and Slovakia will be discussed further in the appendix below. The assessment report for the region specifies that almost all countries have a proper legislative base concerning discrimination at workplace, access to property and other indicators but the problem is the failure of the monitoring and enforcement mechanism. Index relies on and assesses the following criteria: labor policy and practice, access to finances, education and retraining, legal and social status of women and finally the general business environment in the country. The indicators of Georgia are shown in detail below in the diagram and table:



**Chart #4: Women's Economic Opportunity Index 2012, data of Georgia (source: The Economist, Intelligent Unit).**

According to the Women's Economic Opportunity Index, Georgia has the highest scores in general business environment and legal and social status indicators, and the lowest scores in access to finances and labor practices. Improvement are needed towards the practice of equal pay, women's political participation and formation of credit history for women (sub-indicators detailed in Appendix 1). Before analyzing women's economic empowerment policy and initiatives in Georgia, the meaning of women's economic empowerment needs to be further defined.

## WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT ANALYTIC FRAMEWORK

Various authors explain the concept of women's economic empowerment differently. Some think that women's economic empowerment is the process of establishing women's equal access and control over economic resources. The same also implies the use of resources by women to better control the different aspects of their lives.<sup>15</sup> Similar opinion is developed by another theorist O'Neil *et al.* The article suggests that women's economic empowerment involves the process of personal and social changes in psycho-social, political, social and economic contexts through which women individually or collectively acquire the power, choice and control over their lives.<sup>16</sup>

If we consider economic empowerment as a process, then we should assume that the process takes place in different dimensions. Consequently, there should be several dimensions of empowerment: **self-empowerment, mutual empowerment - between people, and social empowerment** which results in social actions. All three types of empowerment depends on each other, while social empowerment is achieved by elimination of social, economic and legal obstacles. Women's economic empowerment includes all three dimensions. There are also different layers of empowerment where women's empowerment is taking place, such as: individual, family, group, organizational, community, national and global levels. At the end of the process we get economically empowered woman who has the opportunity to be economically successful and to have the power to make economic decisions.<sup>17</sup> Finally this processes is ended by enabling a woman to be a full-fledged economic actor. However, due to a multifaceted nature of the process itself, it is often very difficult to focus only on one aspect.

When discussing women's economic empowerment, we should also consider the analytical framework of the feminist approach to this issue. Gender is the main analytical framework for feminist analysis. Gender roles and expectations are linked to social institutions. Feminist economic analysis examines four social institutions: the state, the market, the society and the household. In this prism the family (household) considers the traditional gender distribution of roles where men are managing the household. On a macroeconomic level gender-based division of work, gender-motivated work pay, decision making and gender aspects of economic power are the main intellectual postulates for the feminist political economy. At the microeconomic level feminist perspective focuses on individual and institutional economic activities, which also includes economic activity of household. At this level, gender division of labor, roles and responsibilities, access to resources and decision-making process represent the main research area. Finally, for mesoeconomic level the main aspects include the legislative basis, the norms and the rules which ensure participation and accessibility.<sup>18</sup>

For more accuracy, it is necessary to define the meaning of women's economic empowerment in more details:

### Women's economic empowerment means:

1. **Power from Within:** knowledge, individual opportunities, sense of the rights, self-evaluation and self-confidence in order for individuals to make changes in their own life (including the ability to acquire knowledge for the job or start-up business).
2. **Power to:** opportunities to make economic decisions in the household, community and local economy, and to engage not only in areas that are traditionally regarded as women's work, but also in areas where men are usually dominant.

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15 Taylor G. & Perezniето P; *Review of Evaluation Approaches and Methods used by Interventions on Women and Girls' Economic Empowerment*. March 2014, Shaping Policy for Development.

16 O'Neil T., Domingo P. & Valters C.; *Progress on Women's Empowerment. From Technical Fixes to Political Action*. Accessed: [<https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/9282.pdf>]

17 Golla A. et al; *Understanding and Measuring Women's Economic Empowerment: Definition, Framework and Indicators*. International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) 2011.

18 Riley M.; *A Feminist Political Economic Framework, Center of Concern*. March 2008. Accessed: [[https://www.coc.org/files/Riley%20-%20FPE\\_0.pdf](https://www.coc.org/files/Riley%20-%20FPE_0.pdf)] Also see: Pr. Kabeer N. *Women's Economic Empowerment and Inclusive Growth: Labour Markets and Enterprise Development*. SIG Working Paper 2012/1, UK's Department for International Development (DFID) and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC). Pg. 7 Accessed: [<https://www.idrc.ca/sites/default/files/sp/Documents%20EN/NK-WEE-Concept-Paper.pdf>]

**3. Power Over:** access, control and management of financial, material and knowledge-based assets, including access to employment and activities related to other sources of income.

**4. Power With:** opportunity to organize themselves and extend economic activities and rights.<sup>19</sup>

The complexity of the process of women's economic empowerment is further aggravated by the fact that along with various layers, there are multiple elements involved that should be taken into account by the actors involved in the process because otherwise sustainable results cannot be achieved. These elements are:

- Legal, regulatory, political framework
- Education, skills development and retraining
- Gender-related social norms
- Access to property, assets and financial services
- Access to quality paid job
- Peculiarities of job market
- Social protection
- Collective action and leadership
- Paying attention to the burden of unpaid work
- Fiscal policy.<sup>20</sup>

Given that women's economic empowerment, together with their political empowerment, represents an important benchmark on the way of gender equality, it is important to summarize and review the experience accumulated in Georgia in this respect.

From statistical data and various indexes assessing gender equality, it is clear that women in Georgia are in very unequal situation. As mentioned above, this inequality is caused, further strengthened and nurtured by the cultural, social and religious norms of the country. Gender inequality and its hardest consequence - violence against women - is almost impossible to overcome without women's economic empowerment. Because of such an importance of this issue, we considered it necessary to study what Georgia's policy towards women's economic empowerment is and what initiatives are being implemented in this direction.

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<sup>19</sup> Hunt A & Samman E.; *Women's Economic Empowerment. Navigating Enablers and Constraints*. Overseas Development Institute, 2016 September. Pg. 9. Also see: VeneKlasen L & Miller V. *Power and Empowerment*. PLA Notes, 2002. 43: Pg. 49-42. Accessed: [<http://pubs.iied.org/pdfs/G01985.pdf>]

<sup>20</sup> Hunt A & Samman E.; *Women's Economic Empowerment. Navigating Enablers and Constraints*. Overseas Development Institute, 2016 September. Pg. 12

## **AIM OF THE RESEARCH**

The aim of the research is to support the formulation of policy in Georgia that would be oriented at women's economic empowerment.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH**

In order to achieve the aim of the research, the following objectives were established:

- To collect the information on the initiatives for women's economic empowerment in Georgia over the past ten years;
- To identify the basic characteristics of initiatives implemented in the direction of women's economic empowerment;
- To overview women's economic empowerment policy of Georgia based on selected indicators and to deliver the recommendations to the Government;
- To study the World's/Region's best practices in the field of women's economic empowerment.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The research is of qualitative nature. Based on the aim and objectives of the research, different elements of qualitative research were used. The research aims, objectives and target group have been identified based on the desk research as well as analysis of legislative and policy documents. In-depth interviews were conducted with the target group of the research while through the analysis of secondary sources we collected and summarized the basic quantitative data regarding the target group and the initiatives implemented by them.

### **Scope of the Research**

In order to achieve the objectives set by the research, three sectors - public, non-government and corporate sectors – were included in our study due to their essential role in women's economic empowerment. More specifically, the research was conducted in the following three main directions:

1. Study of the State mechanisms, legislation and policy in the context of gender equality and women's economic empowerment;
2. Assessment of projects financed by the different donor organizations in the direction of women's economic empowerment;
3. Research of the policy implemented in the corporate sector in terms of economic empowerment of women.

### **Sampling**

At the first stage of the research, the working group was established which involved a group of experts and analysts working on women's economic empowerment in Georgia. Based on active consultations with the mentioned working group as well as on literature review, we have considered that for the objectives of the research the following are the basic characteristics of women's economic empowerment:

- Access to social and economic infrastructure;
- Access to property: laws that protect women's property rights; practice of the use of laws;

- Access to finance (credits, loans);
- Access to education: education level; opportunities for professional development; access to new technologies;
- Access to income: increase of material and financial resources; improvement of income stability;
- Access to Employment: job-finding skills; opportunities to be involved in a formal economy; working conditions; remuneration;
- Access to entrepreneurship: share of women leaders in small and large enterprises; share of women involved in start-up businesses; grants issued for women, women's role in the enterprise, and their real duties;
- Access to career growth
- Satisfaction with life: self-esteem; self-confidence; increase in free time;
- Socio-cultural barriers: gender norms; women's role in economics; attitudes toward the entrepreneur/farmer women.

Selected initiatives are oriented at one or more of these characteristics.

## Field work

Afterwards, the research was conducted in three directions. The methodology and approach used in researching each target group's policy and initiative is described below.

1. **During the research of the mechanisms, legislation and policy of the State in terms of gender equality and women's economic empowerment**, legislative framework and strategic policy documents have been analyzed. The agencies which are or should be the main actors in formulating women's economic policies have been identified, which are: on a legislative level - Gender Equality Council; on executive level – Office of the Adviser to the Prime Minister on Human Rights and Gender Issues, Department of Gender Equality at Ombudsman's Office, Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development, Ministry of Agriculture, and Department of Labor and Employment Policy of the Ministry of Labor, Health and Social Affairs. After initial communication with the relevant agencies, in-depth interviews were conducted with the persons responsible for policy development. Since the State does not have a separate program for women's economic empowerment, those programs which involve the elements of women's economic empowerment were studied. In particular: Produce in Georgia, Program for the Development of Cooperatives, programs of the Ministry of Agriculture and programs of the Innovations and Technology Agency. Interviews were conducted with the representatives of these programs and we also requested gender-based segregated data of the same initiatives. In this part of the research, the data on agricultural land ownership was requested from the National Agency of Public Registry.
2. **During the assessment of the projects funded by various donors in the direction of women's economic empowerment**, those projects were identified based on desk-research which had been implemented in 2006-2016 and which meet the above-listed criteria. We composed a list of up to 30 initiatives implemented by donors and local NGOs. All the programs included in the list are those regarding which public information is available on the website of the relevant organization. The Donor Coordination Council database was processed and we contacted donor organizations as well as non-governmental organizations via emails and requested the list of projects they implemented over the last ten years.

After compiling the most comprehensive list of projects, the data collected regarding each project was sorted and systematized. In order to fully cover the relevant projects, the principle of snowball was also used for the selection of projects aimed at women's economic empowerment. In-depth interviews were conducted with a representative of each project, in some cases it was funding

international organization, in other cases local non-governmental organization implementing the project. Our goal was to meet both – the representatives of donor organizations as well as implementer organization for all projects, but this was not possible in case of every project.

The next stage for the study of the State policy and the programs implemented by the donor organizations was direct interview with beneficiaries. These interviews were conducted across the country and we met one or two beneficiaries from each program. There was a tendency that individuals were beneficiaries of several projects and thus we could cover several projects during the interview with them.

In total, 31 in-depth interviews were conducted in both directions of the research. 22 interviews were conducted with the representatives of the State and of the programs of donor organizations as well as of the agencies responsible for the formation of government policies. 9 interviews were conducted with the grantee-beneficiaries of their programs.

**3. The research of the policy implemented in the private sector in the context of women's economic empowerment** was conducted based on a different approach due to peculiarities of this sector. The policy of women's empowerment implemented by the main employers of the private sector was analyzed. The study covered both – the desk research and the field work based on surveys. The study involved both commercial companies as well as organizations that promote women's empowerment in private sector in Georgia.

As a target of the study, the commercial companies have been selected from the following sectors:

1. Industry (17.1%)
2. Trade (16.3%)
3. Transport and communication (10.1%)
4. Agriculture and fisheries (9.3%)
5. Construction (8.3%)
6. Operations in real estate (6.6%)
7. Health and Social Assistance (5.8%)
8. Financial sector

Selection of the sectors was made according to their contribution to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of Georgia. The above-listed sectors are the biggest contributors to Georgian economy (their share in GDP is indicated in parentheses. Source: Geostat, Gross Domestic Product of Georgia, 2016). Companies were selected based on their scale and level of publicity. As for the organizations promoting women's empowerment in the private sector, in-depth interviews were conducted with the relevant representative of the **Millennium Challenge Georgia** as well as with the representative of the **European Bank for Reconstruction and Development**.

As a result of the work in these three directions, we have composed a single database on the initiatives implemented in Georgia over the last ten years that have been aimed at women's economic empowerment. Best practices have been identified. In addition, the relevance of the type of activity with the target group and the main types of projects implemented by the majority of organizations have been discerned. An overview of the international practice was also carried out and based on the existing data the strategy and recommendations were developed for each target group on how to ensure women's economic empowerment and policy planning.

## RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH

### THE MECHANISMS, LEGISLATION AND POLICY OF THE STATE IN THE CONTEXT OF GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

#### Institutional Mechanisms

Since gaining independence, the development of institutional mechanisms for gender equality in Georgia has been consistent but slow. Gender equality in legislative terms is guaranteed by the Constitution of Georgia and the Law on Gender Equality adopted in 2010<sup>21</sup>, according to which the State should promote equality of women and men in the country's economic life. Gender Equality Council, which has been functioning since 2004, is set-up at a legislative body. Its aim is to create legislative basis for gender equality, to review and approve relevant strategies, as well as raise awareness and support measures to promote women's empowerment. The Council participated in the elaboration of the "2014-2016 Action Plan for the Implementation of Gender Equality Policy in Georgia". The third part of the Action Plan provides a list of measures to ensure gender equality in economic sphere. Namely, taking into consideration the principles of gender equality in economic policy and employment, which is expressed in conducting gender analysis in public and private sectors and promoting women's involvement in vocational colleges "within the capabilities". The document does not include the means to eliminate discriminatory practices in higher education because women should have already been encouraged at the level of secondary education to pursue "non-traditional" specialties. Of course, the vocational education is also of great importance.<sup>22</sup> The majority of employed people in a job market are qualified by higher education, and in universities there is a tendency of differentiation between so-called masculine and feminine specialties. If we look at the activities of the donors and the State, gender budgeting has become one of the most important directions in recent years. Under the auspices of the Gender Equality Council, the study - "Gender Analysis of the 2016 Budget of Georgia" was conducted which combines the institutional and legislative mechanisms that contribute to gender-balanced policies.

At the level of the executive government, the position of Assistant/Adviser to the Prime Minister on Human Rights and Gender Equality issues is worth mentioning. This position supervises the issues concerning gender equality and violence against women. This was a kind of additional powers and responsibilities within the Human Rights Secretariat which also accompanied by the Inter-Agency Council on Violence and Discrimination. It is noteworthy that the Council has been transformed into a permanent Commission in which all the representatives of the cabinet of the executive branch are included; a contact person working on gender equality issues is appointed in each ministry and one of the deputy-ministers supervises the issue.

As regards various State agencies, it is noteworthy that at the Office of Public Defender there is a Gender Equality Department that monitors the situation on gender equality, publishes periodic reports and elaborates recommendations. Also, there is a position of Advisor on Gender Equality issues at the Ministry of Defense that monitors the gender equality strategy of the Ministry. In 2016, the Ministry of IDPs developed a Gender Equality Strategy and Action Plan which aims to create a Gender Advisor position in 2017 and considers to appoint a gender contact person at the territorial level. With respect to economic empowerment, gender contact persons are also appointed at the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development, Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Labor and Health.

The internal institutional arrangement shows that the State has those minimal mechanisms that can eradicate gender discrimination and economic violence, but it is also interesting how effective these institutions are in practice, and whether the work for women empowerment is coordinated. Here we will discuss the international commitments taken by Georgia and the dynamics or willingness of their implementation.

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21 Parliament of Georgia. *Law on Gender Equality*, 26 May, 2010. Legislative Herald of Georgia. Available at: [<https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/91624>]

22 Parliament of Georgia. *Gender Equality Policy Implementation Action Plan of Georgia 2014-2016*. January 24, 2014. Legislative Herald of Georgia. Available at: [<https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/2235622>]

## International Commitments

When we talk about women's economic empowerment and gender equality we should not forget the efforts undertaken by different international organizations in this direction. In particular, the UN agencies (UNDP, UN Women, UNFPA), the World Bank, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Oxfam/BRIDGE, the European Union (EU) and other important organizations which create international agenda on women's economic empowerment. However, we should emphasize the principles of economic empowerment of women under the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations as well as how the implementation of those principles are ensured. In 2015, the world's 193 countries agreed on 17 principles of sustainable development. Among those, the achievement of gender equality in countries around the world takes an important place. Gender Equality is the fifth goal of sustainable development, the paragraph 5.5 of which includes full and effective involvement of and equal opportunities for women to take positions at all levels of decision making in the political, economic and public sphere. Its measurement is carried out by two indicators: number of women in the Parliament or local self-governance bodies and the number of women on managerial positions. Also, Section 5.A aims at implementing reforms in order to grant equal rights to women over economic resources as well as access to and right to dispose the land or other property, financial service, heritage and natural resources in accordance with national legislation. The criterion for the fulfillment of this objective is the following: women's share among the owners of and/or right holders over agricultural land, in accordance with the type of ownership right. Also, the goal 5.B calls for increased women's involvement in the use of technology, especially information technology for promoting women's empowerment.

It should be noted that Georgia has already begun voluntary process of nationalization of sustainable development objectives (SDG) and takes relevant obligations. This itself means that nationalization of indicators is reflected in politics. The initial version of the Nationalization Plan was presented in July 2016.<sup>23</sup>

As for the other international commitments undertaken by Georgia, the European Social Charter signed in 2005 obligates Georgia to make such significant changes as: equal pay for equal work to women and men,<sup>24</sup> as well as recognizing the special needs of nursing mothers. However, not all the articles and paragraphs of the European Social Charter are mandatory for Georgia. The UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (PFA) should also be mentioned here. Georgia is a member of the Beijing Platform and has the CEDAW Convention ratified.

From CEDAW's 2014 recommendations to Georgia, it is worth noting that the Commission recognizes the achievements of Georgia, such as the amendment of the Labor Code to improve women's working conditions and tightening the legislation concerning domestic violence. However, there are issues that need to be solved, for example: ineffectiveness of the mechanisms ensuring equality despite the existence of legislative clauses and low level of public awareness; lack of financial or administrative resources allocated for institutional mechanisms for gender equality existing at the executive and legislative levels. The Committee also notes the absence of temporary and special measures, such as: quotas and temporary measures with respect to marginalized and vulnerable women: women in rural areas, ethnic minorities, elderly women and women with disabilities. As CEDAW notes, the State should also take care of: stereotypes in society; effective mechanisms for eradicating domestic violence; rural women's access to resources; and participation of girls and women in STEM subjects.<sup>25</sup>

As for the labor relations, the International Labor Organization (ILO) states that Georgia has ratified all the fundamental conventions, however the number of non-ratified conventions reaches 63. This list includes an important convention for women's economic empowerment, such as: Domestic Worker's Convention, which came into force in 2013 and is an important tool for the recognition of women's family work.<sup>26</sup>

As we see, international organizations emphasize the weakness of implementation mechanisms in the

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23 United Nations. *Preliminary version of Nationalized SDGs Georgia*. 2016. Accessible: [<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/10683Annex%20-Preliminary%20version%20of%20Nationalized%20SDGs%20Georgia.pdf>]

24 European Social Charter, Strasbourg 3 V 1996, para. 4, sub-para. 3 1996. Accessible: [<http://www.ombudsman.ge/uploads/other/1/1199.pdf>]

25 CEDAW. *Concluding Observations on the fourth and fifth periodic reports of Georgia*, 26 June 2014. Accessed: [<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=14787&LangID=E>]

26 International Labour Organization (ILO); *Up to date protocols and conventions not ratified by Georgia*. September 2017 Accessed: [[http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:11210:0::NO:11210:P11210\\_COUNTRY\\_ID:102639](http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:11210:0::NO:11210:P11210_COUNTRY_ID:102639)]

country as well as the necessity of defeating prevailing gender stereotypes in the society. Not making progress in this respect is what distinguishes Georgia from Western and Northern European countries. As Appendix 2 shows, Georgia has almost all of the institutional and legislative mechanisms existing in Lithuania and Slovenia; however, in the absence of a comprehensive approach the legislative and institutional mechanisms become ineffective.

## Government Policy

As regards Governmental strategic documents, one of the defining documents of the country's economic policy is the Social-Economic Development Strategy – 2020 which was elaborated in 2014 and was soon replaced by a new, so called Four-point Plan in 2016: "Liberty, Fast Development and Prosperity". It should be noted that the strategy adopted in 2014 was sterile in the context of gender; gender inequality, not mentioning economic violence, was not mentioned at all. However, unlike this document, the government program adopted in 2016 is more inclusive and aims at ensuring gender equality. It states that: "effective measures will be taken in all areas of public life, especially in political and economic sphere, and at the level of decision-making, to protect gender equality. A quick and effective response will be provided on each fact of violation of gender equality. The government will promote awareness of gender equality issues."<sup>27</sup> The State declares the inclusive economic growth as a cornerstone for economic development, which implies the maximum utilization of human resources in the development of the country. As a strategic document, the Four-point Plan is a significant step forward; however, the main criticism still comes over the effective mechanisms for the implementation of the stipulations and goals included in the document. In the context of inclusive economic development, giving strategic importance to the issue of women's economic empowerment is essential because the State cannot be effective in the use of human resources if from year to year women represent the biggest portion of economically inactive and unemployed population.

As for the other important strategic documents, gender approach is more or less used in the 2014-2020 Human Rights Strategy of Georgia. The strategy speaks about human rights-based approaches that involve the consideration of different needs of men and women in various areas in order to achieve gender equality. The document also focuses on domestic violence and the protection of women's rights, and from the list of objectives for achieving this latter, only one objective refers to political empowerment and mentions economic empowerment too.<sup>28</sup>

We also reviewed the documents regarding ongoing and planned activities in Georgian economy and adjacent fields:

- Strategies of regional development: Guria, Imereti, Mtskheta-Mtianeti, Racha-Lechkhumi, Kvemo Svaneti, Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti, Samtskhe-Javakheti, Kvemo Kartli, Shida Kartli.
- Small and Medium Business Development Strategy
- Georgia's 2015-2020 Agricultural Development Strategy
- 2017-2020 Rural Development Strategy

Each document was studied and below is a summary of each:

- **Strategies of Regional Development** (Guria, Imereti, Mtskheta-Mtianeti, Racha-Lechkhumi, Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti, Samtskhe-Javakheti, Kvemo Kartli, Shida Kartli): most of these strategies (except of Samtskhe-Javakheti and Shida Kartli) include: "gender indicators" where the women's participation in the life of a region is overviewed and is noted that low participation of women represents a problem and necessary steps should be taken in this regard.

Part of the strategies is an assessment of strengths and weaknesses of the regions. The weaknesses identified in the document indicate "gender imbalance in public and private sectors".

<sup>27</sup> Government of Georgia; *Freedom, Fast Development, Welfare – Governmental Program 2016-2020*. Accessed: [[http://mrdi.gov.ge/sites/default/files/samtavrobo\\_programa\\_2016-2020\\_tavisupleba\\_scrapi\\_ganvitareba\\_ketildgeoba.pdf](http://mrdi.gov.ge/sites/default/files/samtavrobo_programa_2016-2020_tavisupleba_scrapi_ganvitareba_ketildgeoba.pdf)]

<sup>28</sup> Parliament of Georgia; *Georgia's Human Rights Protection National Strategy Action Plan 2014-2020*. Available at: [http://gov.ge/files/428\\_51453\\_705840\\_Strategy-GEO\(1\).pdf](http://gov.ge/files/428_51453_705840_Strategy-GEO(1).pdf)

Strategies define the main goals of the regions for 2017-2021. Among these goals is “the development of media and civil society sector and securing the elimination of gender inequality”. The mentioned goal is to be achieved by the following objective: planning and implementation of measures promoting gender equality.

- **Small and Medium Business Development Strategy:** Small and Medium Business Development Strategy puts relatively higher emphasis on the issue of women’s economic empowerment. According to the Strategy, “strengthening and promoting women’s entrepreneurship is important for advancing inclusive growth.” However, among the five priority directions of the Strategy (Strategic Direction 1: advancing legislative, institutional and entrepreneurial environment; Strategic Direction 2: improving access to financial resources; Strategic Direction 3: development of skills for small and medium sized entrepreneurship and promotion of entrepreneurial culture; Strategic Direction 4: export promotion and internationalization of small and medium enterprises; Strategic Direction 5: supporting innovation, research and development) only one (development of skills for small and medium sized entrepreneurship and promotion of entrepreneurial culture) includes the measures aimed at women’s empowerment. These measures are prescribed in the priority objective: “Priority Action 3.9: promote women entrepreneurship. For the purposes of promoting women entrepreneurship and engagement of women in business activities, gap analysis and needs assessment will be conducted. Taking into account the results of the analysis, the relevant measures will be developed to support women’s entrepreneurship. Also, with the involvement and participation of stakeholders, the platform will be established which will be aimed at the dialogue and the promotion of more active engagement of women in entrepreneurship. Women’s participation in the State programs will be supported, including in the component called Micro and Small Entrepreneurship Development in the Regions of the program - “Produce in Georgia” as well as in the projects promoting innovation.” Entrepreneurship Development Agency and Innovation and Technology Agency are responsible for the implementation of these priority actions.
- **Georgia’s 2015-2020 Agricultural Development Strategy:** the issue of women’s empowerment is only noted in the concluding part of the Agricultural Development Strategy. “In the process of implementation of the Strategy, the gender-related information will also be collected for conducting further detailed analysis. This will be necessary for the development of a policy that will promote women’s involvement in agriculture and agribusiness. Special programs will be developed that will determine the needs with respect to gender equality, minority, elderly, rural youth, less developed regions and vulnerable groups.”
- **Rural Development Strategy 2017-2020:** the necessity of empowering women in rural areas is set as a goal by the Rural Development Strategy. One of its three strategic objectives - Social Conditions and Living Standards - includes the involvement of rural population, especially women, in solving local problems. However, the first strategic objective which talks about diversification of rural economy, does not mention any need for economic empowerment of women and for their better inclusion in agricultural activities.

