



## Discussion Paper



| Beiträge von **Studierenden**

### The Socio-Economic Dimensions of Gender Inequalities in Rural Areas of Georgia

Madona Terterashvili

Harriet Taylor Mill-Institut für Ökonomie und Geschlechterforschung  
Discussion Paper 25, 06/2014

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**Discussion Papers des Harriet Taylor Mill-Instituts für Ökonomie  
und Geschlechterforschung der Hochschule für Wirtschaft und  
Recht Berlin**

**Herausgeberinnen: Miriam Beblo, Claudia Gather, Madeleine Janke,  
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Die Herausgeberinnen

# **The Socio-Economic Dimensions of Gender Inequalities in Rural Areas of Georgia**

**Madona Terterashvili**

## **Author**

**Madona Terterashvili** obtained her master's degree in International Economics from Berlin School of Economics and Law in 2013. Her research interest lies in the field of labor market and gender studies.

## **Abstract**

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, gender inequalities became a subject of discussion in the Georgian society. However, in a country like Georgia, where the society is impregnated with long-established patriarchal values and religious beliefs, significant differences persist in the notions of gender roles and any efforts to gender equalities is viewed as a threat to traditional values. In order to explore this proposition, several goals are determined in this work. First of all, the master thesis aims to examine the socio-economic dimensions of gender inequalities and discover the main factors behind women's disadvantageous position in rural communities of Georgia. Second, the work seeks to analyze the Georgian state and women's non-governmental organizations' (WNGOs) responsiveness to existing inequalities and find out the way out of gender inequalities.

Using national statistical data and international indices, the work presents preliminary findings, while the theoretical framework and an expert interview provide additional insights into gender inequalities in rural areas of Georgia. The results of the study document that patriarchal values and rising religious fundamentalism impose barriers to gender equalities, which is considered to be an essential instrument for the sustainable economic development.

After introducing the main findings, the research paper concludes by offering recommendations on the way forward to greater gender equalities.

**Keywords:** gender inequalities, patriarchal ideology, religious fundamentalism, women's empowerment, sustainable economic development.

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## List of Abbreviations

CEDAW	Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CRRC	Caucasus Research Resource Centre
EIU	Economic Intelligence Unit
ERCP	Economic Policy Research Center
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEAC	Gender Equality Advisory Council
Geostat	National Statistics Office of Georgia
IDP	Internally Displaced People
NDI	National Democratic Institute
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
SIGI	Social Institutions & Gender Index
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Fund for Population Activities
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United Nations Agency for International Development
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
VET	Vocational Education and Training
WEO	Women's Economic Opportunity Index
WFG	Women's Fund of Georgia
WNGOs	Women's Non-Governmental Organizations

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## **1. Introduction**

Since the collapse of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), the Georgian government has been pursuing a number of reforms with the aim to include democratic values into a patriarchal society. Despite the freedom and new opportunities that came with the independence, in addition to the long-established traditional values and cultural norms, the burdensome socio-economic turmoil negatively affected the conditions and status of Georgian women. All these contextual factors contributed to the unjustified system of dominance and supremacy of men over women and created a solid base for gender inequalities.

Keeping in mind the fact that gender equalities and democracy-building process are interlinked, the Georgian government has made some positive endeavors to confront social injustice and eradicate all kind of discrimination against women. However, achieving gender equalities on the way to building an egalitarian state has been ambitious goal for Georgia. The inability of the state to confront the gender inequalities and ensure justice within the society brought up the necessity of WNGOs endowment and international community's supervision to remedy rural women's disadvantageous position.

Bearing in mind all above mentioned, the hypothesis of this work is:

*Patriarchal ideology and religious fundamentalism, which are more prominent in rural areas, hinder the attempts of the Georgian state and WNGOs on the way to greater gender equalities and sustainable economic development.*

In order to approve or disapprove the author's main assumption, the objectives of the work are:

- *To assess the socio-economic dimensions of gender inequalities in rural areas of Georgia*
- *To reveal the main factors behind gender inequalities*
- *To discover the role of the Georgian state and WNGOs in achieving gender equalities*
- *To find out the pathway out of gender inequalities*

### **1.1 Structure and Organization**

For the purpose of deep understanding of gender inequalities in rural areas of Georgia and discovering the pathway out of social injustice, the work is organized in the following way.

After introducing a reader to the topic in the first chapter, the second section of this work gives a brief overview of the Georgian economy. Subsequently, in the third chapter, multi-dimensions of gender inequalities in the Georgian society are brought to light. By laying out the theoretical dimensions of gender inequalities, the fourth chapter presents economists' and sociologists' perspectives on the factors of gender inequalities. The fifth chapter covers the empirical part of this work and describes the methodological approach used to achieve the main objectives. By reviewing the expert interview, the reader is introduced to the gender expert's insights on the root causes of gender inequalities, which are used to verify the author's main hypothesis. Backed up with the theoretical framework and expert's insights, the sixth chapter presents the author's recommendations of the way to gender equalities. In the seventh chapter, the work is finalized by drawing a conclusion and the author's outlook on gender equalities in Georgia.

## 1.2 Terminology

In order to introduce the reader to the key terms used for examining the socio-economic dimensions of gender inequalities in rural areas of Georgia, this chapter provides the definitions of the core concepts.

*'Gender Inequalities refers to the inequalities in status, power, resources and prestige of women and men within a society.'*

(Polity – Social Science and Humanities Glossary, n.d.)

Whether in social or economic science, there is no an exact definition of gender inequalities, as it has various dimensions and aspects. However, in the framework of this work, it seeks to highlight an unequal access to resources and opportunities, as well as unequal perception of women in rural communities of Georgia.

*'Patriarchal Ideology is a set of beliefs (and practices which stem from them), which assumes that males are in some way superior to females, and that it is therefore natural and right that men should enjoy a more privileged position in society than women, particularly in terms of power and prestige.'*

(Lawson and Garrod, 2000, p. 206)

*'Religious Fundamentalism is a religious belief and practices following from it that there is a need to return and follow the basic texts of that religion in order to gain salvation.'*

(Lawson and Garrod, 2000, p. 111)

The patriarchal ideology and religious fundamentalism are key concepts in examining gender inequalities in Georgia, due to the fact that patriarchal values reinforced by fundamentalist tendencies, favor the authority of men over women. By applying these concepts, the extent of dominance of social informal rules over formal ones will be highlighted.

The last key concept of this work is *women's empowerment*. There are various perspectives on empowerment and different understanding of this term, although the 'power' as a main root of this term implies expansion of the socio-economic and political strength of women in order to fully participate in decision-making processes that shape their lives.

According to the United Nation's Guidelines (1995), *'women's empowerment has five components: women's sense of self-worth; their right to have and to determine choices; their right to have access to opportunities and resources; their right to have the power to control their own lives, both within and outside the home; and their ability to influence the direction of social change to create a more just social and economic order, nationally and internationally.'*

## 1.3 Limitations

Even though the master thesis reached its objectives, there were some constraints. The primary limitations were the absence of sex-disaggregated national data and the lack of research with respect to gender inequalities in rural communities of Georgia and in the Georgian society, at large.

## **2. Overview of the Georgian Economy**

This chapter seeks to provide a brief overview of the Georgian economy. After presenting the recent history of economic transformation, the current macroeconomic environment and general labor market trends are reviewed.

### **2.1 Economic Restructuring and Current Macroeconomic Situation**

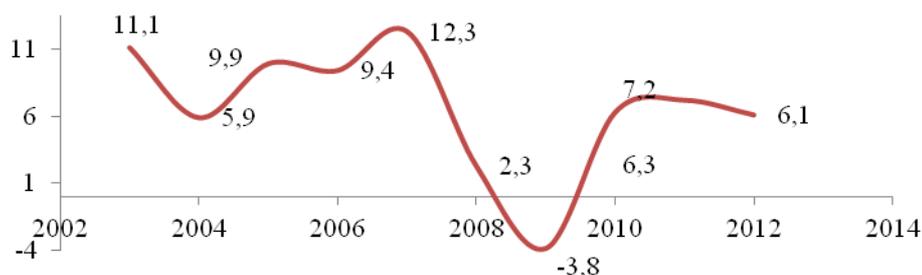
With the aim to confront the main obstacles to economic independence and to regain the fundamental state authority, Georgia along with other post communist states went through the process of a dramatic socio-economic and political transformation. The end of the communist era, culminating in the collapse of the USSR in the early 1990s gave rise to optimism over the democratic values and growth opportunities of the former soviet republics. Even though the transition process was devastating for the majority of the states, Georgia experienced the deepest economic recession and following traumatic post-recession recovery (European Initiative - Liberal Academy, 2012, p. 3).

Throughout the first years of economic restructuring, due to the insufficient institutional reforms, high budget deficit, rapidly rising state debt and a weak banking system, the initiated transformation progressed slowly and as a result, the output declined by around 70 percent, Gross Domestic Product (GDP) decreased by 30 percent a year on average and inflation hit 211 percent in September 1994 (Melnikov, Papiashvili and Rodonaia, 2008, p. 37; Wang, 1999, p. 25).

Despite the numerous ways of smooth transition to a liberal market economy, the historical overview of the economic depression and political chaos of the post-communist states in the 1990s made the world realize that the difficulty of simultaneous socio-economic and political restructuring was neglected. Once being the best performing and richest soviet socialist economy, it took about two decades for Georgia to stabilize the socio-economic and political environment, although it has not regained its economic power prevailing under the communist era (Bodewig, 2007, pp. 4-5).

Since the breakdown of the communist regime, the Rose Revolution in 2003 was considered as a new chapter in the Georgian history because based on the principles of the market economy, the Georgian authorities introduced structural reforms aiming at trade liberalization, custom control and tax code simplification, and modernization of technical regulation system. Grounded by the anticorruption and liberal economic strategies, the government managed to create an investment friendly business environment and attract high level of Foreign Direct Investments (FDI), mainly in large oil and gas pipeline projects, what in turn gave rise to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (OECD, 2011, p. 116).

In recognition of obvious positive economic performance, Georgia has been indicated as one of the leading economic reformers and ranked ninth in the ease of doing business (World Bank, 2013, p. 3). Throughout the years following the Rose Revolution, the following graph 1 demonstrates that the Georgian economy experienced economic growth, reaching 12.3 percent of the real GDP growth in 2007, however the double shock of the Russian-Georgian war in 2008 and the global financial crisis in 2009 undermined the economic stability and as a consequence the real GDP dropped to -3.8 percent in 2009 (European Commission, 2011, p. 8). Soon after the recession, the Georgian economy showed signs of recovery, reaching 7.2 percent of real GDP growth in 2011.



*Graph 1: Real GDP growth in Georgia, 2003-2012.*

*Source: Constructed by the author on the basis of the Ministry of Economic Development of Georgia, 2012.*

Taking into consideration economic and political turmoil, despite the steps forward, massive poverty and living conditions of Internally Displaced People (IDPs) have been crucial problems since independence. Starting from the early 1990s, due to the armed conflicts, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2013) up to 280 000 people were displaced within Georgia, who nowadays live in poverty and highly dependent on foreign aid. With regards to poverty level, according to the latest estimations of the National Statistics Office of Georgia (Geostat, 2013) in 2012 the share of the population under 60 percent of median consumption constituted to 22.4 percent, while 9.7 percent live under the poverty threshold.

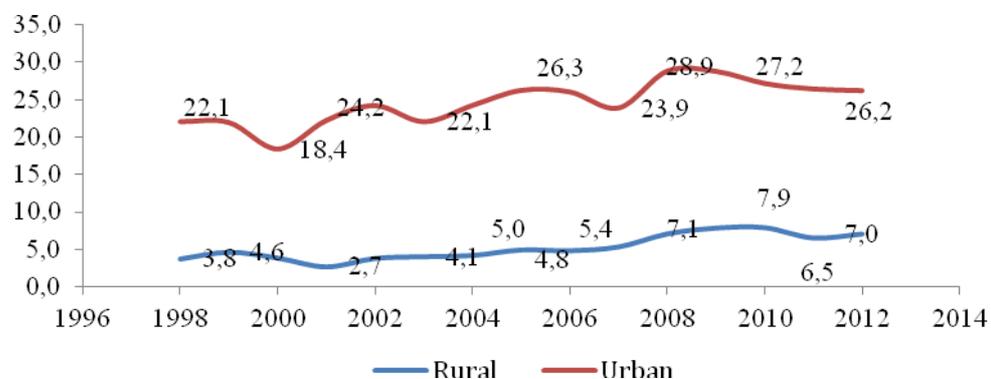
In respect to above indicated problems, in order to tackle the constantly rising poverty level, the Georgian government initiated long-term strategic programs to support the development of the agricultural sector. The main directions of the development strategy were to increase effectiveness of the sector, as well as in parallel to self-sustained agriculture, to facilitate its commercialization through encouragement of entrepreneurial activities of households in rural areas (The Government of Georgia, 2009, p. 5). However, despite the Georgian state's attempts to ensure its efficiency, according to the Economic Policy Research Centre (EPRC, 2013, pp. 7-11) persistent problems with respect to poor economic and transport infrastructures, unregulated land property rights, meager investments, absence of modern technologies, little access to credit and fertilizers, and lack of consultation services negatively affects the agricultural production and prosperity of the rural population.

