



SCHOOLS

AGAINST CHALLENGES

OF GENDER EQUALITY,
GENDER STEREOTYPES AND
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE



2020

SCHOOLS AGAINST CHALLENGES OF GENDER EQUALITY, GENDER STEREOTYPES AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

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1. INTRODUCTION - STUDY RELEVANCE AND PROBLEM ESSENCE

Violence against women and gender inequality is one of the acute problems not only throughout the world but in Georgia as well. Based on the study, **one out of seven women in Georgia has experienced gender-based violence in her lifetime.**¹ Gender inequality is based on and strengthened by traditional norms and attitudes towards the role of a woman. Studies have revealed trends of acceptance of unfair gender norms and stereotypical perception of the role of the woman in a large part of society.² Despite the apparent progress regarding women`s emancipation, men hold dominant positions in society, and these gender stereotypes are passed from generation to generation.³ All this affects the future of the country since gender inequality might significantly hamper economic growth and poverty reduction.⁴

International acts, including the Istanbul Convention, **recognize the structural nature of violence against women as a sign of gender-based violence** and the fact that violence against women is one of the primary social mechanism forcing women to occupy a subordinate position compared to men,⁵ and this problem needs to be addressed systematically.⁶

Firmly rooted stereotypes about gender roles, or prevailing views about characteristics and roles of women and men, on acceptable patterns of their behaviour,⁷ prevent the achievement of gender equality, elimination of discrimination against women and domestic violence.

1 "According to a new national study, one out of seven women in Georgia is experiencing domestic violence"; available at: – <https://bit.ly/369JHH6>

2 For example, a woman`s most important role is to maintain order at home for 66% of women and 78% of men. They (23% of women and 42% of men) also note that a woman should obey a man even if she disagrees with him. The respondents described and referred to independent, strong women and those with the character of a leader as "masculine women".- National Study on Violence against Women in Georgia, 2017, p. 62, 64, 68, 106; available at: – <https://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20georgia/attachments/publications/2018/national%20vaw%20study%20report%20geo.pdf?la=ka&vs=0>

3 Men and gender relations in Georgia, 2014; available at: – https://georgia.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Men_and_Gender_Relations_in_Georgia.pdf

4 Gender equality provision in general education - series of meetings; available at: – http://www.mca-georgia.ge/index.php/main/read_news/128

5 *ibid*, preamble

6 *ibid*, art. 7.1

7 Definition of gender stereotypes, Civil Encyclopedia Dictionary; available at: – <http://www.nplg.gov.ge/gwdict/index.php?a=term&d=5&t=9581>

Patriarchal gender stereotypes are persistent in the population of Georgia.⁸ According to the Public Defender's report of 2019 on the situations in human rights and freedoms, very often, discrimination is reasoned by stereotypes and misconceptions existing in society. However, the state does not undertake relevant measures to address them, and women are one of the most vulnerable groups in this regard.⁹

The seriousness of the problem of gender stereotypes is well demonstrated by the alarming statistics of femicide. According to the General Prosecutor's Office of Georgia, 19 cases of femicide were revealed in 2019. Ten of them were committed on the grounds of domestic crime.¹⁰ In 2020, 8 women were killed in two months.¹¹

School plays a particular role in combating gender inequality, gender discrimination and violence against women, and raising awareness. Women victims of violence always point out that punishing the abuser is not enough to ensure their safety. We need transformations at the level of consciousness, and the educational system can best perform it. It must educate people free from gender stereotypes and outdated patriarchal cultural norms, who will reject violent relationships.

School is an institution where nearly all the citizens go and none of the institutions might have such close relationship with people. Besides, a new generation whose knowledge and values determine the future is formed there. It becomes especially vital in an environment saturated with inequality, since it may be the only place with prospect of educating young people with the right mindset. Thus, school is the best place to fight against gender stereotypes.

8 Men and gender relations in Georgia, 2014, p. 8-9

9 The Situations in Human Rights and Freedoms in Georgia (Public Defender Report), 2019; available at: – <http://www.ombudsman.ge/geo/akhali-ambebi/sakhalkho-damtsvelis-qoveltsliuri-saparlameto-angarishi-adamianis-uflebebisa-da-tavisuflebebis-datsvis-mdgomareobis-taobaze-2019>

The Situations in Human Rights and Freedoms in Georgia (Public Defender Report), 2019 <http://ombudsman.ge/res/docs/2020040215365449134.pdf?fbclid=IwAR0P6u0NhYdNa1CspCH4ym414rokVx3DqPFEU1r6k86LE8H5BKgO7xT41oY>

10 Public Defender's annual parliamentary report on The Situations in Human Rights and Freedoms in Georgia of 2019

11 Women against femicide – the action will be held on March 8 near the philharmonic; available at: – <https://netgazeti.ge/news/431959/>

2. THE AIM AND METHODOLOGY OF THE MONITORING CONDUCTED BY FUND “SUKHUMI”

Regarding domestic violence against women, within the framework of the project “Strengthening of Women`s rights in Western Georgia” supported by the German international organization “Brot”, in March-December, 2019-2020, Fund “Sukhumi” conducted the monitoring of schools to assess teachers` attitudes and the performance of schools against gender stereotypes.

Desk and qualitative research methods, such as in-depth interview and focus group, were used in the study. The research included principals and teachers of public schools from 12 municipalities of western Georgia¹², resource centre employees, education and gender experts, the representatives of NGOs working in schools, parents and former students. 32 people participated in the in-depth interview, and 31 ones in a focus group. The total number of respondents was 63.

Within the scope of the desk research, the existing legislative framework, both international legal and legislative acts adopted by the Parliament of Georgia, have been analyzed. Besides, studies and reports conducted on this issue by various local and international organizations were used.

¹² The monitoring covered the following regions: Imereti (Kutaisi, Tskaltubo, Bagdati, Khoni, Terjola, Samtredia); Guria (Ourgeti (Makvanati, Shemokmedi, Tskhemliskhidi, Gurianti, Bakiskari, Dvabzu), Lanchkhuti (Chibati); Samegrelo (Senaki (Nosiri), Ganmukhuri, Tsalenjikha (Chkhvaleri, Pakhulani), Zugdidi (Orsantia, Kakhati).

3. LEGAL OBLIGATIONS AND STANDARDS OF THE STATE

Georgian legislation protects women`s rights in the field of education. The country`s **constitution** prohibits gender discrimination, and the state undertakes to ensure equality between men and women.¹³ Also, equal access to education for women and men without discrimination and free choice of education and speciality at all stages of education are provided to promote gender equality.¹⁴

These rights are recognized by the international obligations of the State. To eliminate discrimination against women, the number of international acts obliges the state to ensure teaching human rights in the field of education. Under the article 10 of the **UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women**, *“The state is obliged to eliminate any stereotyped concept of the roles of men and women at all levels and in all forms of education, including by the revision of textbooks and school programmes and the adaptation of teaching methods”*.¹⁵

The UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education¹⁶ not only outlaws all forms of discrimination, including the gender-based one in education, but it also underscores the obligation of the state to proscribe any form of discrimination in education while promoting equality of educational opportunity.¹⁷

The UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women obliges the state to eliminate **any stereotypical conception of the role of men and women** in textbooks and school curriculum at all levels and in all forms; reduce the number of out-of-school girls and provide them with special educational information when they drop out.¹⁸ The education of the child should be aimed at raising her/him in the spirit of equality between men and women.¹⁹

13 Constitution of Georgia, art. 11.1; 11.3; available at: – <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/30346?publication=35>

14 Law of Georgia on “Gender Equality”, art. 4.2.b; 7; available at: – <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/91624?publication=8>

15 UN Convention on The Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, art. 10.c; available at: – <http://www.supremecourt.ge/files/upload-file/pdf/aqtebi9.pdf>

16 UNESCO - Convention Against Discrimination in Education; available at: – <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/4466863?publication=0>

17 *ibid*, preamble, art. 1.1; 3(a)

18 UN Convention on The Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, art. 10; available at: – <http://www.supremecourt.ge/files/upload-file/pdf/aqtebi9.pdf>

19 Convention “On the Rights of the Child”, art. 29.1. d; available at: – <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/1399901?publication=0>

The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) obliges the state to take all the necessary measures to **eliminate prejudices, customs, traditions and all other practices based on the idea of female inferiority or stereotypical opinions on the role of man and woman.**²⁰ The convention gives significance to the issue of education. It emphasizes the importance of teaching equality between women and men at all levels of education, non-stereotypical gender roles, and professional training of specialists.²¹

The principles of equality are also observed by the existing legislative acts on general education. According to the **“National Goals of General Education”** approved by the Government of Georgia, “The system of general education of Georgia aims to create conditions for developing a person with national and universal human values”.²² **One of the main goals of the state policy in the field of general education** is to establish civic awareness based on liberal-democratic values.²³

According to the Law of Georgia on **“General Education”**, a general education institution is obliged to provide students with education complying with modern requirements and based on the principle of equality.²⁴

According to the recently adopted **“The Code on the Rights of the Child”**²⁵ in Georgia, one of the aims of the child’s education is to develop a sense of respect and equality in the child regarding fundamental rights and freedoms.

The Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of Georgia²⁶ (hereinafter - the Ministry) is also responsible for undertaking the measures to prevent violence against women and/or domestic violence, including the identification and response to gender-based and/or domestic violence.²⁷ From September 1, 2020, the state will ensure that

20 Council of Europe Convention on “Preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence”, art. 12.1; available at: – <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/3789678?publication=0>

21 *ibid*, art. 14; 15.1; 28

22 Resolution #84 of the Government of Georgia of October 18, 2004 “On Approval of the National Goals of General Education”; available at: – <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/11098?publication=0>

23 Law of Georgia on “General Education”, art. 3.1. b

24 Law of Georgia on “General Education”, art. 33.1.”a”, “j”

25 The code will enter into force on June 1, 2020 Law of Georgia “The Code on the Rights of the Child”, art. 101; available at: – <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/4613854?publication=0>

26 Law of Georgia on “Violence against Women and/or Elimination of Domestic Violence, Protection and Support of Victims of Violence”, art. 7.1; available at: – <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/26422?publication=15>

27 *ibid*, art. 14¹.1

components aimed at preventing violence against women and/or domestic violence are included in the curriculum of general education institutions (schools).²⁸

According to the teacher professional standard, the professional characteristics of all teachers should comply with the principles of equality and **the code of professional ethics of the teacher**.²⁹ According to the latter, the teachers help to establish democratic values in students while fulfilling their professional responsibilities; give students an example of mutual respect and protection of human rights. S/he [teacher] is obliged to inform the relevant person about the fact or alleged fact of violence against women and/or domestic violence if there is a risk of recurrence of violence.³⁰ The standard still needs to be improved, and gender equality issues more clearly reflected. Unfortunately, the recommendations provided by the Public Defender so that the professional standard of a teacher requires the knowledge of basic human rights has not been implemented yet.³¹

Integrating gender equality issues in education, further teacher training, promoting gender equality in general education, and **combating gender stereotypes and gender inequality were foreseen by the government action plans³² and policy documents.**

According to the implementation report on the Government Action Plan on the Protection of Human Rights (2016-2017), the issues of gender equality were partially foreseen in the training modules developed for teachers. Several projects were implemented during this period, a training module was elaborated, training sessions were held, and students made videos. It should be mentioned that **the winning film was about gender stereotypes**.³³

Government Action Plan for 2018-2020 on Combat Against Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence and Protection of Victims foresees the development of the training modules and strengthening the professional skills on is-

28 *ibid*, art. 7.5; Law of Georgia on amendments to Law of Georgia on “Violence against Women and/or Elimination of Domestic Violence, Protection and Support of Victims of Violence”, art. 2.1.; 3.2.