To summarize, it should be noted that only one policy document of Georgia - Small and Medium Business Development Strategy - defines the objectives and actions (along with responsible persons) necessary for economic empowerment of women. It should also be noted that in this Strategy, which consists of 5 priorities, only one priority speaks about the measures necessary for women’s economic empowerment. And in the priority areas, such as access to finances, innovation and research, this issue is neglected. This is particularly unfavorable on the background that access to finances as well as shift from stereotypical to high-income areas is essential for women’s economic empowerment. Also, while economic participation of women in rural areas is an acute problem, the absence of a component on women’s economic empowerment in the Strategies on agriculture and rural development should be emphasized.

## WOMEN'S ENGAGEMENT IN STATE PROJECTS

During the research period from 2006 to 2016, the State had not implemented any project where the declared goal would be the economic empowerment of women. However, in the projects implemented by the two agencies under the relevant Ministries, increase of women's engagement and their economic activity was a priority. In particular, these projects are: Produce in Georgia and the Program on the Development of Cooperatives. Accordingly, these projects will be reviewed below.

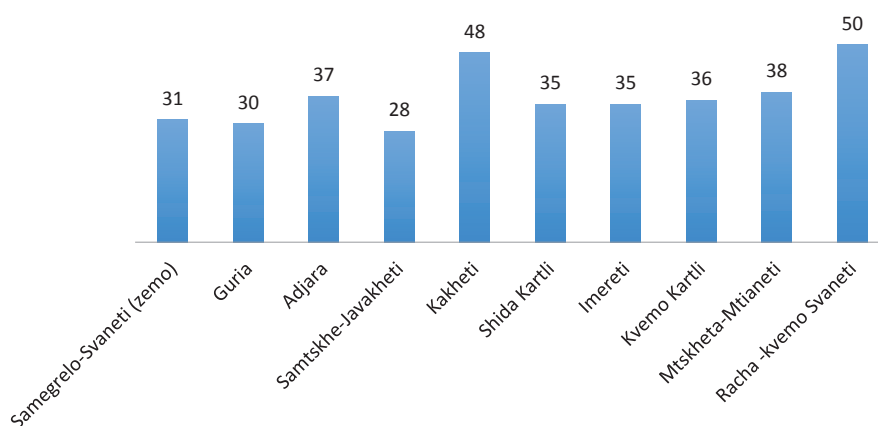
### Produce in Georgia

The project – Produce in Georgia - was established in 2014 under the leadership of the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development. The program is directed towards the development and promotion of the production and its main goal is to support the entrepreneurs and to develop entrepreneurship in Georgia. The program includes three components: access to financial resources, provision of immovable property and consulting services.<sup>29</sup> Accordingly, the Agency issues grants to entrepreneurs in the amount of 5 000, 10 000 and 15,000 GEL and also provides technical support to them. The Program has a larger industrial element in which immovable property is also provided and this element is governed by the Projects' Management Agency of the Ministry of Agriculture. According to the statement of the representative of Produce in Georgia, in total 3205 business ideas have been funded so far, thus covering approximately 4900 beneficiaries/individuals. Technical assistance and retraining was provided to 8880 individuals. The project was implemented in three stages, and the Agency took the initiative to support women entrepreneurs starting from the very first year. This means that in the first phase of the project, at least 20% of the total number of grantee beneficiaries would be women, and in 2016 - 30%. As regards the distribution of beneficiaries according to regions, most problems arose with the women living in rural areas:

*"It's a bit harder for women in rural areas, perhaps because of stereotypes, but... what we have observed during the project is that today cultural peculiarities often represent the obstacles. And why now. Especially in Southern Georgia, where the population is heterogeneous, based on ethnic minority traditions. When a training was held, a spouse often accompanied her to attend it, and so on. There were such precedents, and perhaps it is a limiting factor of their activity, as in a classical sense "(Interview with the State Representative)*

This is confirmed by the information provided by the Ministry of Economy where women's participation in the Micro and Small Entrepreneurship Promotion component of Produce in Georgia is broken-down by regions. In the process of selecting beneficiaries for the program, the first stage is training, after which the participants write a business plan and only then the grants are issued on the basis of the competition.

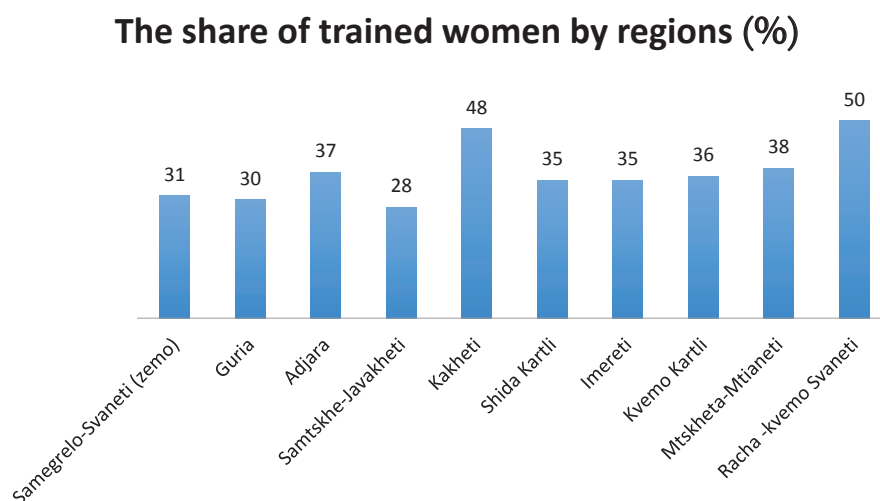
#### The share of trained women by regions (%)



**Chart #5: Trained women's share in the Micro and Small Entrepreneurship Promotion Program represented according to the regions (Source: Ministry of Economy)**

<sup>29</sup> Produce in Georgia, official webpage. Available at: <http://qartuli.ge/geo/sub/about-program/program-details/>

As the diagram shows, women's involvement in trainings' stage is highest in Racha-Kvemo Svaneti and Kakheti, and the lowest in Samtskhe-Javakheti. As for the second stage - the grant program, the share of women participants according to the regions looks like the following:



**Chart #6: Share of beneficiary women in the Micro and Small Entrepreneurship Promotion Program**  
(source: Ministry of Economy)

The tendency does not change substantially regarding the beneficiaries too, where Samtskhe-Javakheti has the lowest share of beneficiaries and Kakheti, Samegrelo and Svaneti take leading positions.

Overall, according to the data from both years, 40% of the beneficiaries of grants issued for small and medium-sized enterprises are women. Numerically this is an acceptable number, but there is a qualitative dimension that shows that women's privileged position is limited to small and medium-sized business. When it comes to large-scale grants and enterprises, there are almost no women represented. Namely, industrial and agricultural components of Produce in Georgia comprise only a several dozen enterprises. From this, we requested the list of enterprises funded under the agricultural component by Agricultural Projects' Management Agency of the Ministry of Agriculture. Analysis of the Public Registry documents concerning 17 funded enterprises showed that the absolute majority of board of directors and of the founders are men. Only two women are identified as deputy chairmen of the board of directors. This determines women's share as 0.05%. Consequently, we can conclude that women's economic activity, as well as political representation, does not go beyond the level of middle management and there is a dominance of men at high positions.

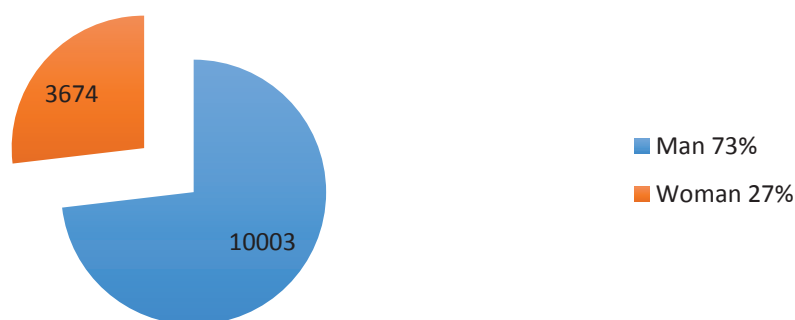
## Program on the Development of Cooperatives

Empowering the women in rural areas is one of the challenges for the State. 2012-2022 Strategy on the Development of Agriculture was the first document where the measures directed at eradicating systemic shortcomings of agriculture were included.<sup>30</sup> The promotion of cooperation in agriculture was then defined by the Government as one of the most important directions which was followed by the adoption of the Law on Agricultural Cooperatives in 2013. The Law envisaged the set-up of the Agency for the Development of Cooperatives, which would be the Legal Entity of Public Law (LEPL) under the Ministry of Agriculture.<sup>31</sup> Functions and responsibilities of the Agency include: granting the status to agricultural cooperatives as well as providing consultations to them regarding legal, institutional, production and other issues. The status was granted to first cooperative on March 7, 2014. As for today there are 1538 agricultural cooperatives registered which include 13677 individuals out of which 3674 are women.

<sup>30</sup> Government of Georgia; Georgia's *Strategy on Development of Agriculture 2012-2022*. Available at: <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/2280820>

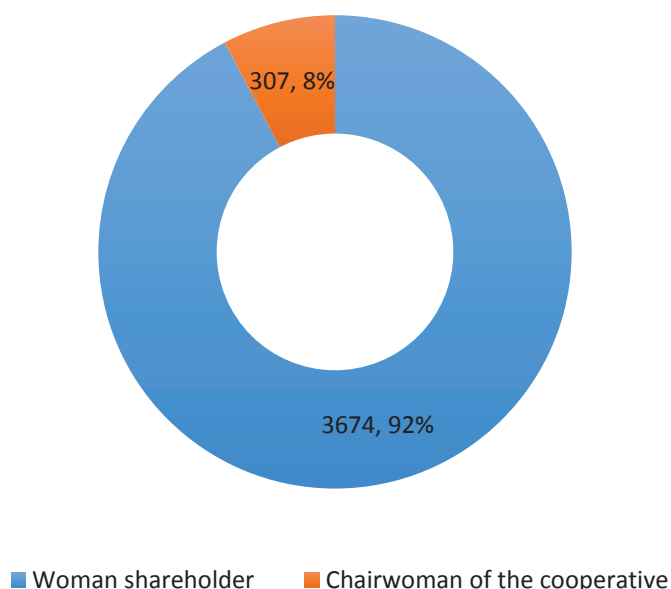
<sup>31</sup> Law of Georgia on Agricultural Cooperatives. 2013. Available at: <http://acda.gov.ge/res/docs/2016010616174218682.pdf>

## Composition of cooperatives



**Chart #7: Gender analysis of cooperatives. (Source: Agency for the Development of Cooperatives)**

From 3674 women only 307 are the cooperative chairmen, the rest are shareholders. Therefore, we can say that only 8% of the women involved in the program of cooperatives hold the leading position. Also, only 20% of the total number of cooperatives is headed by women.



**Chart #8: Gender analysis of cooperatives. (Source: Agency for the Development of Cooperatives)**

As for the cooperatives where all members are women, there are 61 such cooperatives registered with 389 women members. It is worth noting that sustainability of women's cooperatives could be problematic because the initial data from the Agency for the Development of Cooperatives showed 81 cooperatives where all members were women, but due to the shortcomings in the list it was later updated and included the reduced number of cooperatives. According to the representative of the Agency, the data is constantly changing. From this we can assume that through ENPAD and other programs, women's cooperatives were promoted; however, it is difficult to maintain the result beyond a single effect.

Since 2015, the Agency for the Development of Cooperatives has actively started to launch State programs in different directions. One of the first cooperatives that was financed was nut plant comprised of 500 shareholders<sup>32</sup> and located in Samegrelo, village Darcheli. Approximately 34% of cooperative shareholders were women. The second important field is beekeeping, which is one of the most popular area for women's engagement. The program has a prerequisite that if every member of the agricultural cooperative are women, then they would receive beehives based on 20% co-payment instead of 30%. As for the other fields, it has not been possible to promote women's participation in them due to peculiarities of those fields:

*"The grant programs that are announced, that are tied to members. That is, where gender could*

<sup>32</sup> Member of cooperative

*be identified we invested there, one was the nut program and the other was beekeeping program. Other programs that we implement are dairy programs in which case financing is tied to the quantity of cattle, and one more program is viticulture and there funding is linked to vineyard area. In one case, the milk processing equipment is given, and in the second case - the equipment needed for the processing of grape. That means we could not identify the sex there because it was tied to the cattle, and to the land area.” (Interview with a representative of the State agency)*

One of the respondents noted that women’s interest in the program regarding cooperatives was greater than men’s. This distinction was mainly based on the qualitative rather than quantitative part as we see from the numbers above. It was revealed that women are more prone to collaborate within the cooperative than men. Women’s activities are also increased in terms of participation in projects; growing number of women express their willingness to participate in the competition.