Given above presented socio-economic indicators, it should be stated that the Georgian government's response to the welfare concerns and its main strategies have not delivered impressive results yet. However, taking into account the difficulty of the transition process and the magnitude of the consequent economic and political instabilities, agriculture oriented strategies as an important safety net of the Georgian rural dwellers can play a crucial role in poverty reduction and stabilization strategies.

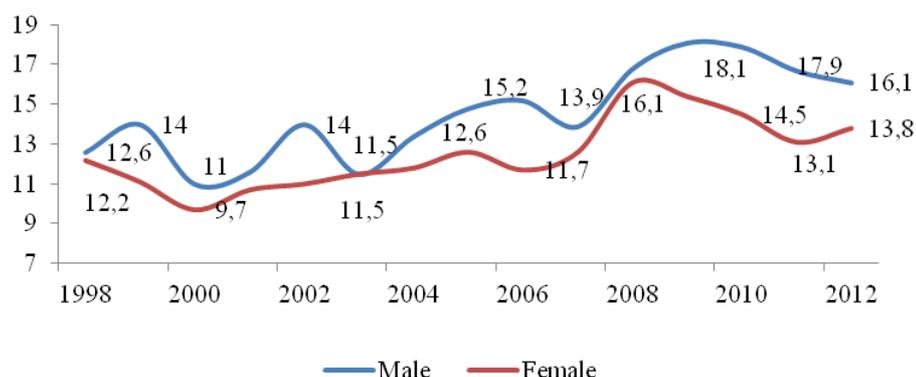
## **2.2 Labor Market Trends**

Generally speaking, in order to evaluate the socio-economic strength of a country, it is important to pay attention to the status of its workforce. No need to argue that for the most of the families salary as the main source of income, directly affects their living conditions. Thus, well functioning labor market is considered to be one of the main instruments for reducing poverty and fostering economic development.

Despite Georgia's recent experience of economic growth, the indicators of unemployment have been increasing since last years. As it can be seen from the graph 2 and graph 3 below the level of unemployment has been increasing since last ten years in both rural and urban areas, reaching its peak in the aftermath of the August War in 2008.



Graph 2: Unemployment rate in urban-rural areas of Georgia, 1998-2012  
Source: Constructed by the author on the basis of Geostat, 2013a.



Graph 3: Unemployment rate by gender 1998-2012  
Source: Constructed by the author on the basis of Geostat, 2013a.

In addition to the high unemployment level, one of its prominent features of the Georgian labor market represents self-employment as a main source of employment in rural areas. The latest national statistics document that in 2012 the share of self-employment in rural areas constituted to 80 percent.

According to Sanikidze, et al. (2006, p.14) the constant lack of employment opportunities created the foundation for high share of self-employment in the Georgian labor market. In general, self-employment can be evaluated from different perspectives. It can be seen as a successful entrepreneurship as well as inability to find formal employment. However, the study on employment trends in Georgia (EPRC, 2011, p. 12) revealed that the self-employment in Georgia does not comprise small business, which have a potential to generate income, reduce poverty level and foster economic growth, rather its main share made up of self-subsistence farming, informal trade or unpaid domestic work.

Due to the absence of detailed statistics, it is impossible to present the percentage of self-employed women in rural areas, although the share of self-employed female population in Georgia throughout 2009-2012 accounted for approximately 60 percent each year, out of which over 56 percent are unpaid family workers (Geostat, 2013b, p. 12). In contrast to self-employment,

according to Care (2013, p. 31) the main source of formal employment for rural women is education and agricultural sectors.

While examining the Georgian labor market, gender imbalances in economic activities should be mentioned in this section. According to Larrera, Antadze and Berulava (2010, pp. 23-27) the national labor market manifests occupational segregation due to the fact that certain professions are considered to be for men or women. According to the report, women are mainly concentrated in agriculture, education, service, health and social insurance sectors, while men dominate in construction, manufacturing, transport and communications. As a result of the occupational segregation, unequal wage treatment of women prevail across all economic sectors, where on average, Georgian women earn 60 percent less than men (World Bank, 2012, p. 17). The detailed information on average monthly remuneration by kind of economic activity and sex can be found in annex 1.

Given the facts with regard to the Georgian macroeconomic environment and labor market trends, it can be summed up that the due to unstable socio-economic and political environment, underutilized agricultural capacity, lack of formal employment opportunities and persistent gender inequalities, the fortune of the Georgian women greatly depends on the conditions beyond their control.

### **3. Background on Gender Inequalities in Georgia**

In order to shed light on different dimensions of gender inequalities, this chapter begins with an overview of the Georgian women's status under the communist era and after independence. The consequent subchapters present the Georgian state and WNGOs' activities with regard to gender inequalities.

#### **3.1 Women Before and After Transition**

There is a large body of literature examining gender inequalities in Central and Eastern Europe, but very little attention has been given to Georgia under the communist regime and after. However, since the former socialist republics have relatively the same history of the social order, generated from the common legislative roots, it is possible to present the status and role of the Georgian women throughout last decades.

It has been widely believed that the welfare state of USSR was characterized by distinctive gender attitudes. Under the communist era, the constitutional position of women equaled with men, meaning that women were having the same rights and opportunities as men. The soviet countries' emphasis on the active involvement of women in the labor force for economic development, which was enabled through the focus on employment generation and social benefits for childcare, was considered as an egalitarian order of gender relations (Pascall and Kwak, 2005, pp. 16-17).

Even though women's active involvement in the workforce was guaranteed, the Union's ideology favored traditional families, imposing double burden of labor market and household work on women. Furthermore, occupational segregation and consequent income inequalities existed at that time, and as Pascall and Kwak (2005, p. 39) explains, were stemmed from the state policies and cultural norms.

The communism maintained the traditional ideas of gender roles<sup>1</sup> by attributing the traditional patterns of the household work and childcare responsibilities entirely to women. As Hungarian sociologist, Zsuzsa Ferge (1997, p. 163) stated, women never have been equal to men, even more, in private sphere, like family or interpersonal relations, the traditional gender roles and the male-breadwinner model remained untouched.

With the collapse of the authoritarian regime of the USSR, the transformation to a market economy and emergence of the individualistic cultures on the one hand, created new opportunities, however, on the other hand, undermined the idea of the welfare state, and negatively affected all aspects of social life. The transition towards competitive market economy has generated a range of gender outcomes, particularly women's position in the labor market has weakened and as a result, women's unemployment and income inequalities showed an increasing tendency (Waylen, 2007, pp. 178-196).

To put it briefly, the soviet ideology of the gender equalities, including different economic, cultural or religious aspects, sustained the male-breadwinner model, which is more salient nowadays. Even though the breakdown of the authoritarian regime made room for social, civil and political movements that could challenge the traditional family structures, it seems like that in the climate of the economic downturn and political instability the Georgian women felt unable to oppose to the traditional gender roles and make use of newly emerged rights and opportunities.

### **3.2 Status of the Modern Georgian Woman**

Long before the collapse of the communist era it was already widely acknowledged that gender equalities have had major impact on the sustainable development, where development was seen as a process of expanding freedom for all members of a society. As Amartya Sen (1999, p. 18) states: 'Greater freedom enhances the ability of people to help themselves and also to influence the world, and these matters are central to the process of development.' Following the Nobel Prize winner in economic science - Amartya Sen, the World Bank sees gender equalities as an essential instrument for the sustainable economic development, as it can increase economic efficiency. According to the World Bank (2012, pp. 3-6) by eliminating certain barriers and improving the access to education and economic opportunities, the potential of rural women to contribute to the well-being of their communities and the society, at large, will increase. Furthermore, by eliminating discriminatory social norms and perception of women as subordinate to men, the women's ability to speak out and make independent choice will increase, which can be transformative for the whole society.

Regardless of widely known truth, women all around the world still face persistent inequalities in access to economic opportunities and education, political underrepresentation, extensive health and safety risks.

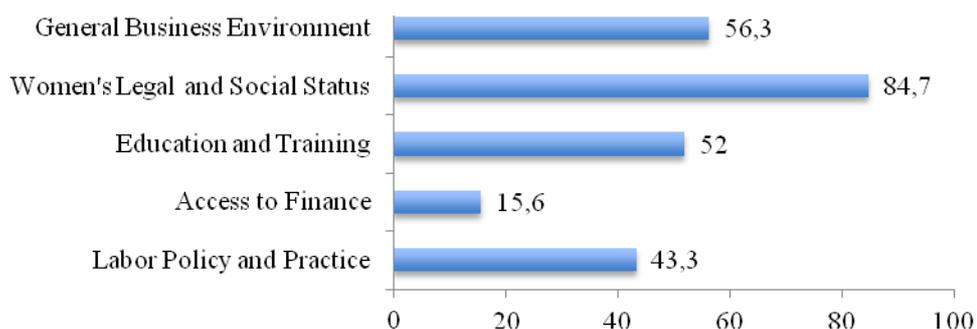
In order to understand the current state of rural women in Georgia and dig out the root causes of existing inequalities, this section presents international indices, such as Women's Economic Opportunity (WEO) index and Social Institutions & Gender Index (SIGI).

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<sup>1</sup> 'Gender roles refer to the social expectations that a society attaches to gender and their expression.' (Bruce and Yearley, 2006, p. 121)

Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), which introduced WEO index in 2010, defines women's economic opportunities as a combination of laws, regulations, customs and social norms that hinder women's advancement on equal footing with men. Therefore, WEO index looks beyond gender inequalities in order to point up the factors affecting women's access to economic opportunities in 128 countries.<sup>2</sup>

According to the latest estimations, despite improvements from 49.2 in 2010 to 54.5 in 2012 in WEO index score, the considerable gender inequalities still persist in the Georgian society (EUI, 2012, p. 10). The graph 4 below presents WEO index score of Georgia by categories.



*Graph 4: WEO index scores by categories, 2010<sup>3</sup>*

*Source: Constructed by the author on the basis of EIU, 2010, p. 64.*

As it can be seen from the graph 4, the Georgian women face challenges in access to economic opportunities in all categories, while the most problematic issues are implementation and enforcement of non-discrimination and income equality policies (0.0), access to financial programs and services (0.0), violence against women (66.7), tertiary education (36.0), development trainings (20.0) and poor infrastructure (41.8). Due to the space limitation the detailed information with regard to the scores of sub-categories is presented in annex 2.

In order to broaden the reader's understanding of women's disadvantageous position in the Georgian society, SIGI, as a measure of drivers of gender inequalities, is introduced below. As a complex index, SIGI was developed by OEC in 2009 with the aim to identify and measure the influence of discriminatory social institutions on women in 100 countries (OECD, 2012, p. 7). Keeping in mind Douglass North's (1999, p. 97) definition of institutions as 'humanly devised constraints that structure political, economic and social interaction. They consisting of informal constraints – customs and traditions, and formal rules – constitutions, laws, property rights', SIGI is particularly interesting for understanding gender inequalities in Georgia, because it draws attention to the social norms that determine gender roles and attitudes.