29 The professional standard of teacher, art. 4.c,h
see: Order of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia #92/N of June 6, 2017, on “Approval of the Professional Standard for Teachers” on amendments to the Order #1014 of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia of November 21,2008”; available at: – <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/3658522?publication=0>

30 Code of Teacher’s Professional Ethics, art. 3.3-5,8; 20¹; available at: – http://old.tpdv.ge/uploads/pdf_documents/maszavleblis_eTikis%20kodeqsikodeqsi.pdf

31 Report of 2019, p.318

32 Action Plan of the Government of Georgia on the Protection of Human Rights for 2016-2017, action -13.1.2.1-13.1.3.1; available at: – <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/download/3350412/0/ge/pdf>

33 Implementation report of Action Plan of the Government of Georgia on the Protection of Human Rights for 2016-2017, Gender Equality and Strengthening of Women, p. 255-256; available at: – <http://myrights.gov.ge/uploads/files/docs/6971Report2016-2017.pdf>

sues of domestic violence and gender-based violence for teachers as well. Also, the Ministry, as the implementer and service provider for prevention of violence against women and domestic violence, under the governmental action plan had to develop/approve an annual internal action plan or to integrate it into the existing internal institutional action plan. Besides, the Ministry and other relevant institutions are responsible for undertaking awareness-raising activities and/or training on issues of gender-based and domestic violence in the institutions of general education.³⁴

According to the Action Plan (2018-2020) implementation report of 2018, to enhance the professional skills of teachers, the Ministry uses the module “Prevention of Bullying in Schools and Promotion of Development of Tolerance Culture”, which covers the issues of violence against women and domestic violence.³⁵ 5749 teachers have been trained through this module since 2018.³⁶ This number is very little compared to the total number of teachers.³⁷

According to the Public Defender, the analysis of the strategy of the National Centre for Teacher`s Professional Development for 2016-2017 indicates that provision of teachers with knowledge on human rights issues and their introduction in the teaching process is not a strategic priority. The centre has not developed a consolidated training policy document on human rights for teachers yet.³⁸

At the policy level, the state does not adequately confront gender stereotypes in the educational system and resort to preventive measures. According to the experts, in the action plans, more attention should be paid to changing gender stereotypes in society.³⁹

According to the national strategy for the prevention of violence, the school should be a forum ensuring dialogue between the state, society and the new generation. Through

34 Resolution #175 of the Government of Georgia of April 11, 2018, on “The Approval of the Action Plan for 2018-2020 for Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence and for the Protection of Victims”, action - 2.1.6- 2.1.7; 3.1.2; 3.2.1; available at: – <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/4144947?publication=0>

35 Action plan (2018-2020) implementation report of 2018, p. 18; available at: – <http://myrights.gov.ge/uploads/files/docs/3660EVAW%E1%83%90%E1%83%9C%E1%83%92%E1%83%90%E1%83%A0%E1%83%98%E1%83%A8%E1%83%982018.pdf>

36 Action plan (2018-2020) implementation report of 2018, p. 20

37 According to “Geostat” data, 63 780 teachers are employed in the institutions of general education at the beginning of 2019/2020 academic year; available at: – <https://www.interpressnews.ge/ka/article/575378-2018-2019-sascavlo-cels-12-000-ze-metma-moscavlem-scavla-shecqvita>

38 Report of 2019, p. 319

39 Analysis of the policy against domestic violence in Georgia, p. 30-31, 45; available at: – <http://www.parliament.ge/uploads/other/75/75669.pdf>

it, the state can make a significant contribution to the prevention of violence by mental and emotional training of students.⁴⁰

Despite progressive provisions regarding the establishment of legal and professional standards, the challenges remain. Only the standards of the social science teacher requires some knowledge regarding human rights. It means that only social science teachers are required to have some competence in this field, which is contrary to international standards. No human rights issues are included in the standards of the public school principal.⁴¹ The general part of the teacher's professional standard does not require teachers to have competences in the field of human rights. However, there are some records of intercultural teaching and inclusive education.⁴²

There are challenges in terms of textbook standards, as well. In 2016, **a project of the textbook assessment criteria was developed**, which implied the evaluation of the textbook in terms of gender equality.⁴³ **The criteria of reviewing the textbooks** of primary and secondary education approved by the Ministry include the following requirements: **the textbook should be free, including from gender-based stereotypical, incorrect and discriminatory elements; gender equality should be preserved in texts and illustrations; the illustrations and content should be free from any incitement to violence.**⁴⁴ Despite the obligation of the state, unfortunately, the gender sensitivity of teaching methods and programs has not been assessed yet.⁴⁵

The effective work of resource centres regarding pursuing gender policy and proactive actions to eliminate gender stereotypes for prevention of violence remains a problem. Although under the law, the statute obliges the Educational Resource Centre to provide the development of human resources of general education institutions by organizing relevant events (training, seminars, etc.) on the ground. Be-

40 Violence prevention national strategy (draft version), p. 17; available at: – <https://police.ge/files/pdf/dzaladobis%20strategia%20saitze%20dasadebi.pdf>

41 The Situations in Human Rights and Freedoms in Georgia, 2018, (Public Defender Report), p. 948, 951; available at - <http://www.ombudsman.ge/res/docs/2019042620571319466.pdf>

42 The Situations in Human Rights and Freedoms in Georgia, 2018, (Public Defender Report), p. 950

43 *ibid*, p. 256

44 “On Approval of the Content and Technical Criteria for the Review of the Basic and Secondary Level Textbook/Series of Model” Appendix N1 to Order #768 of the Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of December 31, 2018 - 5. Relevance to legal and ethical norms; available at: – <https://www.mes.gov.ge/uploads/griphireba/files/222.pdf>

45 The report of public defender of 2019, p. 313; available at: – <http://ombudsman.ge/res/docs/2020040215365449134.pdf?fbclid=IwAR0P6u0NhYdNa1CspCH4ym414rokVx3DqPFEU1r6k86LE8H5BKgO7xT41oY>

sides, it must contribute to the introduction of innovations and programs developed by the Ministry (it implies planning and supporting of the events aimed at the elimination of gender stereotypes and the promotion of gender equality). Centre must also monitor and evaluate the educational process and school environment, and develop some recommendations to improve them.⁴⁶ However, nothing is mentioned about the measures undertaken by the resource centre in this regard in the performance report of the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of Georgia of 2019.⁴⁷ The cooperation of the resource centres with the local civil society is rather weak.

It is noteworthy that in order to prevent violence, **the resource officer`s service** must participate in the planning and implementation of relevant educational campaigns and activities. Besides, it also should provide psychosocial services to students with such [psychosocial] problems, behavioural and emotional disorders, their parents and teachers.⁴⁸ However, the work of this service [resource officer`s service] in eliminating and preventing gender stereotypes and violence is rather weak. The fact that the resource officer`s service is not represented in all schools throughout Georgia remains the problem. In schools with a small contingent, under the principal`s order, the function of this service to some extent, is shared by certain persons of the staff. However, due to their insufficient qualification and small salary, the function is not adequately performed and is formal.

46 Order # 47N of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia, "On Approval of the Typical Statute of the Educational Resource Centres of the Territorial Organs of the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia", art. 2, 14.03.17; available at: – <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/3606347?publication=0>

47 Performance Report of Ministry of Education, Science, Culture, and Sport of Georgia of 2019; available at: – https://mes.gov.ge/publicInfo/?page_id=103

48 Order of the Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of Georgia №141 /n "On Approval of the Statute of Public Law Legal Entity - Resource Officer Service of an Educational Institution", art. 3, 12.07.2019; available at: – <http://mandaturi.gov.ge/image/data/%E1%83%99%E1%83%90%E1%83%9C%E1%83%9D%E1%83%9C%E1%83%9B%E1%83%93%E1%83%94%E1%83%91%E1%83%9A%E1%83%9D%E1%83%91%E1%83%90/Debuleba.pdf>

4. STUDIES ON GENDER STEREOTYPES IN TEACHERS AND SCHOOL

Legal standards are far ahead of the practice in general education institutions and thus remain as declared principles. Studies and this monitoring demonstrate that **much should be done to eliminate gender stereotypes in school life** and establish equality.

According to the Global Gender Inequality Index 2018, Georgia takes the 99th place out of 149 countries (with 0,677 points), which is below the average world index, and it takes the 60th position regarding educational achievements.⁴⁹

Gender stereotypes are actual in society`s attitude regarding education, as well. Generally, people prefer boys and men to receive education. In 2017, according to the UN study, the majority of the population preferred women to take primary education, and less supported their opportunity to take secondary and especially higher education.⁵⁰ Besides, poverty often prevents girls from taking secondary and higher education.⁵¹ In the case of making a choice between a girl and a boy to pay the higher education tax, 44% of the surveyed population would pay the tuition fee of the boy and only 22% of the girl.⁵²

Against rigid gender stereotypes in society, the school plays a vital role to raise the youth with healthy thinking. Especially in terms, when the primary recommendation for the elimination of violence is to change the social norms related to the acceptance of gender-based violence and women`s subordinate role.⁵³

Although the school is obliged to eliminate gender stereotypes in society, **it often tends to reinforce them.** Researchers recognize the school`s impact on the formation

49 The Global Gender Gap Report 2018, Georgia, p. 105-106; available at: – http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2018.pdf

50 Gupta, T.P., Taylor, A., Lauro, G., Shengelia, L., Sturua, L. (2018). “Harmful Practices of Early/Child Marriage and FGM/C”- qualitative research final report. Tbilisi, Georgia and Washington DC, USA; National Centre for Disease Control and Public Health, Promundo-US, UNFPA, UNICEF p. 47- 48; available at: – <https://georgia.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Exploring%20Harmful%20Practices%20of%20EarlyChild%20Marriage%20and%20FGMC%20in%20Georgia%20GEO.pdf>

51 *ibid*, p. 9

52 “Public attitudes towards gender equality in politics and business” , p. 75; available at: – https://www.undp.org/content/dam/georgia/docs/publications/GE_UNDP_Gender_Research_GEO.pdf

53 National Study on Violence against Women in Georgia, 2017, p. 107; available at: – <https://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20georgia/attachments/publications/2018/national%20vaw%20study%20report%20geo.pdf?la=ka&vs=0>

of gender roles in individuals. In contrast, education policy underestimates the role of the school as a socializing agent.⁵⁴

Educational content promotes recurrence of gender stereotypes in schools.