*“As we started, together with the EU, to actively support cooperatives, we observed a very interesting trend that ladies were much more active. They saw the benefits of collective work and of the results obtained from it sooner than, let’s say, men. They revealed some conservative approach and we had to work more with them” (Interview with a representative of the State agency)*

Women in rural areas, as a twice more vulnerable group, require special attention. However, today there is no State policy in this direction. Besides Produce in Georgia, none of the other State programs which are focused on economic empowerment considers inclusion of women in rural areas as a priority. Even there is no such criterion in any program of the Ministry of Agriculture itself.

*“Any program, any project that is processed by the Ministry is equally accessible and there is not even a small exception, let’s say, in the context of gender.” (Interview with a representative of the State agency)*

When they talk about the lack of women’s engagement and their needs, the representatives of the State entities point out that:

*“First of all, not everyone have the skills; everyone may want to start a business, but not everyone can be able to do so, right? In other words, relevant knowledge is needed. This is why there is a paragraph on women entrepreneurship in the Action Plan of SME<sup>33</sup> Strategy. This means that in order to initiate women’s entrepreneurship, it should be based on something, right? Let’s say education, skills, yes? This is a very important part ... this is a big problem ... it is natural ... these activities are also included and a number of measures have been implemented and are planned to be implemented again in this regard.” (Interview with a representative of the State agency)*

As it seems, the Ministry of Economy mostly focuses on the development of education and business skills, while none of the respondents indicate gender-based segregation of specialties in education and the need to work in this regard. However, when it comes to education and especially encouraging women’s involvement in STEM fields, Georgia’s Innovations and Technology Agency attempts to improve situation in this respect through its projects.

## StartUp Georgia

As for the second largest project implemented by the Innovations and Technology Agency of the Ministry of Economy, it does not have a specific strategy for women’s economic empowerment. However in Small and Medium Business Development Strategy, the Agency is responsible for the “priority action 3.9 – promoting women entrepreneurship”. The Agency implemented a small number of projects related to women’s empowerment – for instance, Hackathon Women for Programming. Also, the Agency conducts campaigns and public meetings to defeat the stereotype that technologies/innovations are inappropriate fields for women. In addition, they had a special training for women and social entrepreneurs – “make useless useful”. Below is a gender distribution of participants in the Agency’s programs (source: Innovations and Technology Agency):

Women represent **37%** of the beneficiaries of the projects **implemented by the Agency in January-April 2017**. In particular:

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33 Author’s note: Small and Medium Business Development Strategy

- From 20 funded beneficiaries within the **Micro Grants Program**, 3 (15%) are women
- From 100 applications filed in the Industrial Laboratory, 41 (41%) belongs to women.
- **Business Incubator** has 8 teams with 32 members, of which 4 (12%) are women. 85 people participated in all three cohorts of Business Incubator, of which 14 (16.5%) were women.
- From 174 trainers trained within the framework of **Information Technology Specialists Retraining Program**, 36 (20%) are women. And, from 507 beneficiaries coached by the trainers during a given period, 200 (40%) are women.
- From 250 beneficiaries of the trainings - “**Young People for Innovative Development**” conducted in the regions, 150 (60%) are women.
- From 249 participants of the **contests on promoting innovations**, 80 (32%) are women.

It should be noted that the trend of women’s participation is lower in high-tech projects rather than in traditional start-ups. Also, women’s involvement in business is only discussed at the level of micro and small entrepreneurship and no attention is paid to industrial components.

## Women in Rural Areas - Projects of the Ministry of Agriculture

As for the gender statistics of the projects of the Ministry of Agriculture (implementer – the Agricultural Projects’ Management Agency), the Agency provided us with the data on gender balance of all the projects where participants were individuals (physical persons). Data cannot be available for the “Agricultural Products’ Processing and Storing Enterprises Co-Financing Project” and “Tea Plantation Rehabilitation Program” because only legal entities participated in these projects.

Project/Program Name	Total	Male Beneficiaries	Female Beneficiaries	Female Beneficiaries in %
Preferential Agro-Credit Project	16 631	15 412	1 219	7.3
Agro-Insurance Program	41 631	30 778	10 853	26.1
Program ‘Lay Foundation to Future’	404	330	74	18.3
Program for co-financing the modernization, market access and flexibility of agriculture (IFAD)	52	43	9	17.3
Project on supporting farmers owning small lands with springtime works	767 020	508 339	258 681	33.7

**Chart #9: Gender Balance of the Participants of Projects/Programs implemented by the Agency. Individuals and Individual Entrepreneurs. (Agricultural Projects’ Management Agency)**

As data shows, there is the highest involvement of women beneficiaries in the project on Supporting Farmers Owning Small Lands with Springtime Works, where women beneficiaries represent 33.7% of all participants. The lowest participation rate is observed in a Preferential Agro-Credit project, where women constitute only 7.3% of the total number of beneficiaries. It is noteworthy that from 41631 beneficiaries of Agro-Insurance program, only 10853 are women, and 18% are women for ‘Lay Foundation to Future’ program. Approximately the same indicator is observed in case of the program on Co-financing the Modernization, Market Access and Flexibility of Agriculture (IFAD) where only 9 out of 52 beneficiaries are women. It should be noted that the data provided by the Agency is incomplete and does not include seasonal programs, such as: Tangerine Realization Promotion Program and Non-Standard Apple Realization Program.<sup>34</sup>

Regarding the regional distribution of women beneficiaries (individuals and individual entrepreneurs) participating in the projects/programs implemented by the Agency, the results are as follows:

<sup>34</sup> Agricultural Projects’ Management Agency, official webpage [http://apma.ge/projects/read/season\\_projects/57:child](http://apma.ge/projects/read/season_projects/57:child)

Region	Women Beneficiaries
Adjara	3 946
Guria	2 317
Tbilisi	15
Imereti	377
Kakheti	2 751
Mtskheta-Mtianeti	36
Racha-Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti	17
Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti	1 441
Samtskhe-Javakheti	394
Kvemo Kartli	336
Shida Kartli	525
Total	12 155

**Chart #10: Distribution of women participating in the projects of the Ministry of Agriculture according to regions.**  
**Source: Agriculture Projects Development Agency**

It is also interesting to correlate budget and scope of the projects with respect to women's involvement.

#	Budget of 2017 projects implemented by the Agency	GEL
1	Preferential Agro-Credit	47 000 000
2	Agro-Insurance project	7 000 000
3	Program 'Lay Foundation to Future'	8 700 000
4	Agricultural Products' Processing and Storing Enterprises Co-Financing Project	9 288 940
5	Tea Plantation Rehabilitation Program	400 000
6	Program for co-financing the modernization, market access and flexibility of agriculture (IFAD)	2 700 000

*Note: "Project on Supporting Farmers Owning Small Lands with Springtime Works" was not implemented in 2017.*

**Chart #11: Budget of the programs of the Ministry of Agriculture. Source:**  
**Agriculture Projects Development Agency**

Considering the above, we can conclude that there is the highest involvement of women in one of the lowest budget projects, while in the Preferential Agro-Credit Program with largest budget – 47 million GEL – women's involvement is only 7.3%. Chairman of the Farmer Women's Association explains this fact in the following way:

*"To participate in a large budget project, there is a pay of co-financing. This is 20 percent, high enough, which woman cannot afford. Plus, let's say for the Agro Credit. If she takes the second or the third stage agro credit, she must have a very large mortgage property, which she does not have. So she tries to get a small grant that does not need a basic property... this is the reason. This is why we say that the State programs must be revised in gender context." (International and local project beneficiary)*

One of the most important issues for our study was agricultural land ownership by women, and the information regarding this was requested from the Public Registry Agency. As a result, it was found out that the total number of agricultural lands owners is 723 302, out of which 295 147 are women (40.8%). It also became clear that the State still has no full information. The total area of unspecified land is 219 015.71 hectares of which 64 245.55 hectares is owned by women, amounting to 29.3%. The specified land area is 655 775.31, whereas females hold 283 782.97, amounting to 42.3%. According to this data, women own slightly less than half of the agricultural land in Georgia, which is an unrealistic data in regards to women's economic

activity. Consequently, we can assume that several shortcomings of the above mentioned statistics are the following: agricultural land is mainly under a household ownership and as a result of marriage, both men and women are considered to be the landowners. It should also be taken into consideration that real benefit from a land goes to a man despite the fact that it is owned by a women. The women in rural areas are less likely to be leading agricultural relations. This is reflected in the data showing that households are mostly led by men. We also requested the regional statistics of land ownership which is given in the appendix.

Since we could not get comprehensive information from the Public Registry, for our analysis we needed to use agricultural census conducted by Geostat in 2014. From this, it turns out that in 639 963 family farmings in Georgia, there are only 198 176 women farmers. There are in total 1 138 333 women in agricultural households; out of them, 314 279 women are less than 25 years, and the rest are equally distributed according the age group, except the age group of 45-54 years which consists of 163 313 women.<sup>35</sup> In addition, with respect to land ownership, the data of Geostat shows a different picture. Namely, in 2016, 28.2% of the agricultural lands are owned by women. As for the sex based distribution of land in the use of farming, only 10% of the land under lease is owned by women and only 17% of the total land (including under lease) is owned by women.<sup>36</sup>

Based on the above information, we conclude that the State policy on women's empowerment in the rural areas does not exist. In addition, the absence of temporary and special measures for women empowerment represents a significant shortcoming. The State does not have the will to put the issue of women's economic empowerment on its political agenda. Accordingly, its policy is not gender-sensitive, especially in terms of economic empowerment. The State does not see any economic violence against women and therefore no preventive mechanisms are implemented.

## Main Findings

The main findings of the analysis of the policy, legislation and mechanisms of the State concerning gender equality and women's economic empowerment are the following:

### Policy Documents

- Women's economic empowerment is not a significant issue for the State since none of the relevant State policy documents discuss this issue.
- Those parts on gender equality in State policy documents are mostly due to the involvement of an international organization in the elaboration of a policy document. This emphasizes the indifference of the State towards the issue and the role of international organizations in making it urgently important.

### Legislation

- The legislative framework for gender equality is largely in line with international practice.

### Institutional Mechanisms

- There are some agencies in Georgia that are responsible for gender equality. The operation of these agencies cannot be effective without well-established and pre-defined State policy and their activities will be uncoordinated and non-systematic. In addition, the absence of the State policy has a negative impact on the functioning of these agencies as well as on the power of the relevant civil servants in decision making process. Obviously, it is difficult to achieve any results in the absence of will, policy and mandate.
- Women in rural areas, as a twice vulnerable group, require special attention. Unfortunately, there is no State policy in this direction today. Besides Produce in Georgia, none of the other State programs on economic empowerment considers the inclusion of rural women as a priority issue. There is no such criterion in any program of the Ministry of Agriculture itself.

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35 National Statistics Office of Georgia; *2014 Agricultural Census of Georgia*. Available at: [[http://census.ge/files/results/agriculture/Agricultural\\_Census\\_2014.pdf](http://census.ge/files/results/agriculture/Agricultural_Census_2014.pdf)]

36 National Statistics Office of Georgia database; Gender Statistics. [pc-axis.geostat.ge](http://pc-axis.geostat.ge)

## **Participation of Women in Economic Activities, the Tendency**

- Involvement of women in economic activity - State-sponsored programs supporting economy – is particularly difficult in rural areas where traditional stereotypes are strong.
- Women, in most cases, participate in programs developed for SMEs. Their participation is drastically reduced in large business activities. Women's involvement in one of the least funded projects is the highest, while in the Preferential Agro-Credit Program with largest budget – 47 million GEL – women's involvement is only 7.3%.
- Compared to traditional sectors, women's participation is low in high-tech startups.
- Women's economic activity, as well as their representation in the decision-making process, does not go beyond middle level management and men are dominant at high level positions.
- Those components of the State or donor organizations' projects which are specifically designed to encourage women have a positive effect on women's involvement in the projects. Nevertheless, it is difficult to sustain the level of women's involvement. This indicates two things: first, women may participate in the programs only formally, due to the proposed benefits, but actual decisions are not made by them; second, there is a necessity for such elements of the program which will be oriented at maintaining women's participation in the programs.
- Land ownership by women does not in fact influence their involvement in economic activity. Land/property ownership is an essential prerequisite for women's economic empowerment, but it is not enough to overcome the widespread cultural and social norms.

