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**GENDER DIFFERENCES AS THE CONSEQUENCE OF
MACRO-ECONOMIC CHANGES AND POLICY DECISIONS**

Submitted by State Department for Statistics of Georgia¹

Contributed paper

Dynamics in the political and economic development of Georgia as well as social and cultural traditions have made the need to address issues of gender equality urgent in Georgia. At the same time, difficulties during the economic transition period have created specific problems in the areas of family life, health care and education for women, as well as in the political decision-making processes and in combating violence against women.

Historically, women in Georgia have brought up children, taken care of the household and preserved the traditional spirit of the family. Men supported the family and carried out only an indirect, assisting role in bringing up children and maintaining the household. Family for a woman was not only the primary source of her personal happiness and welfare, but it was also a social stimulant, which made her experience to be socially valuable.

With the high rate of unemployment among men (unemployment rate among men is 12.5%, and among women 11.0%), it has become necessary for women to undertake the role of family breadwinners while retaining the traditional role of bringing up children and taking care of the family in the conditions of economic crisis.

Women's unemployment and self-employment have increased. A reduction in the number of pre-school institutions (from 1990 to 2001, their number decreased by 50%) and the disintegration of out-of-school institutions for children have further complicated the task of looking after the children.

Against a background of massive labour force migration, the number of one-parent families is progressively increasing. As well as the trend toward an increasing number of single parents, the number of persons living alone has also increased.

The increase in poverty, which followed the sharp decrease in family income, has created an especially favourable background for raising the importance of gender inequality issues. A low level of women's participation in the economy also reflects inequality in gender relations in the country. In spite of equality in labour rights, engendered in legislative law, men and women are entrusted with a different range of duties. They participate in different activities, hold different positions and get different wages.

¹ Prepared by Teimuraz Beridze

According to the 2001 figures, the average wage of women in Georgia was 1.8 times less than men's wages. This was in general caused by the fields where women seek employment. The largest part of women is employed in education, health care and other spheres of services where the level of remuneration is low.

Though there are no limits in the legislation regarding rights for the ownership of land, housing and other kinds of estate, and also access to credits, the law does not provide any special mechanisms promoting women's access to credits.

In spite of the fact, that equal participation of men and women in the decision-making process is officially legislated, at present the women's participation index in this process is low. According to the figures for 2001, only 2 ministers, 17 members of parliament (7.2% out of all members of parliament) and the governor of the administration of only one region are women.

The lack of a strong enough social service system worsens mother and child's condition of health.

Actual gender problems include cases of psychological and moral violence, sexual abuse, and the raping of women. The newest form of violence is the compulsive prostitution. The scope of spreading prostitution is increasing among girls of school age.

A problem specific to Georgia is the suffering of women due to ethnic conflicts. At present 55% out of 280 100 Internally Displaced Persons from Abkhazia and Samachablo, regions of Georgia, are women. The provision of basic needs, housing, health care, employment, and social-psychological rehabilitation make up the most important concerns.

The above-mentioned problems have already been taken into account in resolution #308 of the President of Georgia dated June 18, 1998. The 1998-2000 Action Plan contains measures to improve women's conditions in Georgia. This plan calls for: the better incorporation of the gender factor in state policy and legislation, the collection and analysis of statistical data on the conditions of men and women, and the need to inform society about the issues of gender equality through seminars, workshops, meetings, publications, forums and mass media.

The objective of the Action Plan is to reinforce women's role and participation in decision-making processes, promote growth of women's economic activity and independence, to improve their access to the means of production, to implement measures for eliminating poverty among women and promote women's employment (especially in the rural area through the encouragement of micro-credits). Other measures include introducing social assistance programs and projects to single persons, multi-children families, pensioners and disabled persons, the elaboration of projects for developing democratic processes and introducing programs for professional training. Foreseen in the future are perfection of the legislative basis and mechanisms for removal of all the forms of violence and exploitation toward women, including prostitution, and the improvement of the state of education and health.

The above-mentioned program is also geared toward satisfying the needs of gender statistics users. NGOs serve to defend women's economic and political rights. A special work group was established in the State Department for Statistics of Georgia to focus specially on gender problems.

NGOs have sponsored conferences and discussions on the development of gender issues in Georgia, on matters of women's rights, their political and economic independence, development of entrepreneurship among the women, etc. Systematic meetings with potential users of gender statistics often take place there.

A seminar "On the Issues of Gender Statistics" - organized by the Central Statistical Bureau of Sweden - was held on April 27-28, 1999 in the Regional Training Centre of the State Department for Statistics of Georgia. Significant progress has been made in exchanging information on the gender statistical approaches of different countries, on preparing statistical information oriented towards user

needs, and on maintaining quality, and dissemination. Also produced in 1999 was the statistical abstract "On Women and Men in Georgia".