Most textbooks in all subjects and grades are full of them[gender stereotypes].⁵⁵ According to researchers, textbooks are one of the most powerful tools for forming gender stereotypes in school.⁵⁶ Studies show that in Georgia, women are less represented/heroized in textbooks, illustrations, historical sources, and learning activities. Men are represented in their traditional role - a fighter or a lord. While the activities of women are never associated with authority or decision-making.⁵⁷

Public Defender is included in the process of series approval of some textbooks, and it is a very positive fact. However, sometimes, the recommendations about reflecting gender issues in the textbooks given by her representatives are not considered.⁵⁸ Unfortunately, this process does not cover the textbooks of all the grades. Only the series of some primary and secondary school (VII-VIII grades) textbooks have been approved.⁵⁹

Researchers also speak about a **hidden curriculum**, i.e. organization of the educational process which promotes gender inequality and fosters gender stereotypes. At all stages, relations in educational institutions repeat the prevailing view of women as subordinates.⁶⁰

The fact that most teachers have gender-stereotypical views remains an acute problem. When we talk about loading society with gender stereotypes, we also consider teachers as a part of society.⁶¹ Studies show that teachers lack awareness on gender issues, and most of them prefer the traditional distribution of female and male roles and recognize the dominance of men in career, family and socio-political activity.⁶²

54 Gorgadze, N., "Gender education in the primary school of general education", p. 28, 38; available at: – http://press.tsu.ge/data/image_db_innova/disertaciebi_fsiqologia/natia_gorgadze.pdf

55 Typical problems in educational content, see: "Guidelines for TEE Module - Writers for Gender and Social Inclusion", p. 8-10; available at: – http://old.tpdg.ge/uploads/pdf_documents/gender1.pdf

56 Gorgadze, N., "Gender education in the primary school of general education", p. 36-37

57 Gender stereotypes in school textbooks; available at: – <https://bit.ly/2V71MDr>

58 Proposal of the Public Defender to the Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of Georgia on improving the process of reviewing the textbooks of general education institutions, p. 3; available at: – <http://ombudsman.ge/res/docs/2020030217361936000.pdf>

59 Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of Georgia, 22.06.2020; available at: – <http://mes.gov.ge/content.php?lang=geo&id=10521>

60 Berekashvili, N., "Gender socialization factors in the context of education", 2012, p. 68-69

61 Examples of possible biases in teacher's behaviour, see: "Guidelines for TEE Module - Writers for Gender and Social Inclusion", p. 12; available at: – http://old.tpdg.ge/uploads/pdf_documents/gender1.pdf

62 Study of teachers' knowledge and attitudes towards gender equality (research report), 2014, p. 11-12; available at: – <http://www.parliament.ge/uploads/other/75/75678.pdf>

Other researches have also confirmed those mentioned above. Differences in teachers' attitudes have been identified. The teacher-student interaction was gender biased in favour of the boys.⁶³ Teachers considered the upbringing of different qualities according to the sex of the student as a pedagogical task, and this difference is manifested in support of gender stereotypical characteristics.⁶⁴ Researches on gender equality in the field of education show that traditional attitudes of teachers subconsciously reinforce gender stereotypes.⁶⁵

According to the program for international student assessment PISA 2018 official results, **girls have shown much better results than boys.**⁶⁶ **Paradoxically, the fact is that girls study better, but boys are considered to be more talented.**⁶⁷ For example, about half of the teachers believed that boys have better learning skills and are more gifted.⁶⁸

Based on the observations and data of many years, it is believed that this model of teacher-student relationship leads to lower self-efficacy in girls. Consequently, recognition of boys' superiority makes them think that they are superior over girls.⁶⁹

Teachers, as a rule, do not realize their bias, and they remain insensitive to the inequalities reflected in the educational content because they teach what they have learned. As a result of the gender socialization and discriminatory hidden curriculum established in the school, girls and boys receive unequal education. Girls are less involved in STEM fields, which is reasoned by the stereotypes in the field of education. Teachers encourage boys to study science and restrict girls to "feminine" roles.⁷⁰ According to the researchers, this trend will continue until teachers realize the problems of gender socialization, their bias and raise their awareness in this regard.⁷¹

The studies and the present monitoring have shown that most teachers tend not to

63 Berekashvili, N., "Gender socialization factors in the context of education", 2012, p. 98; available at: – <https://bit.ly/2yX77Vc>

64 Berekashvili, N., "Gender socialization factors in the context of education", 2012, p. 99-100; available at: – <https://bit.ly/2yX77Vc>

65 Gender equality in Georgia: barriers and recommendations, part II, 2018, p. 73

66 "Literacy-the most problematic issue" – PISA 2018 and deteriorating results of Georgian students; available at: – <https://edu.aris.ge/news/wignierebashi-yvelaze-metad-gvichirs-pisa-2018-da-qartveli-moswavleebis-gauaresebuli-shedegebi.html>

67 Gender stereotypes in school textbooks; available at: – <https://bit.ly/2V71MDr>

68 Berekashvili, N., "Gender socialization factors in the context of education", 2012, p. 100

69 *ibid*, p. 67, 102

70 Guidelines for TEE Module - Writers for Gender and Social Inclusion, p. 4; available at: – http://old.tpdg.ge/uploads/pdf_documents/gender1.pdf

71 Berekashvili, N., "Gender socialization factors in the context of education", 2012, p. 67-68

notice and/or reject gender-stereotyped behavior⁷² which is emphasized by the field experts and students as well. According to girls, teachers consider them to be weaker and more emotional, while boys are considered to be smarter and stronger. Intelligent girls are praised for having a “masculine brain”.⁷³

Teacher training, raising their awareness, qualification and gender sensitivity is vital in combating gender stereotypes. According to the explanation of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, the relevant values of the Convention will not be efficiently integrated into the educational space if teachers “do not embody the values relevant to the Convention”.⁷⁴ Unfortunately, gender issues are less crucial in teacher training programs. It is necessary to increase the competence of teachers in gender equality to change the existing reality.

Gender imbalance in the educational system is demonstrated by the ratio of female to male teachers. Most of the teachers in Georgia are women. This profession is perceived as feminine due to low wages and the lack of career opportunities.⁷⁵ According to Geostat, 63 780 teachers work in the educational institutions during the academic year 2019-2020, including 55 376 women. The data is distributed in the following way in public schools: 55 946 and 48 513.⁷⁶ The share of women comprises 86,8% of the total number.

With the proper effort, the educational system can indeed reduce violence against women and bring benefits to society. According to the World Bank assessment, better education reduces the incidence of sex discrimination, including domestic violence, and increases economic benefits.⁷⁷

72 Study of teachers' knowledge and attitudes towards gender equality (research report), 2014, p. 27-29; available at: – <http://www.parliament.ge/uploads/other/75/75678.pdf>

73 Gender equality in Georgia: barriers and recommendations, part II, 2018 , p. 73-74

74 UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC), General comment No. 1 (2001), Article 29 (1), The aims of education, -CRC/GC/2001/1, para. 18; available at: – <https://bit.ly/35oDnM8>

75 Gender equality in Georgia: barriers and recommendations, part II , 2018, p. 71; available at: – <https://bit.ly/2xfOknD>

76 General education; available at: – <https://www.geostat.ge/ka/modules/categories/59/zogadi-ganatleba>

77 Gorgadze, N., “Gender education in the primary school of general education “ - p. 27; available at: – http://press.tsu.ge/data/image_db_innova/disertaciebi_fsiqologia/natia_gorgadze.pdf

5. GENDER STEREOTYPES IN SCHOOLS - FINDINGS OF THE FUND "SUKHUMI" MONITORING

The monitoring conducted by Fund "Sukhumi" has demonstrated that, despite the apparent progress, **gender stereotypes are still firmly rooted in the school**. It is revealed by all actors: principals, teachers, parents and, of course, the students. Some respondents admit that they have stereotypic views as well, but they do not know the cause of the problem and their responsibility in this regard. The higher the administrative level of the employee in the educational system, the less recognition and enthusiasm they show to discuss problems. Most of them blame the society and the family for reproducing the stereotypes and do not see the role of the school in their strengthening - *"Generally, this problem exists in Georgian society. I cannot say that the school deepens these attitudes or prompts them to the students. I would say that the roots only come from the family"* (a school principal, Zugdidi Municipality). *"I think that the school deepens the gender stereotypes"* (a teacher, Terjola Municipality).

According to some respondents, the school, the family and the society, equally share the responsibility for deepening gender stereotypes, and they should fight against them together as well - *"There are many stereotypic idiomatic expressions. The school, the kindergarten, the family, the neighbourhood, the social environment in which we live, contribute to strengthening these stereotypes since there are people whose daily life is full of discrimination (a gender expert). "All these three links should manage to break gender stereotypes with joint efforts"* (a parent, Senaki Municipality).

There were cases when the respondents completely denied the existence of stereotypes - *"This opinion is not supported in our school. There is no gender-based discrimination (i.e. we do not make a difference between a girl and a boy)"* (a school principal, Tskaltubo Municipality). **Older teachers are characterised by an abundance of stereotypes and a lack of willingness to acknowledge it. Differences are also observed between rural and urban schools** - *"Compared to the city, there is a low level of awareness, and this is reflected in the school as well"* (a school principal, Senaki Municipality). Despite the acuteness of the problem in rural areas and regions, **the increase of internet access makes a positive impact on breaking stereotypes** - *"Our school is adjacent to the division line. Gender stereotypes are especially firmly rooted in this region. Teachers try their best, but it is impossible to transform the roles of girl and boy at once completely. However, some changes have been made, and certain stereotypes are broken. Information is shared through TV and the internet. Changes start with informing"* (a teacher, Tsalenjikha Municipality). Despite there is

some progress compared to previous years, **teachers still have rigid stereotypical views**. Their attitudes, vocabulary and behaviour manifest it. For example, a teacher who says that the existence of gender stereotypes is unjustified demonstrates the opposite during the interview - *“Sometimes, in domestic violence, the other side is guilty as well. You also take responsibility when you irritate your drunken husband”* (a focus group participant teacher, Ozurgeti Municipality).

The existence of gender stereotypes is closely linked to the tradition and practice, as there are teachers who used expressions such as “she has a brain like a boy”, “a boy is different”, “a man is everything”. *“I remember one of my teachers telling us a popular “truth” - “Anyway, a boy’s head is better than a girl’s head”* (a gender expert).

The practice of using stereotypical expressions is often admitted by teachers and school principals as well – *“Sometimes teachers say about girls that “they run like boys in the corridor”. Then they smile at themselves and acknowledge it to be a gender-based expression. We learn all this with children. We had been taught differently, and we are transforming our thinking now”* (a school principal, Zugdidi Municipality). Such examples demonstrate that breaking stereotypes needs strong efforts, even though people realize it.