## **PROJECTS ON WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT FINANCED BY DIFFERENT DONORS**

To improve the State policy on gender equality and women's empowerment, it is necessary to share and study the experience of international donor organizations - what projects they have implemented in Georgia in this direction, what results have been achieved by those projects, and what main conclusions can be made based on the experiences of donors, implementers and beneficiaries. The study covered 20 projects implemented from 2006 to 2016. During the field work, we met international donors as well as local organizations.

It should be noted that in 2006 and even earlier, when the State institutional mechanisms of gender equality did not exist, when there was no strategy or action plan in this respect, projects on women's empowerment in Georgia were financed by international governmental and non-governmental organizations. They worked with local NGOs on the problems of women in rural areas, their economic empowerment and in general, on the issues related to women's rights in Georgia. It was therefore very interesting for this research to learn the work of non-governmental sector in this regard during the last ten years.

## **Origins of Women's Economic Empowerment**

Within the timeframe of our research, the first project which was directly related to economic empowerment of women is the grant project for women in rural areas implemented by the foundation "Taso" in 2008-2009, the donor of which was Open Society Georgia Foundation. However, it should be noted here that the Open Society Foundation launched the economic empowerment program for rural women in 2004 and the grants were issued annually. For instance, grants issued in 2007 amounted to 62 299 dollars and there were in total 35 grants issued. It is interesting what fields were financed for women's economic empowerment ten years ago. These fields include: Churchkhela production, beekeeping, fish farming, bakery, poultry, traditional crafts workshop, sewing, greenhouse, computer center and guest house. For comparison, I would like to bring the examples of the fields from the scope of our research that were financed through various projects during 2014-2016: handmade jewelry, felt making, dairying, beekeeping, sheep-farming and others. This emphasizes the

trend that women's economic activity, either in the past or today, does not go beyond small and medium sized businesses. Women's participation in bigger industrial projects is still low. Women still do not have access to resources and on the background of women's poverty most of the grants serve as a lifesaving source for women. Therefore, in Georgian reality it is recommended to maintain the sustainability of contact with beneficiaries in order for them to move to an empowerment stage and take care of the skills and knowledge development.

When we talk about sustainability, we need to point out that most of the projects covered in the research were implemented in 2011-2016, and even if constant contacts were maintained with the beneficiaries in order to achieve better impact of economic empowerment, 5-6 years might not be enough time to achieve effective results.

The second most important project for women's economic empowerment was implemented by the Association of Young Economists. The project was financed by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the project was aimed at inclusion/reintegration of women affected by August War into economic life. Trainings in entrepreneurship and business were conducted for them. In addition, the project included the consultations with beneficiaries. After that, the manual was created for entrepreneurs: "Woman in Business."

Over the years, projects of the donors had shifted from urban and central municipal locations to villages and served the empowerment of women living in rural areas. In the light of the fact that economic empowerment of rural women is not a priority for the State, with the efforts of international and local organizations, women living in different regions of Georgia were provided with the opportunities to have income and produce products. In this respect three biggest programs should be noted: ENPARD - EU funded agriculture and agriculture development program; Alliance Lesser Caucasus Georgia, a project funded by the Swiss Development and Cooperation Agency which is aimed at facilitating transition of cattle-breeding sector in three regions (Kvemo Kartli, Samtske-Javakheti, Adjara) to sustainable market economy and at developing the production of meat, dairy and honey products; third, REAP – the USAID funded project which aims to increase the diversity of production and to provide technical assistance in rural areas. All three projects are distinguished with a multi-million budget and complex structure. Most importantly, they pay special attention to women's inclusion, which once again demonstrates the necessity of mobilizing resources when planning the projects for women's economic empowerment.

Also, the EBRD's project should be noted, which is relatively new, but has a special emphasis on cooperation with financial sector regarding women's economic empowerment. The entire project is of 100 million GEL, out of which 10 million GEL is allocated for the "Woman in Business" program. Bank of Georgia is one of the implementers of this project, but in an interview with one of the beneficiaries it became clear that they do not plan to use this service due to its unfavorable conditions:

*"They said that it is announced for women at the Bank of Georgia. As if the mortgage was not required. But I came in and realized that I needed a property for mortgage. The property was demanded of course. Regarding the amount of money; so, they do not give less than 10 000 GEL and above 10 000 GEL property is required for mortgage. "(Beneficiary of the State and Donors Program)*

Apart from the projects already discussed, there are other implemented projects that are distinguished by different approaches to women's economic empowerment. For clarity we should mention all those project activities that are envisioned by these programs. They can be divided in several categories:

- The first is an educational element that is aimed at delivery of business skills, rarely at new knowledge creation;
- The second is counseling and mentoring activity which is one of the activities of almost all programs;
- The third is a grant program, where the amount of grants differ for each project; however, it still falls in the category of small and medium sized entrepreneurship (exception is the three largest projects discussed above).
- Several projects also include a so-called community mobilization component that serves to encourage women's participation in solving local problems. This component is mainly implemented through setting-up local initiative groups, women's rooms or village houses.

The main component of any project is the target group. In this case, the target group of the projects we have researched is quite diverse. Here too the categories can be identified:

- Men together with women as a target group – found in rare cases.
- Internally displaced women.
- Socially unprotected, unemployed, low-paid, lonely mothers and breadwinning mothers.
- Women living in rural areas are one of the largest groups.
- Women living in mountainous villages, border regions and low-income agricultural villages.
- Women with disabilities and women belonging to ethnic minorities.

It should be noted that this kind of categorization is certainly linked to the geographical area of the project implementation; however, as with the target group, when choosing the site of the project, a wide range of categories are used. When I asked the project representatives about the existence of needs assessment or basic research in the beginning phase of the project, which determines a target group and a geographical area of the project, there were occasions when while identifying the target group they used the personal contacts or previous experience of the organization. This confirms the absence of such studies. However, it should be noted that an initial or final research as well as project monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are linked to additional finances, which in low budget projects practically eliminates the possibility of such research.

*“Simply the relevance was the fact that the campaign about violence against women was started in that year and one of the factors there was that women are not economically independent and women do not have any income and are totally dependent on men ... And that’s why the idea of women’s empowerment appeared in order to create something for them, own income and help them become less vulnerable to violence.” (Representative of international and local organizations projects)*

*“The goal was somewhat altered, but we have been working on these type of relationships for years. This is not a new intervention. We work for years. There were previous projects and the baseline situation for this intervention had long been known to us”(representative of international and local organizations projects)*

*“We have a resource center there, from the very beginning, exactly when, I do not remember, but we decided to do something in this village, and when we went there and talked to people, we found out that they are ready to do things. And then this needs assessment was conducted based on conversations with them, what the needs are and what can be done “(representative of international and local organizations projects)*

While surveying project managers and donors themselves, the main problems which organizations faced when working with beneficiaries were identified. These problems are often associated with women’s agency, and organizations often have difficulties to convince women to participate in a project. Representatives of the projects of international and local organizations noted during the interview that:

*“The main problem that was faced was the problem of mobilization of women, for example, especially whilst attending the training and I always advised to plan it in consultation with them and it was always like, for example, that they don’t come”*

*“There was always a feeling of distrust; a man who invites these women to somewhere, where he’s taking them, right? He says that in the beginning it was very difficult to establish trust in these new villages where nobody knew him and so there was a lot of difficulties in terms of trust”*

The representatives of the projects of donor organizations talked also about the lack of motivation:

*“There was a lack of motivation, because they did not know something, they could not see it as business. Generally, it is not new that women have low self-confidence and it is difficult to convince them that they can do things. Especially when it comes to financial and business activities, because there is a confrontation with family too who believes that it cannot be done*

*and that's why they should not do it; and the fight with their own self too, because they know that they've never done it before and these problems were real."*

*"There is a lack of involvement from their side, there are number of different problems and why this is so and why it happens, maybe they have no trust at all."*

The study also revealed the facts that men tried to appropriate the resources belonging to women. Organizations, in turn, try to avoid such incidents.

*"There is one village, on the other side of Enguri, Georgian, territory of Georgia, where they made us a bit angry because there was a man of the village (head) ... and he did not release women for what they wanted to do. So, we left."*

*"It's a well-known fact and not just in Georgia that men use women as a cover and do projects."*

As we see, the efforts and the work of international and local NGOs are an important part of the process of building women's economic empowerment in Georgia, but it is necessary to shift to a new stage of development and fight for increasing women's participation in non-traditional economic fields as well as increasing the number of women in decision-making positions.

## **Experience of Beneficiaries**

As a target group of the program - beneficiaries are very important for revealing major deficiencies in the process of women's economic empowerment. Therefore, we will not have a complete picture without their opinions. It should be noted that the majority of interviewed beneficiaries are participants of some of the projects included in the research. For example, the REAP grant recipient was also the beneficiary of the G4G and Young Economists Association Project and also participated in the Agro-Credit project of the Ministry of Agriculture. In the second case, the beneficiary of Produce in Georgia, was also the participant of G4G, Young Economists Association Project and the "Elkana" Grants project.<sup>37</sup> This is a significant trend, which, on the one hand, speaks about the efficiency of the projects related to women's empowerment, and on the other hand, may point to the problem of resource allocation. Before the research results are reviewed, it should be noted that establishing the contact with the beneficiaries of the State projects was two times harder because this information was not available. However, in contrast to the expectations, there were also some shortcomings in the process of requesting information regarding beneficiaries from the representatives of international and local organizations.

The research revealed that beneficiaries identify several problems, among which is access to finance and dishonest attitude from the banks, as well as the need to raise awareness regarding business activities.

*"We did not go (to the bank) because we knew that the bank would not give us. They are asking for property. But we did not go because we knew we would be rejected "(State program beneficiary).*

*"Everywhere there is a problem with access to finance, but the problem of access to finance is caused by the problem of education. Many people do not have consciousness. They always complain that they have no money but they don't understand why they do not have it. Nobody wants to work. This is not the problem of women only, rather it is a general problem in the regions." (Beneficiary of international and local organizations projects)*

There is also a lack of gender sensitivity in beneficiaries:

*"Maybe they were more touched because I was a women than they would have been if I were man. I do not have exact answer on this, but I hope there was no positive discrimination and I truly deserved it, not only because I was a women, this is my position." (Beneficiary of international and local organizations projects)*

*"In any case, that women in bank...do not give credit, Ok sir. I was also rejected, but I blame the problem of being a woman or a man the least. In general, in banking sector, I am not saying*

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<sup>37</sup> Elkana Project is not under the scope of this research as it started in 2017

*this to justify them, they do not need it from me, but in terms of objectivity there is no such variable for banks as gender. It is linked to property, to million other risks which woman and man can both have or not have; so, when I was starting and I was not given the credit, I truly don't blame the gender" (Beneficiary of international and local organizations projects)*

Beneficiaries think that some of the most important impediments to their business development are the lack of well-tailored professional trainings and the lack of technical knowledge:

*"There was a lot of trainings in gender issues, and now I would have preferred to have less in gender and more in those issues that would be more useful for my practical work." (Beneficiary of international and local organizations projects)*

*"As soon as the work is nonstandard, the problem arises that relevant qualifications does not exist and second, as soon as wrapping is needed, some equipment is needed which he/she does not use, right away the need arises to buy everything abroad." (Beneficiary of international and local organizations projects)*

*"A qualified agronomist, qualified person, whom you can ask questions and get a qualified response, not to speak about hire, maybe be one and overwhelmingly busy, or there might not be one at all." (Beneficiary of international and local organizations projects)*

As it turns out, assessment of the needs of beneficiaries is key for the process of women's economic empowerment without which proper planning of the project is impossible.

## **International Approaches and Experiences: Planning of Women's Economic Empowerment Projects:**

As we have reviewed the main problems and achievements of donors, it is also interesting to analyze the international practice in this regard. Desk review showed that only a small amount of capital inflows cannot increase the number of those livelihood enterprises which are managed by women. It was observed in Bosnia and Herzegovina that micro-credits were not effective. It turned out that micro-credits represent more effective tool for companies managed by men, because women have more pre-requisites to use this money for other purposes. This could be relevant in the case of Georgia too, but at this stage the data do not confirm this hypothesis.<sup>38</sup>

Programs on retraining and salary subsidies have had different effects in Poland, Romania, Russia and Slovakia. These programs in Poland and Romania had a positive impact on women's employment opportunities. However, the same program was not effective in Russia. This points to the fact that similar programs may have different effects/results in countries that are alike.<sup>39</sup> Accordingly, while planning the projects in Georgia, the country's political-economic and cultural peculiarities should be taken into consideration.

Studies have shown that the same intervention may have different results considering the types and characteristics of a beneficiary. This especially concerns an inflow of a small amount of capital in the form of loans and grants that work for poor women but is ineffective for very poor women if only this kind of assistance is provided. Smart planning of the program is very important for success. For instance, it is possible to buy capital or materials for business as a support, rather than providing money. This encourages women to be oriented on business and do not spend money for other needs.