Gender statistics have been compiled in the context of preparing the social-economic indicators of Georgia. First of all, the gender dimension was integrated while producing the database of indicators for the demographic development of the country and for the population census. But because of a delay in the population census and a lack of current statistical indicators of the interregional and intra-regional migration, the number of married people (according to the types of marriages) is not included in the current statistics. It is foreseen that the gender dimension will be incorporated to the questionnaire of the census for the year 2002.

From the demographic data given in the Human Development Reports, we would like to draw your particular attention to the life expectancy at birth. This indicator has not been calculated by official statistics of Georgia for 10 years for specific reasons. At the beginning of 90s with the well-known occurrences in East Europe, the social and demographic situation of Georgia changed significantly. This has made the 1989 population census results invalid as basis information for further demographic analysis. Unless there is reliable primary information, the reliability of demographic data and projections remains doubtful. On the other hand, being able to obtain exact data on population by age and sex and external or internal migration is very difficult because of the existing accounting system which has not changed since the soviet era.

Therefore it is important to find new approaches and in general to do a fundamental reorganization of the existing accounting system. In this respect, the development of demographic statistics requires assistance in many areas: new methodologies, computer software and financial means.

In the area of demographic statistics concurrent with the accounting system it is advisable to study natural and migratory population movement by using sample survey methods.

Through TACIS funding the Demographic Statistics Division carried out an external migration sample survey in 1998. The same survey was again conducted in December 2000-February 2001 (again by TACIS funding). The results and experience gained from the survey will help us to determine migration trends. It is advisable to study the process by 3-4 years periods, to single out seasonal geographical factors, the trends of main flows and others. For a fundamental study of migration in the country it is necessary to obtain financing from international organizations, as the country's small budget will not be able to accommodate this.

Considerations for the incorporation of the gender dimension in employment statistics and indicators are based on the guidelines on gender statistics data improvement given at the 1995 Beijing conference as well as on national needs.

The gender perspective has partly been incorporated in the statistics reflecting economy and employment. Indicators of economic activity, employment and unemployment of the population were obtained from the labour force survey. The processing of the survey information began in 1998 through assistance from the International Labour Organization and continued till 1999.

Information on the composition of the labour force from the survey of the employed, unemployed, and economically non-active population can be processed not only from the gender perspective, but also from the perspective of urban and rural areas. The above-mentioned survey was also conducted quarterly. A selective study, which was intended to provide statistics and indicators, is at present suspended because of the lack of the needed financial resources.

From the list of gender statistics and indicators in the sub-division of "Employment" it becomes clear which information regarding gender is possible to provide. As regards the section "Economic Indicators", it is necessary to carry out a special survey for getting indicators "On Average Monthly Wages by the Separate Professional Groups". Carrying out the above-mentioned survey is related to

significant financial costs. Therefore, information is can only be processed with a definite periodicity. The last survey of this kind was carried out in 1997.

Regarding monthly wages by gender, it must be noted that similar information had not been processed in previous years and that the definite work was being carried out in this direction. Changes were made in the current statistical calculation to obtain average wages from the gender perspective. This is processed quarterly not only according to a branch of industry but also in forms of estate.

Apart from this, studies are being carried out periodically in order to compile information on wage differentials by branch of economy. The before-mentioned survey reflects the number of workers in the country receiving less than the minimum salary broken down by branch of industry, gender and forms of estate.

Information is drawn from the labour force survey which collects data on the economically active and non-active population, and on employment and unemployment in different sectors of the economy. Data collection is carried out by means of a questionnaire addressed to all population living in private households of the age of 15 and over. Information from the questionnaires is put in the database and it is then processed in the form of standard tables. In case more information is needed, additional tables are compiled based on the information available in the questionnaire.

As it was mentioned before, data on employment and unemployment are obtained on the basis of household and labour force sample surveys at country level. The labour force survey was carried out in Georgia in 1998-1999 with assistance of the International Labour Organization. Because of the existing difficult financial situation the State Department for Statistics is unable to include this survey in the regular budget. The information will be available only in the case the labour force sample survey is continued.

Studies related to definitions, concepts, classifications, and measurement issues are conducted in accordance with the national accounting system. Corresponding work is also done in the sphere of classification and standards.

The State Department for Statistics of Georgia obtains data in the field of social services, education, health care, delinquency, women's participation in family affairs and the household, and in governmental bodies. However, a number of indicators is missing. We think that additional data collection in the above-mentioned areas is of great interest. But with the existing funding further work on this would be impossible.

We would like to be able to present the main trends and indicators which are currently estimated by household survey data and by possibly carrying out new surveys.