Some teachers even admitted that children are better aware of gender stereotype terminology harmfulness – *“I have heard a phrase - “This kind of behavior does not suit a girl” from the teacher, but the student replied – “Behaviour does not have a sex”* (a school principal, Zugdidi Municipality). The access to the internet and information helps new generation to realize many issues – *“I think all this is due to the internet. Children perceive and receive all the novelties easily. Teachers are far behind our children in terms of perception”* (a school principal, Senaki Municipality).

Some respondents emphasize that **gender-based stereotypic phrases said by teachers make a negative impact on the self-efficacy of girls** – *“It seems that she should not think about the “male” profession as she is a girl”* (a teacher, Terjola Municipality). It has also been mentioned that phrases, like “He is a boy and he will do it”, **affect boys**. Gender-based superiority makes them lazier and less motivated.

It is clear that gender stereotypes in schools are not often perceived as a problem, are non-priority, or their negative impact on deepening gender inequality in society is not fully realized. One respondent cited an example of the question asked at the certification exam of teachers. It referred to their perception of the acute issues in schools. It turned out that only the paper of one teacher out of 130 candidates covered the problems of gender stereotypes in schools - *“It demonstrates that the future teachers’ awareness is not gender-sensitive”* (a gender expert).

The lack of male teachers and the concentration of their small number in technical subjects or sports contributes to the formation of gender stereotypes in school – *“They still think that only women can teach pedagogics and men can teach either sports or mathematics. Indeed, the student needs to see both female and male*

teachers at school equally. It will contribute to their right formation” (a teacher, Khoni Municipality). However, it has also been emphasized that the importance of a male teacher to schools and the educational process is not very well realized. It strengthens the existing practice that while raising children, women bear more responsibility than men – *“Frankly speaking, I think that a small number of male teachers does not make barriers to the educational process. However, it would be much better if the number of male teachers was bigger in the school” (a school principal, Tsalenjikhha Municipality).*

The attitude towards male teachers is also stereotypic, and it was demonstrated by school representatives, parents and students as well. **In some cases, respondents show more respect to male teachers** – *“It is quite a different thing when there is a male teacher in school. It is essential since they have different mindset and show different support” (a school principal, Tsalenjikhha Municipality).* *“They [male teachers] have a better impact on children in terms of upbringing and especially on boys” (a school principal, Tskaltubo Municipality).* *“It seems that children show more interest. Boys have “mannish” attitude towards them” (a parent, Ozurgeti Municipality).*

The following example given by the respondent demonstrates the priority given to men in the educational system. There is an active, smart young woman in a particular school who has passed the exam for principals. Nevertheless, the staff members do not allow her to take this position. They think that – *“The school will be stronger if a principal is a man since he will be more efficient” (a teacher, Terjola Municipality).*

5.1. THE ROLE OF SCHOOL IN COMBAT AGAINST GENDER STEREOTYPES

Despite different views on many issues, all the respondents agreed that the school has **a crucial role in combating gender stereotypes** since, after the family, it makes a significant impact on the formation of the child. Children are future parents. The present parents have been raised by the school. Thus, the school forms the community and its values - *“12 years at school is enough time to make an impact on children. This is the best prevention, to raise children with right and non-stereotyped thinking” (a parent, Khoni Municipality).* The role of the educational institution is also vital when a child does not have an environment supporting equality in the family. The school remains an essential institution for shaping the child’s values. In the absence of family support, **the school should encourage the development of modern and critical thinking in the student to understand his/her rights and place in society.**

The respondents noted that the Ministry of Education should be more actively included in the fight against gender stereotypes in schools and undertake a clear policy in this regard - *“The functions of the school against gender discrimination should be more specific” (a school principal, Zugdidi Municipality).* *“The role of the educational system is vital in this regard, and schools should be obliged to become more active. When*

you have an official assignment, you are more mobilized, and in the absence of such objective, the reality is completely different” (a school principal, Senaki Municipality).

Monitoring process has also revealed **a clash of values and mentality in families with the modern requirements of the school**. When the school tries to introduce modern standards and values in the process of education, the family often remains a much more traditional and conservative institution. According to one parent, unfortunately, many parents **do not support the change of traditional gender roles** and still believe that “the wife should be obedient to her husband” - *“Most people think that what happens in their families is normal, that a man should be the head of the family, that beating a woman is not unusual...what will he explain to his children?” (a parent, Khoni Municipality)*. This situation and a woman’s obligation to obey her husband, supports the practice of violence against women in families. Besides, stereotypic views about the role of men and women in families significantly affect the attitudes and actions of their children - *“The child often says that the man is the head of the family and the woman is his obedient, and argues that the parents are religious and teach him so (as their preacher tells them)” (a parent, Khoni Municipality)*. **It is especially dangerous when teachers and parents demonstrate gender stereotypes at the same time**, as in such case the child lacks the opportunity to listen to an alternative opinion to draw an informed conclusion - *“We had to sew blue robes for the New Year party. The boys’ parents protested that their sons would not wear the clothes in blue. That colour was not suitable for boys. I was also surprised that neither the teacher protested about it. She also advised choosing another colour” (a parent, Khoni Municipality)*.

It demonstrates **the importance of having a healthy school environment for children who live a stereotypical family**. After the competent conversations and discussions on gender equality by teachers, the child is allowed to make an informed conclusion.

The monitoring has revealed that in case of meetings initiated by the school on the issues of gender and domestic violence, the parents show interest and agree to cooperate - *“We held meetings with students and parents on the issue of domestic violence. At first, I did not expect them to be actively involved, especially fathers. There was a wide range of people, including police officers, investigators, etc. We gave tests and assignments to parents. I was so happy to get such a result with the participation of the fathers. We realized the importance of such cooperation” (focus group, Ozurgeti Municipality)*.

The monitoring has also revealed **the examples of close cooperation between the school and the parent** - *“We, as parents were allowed to hold meetings with students on a topic chosen by us, and I conducted a meeting on gender in my child’s class. Our teacher regularly allows parents to share their professional experience. These meetings are aimed at raising awareness of students and providing more information to them” (a parent, Khoni Municipality)*.

Teachers more or less try to avoid sharing homework/work on gender basis and promote equal involvement of boys and girls in the school environment - *“As for the distribution of roles, girls and boys share the work equally. We have a list of duties, where both girls and boys are included. The boys do not protest to perform the work” (a teacher, Khoni Municipality).*

It is vital that the **school and family are consistent and closely cooperate to break the stereotypes**. Gender stereotypes are a complex social problem and can be combated by consolidating a successful school and family/community - *“We must work together. I do not raise my children with stereotypes, but if his classmates mock at him, everything is over. He will not believe me anymore” (a parent, Tsalenjikha Municipality).*

5.2. GIRLS` ACCESS TO EDUCATION

As a rule, gender stereotypes limit opportunities for girls to get the education. However, most of the respondents say that **school and parents do not restrict girls` professional choice** to receive a higher education, since Georgian society shows respect to this issue. Though some members of our society still believe that in similar conditions, **higher education is more significant for boys rather than for girls** - *“Subconsciously, we are more concerned about the boy`s career. We always look for a good family for a girl” (a parent, Khoni Municipality).* However, it was stated that both parents and the school support girls to get a higher education.

The study has demonstrated that in terms of limited resources, a family tends to spend finances on a boy`s education, even if the girl is a better student. **Girls bravely oppose such attitude and disobey the oppression**. The respondent recalled a case when due to the lack of funds, parents were going to give preference to boys` higher education and asked the girl to leave the school at the 9th grade - *“They told her that she would get married and raise children, so, education was not essential to her. However, the girl had nearly sued the parents, and now she is studying at the university” (Resource Centre representative, Samegrelo).* *“In one family, the grandfather was the main breadwinner of the family. He decided not to pay the tuition fee for the girl as she would get married, and give preference to the boy. There was a conflict in the family. She asked the relatives to support her. Fortunately, the girl managed to continue her studies” (focus group of teachers and a principal, Ozurgeti Municipality).*

The respondents also unanimously noted that **in our information era, new generation is bolder, and girls are defending their rights**. The internet plays a vital role in it. The state and school must support them - *“Many stereotypes have been chipped away in the society. A new generation has set new rules in their families, they dress differently and we see that old stereotypes have been eliminated” (a parent, Zugdidi Municipality).*

Ethnic Georgian Christians mainly settle the target municipalities of the monitoring, and the religious motive does not restrict girls' access to education. However, respondents recalled **examples of restrictions on the right to education among ethnic and religious minorities**. It was noted that in Samtredia, in village Ianeti, in settlement of Turkish-Meskhetians, there were problems for girls regarding continuing education. There is a nine-year school near the settlement, and a public school is located a few kilometres away. Although the children are served by transport, most girls are not allowed to continue their education after the ninth grade - *"Girls are prepared to get married. Our representative went and talked to the parents that they do not have the right to restrict girls from studying. We explained that it is a punishable act. Some listened, some did not. One cannot solve this problem at once"* (Resource Centre representative, Imereti).

A similar problem was identified in other target municipality of our monitoring - *"Adjarians live here. Boys have to study, and girls have to get married. They still have such awareness, but it is not long-lasting"*(a parent, Ozurgeti Municipality). *"The situation is completely different there [Muslim communities of Adjarian migrants in Ozurgeti]. Population in the settlement has stereotypic views, and there are cases of discrimination as well. For instance, a child asks his father for permission, whether to go to any circle or not"* (focus group, Ozurgeti Municipality).

The existing problem needs to be promptly addressed since girls need state support, and they do not have time to wait for the written changes. **It is crucial to introduce special programs in schools for girls and families with similar approaches to fully protect and ensure the right to education guaranteed by the Constitution.**

5.3. GENDER STEREOTYPES IN TEXTBOOKS AND FIGHT AGAINST THEM IN EDUCATIONAL PROCESS

The respondents of the research admit that **school textbooks are full of gender stereotypes**. Many of them said that had not thought about it before; however, they pointed out that – *"I have observed them [gender stereotypes] in historical and literary works indeed and try to explain it to the child"* (a teacher, Terjola Municipality). *"While working on math tasks, children request explanation why a boy had more apples than a girl. Frankly speaking, I have not paid attention to it before"*(a teacher, Khoni Municipality).