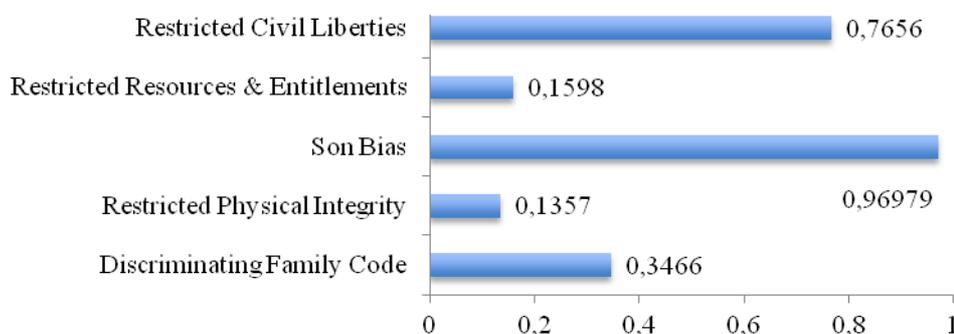
In order to reveal to which extent social norms influence gender inequalities, SIGI captures five categories – discriminatory family code, restricted family integrity, son bias, restricted resources and entitlements, and restricted civil liberties. The influence of social institutions is measured from 0 to 1, where 1 demonstrates strong influence on the majority of women (OECD, 2012, p. 8).

<sup>2</sup> WEO index is based on five main categories, where each category is based on four or five sub-categories. The main categories are labor policies and practices, access to finance, education and training, women's legal and social status, and general business environment. WEO index is measured from 0 to 100, where 100 score is the most favorable (EIU, 2010, pp. 4-7).

<sup>3</sup> The detailed information with regard to scores of each category was presented in 2010 EIU report, while 2012 report shows general information about the countries' ranking.

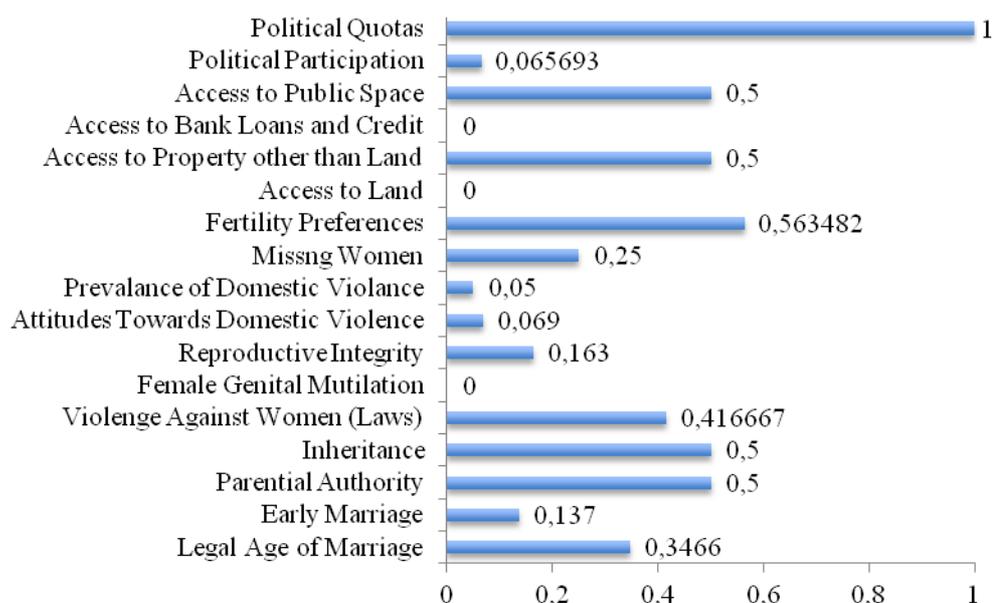
Even though the Georgian Constitution (Parliament of Georgia, 2013, p. 4) under the article 14 guarantees equal rights and opportunities for men and women, SIGI clearly documents the dominance of the informal social rules over formal.

According to the latest data, Georgia is ranked at 60th place out of 100 countries, demonstrating strong influence of informal social norms on gender inequalities. The graphs below demonstrate SIGI scores of each category and sub-categories.



Graph 5: SIGI category scores, Georgia, 2012

Source: Constructed by author on the basis of SIGI Georgia, 2012



Graph 6: SIGI sub-categories scores, Georgia, 2012

Source: Constructed by author on the basis of SIGI Georgia, 2012

Based on the above-introduced indices, the preliminary statement can be made that the Georgian society is impregnated with contradictions. Despite the fact that equality is established on legal grounds, nearly all indices demonstrate women's economic and political underrepresentation, unregulated property rights, limited access to financial resources, low education level, freedom of expression and domestic violence. All this points up that the dominance of informal rules leave little room for the Georgian women to be actively involved in economic, social and political spheres.

Discriminatory social norms and practices that limit women's rights and access to resources play significant role in determining women's economic or social

outcomes. For instance, even though legislation prohibits bride-kidnapping practices, the abduction of girls for forced marriage takes place in some rural areas of Georgia (Kamm, 2012, p. 10). In the fear of social pressure, girls are forced to create families since early age, what in turn bounds them to day-to-day household and childrearing responsibilities. As a consequence, girls are unable to complete their education and find formal employment.

In addition to the discriminatory social practices, the analysis of education materials document that education system is filled with gender stereotypes. According to United Nations Children's Fund's (UNICEF) consultant Iveta Silova (2004, p. 10) 'females are usually portrayed in a narrowly defined domestic context, usually engaged in such activities as taking care of children, cooking, knitting, sewing, washing dishes, cleaning the house, laying the table, and watering flowers. Males, on the other hand, are commonly portrayed as reading, playing, dancing, singing, hiking, catching butterflies, and going to school'. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2007, p. 3) explains this fact by the influence of the Orthodox Church on the education system.

Furthermore, while there are no legal restrictions to women's property and inheritance rights, in reality women are seen as secondary heirs. In rural areas of Georgia, property is usually registered to the male family members and preferences in regard to inheritance, ownership or administration is usually given to men (Duban, 2010, p. 24).

Nowadays, an important issue in gender studies represents women's economic activities. As it was presented in chapter 2.2 and annex 1, the Georgian women face constant inequalities and compared to men are less involved in labor market. In addition to passive economic activities, women tend to concentrate in lower-paying industries and in lower positions compared to men, even in female dominating industries, as well as face glass ceiling<sup>4</sup> in workplace, what according to Care (2013, pp. 8-9) goes hand in hand with patriarchal ideology and gender stereotypes, which are more salient in rural areas. Moreover, with regard to rural women's entrepreneurial activities, it was brought out as a problematic issue due to various cultural constraints and women's low decision-making rights within their families and communities (Care, 2013, p. 19).

One of the indicators of democracy and justice in a society represents equal civic and political participation of its members. Even though the Georgian society is actively involved in politics, as SIGI emphasized, women's political participation is very limited, while their activism is especially restricted in rural areas. As Sumbadze (2008, pp. 48-50) highlighted there are various reasons of women's low involvement in civic and political activism, such as absence of political quotas, low capacity and self-esteem of women, household burden, and deeply rooted patriarchal ideology and stereotypes limiting women's involvement in public domain.

While the Georgian cultural traditions considers family as sound place, the Georgian reality demonstrate that the violation of the basic human rights of women start from families. Nowadays, domestic violence can be considered as an extreme form of gender inequality and it still represents one of the most problematic issues in the Georgian society, with women being subject of physical and psychological violence and economic control (Chkheidze, 2010, p. 3). The

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<sup>4</sup> 'Glass ceiling refers to the invisible mechanism of discrimination and prejudice restricting women's professional advancement at work' (Gabriel, 2008, p. 117)

first comprehensive study on domestic violence against women in Georgia (UNFPA, 2010, p. 37) revealed that over 78 percent of women, 48 percent out of which are rural women, think that domestic violence is a private affair and should be discussed within the family. According to the study the influence of the social and cultural norms can be traced in the women's attitudes towards violence, because 45.9 percent of women who have experienced violence stated that men have reasons to hit their wives and the main reasons of the physical violence from the perspectives of rural women were alcohol, financial problems and unemployment (UNFPA, 2010, pp. 51-52).

To put it briefly, these findings give possibility to make a preliminary conclusion that inequalities manifest in various dimensions of women's daily life in rural areas of Georgia, where long-established patriarchal fashion of the society is more salient.

### **3.3 State's Responsiveness to Gender Inequalities**

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, in maintaining efforts towards European values, the Georgian government took steps towards gender equalities. In 1994 Georgia signed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and soon after that adopted an Action Plan for Equality, Development and Peace introduced in Beijing in 1995 (UN, 2004, p. 2). Furthermore, as a signatory state to the Millennium Declaration of 2000, Georgian authorities made a commitment to promote gender equalities and empower women (UNDP, 2005, p. 6).

In addition to these obligations, the Georgian state with the support of the international community initiated other strategies to increase the awareness of gender issues and advance women's position, however, as stated by Nodia (2006, p. 171) the gender related activities did not have any significant results until the Rose Revolution in 2003, which can be considered as a real step on the way to gender equalities.

Since then, the Georgian state undertook some initiatives to address gender inequalities. Today, the key institutions, policies and laws<sup>5</sup> addressing gender equalities in Georgia are:

- Gender Equality Advisory Council of Parliament of Georgia (GEAC) – the first institutional mechanism (2004)
- The State Concept of Georgia on Gender Equalities (2006)
- National Action Plan on Implementation of Gender Equality Policy (2007)
- Law on Elimination of Domestic Violence (2006)
- Law on Gender Equalities (2010)

However, in spite of above listed initiatives, Chkheidze (2010, p. 4) states that the Georgian state has not expressed enough commitment to gender equalities as a fundamental element of ensuring human rights and sustainable development. Furthermore, it is widely believed that the gender related programs have formal character and necessity of addressing these issues is driven mainly by international community. As a consequence, absence of genuine devotion to this problem explains inefficiency of laws to address and enforce basic human rights of women. In order to remedy this situation, Japaridze (2012, pp. 7-12) highlighted importance of a cooperative action of the Georgian state, WNGOs and international community on the way forward to gender equalities.

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<sup>5</sup> This information is obtained from the Parliament of Georgia

Overall, keeping in mind a wide set of problems of the Georgian society, the government has to be ready for an action to bring to light existing challenges and discover the solutions. It has to be acknowledged that the problems women face are not particularly women's issues, but rather than a blow against sustainable economic development of the whole society. The Georgian state has to recognize that gender equalities is a solution, as it enables to use all the available human talent and, therefore, the active dialogue and cooperation of various state and non-state actors has a major role to play in creating the conditions of equal rights and opportunities for men and women, be it in urban or rural areas of Georgia.

### **3.4 NGOs Responsiveness to Gender Inequalities**

Generally speaking, the history of development of NGOs<sup>6</sup> in Georgia dates back to the early 1990s, which was greatly supported by the international community with the purpose to promote civic activism in Georgia (Gurgenidze, 2005, p.16). Since then, the number of NGOs mushroomed, currently reaching approximately 300 organizations (NGO Liaison Office, 2013). Nowadays, the national NGOs are unequally distributed across Georgia, have different levels of institutional advancement and cover different issues, however those which are particularly addressing gender issues are overwhelmingly run by women and are defined as WNGOs. The main directions in the activities of WNGOs are gender mainstreaming, women's economic and political empowerment, social service provision, capacity building, domestic violence, and more (Sumbadze, 2008, pp. 56-58).

In order to understand the importance of WNGOs with regard to gender inequalities, it is important to refer to the latest study on public attitudes toward NGOs in Georgia (Ritvo, et al., 2013, pp. 14-18). According to the study, over 80 percent of the Georgian population believe that NGOs play an important role in development process, in helping people to live in a free country and in providing basic needs, however there is a concern with regard to influence of the NGOs over the Georgian authorities.

The fact that the NGOs have a great potential in developing democratic system and serve as a glue binding a government and a society on the way to social justice has been widely acknowledged and once again highlighted by a founder of World Economic Forum – Klaus Schwab (World Economic Forum, 2013, p. 3).

However, not everything is that easy when it comes to the culturally sensitive issues, such as gender inequalities:

First of all, the lack of genuine political will and the tendency to disregard gender equalities as a significant milestone for sustainable economic development makes the dialogue between the state and WNGOs problematic and thus hamper the effectiveness of WNGOs to address women's issues. Second, in addition to the political will, patriarchal mentality imposes informal barriers to WNGOs in dealing with social discrimination, exclusion and subordination. Third challenge is related to financial viability. Even though the governmental financial assistance has increased throughout the last years, according to USAID (2011, p. 84) international donors remain the main source of funding of WNGOs. The fourth challenge arises from the financial dependency. According to Duban (2010, p. 17) financial aid from international donors is directed to in advanced defined funding

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<sup>6</sup> The World Bank (1989) defines NGOs as 'private organizations that pursue activities to relieve suffering, promote the interests of the poor, protect the environment, provide basic social services, or undertake community development'

priority areas, for instance, service provision, while less support is provided in terms of advocacy, lobbying or legislative initiatives.

