

Dimensions of Gender Equality in Georgia

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Despite the fact that gender equality and prohibition of discrimination are enshrined in various national legal acts, as well as in internationally binding legal documents, which Georgia acceded to, the reality on the ground is quite different. Gender inequality in Georgia remains an entrenched reality in political, economic and social life.¹ Georgia is ranked 76th out of 188 countries in the Gender Inequality Index (GII)².

Gender equality within a society is strongly defined by how men and women’s role is perceived by society. Persisting gender stereotypes, cultural and traditional attitudes within the society have significant impact on women’s and men’s position at every stage of their life. Different models of upbringing of boys and girls, gender-stereotypical expectations and the role society chooses to assign them, further reflects in the gender-segregated position of women in the society. According to the findings of the 2013 UNDP gender perception report on Georgia, 66% of the surveyed population share the idea that “*it is always better when a man works and a woman is at home*” and 79% think that “*woman should prioritise her family over her career.*” Only 11% of the interviewed believe that “*women should be equally contributing to the family welfare.*”³ Such attitudes toward women largely contribute to women’s subordinated position in the society.

The last two decades in Georgia were crucial and pivotal for changing women’s status in terms of creating legislative and institutional frameworks for gender equality. The Constitution of Georgia guarantees equal rights to women and men. In 1995, Georgia adopted the Beijing Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. As a signatory of the Millennium Development Goals, Georgia committed to take measures to achieve Goal 3 “promoting gender equality and empowering women” by 2015 and developed a strategic plan for its fulfillment. Establishment of the Gender Equality Council at the Parliament in 2004, which after adoption of the “Law on Gender Equality” in 2010 became a permanent body on gender equality, was a significant step toward establishing greater equality in Georgia. In May 2014, the Law of Georgia on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination came into force, moving Georgia’s antidiscrimination framework closer to international standards. Furthermore, in May 2017 Georgia ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (the Istanbul Convention), which led to establishment of gender equality machineries at the central and local level. However, passing laws and policies alone does not ensure substantive gender equality or even equity and respect for women’s human rights.

Women are underrepresented in ***politics and decision-making positions***. As a result of 2016 Parliamentary elections only 15% of MPs are women. As to the women’s representation in the executive branch, there are currently only three women ministers in the

¹European Commission, Joint Staff Working Document, Association Implementation Report on Georgia, Brussels, 09.11.2017, page 3. available at <http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-14200-2017-INIT/en/pdf>

²Human Development Report 2016, UNDP, available at http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/2016_human_development_report.pdf; The GII reflects gender-based inequalities in three dimensions — reproductive health, empowerment, and economic activity.

³ UNDP/ACT, “Public Perception Study on Gender Equality in Politics and Business”, 2013, page 79.

Cabinet out of 14 ministers. The number of women in local self-government is 13 percent after local government elections in 2017⁴.

In the labour market, the rate of employed women is 53% against 67% for men.⁵ This is despite the fact that the enrolment rates in primary, secondary and higher education are practically equal for both genders or in some cases exceeded by women (for instance, women make up 55% of students in higher education institutions, while men – 45%)⁶. This proves that women have much less opportunity for realisation of their educational potential than men. The labour market in Georgia is characterised by high gender inequality, in terms of labour force participation and employment rate, gender-based employment segregation, and disparities in the average salaries.

Domestic violence continues to be a persistent problem for women in Georgia. According to the statistics in 2017 by the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia (MIA), out of 2,638 officially registered victims of domestic violence 87.3% are women. The most severe form of violence against women has significantly increased in recent years in Georgia. According to the ombudsman data, in 2017 during 9 months, 22 women were killed in Georgia, out of which 13 were identified as crimes based on domestic violence.⁷ As per data provided by MIA, they issued 3,137 restrictive orders on domestic violence which is higher than in previous years. The law enforcement agencies claim that increase of statistics is due to victims' higher application to the police, rather than increase in the number of cases themselves. This could be attributed to active awareness-raising campaign undertaken by the Government and civil society organizations, which has substantially altered public perceptions of domestic violence, whereas in 2009, 78.3% of the population thought that domestic violence was a "family" matter,⁸ victims or their relatives were reluctant to report it to the relevant agencies, even in quite extreme cases. This attitude has significantly changed over the past few years. According to a UN Women study on the perceptions of Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (2013), only 25 per cent now believe that domestic violence is a family matter, while 69 per cent believe domestic violence is a crime and perpetrator should be punished.⁹

No simple solution is enough to address gender inequality and gender violence in Georgia, especially in the country where gender discrimination is deeply rooted in cultural and social norms and practices and further coupled with poor social, economic situation and service delivery. In order to bridge the gender gap, it is very important to consolidate actions and response of all stakeholders including government authorities, relevant donor organizations, the private sector and civil society organizations to strengthen the supply of

⁴ Inter-Parliamentary Union, available at <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm>

⁵ National Statistics Office of Georgia, Women and Men in Georgia, Statistical Publication, 2017, page 47. available at http://www.geostat.ge/cms/site_images/files/english/health/W&M%20in%20ENG_2017.pdf

⁶ Ibid, page 29

⁷ Netgazeti, (online newsletter), 2017, available in Georgian at <http://netgazeti.ge/news/236199/>

⁸ National research on domestic violence against women in Georgia, ACT Research and the Centre for Social Science at the I. Javakishvili Tbilisi State University, 2010, available at <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cedaw/docs/AdvanceVersions/GeorgiaAnnexX.pdf>

⁹ Nana Sumbadze, "Study of the Perceptions and Attitudes Towards Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence in Tbilisi, Kakheti and Samegrelo-ZemoSvaneti Regions of Georgia" 2013, available at <http://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20georgia/attachments/publications/2014/english-study%20unjp.pdf?la=en&vs=4908>

and demand for effective policies and programs favouring women's access to politics, decision-making positions and labour market.