Based on the depth of the problem, some teachers think **that gender issues should have a separate space in the school program**, and additional textbooks can be elaborated for this purpose. Some of them think that gender issues must be integrated into the program of every subject, and teachers must discuss the problem of gender stereotypes within the framework of their subjects. Respondents have also noted that the existing educational material must be discussed and realized in gender equality

dimension – *“At the lessons of literature, history, biology and social disciplines, two or three minutes should be paid to the discussion of some events in gender aspect. For instance, at the lessons of literature, phrases from works implying gender equality content should be discussed in gender dimension” (a gender expert).*

The respondents have also noted that despite the problem, **deficiencies of the textbooks are being improved** – *“Math tasks used to imply conditions which did not observe gender balance. Consequently, the Ministry had discussions with the specialists and such texts have been omitted. Lessons of civil education are given at schools. It proves that we are going in the right direction” (Resource Centre representative, Imereti).*

The teachers who are better aware of the issue of gender stereotypes pointed out that **textbooks need to be changed** – *“I cannot follow the textbook since they are very outdated and cliched” (focus group, Ozurgeti Municipality).* Teachers use additional resources, including USAID manuals and internet resources, and try to fill the gaps of the textbooks. They try to help colleagues as well to realize better the role of teacher – *“A math teacher asked how to integrate gender issue. But I said to pay attention to the task conditions, the roles of girl and boy there and was very surprised to find it out. It is conditioned by the fact that people believe that only boys should study math. Teachers can hardly consider the textbooks in gender dimension” (focus group, Ozurgeti Municipality).*

It should be mentioned that in the majority of schools, **textbooks and lessons of civil education are the primary tools in combat against stereotypes.** According to the Ministry decree, the subject of civil education is taught in primary school as well, and according to the research participant teachers, it makes a positive impact on raising awareness of children – *“This subject has changed the school and attitudes. We are bringing up a completely different generation. I think that my student is like an educator for her family. Students take flyers home to their parents” (focus group, Ozurgeti Municipality).*

One of the interviewers mentioned a new textbook - “I - citizen” which covers gender issues. **The school encourages a teacher’s initiative to share the knowledge referring gender issue received on further training with the students or include in the program** - *“A new textbook - “I - citizen” covering gender issues has been introduced to schools. Besides, when teachers attend training on gender or similar issues, they can raise these issues during the lesson and even spend the time of the whole lesson on them. The school even encourages them to do so” (Kutaisi Municipality).* Some teachers have pointed out that a teacher can fill the gaps of the textbook by giving some explanations to the students on specific cases. For example, a literature or history teacher can speak about the gender roles of the characters.

Some school representatives said that **a teacher cannot eliminate the gender stereotypes in the textbooks since it needs the relevant examination and time.** They

say that the Ministry of Education should take this responsibility - *“I may notice that a particular phrase is not correct in gender dimension, but I do not have a relevant competence to improve it. I have not been taught to it”* (a teacher, Tsalenjikha Municipality). *“We use the textbooks which we receive. We cannot change them”* (a school principal, Senaki Municipality).

Fight against gender stereotypes at the lesson mainly depends on the enthusiasm and competence of teachers, and only some of them can manage it. However, it is clear that teachers actively work on gender equality issues; it affects children’s attitude and awareness, and level of citizen activism - *“A child realizes that the roles in the family are not distributed in a right way. Students ask other teachers to conduct interesting lessons”* (focus group, a teacher, Ozurgeti Municipality); *“Teacher is the main implementer of any idea at school. Every teacher should contribute to the formation of the right mindset of the students. It is a priority issue and very often, events like “No to violence”, “No to gender discrimination”, are held at our school. There are two clubs of civil education - “Future Generation” and “Youth Inclusion and Development” at the school. They issue wall newspapers, prepare posters, etc.”* (a school principal, Zugdidi Municipality).

Teachers emphasize that they need additional resources to conduct interesting lessons. They have also noted that **the lack of internet access** often prevents them from providing students with relevant material - *“There is no internet at school, and I download the material and bring it to students. We need different material at the art lesson. I gather, and I process it before the lesson”* (a teacher, Ozurgeti Municipality).

The monitoring has revealed that **the role of the resource officers of educational institutions** regarding gender stereotypes and violence prevention is rather weak. On the one hand, it is reasoned by officers’ low awareness and insufficient realization of the necessity to eliminate gender stereotypes. The research has demonstrated that most of the teachers did not even know about the existence of psychological service of this institution [the service of resource officers of educational institutions]. It might be affected by the officers’ failure to execute this function.

It should be considered that this service [the service of resource officers of educational institutions] is not represented in every school of Georgia and based on the principal order, other members of the staff must execute this function - *“In the case of reasonable doubt about violence or gender discrimination, they must address the school administration to solve and regulate it”* (a school principal, Zugdidi Municipality). However, the motivation and the quality of work of these people is rather low, and it is mainly affected by the lack of their qualification and low salaries - *“There is a person in charge of safety. This year, the Ministry has added this position to the staff, and the salary comprises only 100 GEL. S/he has nearly the same functions as the resource officers at school but frankly speaking, one cannot require a person with such a low salary to perform them. Consequently, we, the principals, have to perform these du-*

ties. Besides, they need training and raising qualification” (a school principal, Zugdidi Municipality).

5.4. THE IMPORTANCE OF FURTHER TEACHER TRAINING FOR ELIMINATION OF GENDER STEREOTYPES IN SCHOOL

The present monitoring has demonstrated that raising awareness and qualification of teachers is vital to combat gender stereotypes in school and society. Otherwise, it is impossible to have any progress - *“A competent person is necessary to speak about breaking gender stereotypes”* (a teacher, Tsalenjikha Municipality).

The Ministry and different NGOs, including Fund “Sukhumi”, provide teachers with training in this regard - *“Many teachers have attended different training sessions on this issue, but they are never sufficient. It would be better if they raised their knowledge in this regard”* (a school principal, Tsalenjikha Municipality).

According to the members of the resource centres, **Teachers` House provides teachers with further training and the rest depends on them [teachers]** - *“When you have a module and necessary material, it is up to your creativity to plan the lesson and bring this material in a right way to students. We have teachers, who plan amazing events, discuss literary works in gender or violence dimension. The Ministry and Resource Centre cannot manage everything; it greatly depends on a teacher”* (Resource Centre representative, Tskaltubo Municipality). *“The Ministry and Resource Centres also send materials and provide the relevant teachers with them”* (a school principal, Senaki Municipality).

However, teachers disagree with this statement and point out **that fight against gender stereotypes is not among the Ministry priorities**, and they mainly receive material on bullying - *“Not many teachers know the essence of gender. I have only attended the training organized by Fund “Sukhumi” in this regard. I have not received any material on gender neither from the Ministry nor the Resource Centre. They do not consider this issue as a priority”* (a teacher, Terjola Municipality). Besides, they think **that teachers are provided with single training and not by systematic ones. They must be regular, and their efficiency should be monitored**. Having attended them, they must share experience and skills with colleagues. Like the textbooks, the respondents make an accent on further training of civil education teachers, which is apparently insufficient - *“As I know, the teachers of civil education are trained periodically”* (a school principal, Senaki Municipality); *“As a rule, two or maximum three teachers are invited to the training from the school. I try to balance this issue and send different teachers. However, indeed it is insufficient. The training participant must share the received knowledge and experience with the colleagues to fill this gap. Mainly NGOs invite us to the training on gender issues”* (a school principal, Zugdidi Municipality).

Teachers who have attended the training try to share the experience with their colleagues - *“I have attended the training for teachers organized by your organization and received the information both on gender and violence. Then, on my initiative, I had a discussion - a film show with my students. I think that everybody needs strengthening in this regard”* (a teacher, Terjola Municipality).

As teachers say, **they need special training on gender issues as they are hardly ever held**. It is essential for the teachers of the primary school - *“A teacher might have realized gender stereotype well but providing this information to a first-grade student is not easy”* (a teacher, Tsalenjikha Municipality). Some respondents have pointed out that the majority of teachers at some schools have undergone training on the gender issue. However, much should be done - *“All the teachers from our school have attended special training sessions on gender, but it is insufficient”* (a school principal, Kutaisi Municipality).

Some respondents point out that school **must act independently, and teachers should take the initiative** - *“The Ministry of Education and Resource Centre do not give the detailed instructions about the work of the school regarding gender issue. I am not expecting any instructions from them. For instance, the campaign against violence started three or four years ago. We try to be active in this regard and are not expecting any instructions. We try to include children in the activities”* (a school principal, Senaki Municipality).

The research has demonstrated that **resource centres do not take the initiative to pursue a gender policy in schools**. Despite their obligation to contribute to the development of human resources in schools by providing training or seminars, and actively support the Ministry to introduce innovations and programs, unfortunately, their majority is passive in this regard. Moreover, they often do not even understand the essence of the problem and their role in dealing with it. They much depend on the Ministry of Education and show less initiative. Although they are allowed, they do not try to be creative.

“We are not obliged to have an action plan and act independently. We are a part of the consolidated strategy of the Ministry of Education and are guided by it. We have a definite role in this plan. However, we are not restricted to have our initiatives and activities” (Resource Centre employee, Imereti). In-depth interviews revealed that they had not had any initiatives since “there was no need for it”. At the same time, they noted that “gender stereotypes are firmly rooted in their generation”. It is noteworthy that there is a Turkish-Meskhetian settlement near the resource centre. According to their customs, girls are not allowed to continue their education. In such an environment, it is not only necessary but vitally important to include the efforts not only of the resource centres but of all the relevant governmental departments in breaking the stereotypes and establishing gender equality.

6. THE ROLE OF CSOs IN COMBAT AGAINST GENDER STEREOTYPES IN SCHOOLS

Majority of schools actively cooperate with the civil sector. It is beneficial since it enables filling the lack of intellectual and human resources in school regarding gender equality issues or combat against domestic violence stereotypes. **When the Ministry can hardly provide teachers of all schools with further training and introduce modern ideas to the students from regions, the NGO sector has undertaken this function.**

Many schools realize it - *“I can hardly imagine what our situation would be if there were no NGOs. This sector has brought lots of benefits not only to us but to the state as well” (a teacher, Lanchkhuti Municipality).* Majority of parents also support the collaboration, since consider it to be the best way to achieve actual results - *“One thing is when a school or a teacher is competent and knows how to provide information, though, on the other hand, I consider the role of NGO in raising awareness essential” (a parent, Knoni Municipality).*

Sharing ideas on gender equality among youth and combating violence by its prevention is very important for Fund “Sukhumi”. To reach this aim, the organization covers regions and schools lacking access to different resources due to their remoteness from big cities (including those at the line of separation). To raise awareness of students on conflict prevention and domestic violence, the organization operates in 13 municipalities of western Georgia.⁷⁸ Collaboration with schools is not only beneficial but interesting for both students and teachers, as information is shared via non-formal education methods, funny activities, full participation of students and encouragement of their participation. The organization systematically gives forum-theatre performances, conducts trainings and discussions with students on the issue of gender stereotypes - *“Fund “Sukhumi” operates in this direction in our municipality. It has monthly meetings with students regarding non-formal education. Consequently, children are aware of gender issues” (a school principal, Senaki Municipality).*

Teachers emphasize that work rendered by NGOs with children is vital and productive - *“Such measures are useful...as a result of collaboration with NGOs, the problem of bullying is eliminated in classes where the training has been held. Such cooperation is essential. I declare it with full responsibility” (a school principal, Tskaltubo Municipality).* The

⁷⁸ Within the framework of Young Leaders` School, Fund “Sukhumi” is operating in schools of 13 municipalities of western Georgia (Kutaisi, Tskaltubo, Khoni, Terjola, Senaki, Poti, Zugdidi, Lanchkhuti, Ozurgeti, Vani, Tsalenjikha, Samtredia, Bagdati). Information meetings, workshops on gender stereotypes, domestic violence, conflict prevention and conflict solution are held for youth. In 2011-2020, the project covered 10600 students from 144 schools.

participants of the Fund “Sukhumi” leaders’ school trainings and information meetings are enabled to hold such meetings on gender and gender stereotypes with their peers. For instance, students from Tskaltubo have held events on conflict, on the ways of its resolution and bullying.