Bearing in mind above-mentioned facts, it can be said that WNGOs cannot be considered as universal actors and their capacity to address gender inequalities independently is quite questionable, although in the society with high demand on democratic values, they do not have alternatives for expanding social justice and values of equality.

#### **4. The Theoretical Framework**

While economic well-being sows the seeds of the democratic values, it is widely acknowledged that a stable democratic society and equality of its members contributes to economic prosperity. Despite this understanding, one of the major problems of the modern society represents the gender inequalities. This phenomenon has been a subject of socio-economic studies for many decades and there are different approaches used to investigate and explain its main determinants on the international level. In this work, in order to explain the persistent gender inequalities in the Georgian society, the economic and sociological theories are applied.

##### **4.1 Economists' Perspectives on Gender Inequalities**

A large body of the economic literature emphasizes various factors that explain gender inequalities, although no endeavors are made in this work to provide a comprehensive analysis of all the economic models and quantify the factors generating inequalities. In turn, this chapter is focused on gender specific factors that can lead to women's disadvantageous position in rural areas of Georgia.

###### **4.1.1 Human Capital and Personal Development**

Given a wide range of economic literature, one of the main factors explaining gender inequalities has been studied within the concept of human capital (Blau and Ferber, 1986, p. 184). The application of the human capital term in neoclassical economic analysis dates back to the middle of the twentieth century through the works of Theodore Schultz, Gary Becker, Jacob Mincer, Paul Romer and some others. However, the origin of this phenomenon goes back to the well-known economist Adam Smith and his work 'The Wealth of Nations' (1776, p. 227), who believed in the importance of the 'acquired and useful abilities of all members of the society' along with the traditional factors of production - land, labor and capital for the sustainable economic development.

Apart from the traditional definition of capital, one of the first developers of the human capital theory, Gary Becker, defined human capital as a stock of skills and qualifications of individuals acquired through investments in education, on-the-job training, medical care, etc., where education and training are considered as the most important investments in human capital (Becker, 1992, p. 85).

According to Schultz (1972, p. 5) human capital, as an integral part of a human, is of major economic importance and purely an economic notion, because it represents a form of capital and serves as a source of future income and satisfaction. Furthermore, it has been long believed that women's human capital development and gender equality in educational attainments are key factors fostering economic development and overall social well being (Schultz, 2002, p. 207).

Along with the pioneers of the human capital concept, the World Bank and OECD widely recognized the significance of human capital formation. According to the World Bank (2008, pp. 222-223) there is a strong correlation between the level of human capital and agricultural productivity, leading to the economic prosperity of rural dwellers. Furthermore, OECD (2012a, pp. 24-26) confirmed empirical studies, which document that throughout the period from 1960 to 2008 educational attainments made up 50 percent of economic growth for 30 countries, the half of which was due to increase in women's human capital formation.

However, despite the fact that the importance of the human capital development for economic advancement has been widely acknowledged, one of the crucial problems of a modern society represents gender inequalities in human capital accumulation, especially in rural areas (FAO, 2011, pp. 28-32). Economists have long believed that each person is responsible for his/her human capital accumulation and that incentives to invest, by contributing some time and resources, primarily depends on the rate of return to qualification. However, this is not always true in case of women. There are different factors that can contribute to the differences between men and women in their educational attainments. It has been observed that there are systematic gender differences in the amount and type of human capital obtained, in turn causing economic underrepresentation and income inequalities (Van Dyke, 1999, p. 36).

Traditionally, education, especially for women, was considered as one of the principal cultural values in the Georgian society (Gaprindashvili, 2012, p.3), although nowadays women's possibilities to obtain necessary skills and qualifications are quite controversial issue.

While the national estimations (Geostat, 2011, p. 26) show that 55.5 percent of female students, enrolled in higher educational institutions in 2011, outnumbered 45.5 percent male students, in contrast Sumbadze (2008, p. 114) states that the Georgian society demonstrates preferences in providing education to male rather than female child if they have equal abilities. Moreover, as it was indicated in chapter 3.2, the traditional practice of women's abduction for forced marriage significantly restricts human capital formation.

Another factor hindering human capital accumulation among rural women represents the lack of financial resources. In spite of the absence of statistics with regards to average monthly expenditure on education by gender, the distribution of average monthly expenditure per household showed that rural population spend on average four times less on education than city-dwellers.<sup>7</sup> This information confirms that the lack of financial resources and high poverty level in rural areas result in scarce opportunities of human capital accumulation for women, what in turn has negative consequences on productivity and income.

Another noteworthy issue is the quality of education. According to the EPRC (2011, p. 9) the Georgian labor market is characterized by a mismatch between the qualifications of the labor force and the requirements of the potential employees. Furthermore, the Global Competitiveness Report 2012-2013 showed that inadequately educated labor force is viewed as the second most problematic factor for doing business in Georgia (World Economic Forum, 2012, pp. 174-175).

In addition to above-indicated challenges, burden of household responsibilities as an important barrier for acquiring qualifications should be emphasized. Given

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<sup>7</sup> In 2012, in contrast to 35.4 GEL spent in urban areas, an average monthly expenditure of a rural family constituted to 8.5 GEL. Note: 2.2 GEL=1 EUR (Geostat, 2013c).

traditional values and prescribed social roles, women tend to invest less in their human capital and accumulate less professional experience in comparison with men (OECD, 2011, p. 68). These factors create a vicious circle, where lower productivity of women anticipated due to the lower incentives to invest in personal development is translated into passive labor market activities, income inequality and high risk of unemployment (Maier, 2002, p. 85). Furthermore, there is considerable evidence emphasizing the role of social discrimination, restricting women's career advancement. Societies, shaped by patriarchal values and norms of behavior impose pressure on women's occupational choice and job mobility. As a consequence, gender differences in anticipated returns to skills and qualifications affect their incentives to invest in personal development (Blau and Kahn, 2007, pp. 9-12).

In addition to the formal education, training programs, ranging from on-the-job trainings to vocational education and trainings (VET), provide great opportunities for personal development. One of the prominent supporters of the importance of the training programs, Gary Becker, stated that besides education, trainings increase the marginal productivity of a person by obtaining new skills and qualifications, in turn increasing future earnings (Becker, 1993, pp. 30-35). Regardless of this fact, the significance of training programs for employees in Georgia is underestimated. Due to the absence of sex-disaggregated data, the labor expenditure by gender cannot be presented, however, this notion can be proven by the latest statistics presented in the Statistical Yearbook 2007, where diminishing tendency of the expenditure on staff trainings can be observed. In 2005 the average training cost per employee made up 0.1 percent (Geostat, 2007, p. 55).

In contrast to the on-the-job trainings, despite some debates, VETs play a better role in human capital formation and empowerment of the Georgian population. Nowadays, there are 14 public and 75 private VET centers with the functions to support career development and entrepreneurship by ensuring the lifelong learning, to maintain and accumulate professional skills and match the requirements of the labor market with individuals' needs (Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia, 2013). The VET centers are concentrated in construction, tourism, agriculture, textile and transport, and are mainly financed by the Georgian state and international donors (GTZ, 2010, p. 16). The effectiveness of the VET sector to support the process of human capital creation is a subject of debate. It has been argued that VET centers are less efficient due to the fact that the government and business sector are not participating in consultation processes and as a result VET centers fail to provide relevant skills and meet the labor market requirements. In contrast, the meaningful initiative comes mainly from international organizations and national NGOs to support standard-based qualifications and education system development that responds to the current labor market requirements and provides trained labor force to meet the needs of the Georgian economy (OECD, 2011a, pp. 134-137).

For example, since 2006 the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) has been providing constant support to improve economic and social prospects of rural women via development of the professional training programs with the focus on agriculture and food processing. In 2008 UNDP established first agriculture extension centre in Kakheti region in order to provide information and consultation services about new farming technologies and livestock production. Overall, from 2010 to 2011 more than 3000 small farmers received support through UNDP education programs, 70 percent of whom were employed (UNDP, 2012).

This brief analysis of the human capital theory presented in this chapter documents significance of the human capital formation, even though this is not the whole story for explaining the gender inequalities. For this reason, the effects of discrimination are presented below.

#### **4.1.2 Power of Discrimination**

The fact that individuals, be they male or female, qualified or unqualified, are unequally treated is widely acknowledged. In order to understand the nature of gender inequalities, conventional economic theories look at the differences in productivity, affected by the level of qualifications and skills. However, along with the human capital, the concept of social discrimination provides an additional explanation to women's economic underrepresentation, which consequently negatively affects the Georgian economy.

The first application of the discrimination phenomenon in the neoclassical economics dates back to prominent works of Gary Becker (1971), Edmund Phelps (1972) and Kenneth Arrow (1973).

Gary Becker in his book 'The Economics of Discrimination' (1971, pp. 13-18) developed theories explaining that some employers, employees and customers may discriminated against specific groups of individuals on the basis of prejudices and personal preferences or so called 'tastes for discrimination'. Altonji and Blank (1999, p. 3168) define labor market discrimination as "a situation in which persons who provide labor market services and who are equally productive in physical or material sense are treated unequally in a way that is related to an observable characteristics such as race, ethnicity or gender'.

Becker's employers' discrimination model demonstrates that discrimination against women in the labor market exists because employers refuse to hire women whose marginal productivity might be bigger than marginal cost by demonstrating their subjective preferences for men, meaning that the employers undervalue their potential and are willing to give up a portion of potential profit for this privilege (Becker, 1971, pp. 39-42). Those employers who are willing to hire women will do so if women accept lower wages even if they are perfect substitutes for men in production. As a result, taste for discrimination creates incentives for market segregation, therefore influencing the gender pay gap<sup>8</sup> (Becker, 1971, pp. 56-58, Arrow, 1971, p. 4).

The Becker's discrimination model and in particularly the reasons behind the wage inequalities have been widely debated throughout the history. It has been argued that the employers' discrimination model explains the occupational segregation without providing direct linkage to the income inequalities. However, a large body of the literature supports the belief that occupational exclusion of women and their concentration in lower paying jobs, stemming from labor market discrimination, social norms, the level of human capital or personal preferences, have negative implications on the wage differentials (Johnson and Stafford, 1998, pp. 72-88, Oaxaca, 1973, pp. 693-694). Furthermore, it has been stated by Blau and Kahn (2000, pp. 17-20) that discriminatory preferences and prejudices causing exclusion of women from certain occupations lead to an excess supply of female workforce in so called 'female' occupations, in turn contributing to wage compression for otherwise perfect substitutes in production. This notion coincide

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<sup>8</sup> 'Gender pay gap refers to the difference in earnings of men and women: what women on average take out of employment in monetary terms relative to men' (United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), 2013)

with Stiglitz's (1974, p. 11) ideas that discriminatory preferences generate variations in economic status and restricts advancement opportunities for women, in turn providing incentives for gender pay gap.

One of the key features of the employers' tastes for discrimination model is that discrimination imposes the burden on potential employees, as well as on the discriminatory employers. The taste for discrimination against women brings additional money costs to the employers, thus in the long run companies with great incentives for discrimination will lose profit opportunities and not expand at the same pace with less discriminatory ones, thus they will be driven out of market by competitive forces (Becker, 1971, pp. 43-45, Altonji and Blank, 1999, pp. 3170-3171). Hence, if the employers' discrimination model demonstrates that the discrimination imposes greater costs on firms in the long run, then why does discrimination persist in the long run? The empirical studies could not provide any sufficient explanation to Becker's prediction. However, Stiglitz (1974, pp. 6-9) explains this phenomenon by the fact that perfectly competitive market can not be attained and even if so, this would not guarantee the full elimination of labor market discrimination, because some prejudiced and discriminatory economic agents will remain on the market.

There is also a wide range of literature providing an alternative explanation of the labor market discrimination, which is reflecting not economic agents' preferences but their perception of reality. The basic premise of Phelps' 'The Statistical Theory of Racism and Sexism' is that due to the imperfect information, profits maximizing economic agents tend to discriminate against women based on observable characteristics if they believe that they are less qualified, productive or reliable in comparison with men, and if the obtaining information about potential female employee is costly. In other words, since performance of the potential employees is difficult to predict and measure accurately, economic agents use cheap source of information, such as skin color or gender, to correlate it with their performance (Arrow, 1971, p. 25). Hence, job allocation and wage decisions partly emanate from sociological beliefs and stereotypes, be they true or false (Phelps, 1972, p. 659, Altonji and Blank, 1999, pp. 3180-3181). For example, due to women's family and child rearing responsibilities, employers' will expect career interruption and as a result will discriminate against them when making hiring decisions.