Interventions and support can work better if women have economic independence or autonomy and little social restrictions. Autonomy means that women can be physically mobilized and make decisions independently, both of which are a precondition for success in business. Autonomy is somewhat associated

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38 Cutura J; Women's Economic Empowerment, Trends & Good Practices on Women's Entrepreneurship in the OSCE Region. December 2010. OSCE Secretariat.

39 Kluge J., Lehmann H.& Schmidt C.; *Active Labour Market Policies in Poland: Human Capital Enhancement, Stigmatization or Benefit Churning*. Journal of Comparative Economics. Volume 27. Issue I, March 1999. Pg 61-89. Also see: Todd P; *How to Improve Women's Employability and Quality of Work in Developing and Transition Economics*. January 2013. University of Pennsylvania, United Nations Foundation. Pg. 20-23

with a woman's marital status, whether she has a male partner who controls her choice.<sup>40</sup>

The most effective interventions mainly cover different areas of women's economic empowerment, and their programming part is also diverse; however, Nepal's example shows that one particular program may have an influence in a many different directions. In particular, effective savings management program had influenced women's education, access to work and access to financial services. It had also become a reason for changing gender related norms.

## Main Findings

- The projects implemented by international and local organizations duplicate the types of project activities, there is no diversity of the approach.
- In most cases, projects' target group is generalized and the activities are not tailored to specific needs. This is largely due to the absence of the needs assessment and monitoring mechanisms in the project.
- Organizations do not have communication with each other and do not have information on other organization's projects that can cause some of the problems listed above and lead to unsustainability of project results. This fact may cause duplication of projects and repeated activities for the same target group.
- Based on the analysis of obtained information, we can say that over the last ten years, the largest donors of implemented projects are: USAID, UN agencies, Swiss Cooperation Office and the European Union.
- The research revealed that projects do not differentiate target groups based on their economic opportunities, education and residence. The process of regional selection of locations mainly depends on the organization's previous activities and contacts in this region. This more resembles to choosing an easy way than to capacity building.
- Beneficiaries are less critical to donor organizations and most of their demands are pointed towards the State and financial sector.

## WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT: CORPORATE SECTOR, POLICY AND PRACTICE

Women's economic power is directly influenced by gender policy and practices of the corporate sector. In developed countries, women's participation not only in the work force but also in the decision-making process has been increasing. This, along with other factors, is also the result of a progressive gender policy pursued by companies. What is the situation in Georgia in this respect? In this research, we tried to describe the attitude of the private sector to the need for economic empowerment of women and how it responds to challenges related to gender equality. In order to identify the existing trend in the corporate sector and to make primary conclusions, ten large companies were interviewed from the following sectors: trade, transport and communications, infrastructure, manufacturing, healthcare, real estate, financial services, and pharmaceuticals. The main focus of the research was on the following issues: formal gender policies of companies, practices existing in companies in relation to women empowerment, and women's participation in decision making.

Before we proceed to the description of the main trends of the research, we should note that NGOs and the State agencies emphasize the necessity of involvement of private sector in the process of women's economic empowerment:

*"I think the private sector should be blamed too, because, basically, when it comes to employment, they still prefer to hire men on high level positions. Maybe this does not happen only because they think men have better mental capabilities, but also because, as far as I know,*

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40 Buvinic M. & Furst-Nichols R.; *Promoting Women's Economic Empowerment. What Works?*. World Bank Group. November 2014.

*let's say to avoid maternity leave, or because women need more time for family, etc. And, women have more problems like this." (NGO representative)*

*"I think that engagement of a private sector is also very important, and when I say private sector I most of all refer to financial sector. Of course, civil society organizations too, in order to initiate many those issues that might not be initiated by the State" (NGO representative)*

*"The second biggest actor in relation to women's economic empowerment, I think, should be business sector that will support economic empowerment of women. But, whatever I see today, even those initiatives to which business sector agrees to cooperate, are simply ridiculous and nobody can...by the way this problem exists in feminist sphere too, that we do not dare to critique something loudly." (State agency representative)*

## **Main trends**

### **Gender policy - on paper**

The majority of surveyed companies (9 companies) do not have a formal gender policy; in their official documents - the statute, the strategy – women's empowerment is not included. Only one of the interviewed companies said that gender equality and protection from gender-based discrimination is guaranteed by company's statute. However, this provision of the Statute is not reflected in the activities specifically implemented for this purpose.

Formalized and diverse gender policy is present only at one company among those interviewed during the study. The gender policy of this company includes a constant analysis of the payments in order to eliminate discrimination. Also, the company uses special efforts to attract women to work and then monitors the provision of equal opportunities. It is noteworthy that women's share in top management of this company is exceptionally high - 45%, which is most likely due to its gender sensitive policy.

### **Gender equality in practice**

In addition to the fact that there is not even a formal gender policy in most companies, practical steps are not also taken to strengthen women and to overcome inequality.

To the question regarding the measures taken in relation to women's empowerment, most companies answered that they do not take special measures to empower women at work and to achieve gender equality. According to them, equality is protected in companies and no additional measures are required.

### **Women's participation in decision making**

To the question regarding women's participation in decision making, the companies claim that women are highly involved in this process as well as women equally participate in strategic and major projects management. However, the management structure of the companies indicates the opposite: 90% of executive directors of surveyed companies are men.

### **The role of the State in achieving gender equality in companies**

The surveyed companies do not see the need for the State to take measures promoting gender equality in companies. Most of them believe that the State's initiative in this direction may have negative impact upon the private sector.

At the same time, several companies have stated that the role of the State is to regulate maternity leave policy, since this factor hinders women's economic empowerment.

## International companies are more sensitive to gender

International companies participating in the survey have taken measures of some form to ensure gender equality. Introduction and implementation of these measures is controlled from their headquarters. While in the companies which have Georgian or mostly Georgian management, gender policy does not exist and they are not sensitive to gender.

## Main Findings

We have made interesting preliminary conclusions through the survey of 10 large companies operating in different sectors in Georgia. These findings are important for gender equality policy-makers in the State as well as non-governmental and private sectors.

Surveying the private sector was relatively more difficult as it was expected, as some of the companies refused to participate in our survey, while others abstained from specific answers and shared only general information. This indicates two things: a) gender equality is not a priority or even an important issue for companies. This is also confirmed by the fact that most companies do not have any formal or practical gender policy; b) talking on gender equality is unpleasant for companies because they do not have gender policy and they see the risk that talking publicly about this may damage their image.

The survey showed that companies **do not see the need for women empowerment**. They think that employment in itself is already an empowerment of women and no additional measures are needed. They believe that the professional advancement of employees in their companies depends only on the performance of employees.

The survey clearly demonstrated that **companies are not aware of** the complex and multilayered obstacles that women face in the professional life (both at work and outside). It is a common opinion that professional progress of women depends only on their will and work. This opinion is shared by and is the main argument of almost all surveyed companies.

In addition, companies are **looking at gender equality in a rather narrow way**. For those companies which at some level see the need for women to be empowered, this issue is mostly associated with provision or non-provision of maternity leave.

The observation of one of the major representatives of trade sector regarding the obstacles faced by manager women is worth mentioning. This person believes that **female leader in Georgia is not yet comfortable for men**, and the idea of woman manager may be disappointing and even unacceptable for them. Because of this, women in the leading positions have to utilize “creative” and “diplomatic” ways to successfully manage the company.

In order for the corporate sector to initiate effective measures for gender equality, first of all **they need to be aware of the problem** and why this problem has negative impact not only on women, but also on companies and economy in general.

In addition, it is of utmost importance to survey employed women on what factors hinder their economic empowerment and professional advancement. The existence of such research is the best weapon against the widespread superficial opinion that the professional success of women depends only on their desire and effort.

## MAIN CHALLENGES OF WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT IN GEORGIA

Most of the respondents participating in the survey identified the main challenges that need to be overcome in order to achieve women's economic empowerment in Georgia; the list is quite diverse:

*"The biggest problem for women farmers is that they have no property on their name. This must be taken into account, even in case of agro-credits, or ... by the State program, special programs should be developed in this direction." (NGO representative)*

*"The most important thing is that. We need to provide knowledge and information at the place convenient for them. In the language in which they speak and information must be delivered by someone close to their mind, so to say." (Donors Project Beneficiary)*

*"The main challenge is that these women do not possess any private property and when they start something, they cannot [have nothing to] hold on. For example, to take a loan, the attitude of the banks is that they do not particularly trust the women who have no income and do not own a private property...and the knowledge that women do not have in this area, because from the very beginning these have been the fields which are segregated based on gender. Right? Women are mostly educated in other areas, and the knowledge and access to resources in order to start-up something does not exist and the State policy is not such as well, moreover there is no State policy at all that the budget or the resource that exist on central or municipal level to be distributed equally. The State does not see any need for this." (Representative of an international organization)*

*"The fact that woman works so much at home and this is regarded as nothing and...is unemployed and jobless, is one of the biggest problems. In fact, if we count, that is, those countries have counted too how much the family economizes by having woman working at home and being jobless. How much contribution can be made to that economic thing." (State agency representative)*

*"There are too many shortcomings which are complex and this kind of joint work is needed. Complex work from every side...but taking a multifaceted approach haven't been the case here yet." (NGO representative)*

*"The challenge is even family activities, that if there is even a lack of access to kindergartens here too is a positive trend. Access to finances, even for starting a business, because property and assets are mostly registered on men and if women need to take loan, or grant, independently, they need men's permission." (Donors Project Beneficiary)*

*"Economic violence, which not only negatively impacts women's empowerment, but directly destroys a human in all senses is not less complicated issue than physical and psychological violence ... It's hard to identify. That is, if economic violence is not directly related to material restrictions and let's say is related to the prohibition at work or is related to full use of material resources, and other such things, it is very hard to identify. Especially we meet economic violence and is very hard to identify in case of women with disabilities. As if they have no economic rights and such restrictions is, let's say, part of their rights package." (State agency representative)*

*"We do not refer to self-employed women at all because their work is completely unregulated and I do not even want to imagine how these women work. But, if we refer to employed women, there are no kindergartens for children below 2 years in Georgia, and we do not know what women are doing when they have, this too based on a goodwill of empower, right to payed leave only for 6 months, right? How do they feed and take care of their children for the rest of year and a half? –we have no idea" (State agency representative)*

**As we can see, all those gaps have been revealed which is experienced by the policy on women's economic empowerment (not)existing in the county. I would like to emphasize the following: women's limited access to finances, invisibility of economic violence against women, non-engagement of corporate sector in women's economic empowerment process and low level of women's agency the example of which is an unrecognized invisible family labor.**

## CONCLUSION

Women's economic empowerment is an important process for economic development of the country. It makes economically inactive population to become economically active, which ultimately promotes greater wealth and well-being in the country. For women to be economically empowered, it is necessary that they have access to finance and resources, are protected by strong and effective institutions, and most importantly, have a right to choice and control over their lives.

The study revealed that economic empowerment of women and fight against economic violence towards women is not the part of the State's economic and social policy. Consequently, there is a lack of consolidated State vision regarding the issue. This is confirmed by the fact that over the last ten years the State has not implemented any program, the direct purpose of which would be the economic empowerment of women. Also, in the State's strategic economic documents, we cannot find comprehensive references to the issue of women's economic empowerment.

The efforts and programs of international and local organizations in Georgia regarding women's economic empowerment are impressive due to their extent and intensity. The only challenge that has been identified in this respect is the lack of coordination among organizations that might have negative impact upon the sustainability of the results.

One of the weak points of women's economic policy in Georgia is the corporate sector. A low level of awareness in the issues concerning women's economic empowerment have been identified in the corporate sector. In addition, there are no specific initiatives in terms of economic empowerment of women. The State itself prefers to take a passive approach in this regard and thus everything depends on the goodwill of an employer.

Finally, we can conclude that the main challenges regarding women's economic empowerment in Georgia are their access to finances and increase of their agency.

The Government, together with international and local NGOs, should seek ways to solve the problems identified in this research. It should also be taken into consideration that discussing women's economic empowerment separately from political empowerment and socio-cultural changes would be wrong. Exactly such a complex approach should be taken by any actor involved in the process. Most importantly, we should increase women's self-confidence and agency in order to enable them to manage their lives and finances.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results and the data of the research, recommendations have been developed. The main goal of these recommendations is to eliminate the major challenges discussed above. The recommendations have been developed for those three sectors where the research was conducted. These sectors are: public (State policy), non-governmental and private.

### Public Sector

#### State Policy

- The State should study various forms of economic violence and develop ways to solve them.
- Specific measures regarding women's economic empowerment should be included in the Governmental program – "Freedom, Fast Development and Welfare 2016-2020."
- Main directions of gender equality policy should be determined, such as: women with non-traditional policies, women living in rural areas, women in science, women on decision-making positions, empowerment of young women and girls.
- Similar to the Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Refugees, other ministries should also create an internal regulatory document, such as: Gender Equality Strategy and Action Plan.