As a result of such experience, students are formed into active citizens involved in the life of the local community, actively advocate progressive ideas and promote development.

Since the NGO sector is equipped with more specialized knowledge on gender issues than the majority of teachers do, an expert on gender issue considers their participation in educational processes essential - *“It is of vital importance to make the NGO sector more involved in school life since non-formal education can contribute to the fight against stereotypes” (a gender expert).*

NGO sector plays a vital role regarding further training of teachers as well. The presence of a large number of trained teachers on gender issues is a result of cooperation with the civil sector. Schools realize it and support the **institutional strengthening of this collaboration** - *“We do our best at schools, however, teachers need to raise specification in this direction...but for NGOs, our school would not have had such progress. That is why I want all this to be introduced in the educational system and the Ministry of Education should contribute to it” (a school principal, Zugdidi Municipality).*

*According to the respondents, “NGOs play an important role regarding **improving the communication between the referral entities and making them alert**” (focus-group, Kobuleti Municipality).*

School readiness and openness for collaboration much depends on administration and a principal. It will affect the development of students and teachers, as well as school’s success and promote the creation of its healthy environment. During the monitoring, some principals pointed out that they are open for cooperation with the NGO sector as the Ministry of Education cannot provide students with non-formal education at the given moment. Years ago, many principals abstained from collaboration with NGOs. However, nowadays, they emphasize that such type of education is vital.

It is noteworthy that **parents having dealt with NGOs better realize a negative impact of gender stereotypes**, try to protect their children from them [stereotypes] and actively support coordination between school and NGO sector - *“Through collaboration with the NGO sector, I became freer. Now I can tell my children that there is no difference between the duties of girl and boy. We help each other in household duties and break stereotypes” (a parent, Khoni Municipality).* *“NGO sector is a strong power indeed. They develop discussion skills in children and contribute to the development of their thinking. NGOs can do it better than schools” (a parent, Zugdidi Municipality).* *“Children like such education and I think that NGO sector should be allowed to participate in raising awareness” (a parent, Khoni Municipality).*

The majority of resource centre representatives shared this approach as well - *“This sector [third sector] is an excellent resource to break gender stereotypes in adults and have modern thinking, democratic society” (a resource centre representative, Imereti).*

Though all the actors are satisfied with the collaboration between schools and civil sector and admit its benefits for the development of school and children, the **low level of school openness** regarding NGO cooperation, as well as parents` participation in school life is being identified - *“Indeed, we say that school is open and everything is transparent, but our system we have now does not indicate its openness. Parents have to wait outside. It does not matter whether it is windy or rainy. We are not allowed in, and I do not consider it as a democratic process. I have no idea what is going on inside” (a parent, Khoni Municipality).*

“They do not try to invite parents, communicate with the society or hold such activities” (a teacher, Terjola Municipality).

The respondents have pointed out that the administrations of some schools deal with the issue of third sector work in schools very carefully. In some cases, it is conditioned by the fact that **a school does not have enough competence to control and check the content of issues suggested by NGO**. Very often, it prevents schools from being open - *“The Ministry of Education gives us freedom and autonomy...though there is a big difference between coordination and not being open. When an organization enters the school, we are not aware of its program and content. Unfortunately, we neither have time, nor the competence to do it, and we might miss something important. It will make a mess. Therefore, special units should consider whether it stands in line with their policy and if something is affecting a child in a negative way” (a school principal, Kutaisi Municipality).* Consequently, they think that a department with relevant competence should exist. It will regulate and be responsible for the interaction with the civil society representatives. Some respondents believe that solution of this issue is vital. Besides, schools should be encouraged to enable the civil sector to work with students actively. Otherwise - *“We lose an opportunity to break gender stereotypes promptly in young generation and have modern thinking, democratic society. This sector is a good resource to reach this aim” (a resource centre representative, Imereti).*

While monitoring, we also found out that parents realize the importance of collaboration with civil society and its positive impact on their children’s development. Though they emphasize the necessity to control topics and issues submitted to students in schools by NGO - *“Some schools are open to communication, while others are not. They think that it is more beneficial for their students. I, as a parent, think that somebody should control topics for the discussion. However, the work of the third sector plays its vital role in strengthening the civil society” (a parent, Senaki Municipality).*

7. CHURCH INCLUSIVENESS IN SCHOOLS AND IMPACT ON GENDER STEREOTYPES

The representatives of the Orthodox Church have more privilege to enter the schools, meet teachers and students. However, the Ministry does not interfere with the content of the communication. Nobody knows whether the **gender roles preached by clerics comply with gender equality modern requirements**. Traditionally, the majority of teachers have respect for the church. According to the research conducted by the Women`s Fund in Georgia, teachers relate the issues of girls` development to Georgian traditions, national and religious identity and consider it as a control mechanism.⁷⁹

The Orthodox Church has a contradictory approach to gender equality issues. On the one hand, the church has a significant impact on society⁸⁰ and makes stereotypes and stigma more firmly rooted. In several cases, the representatives from high hierarchies of the church oppose gender equality.⁸¹ Though, on the other hand, the clergyman is a powerful resource to condemn domestic violence, strengthen the idea of acceptance and respect.

The ombudsman report 2019 has revealed attempts to affect the religious neutrality of public schools, as well as cases of educational process indoctrination, and organizing and holding risk-taking events. According to the ombudsman`s assessment, such practice is widely spread.⁸² Several studies prove the dominance of the Orthodox church and its discourse.⁸³ **The ombudsman urges the Ministry to provide equality of rights, preserve the principle of religious neutrality at all stages and monitor its implementation in practice.**⁸⁴

However, it is noteworthy that religious organizations can perform a significant role

79 Study of teachers` knowledge and attitudes towards gender equality (research report),2014, p. 37; available at: – <http://www.parliament.ge/uploads/other/75/75678.pdf>

80 National Study on Violence against Women in Georgia, 2017, p. 102; available at: – <https://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20georgia/attachments/publications/2018/national%20vaw%20study%20report%20geo.pdf?la=ka&vs=0>

81 “According to the scripture, the husband is the head of the family. Family is one body it cannot have two heads” - stated the Catholicos-Patriarch of Georgia during Sunday sermon on April 29, see: “Faith and gender equality”; available at: – <https://netgazeti.ge/opinion/13831/>

82 Report of 2019, p. 317-318

83 Religion at public school (Education policy analysis in freedom dimension), 2014 , p. 11; available at: – <https://bit.ly/2JVDwOc>

84 Report of 2019, p. 223

in combating gender-based violence and early marriages.⁸⁵ Religious leaders should constantly appeal to girls to continue education to become stronger.⁸⁶ Faith and gender equality are compatible.⁸⁷

7.1. CHURCH INCLUSIVENESS – MONITORING FINDINGS

The monitoring has revealed that there is a practice of meeting clergymen with students and teachers in specific schools. The meeting is sometimes initiated either by the Resource Centre and school or by a clergyman – *“By the initiative of the Resource Centre, meetings with a pastor have been held. The topic of discussion was violence, and they were very effective. Such meetings are still held in several schools” (a resource centre representative, Samegrelo).* *“Spiritual Centre” often comes to our place. I think that eparchy manages and funds this process. They held seminars and conferences in every subject” (a school principal, Tsalenjikha Municipality).* The present research has shown that **the Ministry does not control whether the ideas expressed by the clergymen at the meetings with students stand in line with the principles declared by them (Ministry).**

Generally, parents think that lessons on religion should be given in schools; however, according to the qualitative data, **some of them have different expectations from teaching religion.** For example, some respondents think that *“Giving religion lessons at school is very good. Children should know the essence of family and responsibilities of spouses. Religion is a good way to implement peace and stability in the society” (in-depth interview with a parent, Zugdidi Municipality).*

Religion makes a substantial impact on parents and teachers. Consequently, it is reflected in children and their participation in different school-entertainment events - *“For instance, a student in our class often emphasizes that a man is a master and woman is his obedient. As an argument he says that his parents are very religious and teach him as their pastor says” (a parent, Khoni Municipality).* *“We held a Halloween event, and the father of a student who is a preacher did not let him attend it. If we celebrate any American holidays, like a Thanksgiving Day, they consider them as “Satanic” (a teacher, Bagdati Municipality).*

Most teachers and parents show respect to clergymen, and some of them **support the idea of increasing the impact of the church on youth. They even talk about the subordinated role of woman and her obligation to endure** - *“Things went wrong when teaching religion was banned in schools. The church will not affect children badly*

85 The UN research, p. 69

86 Research on early marriage, p. 81

87 Equality of men and women according to Orthodox Theology; available at: – <http://feminism-boell.org/ka/2015/09/20/kalisa-da-kacis-tanascorobis-sakitxi-martlmadidebluri-teologiis-mixedvit>

if they live the right way. We will not have a fear of domestic violence as well. I also teach my daughter that if she wants peace in her family, she has to endure a lot” (in-depth interview with a parent, Kutaisi Municipality).