The gender statistics presented in the annex 1 is the primary source of information to depict the labor market discrimination and occupational segregation, consequently affecting income inequality in Georgia. The table shows that both in 'male' and 'female' occupations, men outnumber women and earn considerable more than women. As Chkheidze (2010, pp. 2-4) states the Georgian women's economic status and opportunities are considerably influenced by the national context, customs and traditions. Patriarchal values and cultural norms dominating especially in rural areas, significantly affect public attitudes about the social roles and responsibilities of women and men in the society, causing unequal treatment and discrimination against women. Furthermore, religious fundamentalism and deeply rooted stereotypes with regards to gender roles generate significant threat to the women's economic independence and advancement, further stimulating income inequalities.

Due to the difficulty of observation of individuals' innate characteristics, preferences or personal motivation, as well as other economic factors it is challenging to state which factor is more crucial in understanding the gender inequalities. However, above presented information draws attention to the strong influence of social factors, which are presented in the following chapter.

## **4.2 Sociologists' Perspectives on Gender Inequalities**

In order to provide better analysis of the reasons behind women's oppression, it is important to discuss macro- and microstructural approaches from sociologists' perspectives.

### **4.2.1 Macrosociological Perspectives**

The chapter provides an analysis of the conflict theory, as well as presents the influence of religion and mass media on gender roles.

#### **4.2.1.1 Conflict Theory**

Originating from the works of the influential thinker of the 19th century - Karl Heinrich Marx, the conflict theory is one of the dominating macrosociological perspectives explaining social transformation and order. The theory is based on an assumption that the ideology of the society is a constant conflict between social classes, who are competing for scarce resources and power. The class based conflicts in an exploitative capitalist society lead to dominance of certain groups, i.e. bourgeoisie, over others, i.e. proletariat, where the interest of the ruling social group is in maintaining its power by excessive influence on the allocation of resources and social structure. According to Marx (sited in Miller, 1991, pp. 55-62) the main goal of the dominant class is determined by the economic interests and therefore the social class conflict is the root cause of inequalities within capitalism. Another major aspect of the Marx's theory is the concept of alienation<sup>9</sup> and the division of labor as one of the factors contributing to it. Marx (sited in Donovan, 2000, pp. 82-84) believed that the allocation of particular groups of people to certain tasks was essentially alienating and was rooted in the division of labor in a family, having a solely physiological foundation. Furthermore, Marx considered that the division of labor within a family was the form of enslavement of women and children by men.

Even though Marx did not particularly address gender issues in his works, his collaborator and one of the prominent contributors to the family economics, Friedrich Engels, applied Marx's assumption of constant social class struggle in the exploitative capitalist society to the family and gender roles, considering bourgeoisie as a husband and proletariat as a wife. Engels' 'The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State' is the first valid base of feminist theories in the analysis of the gender roles in a family and the causes of women's oppression, which is mainly stemmed from Marx's economic theories (Donovan, 2000, p. 87).

Engels' main explanation of the oppression of women is the overthrow of matriarchate by patriarchate as a consequence of an economic development and establishment of property rights. Before the transformation, however, prehistoric society was organized in matriarchate manner, meaning that in ancient times despite of the division of labor between sexes, the supremacy of women in a family was widely established, emphasizing high respect for women. According to the original traditions, children belonged to the mother gens and inherited property through the mother's side. However, the great changes occurred with emergence of the goods for exchange and overall wealth accumulation, giving more power to men, as owners of the family property, in turn creating a stimulus for the overthrow of traditional order of property transmission and leading to the

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<sup>9</sup> Alienation refers to a social or psychological state of separation from self, others, social life generally, on the products or processes of one's labor' (Calhoun, 2002, p. 10)

patriarchal takeover (Engels, 1891, pp. 60-66). The shift of the economic power and strong material base of men resulted in degradation of women's position in the family. As a result, woman became 'the slave of the man's lust, a mere instrument for breeding children' (Engels, 1891, p. 67, pp. 148-151).

As Engels stated, the establishment of the patriarchal fashion was considered, on the one hand, as a historical advantage in terms of establishments of property rights, and on the other hand as 'world-historic defeat of the female sex', leading to the formation of the fundamental social 'law' of absolute supremacy of men over women, and women's roles as an 'unimportant extra' (Engels, 1891, pp. 67-75).

The presented information clarifies the analogy proposed by Engels, where by comparing bourgeoisie with men and proletariat with women, he showed the origin and long tradition of men's supremacy and women's domestic enslavement. According to Engels (1981, p. 151) emancipation of women from domestic suppression, abolition of women's exploiting domestic work and their active involvement in production at a large, social scale was a way out women's enslavement.

Since 19th century the conflict theory went through some changes to exhibit current patterns of a society, although the original ideas with regard to men's dominance and women's empowerment for more egalitarian arrangements still persist (Lindsey, 2005, pp. 188-189). Keeping in mind the fact that long-established patriarchal values and traditions play a significant role in household division of labor, control over resources or decision-making power of women in rural communities (Care, 2013, p. 4), the conflict perspectives provides an additional explanation to women's subordination, unequal distribution of wealth and power between men and women in Georgia.

#### **4.2.1.2 Religion**

Another important point in analyzing macrosociological perspectives on gender represents religion, as a powerful force in shaping social interaction between men and women. Despite the fact that women's position in different social spheres have undergone positive changes in the last decades, there is a strong evidence to believe that the religion is still ideologically supportive of a patriarchal family model and gender-based division of labor with men being financial supporters and women being housekeepers (Gesch, 1995, p. 125). It has been believed that religion does not support the principles of egalitarianism and encourages women's suppression and hinders their access to power (Nason-Clark and Fisher-Townsend, 2005, p. 210).

Christianity, as a main form of religion in Georgia, is based on biblical canons, and points to the long tradition of women's subordination to men. The below presented example proves the above stated and express androcentric ideology<sup>10</sup> of the Christianity:

*'Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence'*

(The Holy Bible, I Timothy, 2:11-12)

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<sup>10</sup> Androcentric ideology views things from a male perspectives and is biased towards male points of view (Lawson and Garrod, 2000, p. 11)

This passage once again demonstrates the supremacy of men over women and confirms the status of a woman as a servant to a man, which is justified by the long established religious beliefs.

Christianity, as a significant part of the Georgian identity, was adopted as an official religion in the 4th Century BC, and since then the Georgian Orthodox Church has preserved its position as one of the most ancient influential institutions. Nowadays, the Georgian Orthodox Church with its anti-modern ideology plays a key role in building the national identity, and as a consequence the Georgian society is saturated with orthodox morals and patriarchal values shaping everyday life of its citizens (Nodia and Scholtbach, 2006, pp. 69-72). According to the public opinion poll conducted by the Caucasus Research Resource Centre (CRRRC, 2011) around 92 percent of the Georgian female population consider themselves religious, where 96 percent out of them considering religion as an important factor in their daily life.

As Gesch (1995, pp. 126-128) states religious commitment and orientation plays a significant role in explaining traditional gender roles. Georgia as a patriarchal society with high level of religiosity is characterized by traditional views on gender roles.

Despite the fact that the main ideology of the religion is pursuance of social justice, Marx (1843, p. 131) had argued that religion is the illusion of the happiness, which encourages underprivileged groups of people, in this case women, to accept the ideology of the patriarchal church, justifying oppression in the name of God. Marxist-inspired conflict theorists encourage women in patriarchal society to challenge traditional values and gender oppression in the name of religion by promoting leadership opportunities in religious institutions (Lindsey, 2005, p. 335). Notwithstanding the evidence that the women in Georgia are believed to be more religious than men, Orthodox Christianity still stands out as restrictive in terms of women's ordainment. According to Sumbadze (2008, p. 59) in 14 officially registered religious communities in Georgia, men are leading these communities, while women are just members. Furthermore, only men are permitted to study in the religious seminary and academy, while women are allowed to attend the departments of psychology, art history, icon restoration and applied arts.

#### **4.2.1.3 Mass Media**

A final macrosociological approach presented in this work is focused on the influence of mass media on gender stereotyping. Without people's conscious awareness, the influence of the mass media is very intense. The massive amount of information received every day from print media or television is believed to present subliminal messages about gender roles in stereotyped ways, further reinforcing people's attitudes in a way that is oftentimes not realized (Cragin and Simonds, 1999, pp. 198-202).

Television as one of the powerful way of socialization is very influential. As Lindsey states (2005, p. 359-364) children's commercials are imbued with gender stereotypes, making the process of forming beliefs about what is thought to be correct behavior for girls and boys easy.

In case of Georgian mass media, it is widely criticized by exposing the Georgian women in a way that preserves stereotyped views, mainly applying clichés about men and women. For instance, in the 'Women's Logic' TV show, women are pictured as beautiful but foolish creatures. In the format of this show, the host of

the show is asking questions and men should guess whether women are able to answer correctly or not. By questioning women's intellectual capacity, the Georgian mass media further hampers the progress with regards to the gender equalities (Sindelar, 2012). Furthermore, newspaper articles seldom report on gender issues and if so, the sensationalized headlines are for attracting readers without providing any sufficient information or solutions. As a remedy against stereotyping in the mass media, there are WNGOs in Georgia, which are providing gender-sensitive trainings for journalists and managing web portals incorporating information about gender issues and women's rights in Georgia (Duban, 2010, pp. 18-19).

Given above presented macrosociological perspectives, it can be said that the religious fundamentalism and patriarchal values are prevalent in the Georgian society, sowing the seeds of social injustice and inequalities.

#### **4.2.2 Microsociological Perspectives**

This chapter enhances the reader's understanding of gender inequalities in Georgia by presenting gender roles and symbolic interaction theories.

##### **4.2.2.1 Sociology of Gender Roles**

The role theory is a microsociological perspective that examines individuals' behavior in terms of their social roles, which are shaped by certain duties, obligations and rights. According to Lopata (1994, pp. 4-12) a social role is a set of mutually dependent social relations between an individual and his/her social circle, where a person is considered as a package of particular characteristics for obtaining specific roles, while social circle is an arena of people's interaction. The basic concept behind the role theory is that cultural norms define different models of social roles and as a consequence, the theory predicts that the complexity of cultural models and demand for multiple roles will result in conflict among individuals.

An important theme in the gender role theory literature is women's social roles and the conflict between domestic and occupational roles. An American social psychologist, Alice Eagly, used role theory in her book 'Sex Differences in Social Behaviors: A Social-Role Interpretation' to demonstrate that due to sometimes rigidly defined social norms, women and men are expected to enter different roles, thus their behaviors and attitudes vary. For instance, while women are expected to be modest and rearing, men are seen as more dominant, goal oriented and independent. In turn, Eagly argues, that these beliefs and expectations result in division of labor, where men are tend to occupy more of the higher positions in the labor market, while women are tend to perform unpaid domestic work (Eagly, 1987, pp. 8-15). What is more, she states that the distinctive social roles have a significant influence on the motivation and acquisition of new qualifications, as well as on the strengthening of attitudes. Hence, it has been observed that the bigger the difference between the social norms of women and men, the greater the difference between human behavior and qualifications, in turn affecting economic independence of women (Eagly, 1987, pp. 116-120).

When cultural values sharply distinguish social roles and define particular norms of behavior, women's involvement in public spheres, entrance into male-dominated occupations and the level of authority is quite problematic. Moreover, it has been believed that cultural stereotypes and predefined gender roles

negatively affect women's commitment to their occupations and economic sustainability (Lopata, 1993, pp. 257-261).

In analyzing gender inequalities, besides social influence on gender roles, particularly interesting are differences between individual preferences.

The preference theory, developed by a British sociologist, Catherine Hakim, is a multidisciplinary theory, which seeks to explain the role of women's lifestyle preferences in labor market activities. Hakim (2002, pp. 433-437) divides women in three main groups: home-centered, adaptive and work-centered women, and states that the majority of women tend to combine work and family lifestyle, who favor personal values over higher earnings. Despite a considerable criticism, Hakim (2002, p. 448) believes that women's choice between labor market and family work considerably explains their occupational choice, what in turn contributes to the occupational segregation and gender pay gap.