The 1997 Human Development Report introduced the human poverty concept which is measured by two different poverty indicators for developing and industrialized countries.

Human poverty index-1 (for developing countries) specifies: percentage of people not expected to survive to age 40, adult illiteracy rate, insufficient economic provision which is measured by the percentage of people without access to safe water and to health services and also the percentage of underweight children under five.

Human poverty index-2 (for industrialized countries) specifies: percentage of people not expected to survive to age 60, adult functional illiteracy rate, percentage of people living below the income poverty line (50% of median personal disposable income).

In the report Georgia refers to the medium human development country group, therefore the human poverty index-2 is used. The value of the index for Georgia cannot be calculated because the following information is not available:

1. percentage of people not expected to survive to age 60;
2. adult functional illiteracy rate.

However, household survey data enable us to calculate the percentage of people living below the income poverty line. For Georgia it would be better not to use the poverty line 50% of median personal disposable income but 50% median consumption, as consumption data are more reliable than income data.

A special survey is required to specify the adult functional illiteracy rate. All the necessary preconditions for such a survey are given in Georgia. In particular, beginning from the second half of 1996, the State Department for Statistics began a household sample survey, and this continues till today. The existing system of observation on households has almost all the necessary preconditions for a survey, in particular:

- an effective system of observation;
- sampling, which is representative of the country regions;
- a network of interviewers and supervisors who have gained experience in household surveys and is spread throughout the country;
- the operators' group has experience with logical control and coding.

It is advisable to carry out a survey on adult functional illiteracy rate as the population's education level defines significantly the country's living standard. Information obtained from the household survey shows that with the decline of the education level of household members, the risk of people living below the poverty line rises. This correlation can especially evidently be observed while evaluating the poverty line of population living in cities.

Weeding out illiteracy in Georgia was solved basically in the first half of the 20th century. As a result, by the end of the 80s it has not yet been a social problem. At the same time, the transition to the market economy has newly raised the question of the definition of the education level. Specification of the literacy rate has become urgent. In this respect in Georgia as in all the countries of the former Soviet Union the definite standard has not been specified for today and correspondingly no statistical information is available. As is above mentioned the population's living standard immediately depends on the education, in particular on the functional literacy rate. These trends have already been proceeding for a long time in the countries of Western Europe and America where the adult functional illiteracy rate is 10-20% of the population at the age of 15-65. On the basis of this we are able to conclude that in this respect we also will have quite serious problems, which require corresponding studies and analysis.

Apart from this, we would be very grateful to receive methodological and technical assistance in measuring specific indicators such as cigarette consumption, population with or without access to safe water, etc.

Gender statistical indicators are supplied to the authorities, and to the women's governmental and non-governmental organizations. It is passed to them in the form of the primary statistical information, analytical materials, statistical abstracts of definite periodicity (and also due to needs) with a view to monitoring and working out policies for improving women's conditions in the country.

Gender statistics data are not yet available on the website of the office. The state budget funds the work for conducting and improving gender statistics and also for preparing statistical publications. There is no experience in using statistical information for commercial purposes. There have not been worked out relevant skills in the sphere of marketing.

Making available gender statistical information on the website of the office would promote interchanging information with the world community.

On the website of the office, the following can be found: advertising materials on statistical data and periods covered, analytical material reflecting different sides of gender equality in the country, gender statistical publications in Georgian, Russian and English.

For the purpose of information exchange among different countries of the world it is reasonable to render technical support to the countries of the former Soviet Union for preparing and disposing information on the website, for defining principles of setting prices. Taking into account the opportunities to fund the mentioned work in countries with transition economy, we consider that it would be necessary to render technical support for covering costs at the initial stage of implementing the project.

When building statistical capacity, another important issue is that attention be paid to the statistical infrastructure, which includes the system of registers (administrative register, business register, sub-registers) as the principal component of statistical system. It is impossible to develop statistics without this.

ESRE&O (Entire State Register of Enterprises and Organizations) is the central administrative register of the country. It covers all legal and physical entities located on the territory of Georgia and engaged in the various fields of economic activities. This register was established in 1995 as an administrative register. It is now being turned into a statistical register.

At present the centralized system of registers lacks efficiency. The exchange of information between ESRE&O and regional offices is not computerized. The lack of modern communication technologies makes the procedure of updating more time consuming and reduces the quality of information.

Nowadays the most urgent problem requiring a solution is the unreliable base for statistical surveys (in gender statistics and others). A system of registers [administrative register, statistical (business register), sub-registers] requires a periodical updating. The SDS of Georgia uses various sources for updating the statistical register.

However, other types of registers such as population register, dwelling register and etc. do not exist in Georgia.