- In each Ministry or LEPL, a staff member (gender focal point) should be appointed who will monitor the gender equality strategy, prepare the relevant report, be responsible for gender statistics and report to the Inter-agency Commission on Gender Equality, Violence against Women and Domestic Violence.
- On the level of executive government, the Office of the Adviser to the Prime Minister on Human Rights and Gender Equality Issues should be strengthened, which will work towards women's economic empowerment and monitor the implementation of the State's gender policy.
- Gender Equality Department at the Ombudsman's Office should be strengthened and their work should be expanded over the activities to eliminate economic violence against women, through awareness raising campaigns and permanent monitoring of the State policy.
- Any strategic document or action plan defining the State policy should go through gender-based analysis GBA + (Gender Based Analysis Plus).
- Special programs should be developed supporting women's entrepreneurship with an aim of women's economic empowerment.
- Public servants should be retrained in order to ensure the implementation of gender sensitive policies at all levels of decision-making.
- The State should ensure the involvement of educational institutions, research centers and experts in the process of planning and implementation of the State policy on women's economic empowerment.
- Geostat should diversify its general gender statistics and should make visual improvements in gender statistics report.

### **Empowerment of Women Living in Rural Areas**

- The Rural Development Strategy should include the issue of women's economic participation through developing their professional skills, while public awareness should be raised regarding women's participation in household management.
- Empowerment of women living in rural areas should be based on the specific program developed by the State, which will have a complex approach and cover the rural women's access to finances and the development of their professional skills.
- Participation of poor women, girls and young women living in rural areas in economic empowerment programs should be increased.
- Geostat should focus on generating data regarding women living in rural areas in their gender publications.
- Free registration of land for women should be introduced and legalization of non-legalized lands should be conducted.
- Agricultural land ownership statistics should be enhanced, by accelerating the land registration program.
- Awareness raising campaign regarding property rights should be implemented.

### **Women in the Workplace**

- The issue of equal access of women and men to services and products should be studied and ways to solve the problem should be designed. Legislation should forbid an employer to ask questions to a job seeker about personal life, family conditions and family planning.
- During the Labor Inspection monitoring, it is important to pay attention to gender discrimination facts at a workplace, to aspiration for equal compensation as well as to the conditions of pregnant, nursing mothers and parents.

- Prohibition of discriminatory harassment and sexual harassment by the Labor Code and the Law on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination.
- The State should create a list of the most gender-fair employers. By permanent coordination with an employer, this will help to increase the social responsibility of the corporate sector.
- The State should identify the most gender-fair and unfair employers, the list should be public. The fairest employer should be awarded.
- It is necessary to create a daycare center for babies in order to support full-time employed women.
- Schedule of kindergartens should match the standard working hours.

### **State Programs**

- It is important to develop a special program that will ensure women's economic empowerment. The Program should deliver not only financial assistance, but also provide trainings for women and raise public awareness through inclusion of men in Program activities.
- It is recommended to ensure and encourage women's participation in the industrial component of Produce in Georgia. In particular, when selecting companies, attention should be paid on gender balance on decision-making positions.
- Ensuring the qualitative gender equality in Micro and Small Entrepreneurship Development Program, calculation of economic benefits and increasing the share of women in distribution of benefits.
- Within the framework of StartUp Georgia Program, work with girls and young women to increase their technical knowledge.
- Establishment and execution of limit on women's engagement in the seasonal and permanent agricultural projects, and increase the number of women among the beneficiaries of large and economically profitable projects.

### **Donors and Local Non-Governmental Organizations:**

- Communication, exchange of information and cooperation among donors and local non-governmental organizations should be increased. To this aim, common platform should be established.
- The database and single web-portal should be created where all projects concerning women's empowerment will be included.
- Baseline studies should be conducted on economic violence against women and women's economic opportunities in Georgia, based on which economic empowerment programs can be developed.
- Every new project of women's economic empowerment should be based on local needs-assessment.
- Women's economic empowerment projects should be tailored to specific target groups. Economic status, geographical area and education are some of the criteria that may be considered.
- When planning the project, attention should be paid on ensuring the sustainability by offering special services, including consulting services, legal audits, financial reporting, and coaching.
- Complex approach should be introduced in the projects created for women's economic empowerment, which implies women's economic and political empowerment and awareness raising in the community, as well as engagement of men along with women in projects.
- Women's economic empowerment implies the formation of women's agency. Attention should be paid to the development and promotion of leadership and transferable skills for women as well as to the increase of motivation.
- Women's empowerment campaigns must go beyond TV and social networks and include local TV

channels, radios and newspapers. Face-to-face meetings should be held in village and community.

- Promote the development of computer skills for middle-age and elderly women through projects, as well as improve their financial management and public relations skills.
- Based on the best practice of other countries, unconditional cash transfers should be provided for young women.
- Donor organizations should work more with their beneficiaries to increase gender awareness and sensitivity.
- The study should be conducted regarding the factors hindering women's economic empowerment and professional advancement. The existence of such research is the best tool against the widespread superficial opinion that the professional success of women depends only on their desire and effort.

## **Corporate Sector**

- Awareness of private companies regarding the problems of economic empowerment and gender discrimination should be increased.
- It is necessary for companies to ensure maternity leave for women as well men in accordance with the Labor Code.
- Companies should create adequate labor conditions for women, which excludes sexual harassment in the workplace. The regulation of this is possible through regular trainings of the staff and inclusion of a corresponding article in internal regulatory documents.
- Awareness of the population should be raised about the European Bank for Reconstruction's (EBRD) project on Women in Business (WiB), by two of the Project implementing companies: Bank of Georgia and TBC Bank.
- Bank of Georgia should ensure increased awareness about and accessibility to the "Female Startupper" program. It should also review the loan conditions offered to women, especially in mortgage part. Also, age restrictions should be abolished.
- It is also necessary to encourage women to participate in the top management of the corporate sector.
- The corporate sector should promote the combination of parenting and professional responsibilities.
- The corporate sector should ensure practical implementation of the principle regarding equal pay for equal work.
- The corporate sector should fight against gender-based wage gap.

## Appendix #1

	2012 year / 128	2012 year score	Change of Score
Total Score	=59	54,5	+4,4
1) Labor Policy and Practice	60	50,5	+9,0
1A) Labor Policy	57	66,7	+6,2
1B) Labor Practice	=69	34,3	+11,7
2) Access to Finances	90	31,2	+7,3
3) Education and Retraining	=74	60,0	-0,8
4) Legal and Social Status of Women	78	66,3	0,0
5) General Business Environment	43	68,6	+2,3

As data shows, according to the Women's Economic Opportunity Index, Georgia has the highest scores in general business environment and legal and social status indicators. While the lowest in terms of access to finances and labor practices.

Below tables show sub-indicators of each indicator and points assigned to them:

### Best Indicators

1,4) Legal limitations based on the type of work	100,0
4,2) Civil rights	100,0
4,6) CEDAW ratification	100,0
3,4) Literacy level of women	99,8
3,3) Number of women with secondary education	95,9
5,2) Business initiation	90,3
1,8) De-facto discrimination at workplace	87,1
4,4) Adolescent fertility indicator	81,7

### Improved Indicators

1,1) Equal pay; ILO convention 100, policy	+35,7
1,9) Access to childcare	+33,3
2,3) Women's access to financial programs	+25,0
1,7) Absence of discrimination; ILO convention 111, practice	+16,7
5,1) Quality of regulation	+7,2
2,1) Forming of credit history	+4,2
3,1) Primary and secondary education, women	+4,1
5,3) Well-functioning infrastructure	+4,1
3,4) Literacy, women	+0,8

### Decreased Indicators

3,2) Higher education, women	-8,8
1,2) Absence of discrimination; ILO convention 111, policy	-4,7
1,8) De-facto discrimination at workplace	-3,1
5,2) Business initiation	-2,2

### Needs improvement: less than 25

3,5) Support and retraining of small and medium entrepreneurs	20,0
1,7) Absence of discrimination; ILO convention 111, practice	16,7
2,1) Forming of credit history	16,4
4,7) Political participation	10,4
1,6) Equal pay; ILO convention 100, practice	0,0

These tables show that improvement is required in equal pay practice, women's political participation and practice of forming credit history for women.

## Appendix #2

### Lithuania

Lithuania is the most successful country in terms of providing gender equality in post-Soviet space. According to different indexes or statistics, it is one of the most successful examples in the world in terms of eradicating gender inequality. Lithuania shares with Georgia post-Soviet economic and political experience, but with almost all the data and indicators it is significantly ahead of our country. According to the World Economic Forum's "Global Gender Inequality Index 2016", Lithuania ranks 25th from 144 countries with 0.744 points.<sup>41</sup> The Index consists of four main indicators: economic participation and opportunities, education attainment, health and survival and political empowerment.

With the number of women in professional and technical work force, Lithuania holds first place in 144 countries where, discussing in terms of economic empowerment, there is more women (67%) employed than men (33%). It also has high indicators concerning women's participation in the workforce in general and women employed on high level of management positions; however, in terms of equal pay for the same work it takes 87<sup>th</sup> place out of 144 countries. Lithuania is also among the best performing countries in terms of Women's Economic Opportunity Index. According to 2010 data, with a score of 71.6 points (77 points in 2012), Lithuania stands higher than world median, while Georgia, with 49.2 points (54.5 in 2012), is ahead of Kyrgyzstan and behind Ukraine and Kazakhstan. Employment policies, access to finance, legal and social status of women, education – with each of these indicators it holds high positions, while Georgia lags considerably behind Lithuania and other countries in the region. (Women's Economic Opportunity, 2010 and 2012). Due to such performance, it is interesting to learn what institutional or legal basis and mechanisms exist in Lithuania to achieve gender equality and women's economic empowerment.

In 1998, the country adopted a Law **on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men** which prohibits discrimination be it sexual harassment or direct and indirect discrimination on the grounds of sex. The Law also sets out the prerequisites of gender mainstreaming and obliges central or local agencies that the legislative documents adopted by them must ensure equal opportunities for women. Since 2002 the Law also regulates equal access of women and men to services and products. Under this Law, the employer cannot ask the job seeker about their age, family status, personal life and family plans. Lithuania has also successfully implemented EU directives with respect to establishing social and job insurance system.

Currently, the country is implementing the **2015-2021 Fourth National Program on Equality of Women and Men**. Also, within the framework of the program, the action plan is developed which is of a complex nature and covers the priority areas: employment, education and science, healthcare, decision-making, development of mechanisms and methods for implementation of equal opportunities. Different ministries are involved and are in charge of specific directions. The program on eradication of inequality is a result of joint efforts of state agencies, women's NGOs and researchers.

**The Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men** was established in 2000 by the Lithuania's Governmental decree and is responsible for the coordination and implementation of the program. The

<sup>41</sup> Where 1=equality and 0=inequality. World Economic Forum; *The Global Gender Gap Report 2017*. Accessed: [[http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_GGGR\\_2017.pdf](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2017.pdf)]

commission consists of representatives of ministries and NGOs. The chair of the Commission is the Minister of Social Security and Labor, since it is one of the responsibilities of this Ministry to ensure gender equality. The Commission is responsible for reporting to the Government through an annual report. At the end of each phase of the program, comprehensive impact assessment and comparative assessment of the program implementation are carried out.<sup>42</sup>

According to the mentioned Law adopted in 1998, the **Ombudsman Institute of Equal Opportunities** was created in Lithuania, which is obliged to review all complaints about violation of gender equality and discrimination against women and men. Also, two university centers on gender studies – of Vilnius University and Siauliai University – are actively involved in the processes. The equality of labor rights is ensured by Women's Committee of Lithuanian Labor Federation and Women's Center of Lithuania's Professional Union and Women's Information Center.

In 2013, the country became the President of the Council of the European Union, with clearly defined goals for gender equality and equal opportunities. The main priority was to increase the effectiveness of institutional mechanisms for achieving de-facto indicator of gender equality. In this regard the objective was set to review and implement the Beijing Platform Action Plan. In the context of women's economic empowerment, Lithuania's initiative was to improve gender balance on the trading market, which means increasing women's participation in economic decision-making. Also, during Lithuania's Presidency, one of the top priorities became a high representation of women on higher positions in scientific and research institutions.

The Action Plan adopted by the Government of Lithuania which aims to implement the National Program for Equality of Women and Men sets out legislative and institutional changes that are to be implemented by various stakeholders. The main burden is still placed on the **Ministry of Social Security and Labor**, which supervises gender issues. The country intends to achieve the first and most important goal – equal work conditions and remuneration - in different ways, **including by creating a list of the most (gender) fair employers and by permanent coordination with them.**

The Ministry of Economy of Lithuania is actively involved in achieving the goals of women's economic empowerment. For this it delivers the consultations and seminars aimed at improving women's entrepreneurial skills, financial knowledge and other competences. The webpage of the Ministry includes the **page on Promotion of Women Entrepreneurship** which always includes the updated information on the initiatives in this regard. Together with the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Economy is trying to fund initiatives and projects aimed at promoting non-agricultural activities and small businesses of women in rural areas. The second important priority is to increase motivation and competence of women in order to enable them to be engaged in decision making processes. To this aim information campaigns regarding leader women and awards for successful women in business are planned for 2015-2017.