Hakim's preference theory is likely to play an important role in analyzing the Georgian reality, due to the prescribed gender roles and attitudes to the Georgian women. For instance, the Georgian society based on the patriarchal values and norms defines women's obligations in holding the role of a mother and a housewife, and sees women's success in marital status rather than in professional career (Chitanava and Pignatti, 2013).

Another noteworthy point is that above discussed socio-cultural factors are likely to contribute to the creation of Cinderella complex developed by Colette Dowling. The Cinderella complex is a psychological dependency explaining women's suppressed attitudes and fears that restrain them from full use of their productivity. In other words, the Cinderella complex is a fear of independence and a wish to be saved and to be taken care of by men, which dates back to the prehistoric period, when men's physical strength was necessary for a family safeguard (Dowling, 1981, pp. 15-21).

Economic analysis do not include the Cinderella complex in the analysis of the gender inequalities, however in patriarchal countries like Georgia, there is a high probability that long-established cultural norms develop this syndrome in the Georgian women, what might influence their activities. Information on gender inequalities presented in chapter 3.2 supports Dowling's ideology that the Cinderella complex characterizes the Georgian women. A survey conducted by Care (2013, p. 10) further strengthen this belief by documenting that the 83 percent of rural women state that men should hold a role of a main financial provider and decision-maker in the Georgian society.

#### **4.2.2.2 Symbolic Interaction Theory**

A large body of research has been made in order to explain socio-economic enigmas like why men dominate over women, how employer's taste for discrimination against women persist in the long run or why women earn less compared to men. However, despite the fact that there are no definite explanations, these unsolved puzzles can be partly attributed to the gender categorization invoked by interactional processes.

Before analyzing symbolic interactionists' perspectives on the gender inequalities, it is important to refer to the origin of the concept of the symbolic interaction. Symbolic interactionism originated from the works of American sociologists - George Herbert Mead and Charles Horton Cooley, who developed this approach to study human behavior. Later on, based on the Mead's theoretical approach, Herbert Blumer coined the term symbolic interaction as a specific type of

interaction taking place between individuals, where meaning of things is formed by individuals through interpretive processes (Blumer, 1969, pp. 2-6).

For the purpose of understanding the process how social interaction forms human behavior, it is important to refer to Blumer (1969, p. 8-21) stating that in order to interact with each other, individuals should take into account others' various actions, thus they are forced to form their own wishes, objectives, images of themselves, activities and anticipated actions toward them on the bases of others' behavior. As a consequence of this complex social process, individuals guide and form the objects of themselves through a process of role-taking, meaning that people define themselves on the bases of others' definitions and attitudes.

In contrast to the original concept of symbolic interaction, which ignores interaction as a macrolevel process governed by cultural norms, contemporary scholars challenged this perspective by stating that people use basic social norms, for instance subconscious sex categorization, to organize interaction with each other, in turn causing variety of gender effects, like gender stereotypes or status beliefs (Ridgeway and Smith-Lovin, 1999, pp. 247-249).

Linda Carli (2001, p. 728) argues that when status beliefs are significantly prominent, they form misleading expectation about men being more competent than women, in turn undermining women's actual abilities and performance. Moreover, due to the fact that society develops gender hierarchies of status and influence, men, defined as superior sex, are reluctant to alter their attitudes towards women what in turn makes it difficult for women to challenge discriminatory social values (Ridgeway, 1991, pp. 373-375).

All above described imply that a systematic consolidation of interactionally invoked sex categorization, gender status beliefs and attached to it social values can explain the fact of persistent gender inequalities in the Georgian society.

Given the economic and sociological perspectives on gender inequalities it can be said that gender, as a fundamental socio-cultural category seems to be an important dimension around which the Georgian society is organized. Many attempts are usually made to attribute gender inequalities to the economic factors but instead of using educational attainments and labor market discrimination as a scapegoat on which to ascribe disadvantageous position of rural women, it is important to understand that it is rather a mixture of different economic and social factors, where prescribed social roles and power relations stemmed from religious fundamentalism and patriarchal ideology of the society might be the main explanation of this phenomenon.

## **5. Findings on Gender Inequalities in Georgia**

This chapter covers the empirical part of this work with the aim to reveal the factors behind the Georgian women's oppression and to explore the role of the Georgian state and WNGOs in attempts to advance women's position in rural communities of Georgia. After introducing the methodological approach, the expert interview analysis is presented, which is consequently used to verify the hypothesis of the work.

### **5.1 Methodology**

In social science, there are different methods of conducting a social research, where the most common ones are quantitative and qualitative research designs.

In this work, for the purpose of approving or disapproving the main hypothesis, the qualitative search method was chosen.

In contrast to the quantitative research method, which is rested on the numerical data, the qualitative research is based on the informal wisdom and knowledge acquired throughout the social life. This means that the qualitative data, which are in the forms of words from transcripts or observation, are empirical and this peculiarity enables to develop a deep understanding of the studying issues (Neuman, 1997, pp. 327-330).

After choosing a research method<sup>11</sup>, the next procedure is data collection. The information for verifying the hypothesis is obtained via in-depth interview, which includes 12 open-ended questions and interview guideline with the purpose to keep the discussion in the planned direction and bring out the research participant's, Nana Pantsulaia's perspectives with regards to the researched issues. The full questionnaire can be found in the annex<sup>3</sup>.

After final approval of the interview questions and guideline, the questionnaire was sent to Ms. Pantsulaia in advance to make her aware of the content of the study. Shortly after this, the interview with the expert was conducted in Georgian language and was voice recorded. The interview was carried out via Skype and took approximately 1 hour.

The next logical step in conducting a social research is a process of data analysis and interpretation. Due to the fact that the qualitative content analysis takes into consideration the theoretical background of this research, it is used as the main technique for analyzing the interview results. In contrast to the quantitative method, the 'qualitative or interpretive version of content analysis', which is in the form of quotes, emphasizes the quality of the data (Neuman, 1997, pp. 272-274, 335).

## **5.2 Interview Results Analysis and Interpretation**

Based on the hypothesis of this work, which presumes the dominance of patriarchal ideology and religious fundamentalism in explaining gender inequalities in rural areas of Georgia, the initial purpose of the study was to assess the socio-economic dimensions of gender inequalities and to bring to light the main factors behind women's disadvantageous position. In addition, the work aimed at discovering the role of the Georgian state and WNGOs in achieving gender inequalities, as well as suggesting the pathway out of social injustice caused by gender inequalities.

The preliminary finding on the gender inequalities supplemented with the theoretical framework and expert interview, gave possibility to reveal the root causes of women's oppression, the Georgian state's commitment to gender equalities and the role of WNGOs in advancing women's position in remote areas of Georgia.

### *The Main Factors behind Gender Inequalities*

The expert was asked to share her insights on the main factors contributing to the gender inequalities and, on the basis of the interview, it can be said that the gender disparity has indeed a multidimensional character.

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<sup>11</sup> Nana Pantsulaia is an Executive Director of Women's Fund of Georgia (WFG), which efforts are directed towards protection of women's rights, their economic and political empowerment, gender equality awareness building, women's education, health protection and non-violence issues (WFG, 2013).

The interview revealed that the lack of proficiency and certain qualifications of rural women can explain gender inequalities, however the most important factor is that the low level of human capital among rural women is primarily stemmed from the deeply rooted patriarchal norms and polarized gender roles.

Along with the scarce financial resources for human capital accumulation, the expert stressed that the rural women have few opportunities for acquiring qualifications and pursuing career, due to the fact that informal 'rules' oblige her to fully take responsibility for domestic chores and child rearing. As a consequence, women accumulate less human capital and practical experience, what leads to the mismatch between the female labor supply and labor market demand, passive labor market activities and economic dependence:

*'I think that the Georgian women, especially in rural communities, have few resources and opportunities for acquiring certain, let us say business skills, what in turn contributes to their exclusion from the labor market. And the reason of the absence of these opportunities is mainly the patriarchal ideology of the society, defining rural women's place and role in keeping the household and taking care of children'* [line 29-34].

This allows to state that the social discrimination with reference to restricted opportunities and rights of rural women negatively affects the Georgian labor market and the whole economy by reducing a pool of talent necessary for strengthening the Georgia economy.

Prevailing gender status beliefs impose certain burdens on rural women to find a formal job outside the family, as well as stimulate gender-based discrimination and occupational segregation. Long established conservative views with regards to gender roles develop certain attitudes and preference in the Georgian society. This contributes to the fact that due to the social pressure, women are pursuing particular, so called female occupations, which are low in status and income, making them vulnerable to the external economic shocks and dependent on the male family members. Moreover, double burden of domestic responsibilities and paid work, as well as social attitudes dictate unjustified gender expectations of the potential employers with regards to women's abilities, aspirations and motivation.

As a result, it becomes really challenging for the Georgian women, especially in rural areas, where traditions and patriarchal norms are more salient, to pursue their careers and dreams:

*'The effect of gender-based discrimination is particularly grave in rural regions due to the strong patriarchal traditions and behavioral patterns'* [line 11-12]

During the interview, the expert was asked to elaborate on other factors, which are responsible for gender inequalities in the Georgian society. The named factors were education system, mass media and rising religious fundamentalism.

The expert's insights supported the view that the education system is saturated with the gender stereotypes that sows the seeds of inequalities in the society. Education as a main tool of shaping children's understanding of gender roles and their attitudes, significantly contribute to the transmission of traditional gender stereotypes and prejudices from one generation to another:

*'The analysis of the Georgian textbooks and other education materials revealed that they do not depict the historical value of women in the development of the society and, instead, contain strong gender stereotypes'* [line 67-70].

In addition to the biased education system, the Georgian Mass Media further strengthen gender stereotypes through spreading subconscious messages about gender roles and reinforce the Georgian's patriarchal psychology.

Mass media as one of the influential source of information encourages the development of the unjustified gender beliefs and contributed to the formation of the 'unhealthy' authoritarian environment:

*'I consider the Georgian mass media as one of the influential sexist and discriminatory mechanisms, which further strengthens existing gender stereotypes and social status believes'* [line 56-59].

While talking about the rigid attitudes of the Georgian society to the gender issues, which shed light on the causes of these disparities, the expert emphasized rising religious fundamentalism, which supports the patriarchal social structure and patriarchal model of a family, as one of the main factors of the gender inequalities in the society:

*'The Georgian Orthodox Church is the most influential informal institution, which supports supremacy of men over women and leads to women's oppression in terms of scarce opportunities and rights.'* [line 79-82].

Religion, as an ideologically supportive of patriarchal norms, is embedded in social customs and traditions, and is used as an instrument of justification for social discrimination and oppression of the Georgian women. Instead of pursuing a social justice and equality, which is established on the legal ground, it seems like religious beliefs attach certain social roles and obligations to women, in turn restricting their opportunities and rights. In contrast to the egalitarian views of men and women, the Georgian society perceives women as being responsible for domestic chores and childrearing, what significantly restricts their labor market activities.

Furthermore, in a society, where religion and long established patriarchal norms are considered as an important factor in shaping its everyday life, rural women seem unable to challenge discriminatory social norms and traditions. All these allows to state that the patriarchal culture and religion impose barriers to women's civic activism and contribute to the forfeit of women's economic power, as well as to the other forms of women's social discrimination:

*'Despite the fact that the women outnumber men in Georgia, they are perceived as minorities and constantly face discrimination. This issue is especially critical when we are talking about disabled, rural or LBT<sup>12</sup> women, who struggle even more. The hidden problems and fears are having negative impact on women, leading to further marginalization.'* [line 101-105]

#### *The Georgian State's Commitment to Gender Equalities*

After revealing the main factors behind women's disadvantageous positions, it is important to understand how these inequalities can be confronted. That is why, the expert was asked to share her perspectives about the Georgian state's attitudes to women's oppression and its commitment to ensure gender equalities.