However, there is no homogenous attitude towards the role of the church among parents and teachers. Some have **contradictory opinions** on the church inclusiveness and the role of man and woman in a family. On the one hand, they support strengthening the role of the church in a child’s life, share the traditional concept of the role of man and woman. However, on the other hand, they admit that like a new vision of the young generation and intolerance of the **husband’s superiority over the wife** - *“I think that the church has a positive impact. I am a parishioner and would like my children to go to the church as well. Georgians know that since man is a master, his word and opinion should be considered. However, the new generation has a different opinion. They do not share the traditional approach to this issue, and I like it very much (a parent, Ozurgeti Municipality).* Some respondents **openly express their negative attitude toward strengthening stereotypes regarding gender role** - *“Clergymen have the outdated attitude to these issues, and I do not agree with them” (a parent, Khoni Municipality).* *“People should not think that a person must obey someone because of being a woman. I think that the church plays a vital role. However, some priests say that men are superior to women, and they [women] must obey them. It is not right” (a parent, Senaki Municipality).*

Some parents think that **modern youth can process information and draw the right conclusions** - *“To date, youngsters can analyze the information. It does not matter whether priests provide it or not” (in-depth interview with a parent, Sametrdia Municipality).*

Collaboration with the church as an institution of mighty power may be useful if it is done in the right way and form. Working with people who make a cultural impact on society is vital, including religious leaders, since they can respond the specific cases of gender-based violence.⁸⁸

88 National Study on Violence against Women in Georgia, 2017, p. 107; available at - <https://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20georgia/attachments/publications/2018/national%20vaw%20study%20report%20geo.pdf?la=ka&vs=0>

8. THE ROLE OF SCHOOL IN FAMILY AND IN COMBATING VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

School plays a vital role not only in prevention and teaching youth the right values but disclosing specific facts and reporting them to the relevant organs. Since teachers and schools are closely connected to the society and are aware of the situation in families, they are main institutions to identify and report domestic violence. Taking the linkage between teachers and students into account, they [teachers] might be even considered as witnesses.⁸⁹ Under the law, school personnel must apply to the relevant units in case of doubt about violence against children.⁹⁰ Not reporting such cases is an administrative law violation.⁹¹

Considering the role of teachers in this regards, the experts emphasize that they need further training.⁹² In case of domestic violence, a victim often applies to law enforcement organs only when the situation becomes critical. Educational institutions, as an inter-link, should be involved in the process of violence early detection. Teachers have a close relationship with children and can identify direct or indirect signs of violence.⁹³

The ministry promotes the active role of schools in the identification of violence against children and domestic violence. During monitoring, it identifies if a school has any internal rules regarding child abuse, if there is a relevant person in charge and whether the cases of violence have been referred.⁹⁴ Though schools have been relatively active in this regard recently, according to the data, many schools have not reported such cases at all, indicating that teachers do not record and report the cases.⁹⁵

According to the UN Women Georgia research, only 9% of teachers have reported the facts of domestic violence, whereas 87% state that will apply to the relevant units in

89 Teacher reporting of violence against children and women, UN Women, Georgia, 2019, p. 6, 16, 22; available at <https://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20georgia/attachments/publications/2019/teacher%20reporting%20of%20violence%20against%20children%20and%20women%20geo.pdf?la=en&vs=2453>

90 Law on domestic violence, art. 14¹

91 Administrative Offences Code of Georgia, art. 1726

92 Report of the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, Causes and Consequences of Violence on the Visit to Georgia, 2016, p. 27; available at: – <http://www.parliament.ge/uploads/other/75/75719.pdf>

93 The audit report, p. 43-44

94 “Motherhood at the age of 15”; available at: – <https://bit.ly/2Y7rnOu>

95 Teacher reporting of violence against children and women, UN Women, Georgia, 2019, p 7, 16

case of child abuse doubt. Though teachers (19%) in regions are more informed about the facts of domestic violence than those in cities (10%), it should be mentioned that the number of reported cases by teachers is much lower in regions.⁹⁶ According to the survey data, **teachers who are active users of the internet are more inclined to report**. Consequently, schools and teachers must have constant access to the internet, especially in villages. The internet may become a powerful tool for taking awareness-raising measures.⁹⁷

Gender sensitivity of teachers is being improved. Based on the recent research, the majority of teachers (71%) do not agree with the statement that violence between spouses is their private matter, and nobody should interfere. Many of them (90%) point out that women should not endure domestic violence. But, at the same time, 60% of teachers think that the primary duty of a woman is to take care of family and house. It turned out that women, regular users of the internet and young teachers from schools of a better climate, do not share the approach mentioned above and are more inclined to report.⁹⁸

According to the research mentioned above, only 14% of teachers think that beating wife by the husband is not justified, whereas 20-25% of teachers believe that such behaviour is partly or wholly acquitted. It should be noted that elderly teachers and village population are more tolerant of violence against wives, whereas, we cannot say the same about youth and active users of the internet.⁹⁹ Based on the research data, it is clear that the indicator of gender-sensitivity is relatively low among teachers. Consequently, they need further training and raising awareness on the issue of domestic violence, and the internet is an excellent tool to receive information and break the stereotypes.

As the studies prove, though the teachers can identify signs and forms of violence, quantitative research demonstrates the lack of their thorough knowledge. More than 80% of teachers know that they must report cases of violence against children.¹⁰⁰ Teachers are less tolerant of child abuse cases than of gender-based violence. Teachers' attitude towards domestic violence and punishment of the child is generally right.¹⁰¹ However, the qualitative data demonstrate the lack of thorough knowledge about psychological and verbal violence among them [teachers].¹⁰²

96 *ibid*, p. 30-32

97 *ibid* p. 6-7

98 *ibid*, p.42

99 *ibid*, p. 46

100 *ibid*, p. 49

101 *ibid*, p 47

102 *ibid*, p. 45

It has been also demonstrated that school professionals mainly talk to abuser parents as they think that before reporting, they need some permit from the adults of the family. It proves that they lack some self-efficacy and need more support. Teachers need a person to discuss the cases and get convinced that while reporting, they behave in line with the law.¹⁰³

Fear of possible outcomes or vague future, distrust towards the relevant organs, among teachers, principals and officers of educational institutions, or useless bureaucratic procedures, **prevent teachers from reporting**. Besides, the lack of awareness on legal mechanisms of protection can be considered as a barrier. Furthermore, sometimes a declarant has a strong linkage with the abuser's family and might be afraid of negative consequences, and be affected by insufficient services or evidences.¹⁰⁴

To remove these barriers, the experts point out that **interdepartmental unit needs to be created. It will contribute to monitoring and reporting the cases of domestic violence by educational institutions**. Besides, the Ministry should use resource centres more actively to coordinate with schools, inform teachers and principals about their obligation of reporting the cases of domestic violence. Teachers should be provided with information on successful cases of reporting. Besides, they need to have purposeful communication based on data analysis with teachers. Through the coordination with other actors, the Ministry should ensure further regular training of teachers. They should be informed about the harmful results of all forms of domestic violence. Trainings should imply a detailed description of each stage of reporting and methods of teachers' support/strengthening. Violence prevention module should be included in curriculum and textbooks as well. Teachers' attitude towards domestic violence should be used as one of the criteria while employing new teachers and principals. In addition to encouraging teachers to report violence, it is necessary to develop a response system; ensure reporter's confidentiality, train police, increase the number of social workers and psychologists, and provide them with in-depth training on working with victims of domestic violence. It is necessary to reduce bureaucratic burden (which hinders reporting) and offer a flexible schedule of cooperation to the reporter. Within the existing hotline, it is advisable to offer consultation to teachers on signs of domestic violence and reporting.¹⁰⁵

School principals have a vital role in improving the school climate, supporting and strengthening teachers, what is set forth by the conception of "Support of the General Education Reform".¹⁰⁶

103 *ibid.* p 39-41

104 *ibid.*, p. 22, 34

105 *ibid.*, p. 61-62, 64, 65, 67

106 Program conception - "Support of the General Education Reform", p. 9; available at: – <https://www.mes.gov.ge/uploads/files/zogadi-ganatlebis-xelshecyoba.pdf>

8. 1. THE LEVEL OF SCHOOL RESPONSIVENESS TO VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN - MONITORING FINDINGS

This monitoring has proved that **teachers are mostly aware of their responsibilities against domestic violence**, can identify its signs and, declaratively, express their readiness to combat it - *“Most of them are trained and know the specific signs of violence, to whom to apply and what to do” (a principal of the resource centre, Tsalenjikha Municipality)*. **Training provided by the Ministry or NGOs is the main source of information** for teachers. However, there were teachers among the respondents who lack the relevant knowledge **and are unaware of referral procedures and the role of school in the fight against domestic violence** - *“I am not very well aware of the Law on Violence Against Women, Children and Domestic Violence. Therefore, I do not know the obligations of school under the law”(a school principal, Zugdidi Municipality)*; *“Trainings held for teachers are vital and should be held more frequently. **Physical violence can be easily detected. However, I cannot say the same about psychological violence.** Therefore, teachers need further training in this regard” (focus-group, Kobuleti Municipality)*. Some teachers have not received training materials from the resource centre and are trying to develop independently, with the help of the internet - *“I found the information on the internet. Everything is available and can be easily found” (focus group, Kobuleti Municipality)*.

The respondents who are ready to address the cases of domestic violence think that the Ministry must elaborate a clear and detailed instruction - *“We do not have any strategy while working. There should be a unified strategy, with detailed description of the function and responsibility of the school. Besides, they should be performed thoroughly” (focus group, schools of Tskaltubo, Khoni, Terjola municipalities)*.

According to the undertaken obligation, some schools have a **document of child referral procedures** - *“It implied detailed obligations to be implemented by the school” (a school principal, Zugdidi Municipality)*. *“We have a referral document provided by the Ministry of Education and follow it. We must detect the fact and refer to the entities responsible in this regard” (focus group, Tskaltubo, Khoni, Terjola municipality schools)*. Many teachers and principals are unaware of the referral card (form No. 2) implied by “Child Protection Referral Procedures”, which is filled in case of child abuse. Therefore, **their knowledge is not thorough and lacks some specification**.

In-depth analysis of the declared statements **reveals many challenges**. It should be noted that for **the majority of resource centres and some principals, can hardly admit the problem**. External evaluators easily identify the system gaps - *“Teachers and principals are not very well aware of domestic violence and violence against children. They do not know their duties and responsibilities” (a director of Youth Centre, Terjola Municipality)*.

Many schools avoid responding - *“It is conditioned by the fact that it makes prob-*

lems for school administration. There were some cases when I reported the fact to the class curator, though she refused it” (focus group, Ozurgeti Municipality).

Besides the lack of knowledge about combating violence against children, **teachers are hindered by a heavy workload.** They do not have time to be active beyond the lesson - *“There are a few teachers who are active regarding such issues” (a school principal, Kutaisi Municipality).*

Responding is prevented by **the existing stereotypes** as well. **Teachers are busy with personal professional, matters and the issue of domestic violence is less crucial against this background** - *“I cannot solve the problem of other families”* - such phrases are heard from all teachers. *“Teachers have a new concern nowadays. There is a complete mess in schools regarding credit-points. While it is a priority issue for teachers, we have completely forgotten children” (a teacher, Lanchkhuti Municipality).*

Often teachers feel unprotected and oppressed. The lack of knowledge prevents them from taking their responsibility and being self confident. At the same time, they are afraid of the possible outcome - *“If we go back to all the famous examples, we can see that in case of violence and negative outcomes, responsibility is imposed on school or a specific teacher. A teacher is unprotected indeed. Sometimes, the situation is not critical and can be resolved locally, though a teacher becomes free from the responsibility”(a teacher, Tsalenjikha Municipality).*

It is evident that more work should be rendered with teachers. On the one hand, the Ministry imposes liabilities and identifies responsibilities for breaching them. Though, on the other hand, it does not provide teachers with relevant knowledge and support. As they are afraid of the reaction from the society and authorities, either refuse to respond or hide the fact not to make mistakes - *“Finally, school becomes a can carrier, and it makes teachers unprotected. That is why principals prefer not to disclose such facts since school becomes a wrongdoer” (focus group, Tskaltubo, Khoni, Terjola municipality schools).* Such an approach might become deplorable for a child whose last hope is the school in case of the violator parent. Some teachers realize it very well. *“Teacher should be able to identify a child’s interests. In such case, the child is a priority, not me” (a teacher, Lanchkhuti Municipality).*

The present monitoring has demonstrated the trend identified by the researches. **Even in the case of disclosed cases of violence, schools avoid referring to the relevant people or law enforcement organs. Traditional social norms and close relationship prevent them from it.** Consequently, they try to settle the problem in private talks - *“It is not easy because sometimes, the status of the family prevents you from responding. One cannot dare to tell such family anything about the fact of violence. We all are neighbours and acquaintances. Though, somebody should report to the relevant organs. It does not matter whether it is a school or village representative. We, teachers, try to interfere but...” (focus group, Ozurgeti Municipality).*

The monitoring has also revealed that teachers **do not want to be involved in the**

process of investigation and procedures connected to it - *“A teacher should realize that going to questioning for 2 or 3 times, being a witness and answering the questions is a part of the procedures and should do it for the sake of a child. Many of them avoid such procedures, and that is why they try not to disclose cases” (a teacher, Lanchkhuti Municipality)*. School personnel should raise awareness in this regard and be encouraged to report cases.