Within the framework of the Action Plan, the Lithuanian Government also defines gender equality training for civil servants. It is also important to ensure equality at the local self-government level, for which the employees of municipal administrative units are engaged in educational activities. Most importantly, all the above mentioned activities are implemented based on cooperation among different agencies, ministries and actors. The Lithuanian Government's Action Plan, besides the above mentioned priority areas, includes the measures to be taken in the fields of national defense, education and science and healthcare.

In 2012 the gender pay gap in Lithuania was 12.6% which is less than the EU average. In order to eradicate this distinction, the Lithuanian government used different methods. For example: **compulsory gender equality clause to be included in the statutes of private or public institutions.** Also, the State Labor Inspection is actively involved in the workplace to ensure the implementation of the Equal Remuneration Rule of the Lithuanian Labor Code.

Lithuania's National Statistics Office annually publishes the publication - women and men in Lithuania. The 120-page document makes a detailed overview of the situation regarding gender equality in the country; it also presents gender equality indicators of Eurostat for Lithuania and other various quantitative data, such as: labor market, living conditions, power and decision making, use of information technologies etc. In addition, the data from other EU countries in this respect and the definitions of the terms are given. The publication is bilingual and is available in both Lithuanian and English.

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42 Ministry of Social Security and Labour, Republic of Lithuania. Accessed: [<http://www.socmin.lt/en/gender-equality-8891.html>]

## Slovenia

The second most successful country in the post-socialist space is Slovenia, which holds eighth place in the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Inequality Index, with 0,786 points. In terms of indicators, it takes 15<sup>th</sup> place from 144 countries with respect to women's economic participation and opportunities. It, like Lithuania, has the best indicators in terms of women's employment in professional and technical sphere and in terms of income comparison.

Slovenia joined the EU in 2004 and the main legal or institutional mechanisms to eradicate gender inequality were created before the EU membership. For example, **2002 Equal Opportunities for Women and Men Act**, which ensures economic, political and social equality and prohibits direct or indirect discrimination. Also, according to this Act, the Slovenian government created a national plan for equal opportunities. Based on 2002 Equal Opportunities Act, **the Governmental Office of Equal Opportunities** was set-up, whose responsibilities were transferred to the Ministry of Labor, Family and Social Affairs in 2012. Each ministry has a **gender equality coordinator**, local self-governments can also appoint equality coordinators. Equal Opportunities Direction works to introduce gender mainstreaming at all governmental levels and also to define measures to eradicate sex and gender based inequalities and socially constructed relations between women and men in all areas of life. It also monitors this process. In 2010, the Equality Office implemented the project "Equal in Diversity", which included the creation of a new web site for advocacy of equality principles and was funded by the European Commission. The web page contains information, advice and recommendations regarding discrimination cases. The web site has an online questionnaire where a citizen can initiate the initiative or file the fact of discrimination. The website is presented in a number of languages, including ethnic or religious minority languages in Slovenia.

Slovenia pays a lot of attention to equipping women with appropriate skills and educating them, especially advocates for women's participation in science. For this purpose, within the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport the special expert body was established - **the Commission for Supporting Women in Science**. It consists of 14 members and is most actively involved in raising awareness; they also developed special provisions to eliminate gender discrimination while funding research activities. The Commission also contributes to the development of gender sensitive scientific language and supports gender balance in bodies making science-related decisions.

The Equality Office actively supports the role of women in the private sector. To this end, they set up an expert panel: "ensuring equal access of men and women to goods and services". In order to promote female entrepreneurship, vouchers were issued to women entrepreneurs for the purposes of retraining women and equipping them with skills.

According to various indicators, Slovenia is leading in the European Union and is one of the countries around the globe where the gender-based salary gap is low. In Slovenia this gap was 5.1% in 2012. According to the 2012 data of Women's Economic Opportunities, Slovenia has 18<sup>th</sup> place in the world. However, the Committee on the Elimination of all Forms of Violence against Women indicates that the number of women in decision-making positions is still low in Slovenian private and public organizations. Only 11% of the heads of governing boards of the largest companies are women and only 14% of the board members are women. The Equal Opportunities Office annually conducts a private sector survey to identify gender balance in decision-making positions. Only 2.8% of surveyed companies have a gender balance included in their internal regulations.

The principles of gender equality are protected in other legislative acts too, such as the Law on Labor Relations adopted in 2013 and the Workplace Health and Safety Act of 2011, which regulate gender-based discrimination in labor relations. The Labor Relations Act regulates such issues as labor rights of breastfeeding mothers. The Law prescribes at least one hour a day for her, while the awareness of the population in Georgia is still low around maternity leave.

In Slovenia, special attention is paid on women living in rural areas. **National Statistics Office annually publishes a report regarding the economic and social status of women living in rural areas.**<sup>43</sup>

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43 CEDAW, Report on Slovenia. 19 May 2014.

## Other Countries:

The institutional mechanisms of European Union countries regarding women's economic empowerment are almost identical. Therefore, it is desirable to consider examples of other successful countries. According to 2012 Women's Economic Opportunity Index, in the list of the top ten countries, besides Scandinavian countries and other EU states, are Canada, New Zealand and Australia. Let's consider the legal and institutional grounds of one of them, aimed at ensuring women's economic empowerment.

### Canada

Gender equality in Canada is guaranteed by the main legislative document - Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Also, the Canadian Human Rights Act prohibits all forms of discrimination. The Fair Division of Labor Act (Employment Equality Act) and the Fair Compensation Act in the Private Sector guarantee equality of men and women.<sup>44</sup> Canada is also an important actor on supporting women's economic empowerment across the globe. With the help of the Government of Canada, various UN agencies working on gender equality have created a new web site - **Empower Women**, which is an international platform and serves as an information base on women's economic participation worldwide; the web site and materials posted on it are available in several languages.

Within the Canadian Cabinet, there is an office on – **the Status of Women in Canada**. The Ministry works in several directions: violence against women and girls, women in rural and inaccessible areas, women with non-traditional professions, young women and girls in Canada, and women in governing councils. In 2016-2017, the Government of Canada is implementing the program - **women's increased economic security and success**, within which half a million dollars have been allocated for the involvement of female workers by the construction companies. Within the project, companies will be assisted to develop terms and conditions to create equal environment and increase women's engagement. The Canadian Government also works to increase women's involvement in unconventional, non-traditional work areas and professions, such as: tech professionals and qualified tradesman.

Canada actively employs the **GBA + (Gender Based Analysis Plus)** tool that analyzes what differences can there be between women, men and other gender-diverse groups in the process of impact of programs and policies. In order to carry out the GBA + in real life, the following key questions need to be asked:

1. **Do I believe that the issue I work on is gender neutral? Or culturally neutral? Or neutral to the opportunities? Or, is this issue only the consequent of my experience?**
2. **Is it possible that my conclusions prevent me from asking the questions and listening to or understanding the answers existing beyond my own experience?**
3. **Do the views and norms of the organizations, institutions and the society around me restrict the possibilities for the policy that I consider and present?**<sup>45</sup>

Feminist International Assistance Policy – is Canada's one of the priority directions for promoting international development. The main direction is: gender equality and empowering girls and women. Canada also provides assistance to the population of different regions of the world in the following areas: maintaining human dignity, growth for everyone, environment and climate change, inclusive governance, peace and security. All these goals are achieved through a feminist approach where all issues are viewed in the context of gender and through the attention to the problems of women and girls.<sup>46</sup>

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44 Government of Canada, Rights of Women <http://www.canada.pch.gc.ca/eng/1448633334004>

45 Status of Women Canada, GBA+ tool. Accessed: [<http://www.swc-cfc.gc.ca/gba-accs/apply-appliquez-en.html>]

46 Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy. Accessed: [[http://international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues\\_developpement-enjeux\\_developpement/priorities-priorites/policy-politique.aspx?lang=eng](http://international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues_developpement-enjeux_developpement/priorities-priorites/policy-politique.aspx?lang=eng)]

### Appendix #3

The list of the projects implemented by donors and local non-governmental organizations in relation to women's economic empowerment during the years 2006-2016:

Name of the Project	Donor Organization	Implementing Partner NGO	Duration
Women's Economic Empowerment	Open Society Georgian Foundation (OSGF)	Foundation 'TASO'	2008-2009
Support to women victims of August War	UNIFEM	Association of Young Economists of Georgia	2008-2009
Women's Economic Empowerment Program	USAID Georgia	Women's Fund Georgia	2009-2011
NAMA's. Equitable, Climate Proof and Sustainable Development	EU Delegation to Georgia	Rural Communities Development Agency (RCDA), Women in Europe for a Common Future (WECF),	2010-2015
JOIN-The project Local Actors join for inclusive economic development and governance in the South Caucasus	Austrian Development Agency (ADA)	Care Georgia	2011-2014
Women's Empowerment –benefit for all (EWA)	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Nederland's	Rural Communities Development Agency (RCDA)	2012-2015
Strong Women-Strong Integration	Austrian Development Agency	World Vision Georgia	2012-2014
REAP-Restoring Efficiency to Agriculture Production	USAID Georgia	CNFA Georgia	2013-2018
UN joint program for Gender equality in Georgia	Government of Sweden	UNDP/UNFPA/UN Women	2012-2015
ENPARD-Support to Agriculture and Rural Development	European Union	CARE, OXFAM GB, Mercy Corps, People in Need (PIN), UNDP.	2013-2020
Broadening Horizons: Improved Choices for the Professional and Economic development of Women and Girls	USAID Georgia	ICCN	2013-2016
Alliances Lesser Caucasus Program	Mercy Corps, Swiss Cooperation Office	ICCN, IADD	2014-2017
G4G-Governing for Growth in Georgia	USAID Georgia	Deloitte Consulting LLP	2014-2019
We Want to Work on Equal Environment	USAID Georgia	Article 42, CSS, Jumpstart Georgia, N-MAP, Georgia's Trade Union	2014-2016
Informing Women in living in rural areas	GIZ	Article 42	2015
Loan for Women Entrepreneurs	EBRD	Bank of Georgia, TBC Bank	2016
Improving opportunities for women entrepreneurs	Swiss Embassy in Georgia	The Economic Policy Research Center (EPRC)	2015-2016
IDP reach to economic resources	European Union	UN Women/FAO	2016-2017
Supporting employability of disabled women in Georgia	Czech Development Agency	Care Georgia	2015-2017
Gender Advisory Service-Tbilisi Bus	EBRD	Tbilisi Transportation Company	2017-2019
Social-economic empowerment of IDPs with gender aspects in Georgia.	EU/FAO/UN Women	IDP Livelihood Agency	2017
Creating Opportunities for Young Women Entrepreneurs to Prevent Dangerous Migration	USAID	HERA Georgia	2017

## Appendix #4

Ratio of agricultural land plots areas registered in women's ownership with total area of agricultural land registered in the ownership of physical persons, according to regions						
Region	Total unspecified area owned by physical persons (hectare)	Unspecified area in the ownership of women (hectare)	Percentage	Total specified area owned by physical persons (hectare)	Unspecified area in the ownership of women (hectare)	Percentage
Adjara Region	2147,1	299,3	13,9	13131,83538	5233,9	39,9
Guria Region	6032,0	1528,4	25,3	25342,0159	10193,6	40,2
Tbilisi	11,2	5,2	46,8	2278,425962	932,7	40,9
Imereti Region	33336,5	6179,5	18,5	75754,24898	26019,3	34,3
Kakheti Region	71145,3	12057,0	16,9	213820,7063	46547,1	21,8
Mtskheta-Mtianeti Region	10442,8	1804,2	17,3	21793,71479	6976,8	32,0
Racha-Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti Region	5333,5	1219,4	22,9	26335,41339	8417,3	32,0
Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti Region	32545,4	20382,9	62,6	54593,09922	21817,4	40,0
Samtskhe-Javakheti Region	16594,3	2518,7	15,2	63750,17328	14063,5	22,1
Kvemo Kartli Region	21396,0	5208,8	24,3	114927,7685	25681,9	22,3
Shida Kartli Region	20031,7	6479,8	32,3	44047,91295	13264,6	30,1

Total number of physical person owners of agricultural land plots, number of female owners and their percentage ratio, according to regions			
Region	Total number of physical person owners	number of female owners	Percent
Adjara Region	54116	22130	40,9
Guria Region	45238	19794	43,8
Tbilisi	16358	6997	42,8
Imereti Region	131481	55468	42,2
Kakheti Region	99928	39110	39,1
Mtskheta-Mtianeti Region	62516	27520	44,0
Racha-Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti Region	10431	4265	40,9
Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti Region	76965	32651	42,4
Samtskhe-Javakheti Region	41937	16813	40,1
Kvemo Karti Region	133834	49038	36,6
Shida Kartli Region	67579	27064	40,0