Generally speaking, the interview revealed that despite the ratification of various conventions and adoption of laws on domestic violence and gender equalities, which according to the expert can be considered as the main achievements of the

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<sup>12</sup> LBT stands for lesbian, bisexual or transgender

Georgian state, the activities of the state authorities do not contribute much to the equal rights, opportunities and treatment of men and women:

*'The main achievements of the Georgian state are ratification of international conventions and adoption of laws concerning women, although they sometimes fail to be enforced. In addition, I would say that the fact that the Prime Minister of Georgia, Bidzina Ivanishvili, officially stated that he learned the word 'gender' just few days ago and wants to have an advisor in gender issues can be considered as an 'achievement'.<sup>13</sup> [line 181-186]*

It was pointed out that despite some positive endeavors and steps forward, due to the sensitivity of the gender equality issues the state authorities are hesitant about putting it on the political agenda. Furthermore, the expert remarked that the growing influence of the Orthodox Church over the state makes it challenging to pursue gender equalities in Georgia:

*'The Church was always playing a significant role in our society but it was more hidden. However, with the election of the new state earlier this year, the influence of the Church over the Georgian society became more prominent. There are no official studies regarding the influence of the Orthodox Church over the Georgian state, but it is my personal point of view that the European (democratic) values will not be as important as it was declared years before. I think that the Church is already showing its power and the 17th of May<sup>14</sup> was the best demonstration of it.'* [line 82-89]

The expert believes that the Georgian authorities commitment to gender equalities is mainly explained by the pressure coming from the international organizations. If not the normative requirements demanded by the international community, the gender inequalities would not be an issue of discussion for the state:

*'Personally I believe that the fact that the Georgian government is dealing with women's issues is because of the influence of the International community and active work of the non-governmental sector.'* [line 172-174]

Based on above indicated facts, it can be said that the absence of the genuine will and the lack of understanding of the importance of gender equalities for socio-economic prosperity of the whole society contributes to the artificial commitment of the Georgian authorities to the problems of women's oppression, which is especially grave in rural areas.

#### *The Role of WNGOs in achieving gender equalities*

After presenting the factors behind gender inequalities and passive gender equality policy pursued by the Georgian state, it is of vital importance to emphasize what is the remedy for gender inequalities and who can speak out against basic human rights abuse.

The expert confirmed the notion developed in previous chapters that WNGOs have a potential of confronting the reasons of gender inequalities and assisting rural women to deal with the reality of socio-economic discrimination. However,

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<sup>13</sup> According to Pantsulaia, despite the Prime Minister's statement, the position of gender advisor is still vacant [line 186-188]

<sup>14</sup> 17<sup>th</sup> of May – International day against homophobia was met by thousands of religious protestors, who 'break through' the police cordon and violently pursued LGBT activists. The Orthodox Church asked the state to prohibit the silent demonstration, calling homosexuality as 'anomaly and disease' and insulting for the Georgian traditions (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 2013)

during the interview, the expert drew attention to the problems WNGOs face in addressing gender equalities in Georgia. The lack of financial and technical capacity, visibility issues and the poor interaction and cooperation mechanism between the state and WNGOs were indicated. Moreover, the expert expressed her concerns with regard to communication and cooperation problems with the international organizations. According to the expert, in many cases donors do not make use of the knowledge of national WNGOs in setting agendas and prioritize areas of support identified by them:

*'Furthermore, in many cases international donors' priorities are defined in advance, meaning that in many cases it is problematic for women's NGOs knowing better the Georgian reality to get funding.'* [line 121-123]

In spite of above indicated problems, the expert expressed her belief that the WNGOs can act as 'change agents' and confront with the such profound difficulties as patriarchal values and discriminatory social attitudes by women's socio-economic empowerment. However, due to the fact that the women's empowerment is a long-term, complex process, the expert highlighted the importance of the cooperative action of the state, WNGOs and international community. The expert expressed her belief that the mutual action and endeavor to women's empowerment will contribute to the transformation of the patriarchal fashion of the Georgian society on the way to greater gender equalities:

*'Thus, from my point of view, the process of women's empowerment require interaction between different actors, which will challenge certain social dogmas and overcome women's oppression'* [line 108-110]

This work has gone some way towards enhancing the understanding of the root causes of women's disadvantageous position in rural communities of Georgia, where the theoretical framework and empirical findings finally confirmed the initial hypothesis that the patriarchal ideology of the society and religious fundamentalism are the root causes of gender inequalities and social injustice. Having defined the key factors of inequalities, the commitment of the Georgian state to the democratic values, in terms of equal opportunities and rights between men and women, as well as the role of WNGOs in confronting gender inequalities were discovered. The interview produced results, which corroborate with the preliminary findings that the gender inequalities are not considered as an obstacle to the sustainable economic development, meaning that despite some steps towards gender equalities, the reality points to the fact that the Georgian state has not pledged itself to fulfill its obligation to defend women's rights and advance their positions. In addition to the state's initiatives, the interview revealed that despite some barriers, WNGOs have potential to speak out against gender inequalities, confront the reasons of women's oppression and contribute to transformation of the patriarchal fashion of the society into egalitarian society.

Overall, the interview sowed the seeds of optimism over the advancing women's position in Georgia, be it in rural or urban areas. Therefore, the next chapter presents the author's recommendations on further steps to gender equalities in remote areas of Georgia.

## **6. Recommendations for the Way Forward**

The results of this study once again highlighted that Georgia is a patriarchal country where long-established traditions and cultural norms, largely determined by religion, play a major role in shaping every aspect of life. Regardless of the

fact that collapse of the Soviet Union brought new opportunities, achieving equal treatment of men and women has been challenging for the Georgian society as persistent inequalities are not considered as a problem and any effort on the way to gender equalities is viewed as a threat to traditional values. As a result, Georgian women still have to fight against deeply rooted patriarchal values and discriminatory cultural norms for their rights and opportunities.

After examining different dimensions of the gender inequalities in rural areas of Georgia, the issues of the great interest were to find out what is the instrument for confronting the informal rules and how can the current state of rural women be changed.

Based on the findings presented in this work and backed up with the expert's insights, the answer is in some sense banal that the gender equalities in the Georgian society can be achieved via a joint action of the Georgian state, WNGOs and international community. Taking into account the sensitivity of this issue and weakness of WNGOs to confront gender inequalities on their own, collaborative and effective partnership, in the form of the GEAC and at its disposal the National Action Plan, can be considered as a main policy instrument for achieving the change in the mindset of the Georgian population in regard to the gender equalities and social justice. However, this brings up an interesting question. How should it function in order to confront the social injustice?

In spite of the fact that the gender inequalities are not seen as a problem and an issue of discussion, it is worth mentioning first that the primary responsibility of the GEAC is to develop a successful cooperation between the state authorities, WNGOs and international community in the form of constant dialogue, information exchange and mutual support. Due to the fact that the cooperation involves different actors, in order to guarantee the effectiveness and sustainability of GEAC, as national machinery for gender equalities, next measures should be taken:

First, in order to function effectively, GEAC should hold the Georgian government accountable for commitment to its obligations by reporting on a regular bases on the progress made with regard to gender equalities. In turn, the government should provide financial resources to GEAC in a regular manner and ensure gender relevant qualifications of state authorities.

Second, GEAC should establish a strong link with WNGOs. Therefore, national machinery should create communication channels and continuously consult with WNGOs, involve WNGOs in drafting gender related plans, and provide financial support for strengthening WNGOs. This process will revive and increase visibility of WNGOs, and consequently bridge the gap between rural women and the state. The joint action will ensure inclusion of grassroots perspective in gender equality programs and policies.

Third, international community plays a crucial role in providing support to GEAC through establishing networks for experience exchange and dissemination of best practices and strategies for possible adoption. International community should assist GEAC in ensuring state's commitment to it legitimate base, as well as increase recognition of the gender equality benefits for the economic prosperity. Moreover, international organizations should provide financial and advisory support to national mechanism and WNGOs for the implementation of gender related programs.

After presenting the requirements for achieving sustainability of the national mechanism for gender equalities, it is important to direct reader's attention to the

measures to be taken through the collaborative action of above presented actors for empowering rural women and achieving gender equalities. There are no attempts to provide a comprehensive guide to gender equalities, rather that to present a set of specific recommendations, which reflects the critical areas of rural women's life emphasized throughout this work.

### **(1) Improve sex-disaggregated data**

As it was already mentioned in this work, in Georgia there is a lack of reliable national databases on gender-sensitive statistics on violence, income inequalities, social discrimination or human capital development among rural women, as well as there is no valid methodology for the analysis of this information. The scarcity of sex-disaggregated data, which represents a serious problem, needs to be understood and addressed as a starting point on the way to gender equalities. The data on the needs and problems of rural women is necessary for the comprehensive development of gender equality policy, as well as for monitoring of the policy outcomes. Furthermore, the reliable and up to data sex-disaggregated data will enable the policy-makers to identify and prioritize the major problems facing rural women and to develop gender-sensitive investment policies and employment strategies in rural communities of Georgia.

### **(2) Support gender mainstreaming, develop new strategies and improve funding**

In order to advance women's position in the Georgian patriarchal society, the gender perspectives in all sectors and at all levels should be introduced and mainstreamed. Gender mainstreaming should be a continuous process of assessing rural women's needs and concerns, as well as one of the main strategies of the GEAC for making women's issues a foundation for the gender programs, policies and legislation initiation, development, implementation and monitoring in all economic, societal and political spheres, so that women and men can enjoy the same rights and opportunities. Furthermore, under the supervision of the international community and WNGOs, the National Action Plan should be elaborated and new strategies for effective implementation and monitoring of the gender equality programs, policies and laws should be adopted.

Along with the gender mainstreaming, funding of women's projects should be increased. With the joint action of the international donors and the Georgian state, the adequate funding of the GEAC, as a main institutional mechanism, and WNGOs should be guaranteed.

### **(3) Ensure fundamental rights of rural women and eliminate all forms of discrimination under the law**

The Georgian government has a primary responsibility to ensure that the laws and gender equality policies guarantee women's welfare. In spite of the long-established informal rules, the legal framework should provide protection against all forms of discrimination, violence and transform discriminatory social norms into greater gender equalities. Laws against domestic violence and all forms of harassments should be enforced. Labor code should be reviewed and further developed in order to encompass rural women's needs, prohibit all forms of discrimination and ensure equal pay.

Furthermore, it is a fundamental obligation of the state to ensure that rural and especially IDP women have control over the assets they possess and have rights to receive services, such as healthcare, social protection, child care, education or credit. More equitable access to assets and provision of social services will fortify women's basic rights, boost agricultural productivity, reduce poverty level and

stimulate sustainable economic growth. For this purpose, the state is obliged to make sure that all governing bodies at all levels are held accountable for realization of laws and gender equality policies.

Considering the fact that the Georgian education system is impregnated with gender stereotypes, special attention should be paid to the development of gender-sensitive education system and educational materials. Furthermore, the Georgian mass media as an influential tool in transferring negative cultural attitudes and stereotyping of women should be transformed. The Georgian officials with the support of WNGOs should establish a partnership with the education system and media industry in order to reduce stereotyping and ensuring more positive and strong portrayal of women.

#### **(4) Build the human capital of women**

None of the measures presented in this work can confront the oppression of women and contribute to the economic prosperity as fundamentally as educating women on their rights and building their human capital. The deep-rooted discriminatory practices and stereotypical attitudes, along with the household and childrearing responsibilities make it challenging for rural women to acquire knowledge and pursue their career opportunities. Therefore, in addition to the gender sensitive curriculum, further education system reforms should be introduced. First of all, equal opportunities of receiving education of men and women should be ensured. Second, in order to improve the quality of education, the state funding of education system should be increased. Third, state education credit programs and special allowances should be developed in order to free rural women from domestic responsibilities and ensure their personal development. Forth, vocational education programs should be developed in order to meet the demand for the market skills and qualifications. All these initiatives will provide rural women with new practical skills and qualifications, stimulate income-generating opportunities, improve their self-confidence and provide them with bargaining power within their households and communities, what in turn contribute to the sustainable economic growth.

#### **(5) Provide social services and upgrade infrastructure**

Generally speaking, the absence of the adequate social services and poor developed infrastructure are believed to be significant barriers to women's empowerment and advancement. Oftentimes, the Georgian women lack the access to the basic social services, such as healthcare, social insurance, unemployment benefits, childcare, and so forth. In addition, poor transport, water, and economic infrastructures greatly limit women's economic opportunities. Therefore, for the sake of women's empowerment and advancement, it is of vital importance to ensure the provision of adequate social services and well functioning infrastructure. Through targeted assistance, different social services, for instance shelters for victim women of domestic violence or child allowances, should be introduced and the state regulation and financial assistance should be provided for social infrastructure development. Furthermore, investment in public infrastructure will increase women's economic opportunities by bringing women closer to the market, reduce the transaction costs of doing business, bring down the poverty level and stimulate country's pro-poor growth. Taking into account the fact that the local governments and WNGOs are better aware of women's needs and concerns, it would be beneficial to involve them in the process of social programs development and monitoring.