Teachers consider the feasible reaction from the abuser as a danger. Very often, parents have an inadequate response when outsiders try to interfere in family matters. This problem is especially acute in villages. *“Everybody knows each other. You feel unprotected and are afraid that an abuser might come and hit you in the head. Once, when there was a case of violence, the next day everybody knew who had phoned the police. The police do not protect you; we do not trust it completely, and this is not the only shortcoming. It might be one of the factors preventing teachers from reporting” (focus group, Kobuleti Municipality)*.

Many respondents admit that it is necessary to cooperate with parents - *“Collaboration with parents is a part of violence prevention” (a teacher, Lanchkhuti Municipality)*. However, at the same time, it turned out **that parents and students would not like a close relationship between teachers and their families** - *“We made anonymous inquiries about restoring the visits of curators to the families. But none of the pupils supported this version” (focus group participant teacher, Tskaltubo)*. *“If a parent does not let you have a close relationship, if you cannot prove the fact of violence, you complicate the situation and risk the emotions of the child. Nobody wants to risk, and that is why the cases are not disclosed until they become evident” (focus group participant, teacher, Khoni Municipality)*. The respondents remembered one case when the teacher had found out about a case of domestic violence in a pupil's family. It turned out that the child and mother were victims. The teacher and principal talked to the mother who protested it - *“She attacked and blamed us that we had made the child talk about the family matters. She threatened us to sue. If a parent does not let you, it is hard to identify violence. To date, parents are threatening teachers to sue” (focus group participant, a teacher from Terjola)*.

The present monitoring has proved that for school representatives, domestic violence is associated with violence against a child. They **neglect gender-based violence**. However, the school can play a vital role to combat it (violence against women), since a teacher knows the situation in a pupil's family best, especially in regions and villages, where the problem is especially acute. **Mainly, violence against a child implies gender-based violence** as well, and school must have an exact position in this regard and cooperate with the police.

Despite the problems, there are **successful interference examples as well**. The respondents talked about the cases when the child showed relevant signs because of the family conflict. *“The child looked very sad and frightened and did not communicate*

with others. When someone asked a question, she started to cry” (a teacher, Tsalenjik-ha Municipality). The teacher and administration delicately interfered and talked to the parents. The situation changed and positively affected the child. **Some schools have more organized ways to combat violence.** The focus group participants pointed out that some schools have special working groups consisting of teachers, curators and parents. They discuss the cases of violence identified in the class and make plans for further work. They identify with whom to work and when to include relevant units like police and social service. Some teachers use different creative methods to gain the trust of children and inform them about violence. They encourage children to send letters when they cannot talk about violence - *“Only after it, we started debates. We were discussing “somebody’s problem” and were trying to find the solution. No one knew whose we were discussing. Even I did not know the name of the child. Children never refuse such help. They become stronger” (a teacher, Lanchkhuti Municipality).*

Although the school tries to raise awareness of children on **the prevention of domestic violence**, some respondents point out the insufficiency of these **efforts** - *“The educational field does not perceive the acuteness of the problem. The work rendered by schools regarding prevention needs strengthening. Only one lesson cannot fill the gap regarding the lack of information” (focus group, schools of Tskaltubo, Khoni, Terjola municipalities).*

When a specific case is in official progress, **issues of interdepartmental coordination and collaboration** become vital. The teachers participating in the research pointed out that are insufficiently informed about their role, obligations and functions regarding the **referral process**. The students participating in focus groups admitted that are unaware of their duties in the referral process. They emphasized that teacher, as one of the most important entities of this process, must be informed about her/his duties and functions.

It is noteworthy that the representatives of a higher unit (i.e. resource centres) of the educational system denied the problem of coordination - *“Referral system works well. As soon as we identify the fact of domestic violence or child abuse, curators get involved and address the case to the special services. The Ministry has provided detailed instructions to us” (a director of Resource Centre, Imereti).*

It was revealed that school cooperates only with the police and social service - *“I had two cases at school, and we collaborated with the police and a social worker. I am not aware of other entities” (focus group, a teacher, Tskaltubo Municipality).* Such collaboration needs to be improved since teachers have no experience in writing a report about a victim child during supervision. The report must be submitted to a social worker. Teachers also point out that **there are some shortcomings regarding the work of the police and social service.** For instance, in the case of an aggressive parent, the police try to avoid the situation aggravation. Children do not cooperate with them [police], as well. A small number of social workers and heavy workload also af-

fect the work, and consequently, **the case reported by the school does not go into progress** (focus group, Ozurgeti Municipality). Some teachers have pointed out that when the referral entities do not inform them about the condition of the student during the case progress, **unfortunately, the school is omitted from the process and does not receive the feedback** - *“A child who is just an ordinary case for you is my student and seats in my class. I am concerned about his/her feelings and case progress. Social worker and police do not feel obliged to inform the school. The child and his/her friends look up to me, but I cannot say anything, since I am not informed”* (focus group, a teacher, Khoni Municipality).

The need for a social worker in school was especially emphasized during the monitoring - *“It will be good if s/he [social worker] works both with students and their family members and it will change our reality”* (a school principal, Senaki Municipality). The majority of teachers pointed out that the existence of a “specialized person” in schools is vital. In case there is no psychologist in school, a social worker will be responsible and included in the planning of the school activities against violence, their implementation and monitoring.

Nearly all the respondents pointed out **the necessity of psychological service in schools**. Unfortunately, it is unavailable for the pupils in regions and villages - *“Schools should have psychologists in their staff. It might be even a part-time job”* (a representative of the resource centre, Bagdati, Imereti region). Existence of a psychologist in the staff is vital for the schools near the conflict line - *“Presence of a psychologist is especially important in schools where children are under a constant stress”* (a resource centre representative, Samegrelo).

Teachers participating in the research emphasized the necessity of the Mayor`s representative`s active work. Most of them think that the referral entities, including the police, social worker, doctors and Mayor`s representative, should hold periodical information meetings both with parents and students to raise their awareness - *“I reckon such meetings at my school. They were held about two years ago. I have not witnessed the participation of social workers”* (a teacher, Bagdati Municipality).

The school personnel is ready to become active in combat against violence; however, they need strengthening and support from the Ministry of Education - *“School is the main actor in disclosing this problem, and this function must be strengthened. Educational system should assist schools in reaching this aim”*. **The Ministry of Education should be aimed at fighting domestic violence at schools**. Otherwise, the outcome will be late - *“The Ministry should give a specific directive about our obligations. Due to its unavailability, the school cannot identify its role”* (a school principal, Senaki Municipality).

9. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The present monitoring has demonstrated the need for an expeditious, proactive policy against gender stereotypes at schools since firmly rooted stereotypic views regarding the skills and roles of man and woman make a negative impact on society, hamper demonstration of person's abilities, succeeding and development of the country - *“Knowledge is light, and gender education is important for development”* (a gender expert).

Even beyond any guidelines, teachers are obliged to bring up students in a spirit of equality. However, the declaration of these ideas is not enough. The state should actively work to eliminate gender stereotypes in schools and make raising awareness of children and young people at school a priority in order to achieve real changes and breakthrough in the fight against gender-based domestic violence. They should be taught values based on the principle of equality. The state should provide teachers with specific, clear instructions and oblige them to render active work in this regard, as well as introduce a mechanism for monitoring the results since the school is the best place to raise the spirit of equality and non-violence in citizens.

The following recommendations should be considered:

- To emphasize and implement the idea of combating gender-based discrimination in education policy; to achieve the objectives, the Ministry of Education should suggest a specific, timely and relevant plan with clear indicators;
- To better introduce and implement gender equality aspect in schools, in the educational program of all levels; to provide schools with clear explanations and instructions on the necessity of combating gender stereotypes;
- To encourage and support the efforts of schools and specific teachers in combating gender stereotypes, including through various announcements, awards, etc.;
- To revise educational programs and textbooks and omit texts on stereotypes and discrimination; to make the necessary hints to gender-insensitive material; to better consider gender aspects during the series approval of the textbooks and provide participation of the relevant specialists in the process;
- To activate education support programs for girls and thoroughly investigate the real causes of each dropout and address these facts; to provide strong support for girls and ensure protection of their rights in this process;

- To provide systematic professional development of teachers, a full staff of school administration via compulsory training on gender equality, gender stereotypes and domestic violence;
- To identify gender education and gender sensitivity as a criterion while assessing the school administration and teacher`s competence or/and taking new employees;
- To provide methodology, guidelines and instructions to teachers according to their subjects during the teaching process so that they avoid gender stereotypes and promote equality;
- To support collaboration between schools and the civil sector; make schools open to NGOs and use their resource to combat gender stereotypes more efficiently, especially in regions, where there is a lack of other resources;
- To provide schools with internet and teachers/students with computers and relevant skills in regions, so that modern knowledge and information on gender equality idea become available;
- The Ministry of Education should monitor carrying out the instructions elaborated for teachers which imply all the relevant aspects of domestic violence and violence reporting system in schools; besides, the detailed description of the scheme of the reporting process should be provided;
- The Ministry of Education should elaborate the violence prevention modules and introduce them in the national education plan and textbooks;
- All the entities of referral system should strengthen the collaboration with schools and to prevent domestic violence they should introduce the practice of information meetings with representatives of the resource centres, heads of the educational units of the local self-governmental organs, teachers, parents and students;
- High officials of the Ministry of Education should have more active public appearances and support combat against domestic violence and breaking gender stereotypes;
- Territorial units of the Ministry of Education, such as employees of the resource centres, should be actively involved in preventive measures against gender-based and domestic violence. Besides, they should proactively cooperate with all entities of the local referral system;

- To strengthen coordination mechanism and cooperation at central and local levels; to held systematic meetings between the representatives of the Ministry, local government relevant units, territorial resource centres, school administration and other parties so that they can share experience and methodology, assess the existing situation and take coordinated actions on problem-solving strategies;
- The Ministry of Education should encourage collaboration between resource centres and CSOs working on gender issues. It will contribute to increase their knowledge and raise their qualification on gender equality issues, as well as increase initiatives against gender stereotypes and gender-based violence in schools.

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