## **(6) Improve employment for rural women**

As it was presented in previous chapter 2, poverty is considered as one of the main problems of the Georgian society and the main pathway out of it is employment. Along with the above-indicated activities, in order to strengthen rural and IDP women's position, it is of vital importance to create sustainable rural employment. Furthermore, it is critical to challenge the traditional ideas of women and men's occupations and try to achieve gender equalities in traditionally segregated occupations. For this purpose, it is important to set up and develop institutions for vocational education in cooperation with public and private sectors, which will enable rural women to meet the requirements of the modern labor market and increase their employment opportunities.

As a consequence, the formal employment will make women economically independent and encourage them to challenge the deep-rooted discriminatory social norms and stereotypical attitudes. Furthermore, active involvement of women in the labor market will increase the pool of talent and stimulate the capacity of the Georgian economy to develop.

## **(7) Initiate microcredit for rural women**

In order to translate rural women's economic empowerment into strong and successful businesses, women need access to microfinance. Generally speaking, microcredit will enable women to initiate new business ideas and expand existing agricultural production. However, microcredit should not be considered as a magic bullet as its inappropriate and amiss use can lead to the women's indebtedness. For instance, low level of business skills, prevailing power relations and weak bargaining power of women within their households can result in a situation where financial resources obtained by women are controlled by male family member. Therefore, microfinance initiatives should be a part of a comprehensive gender equality policy framework that guarantees professional education, women's property rights and equal access to resources and markets. It is important to supplement these initiatives with public awareness rising on women's rights, opportunities and abilities. All these will contribute to women's direct control over resources.

## **(8) Increase women's societal voice**

Even though the Georgian Constitution recognizes the equal civil and political rights of men and women before the law, the muted voice of rural women and their passive public and private participation in decision-making processes reflects informal constraints in terms of patriarchal values and social norms. The household and childrearing responsibilities, as well as scepticism about women's decision-making capacity significantly limit rural women's civic and political activities. In order to enhance rural women's leadership and encourage active involvement in decision-making processes, it is of vital importance to eliminate all forms of socio-cultural constraints to rural women's civic activism and introduce mandatory political quotas at local and national levels. Furthermore, with the joint action of state and non-state actors, gender awareness raising campaigns should be initiated in order to emphasize the rights and abilities of women to take part in political processes. As a consequence, the recognition of women as an equal to men participant in decision-making processes will increase awareness of rural women's challenges, make it easier for them to challenge the discriminatory gender status beliefs and strengthen their abilities to advocate their vision in their communities and society at large.

## **7. Conclusion & Outlook**

The present study was undertaken with the purpose to examine the socio-economic dimensions of gender inequalities in rural areas of Georgia, where the main hypothesis assumed that the deeply rooted patriarchal values and religious fundamentalism impose barriers to the Georgian state and women's NGOs attempts on the way to greater gender equalities and sustainable economic development.

In this investigation, the initial aim was to reveal various dimensions of gender inequalities in rural communities and to root out the main factors contributing to women's oppression. Subsequently, the study set out to discover the role of the Georgian state and WNGOs in achieving gender equalities, as well as the pathway out of gender inequalities and social injustice.

Notwithstanding the limitations, the preliminary findings highlighted that the Georgian society is organized in patriarchal fashion, where long-established traditions and cultural norms play a major role in shaping every aspect of life. Within the patriarchal society, where social norms are largely determined by religion, men and women are perceived and treated in different ways. The persistent gender inequalities are not considered as a driver of sustainable economic growth, whereas any effort on the way to gender equalities is viewed as a threat to traditional values.

In addition to the preliminary findings presented in chapter 3, based on the theoretical framework and expert's insights on the current state of women in remote areas of Georgia, the study provided supplementary evidence that the deeply rooted patriarchal values and cultural norms, along with the rising religious fundamentalism significantly limit women's rights and opportunities in various dimensions, what is essential in human and economic terms.

The results of the expert interview evidence that along with the absence of genuine devotion of the Georgian authorities to gender issues, the rising fundamental tendencies impose burdens to the Georgian state, as well as to the women's NGOs in attempts to pursue gender equality strategies, which are essential for poverty reduction and sustainable economic development. However, the empirical findings of this work sowed the seeds of optimism with regard to the challenges facing the Georgian women nowadays and emphasized that there is always a room for new opportunities. Therefore, let all existing challenges for today be a starting point for renewed efforts and responses.

While keeping in mind all obstacles to women's advancement described in this work, a first opportunity can be considered the fact that women's issues gained a great visibility and importance at the international level. Whether the patriarchal ideology of the Georgian society recognizes equality between its members or not, the demand for normative standards of human rights from international community sooner or later will pave the way to renewed efforts on the way forward to gender equalities.

A second opportunity arises from the previous one that the international community, which is based on the principles of equality, democracy and respect for the law, greatly supports and puts particular emphasis on the potential of non-governmental sector in achieving gender equalities. Despite various challenges, i.e. visibility, resources, advocacy capacity, social pressure facing WNGOs today, backed up with the international support, WNGOs can find ways of establishing and improving a dialogue with the state. The open and constructive

dialogue will bridge the cooperation and awareness gaps between the Georgian policy-makers and WNGOs, and will increase the responsiveness to the women's problems.

Furthermore, the experience of difficult socio-economic transformation and the fear of further external shocks can be considered as a third opportunity for development of gender-sensitive economic and social policies, which are at the heart of the recovery and sustainable development of the Georgian economy. A recognition of the gender equality as an objective for economic growth will bring a solid basis for confronting informal social rules and be a driver of behavioral change.

Even though the progress towards greater gender equalities and social change will not come easily, it is a part of a common sense that the gender equalities are crucial for the well-being of the society. Thus, all that needed is to make it happen.

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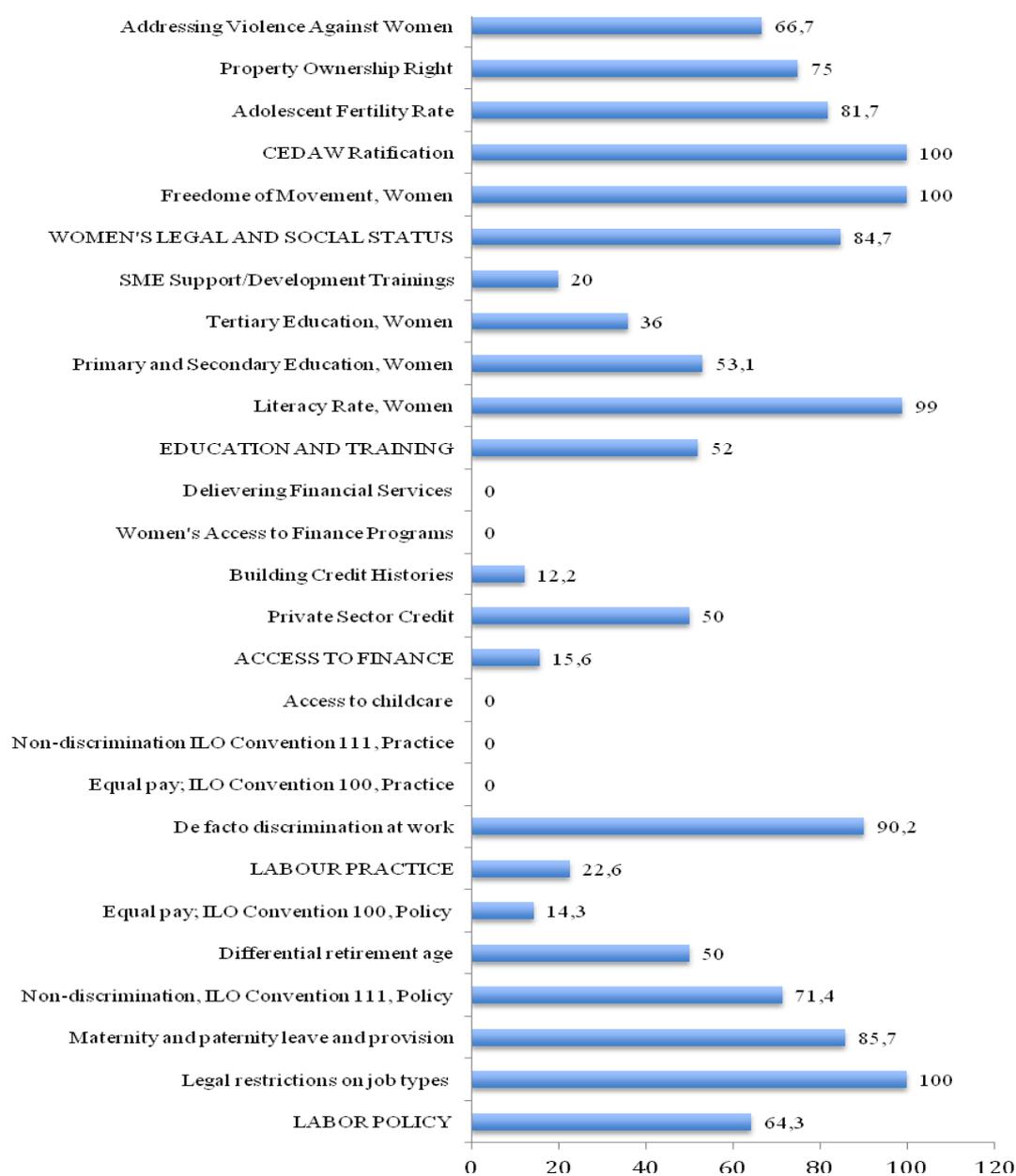
## Annex

Annex 1: The number of employed and their average monthly remuneration by kind of economic activities and sex in 2011

	Number of employees, persons		Average monthly wage, GEL	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
Total Economic Activity	185 872	317 364	442.0	730.7
Agriculture, hunting and forestry	1 336	4 935	336.9	407.0
Fishing	49	388	252.0	273.5
Mining and quarrying	670	5 214	551.9	876.2
Manufacturing	26 356	55 365	392.4	629.1
Electricity, gas and water supply	4 030	17 522	846.5	884.1
Construction	4 119	61 101	513.7	756.8
Trade; Repair of motor vehicles and personal and household goods	44 904	62 934	402.0	662.8
Hotels and restaurants	14 847	9 155	292.3	427.5
Transport and Communications	12 322	39 025	677.3	926.8
Real estate, renting and business activities	18 363	33 654	553.3	808.4
Education	11 771	4 588	334.5	443.7
Health and social work	36 279	11 820	419.4	739.4
Community, social and personal services	10 825	11 662	481.8	694.1

*Source: Constructed by the author on the basis of Geostat 2013b, pp. 16-17*

Annex 2: WEO index scores by sub-categories, 2010



Source: Constructed by the author on the basis of EIU, 2010, p. 64.

### Annex 3: Interview Questionnaire

1. What are the most important factors behind the Georgian women's disadvantaged positions?
2. What does the process of women's empowerment require from different state and non-state actors?
3. What is the mission of the women's NGOs in Georgia and what are the main objectives and strategies on the way to women's empowerment in rural areas of Georgia?
4. What are the main approaches and programs used by the Georgian state in supporting women in rural areas? Are there any mechanisms for cooperation between women's NGOs and the Georgian state?
5. What are specific programs and strategies used by the women's NGOs in supporting the Georgian state's gender equality policy? Are there differences between women's NGOs strategies?
6. What are particular obstacles to integrating gender inequality issues into the Georgian state's development policies?
7. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union and emergence of the women's NGOs, what would you consider as the main achievements of the Georgian state and non-governmental sector in advancing women's position?
8. In your opinion, what policies should the Georgian government implement in the future for empowering rural women?
9. What is the attitude of the Georgian society to gender equality? Do you believe that women's NGOs can act as 'change agents' and cope with such complex issues as patriarchal norms, gender status beliefs and stereotypes on the way to women's empowerment?  
*If yes*, is social change on women's NGOs agenda? How? Through which programs?  
*If no*, what are the main challenges to it?
10. What are your views and recommendations on empowering women in rural areas? Do you believe that financial and technical assistance would advance women's position and change people's attitudes in Georgia?
11. Particularly, what is the most effective way of changing women's position in Georgia? What strategies are needed?
12. How do you see the position of women in the Georgian society in the long run?

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