

Open Society Georgia Foundation

Tbilisi, June 2018



This policy brief covers period of
December 2017 till June 2018

AUTHOR:

Babutsa Pataraiia*

on behalf of union "Sapari"

Peer review by:

Dr. Tobias Schumacher

This policy brief is prepared within the framework of the Open Society Georgia Foundation's in-house project "monitoring implementation of the EU-Georgia Association Agreement by coalition of civil society organizations". The views, opinions and statements expressed by the author and those providing comments are theirs only and do not necessarily reflect the position of the Foundation. Therefore, the Open Society Georgia Foundation is not responsible for the content of the material

The Need for a State Strategy on Women's Economic Empowerment

Introduction

The new EU-Georgia Association Agenda (AA) provides short-term and long-term priorities for joint work to achieve the objectives set by the Association Agreement in the period 2017-2020. Enhancing gender equality and ensuring equal treatment for women and men in social, political and economic life are part of the short-term priorities set out by the AA. Specifically, Article 349(e) of the EU-Georgia Association Agreement highlights the importance of equal opportunities and anti-discrimination, aiming at enhancing gender equality and ensuring equal opportunities between men and women.

Obviously, the economic development of the country is very dependent on women's economic empowerment. To date, however, no consistent policy on this issue exists in Georgia. Furthermore, over the last ten years no state programme focusing on the economic empowerment of women has been implemented. Georgia faces many challenges to address this issue, including women's limited access of financing; the invisibility of economic violence; the low level of women's agency; unrecognized, invisible family labour; and the non-engagement of the corporate sector in the process of women's economic empowerment. This policy brief outlines the core challenges related to women's economic empowerment; provides a concise description of the relevant legislative framework and international obligations; and overviews existing economic policies and practices.

Background Information

Georgian society has dramatically different gender roles for women and men. The public in general tends to believe that women's major role in life is taking care of their families and raising children, while men are expected to provide economic stability and security for their families.¹ The latest research on violence against women revealed that people in Georgia (both women and men) identify women primarily within the family, controlling and regulating domestic affairs.²

* Babutsa Pataraiia is the director of the women's organisation "Sapari" and is actively involved in the Georgian women's movement. She cooperates with international organisations as a national expert on women's issues and lectures at various universities on human rights, women's rights and anti-discrimination law. She received a LL.M degree from the Central European and Tbilisi State Universities.

Although the Georgian legislative framework for gender equality is largely in line with international practice, women suffer systematic oppression in real life. They are completely ignored as a workforce. Cultural, religious and economic obstacles hinder the economic empowerment of Georgian women. In addition, women's economic empowerment is not a priority for the state, demonstrated by the fact that policy documents rarely mention women.³

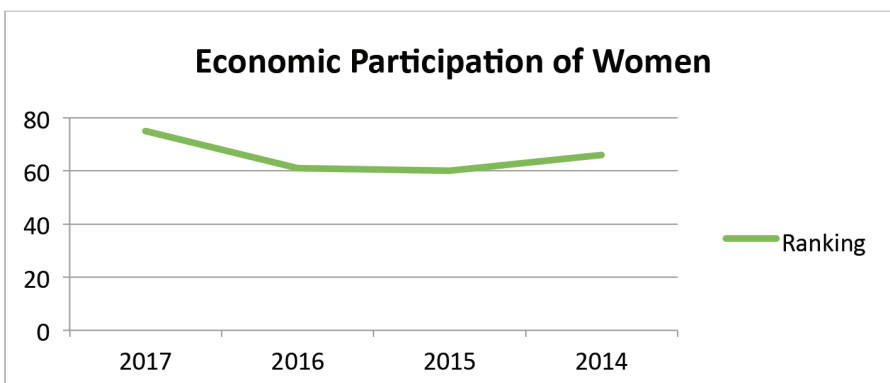
Women's economic empowerment is directly linked to overcoming gender inequality and its most serious consequence – violence against women. According to the Public Defender of Georgia, women often stay with their spouses despite physical abuse due to the fact that they lack financial resources and financial independence that would enable them to leave.⁴ The special rapporteur on violence against women named the lack of economic independence as one of the factors that is most likely to increase the risk of intimate-partner violence in Georgia.⁵

In 2014 the UN Committee on the Eliminations of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) highlighted the disproportionately high unemployment rate of women, the significant gender wage gap and the continued horizontal and vertical segregation in the labor market, where women are concentrated in low-paid jobs.⁶ The Committee recommended that the government take measures to increase the employment of women and effectively address the concentration of women in low-paid jobs. Furthermore, it recommended adopting measures to implement the principle of equal pay for work of equal value.⁷

According to the National Statistics Office of Georgia, as of January 2017, women make up 52% of the Georgian population.⁸ According to 2016 data, 42% of women aged 15 and older are economically inactive, compared to 22% of Georgian men in the same age category. As far as employment is concerned, 67% of men are employed. The average monthly salary of women amounts to 731.3 GEL for women, compared to 1116.6 GEL for men.⁹

In 2017, the Gender Gap Index of the World Economic Forum ranked Georgia 94th among 144 countries. The index is measured based on economic participation; educational attainment; health and survival; and political empowerment.

In terms of economic participation and opportunities, according to the World Economic Forum data, Georgia has fallen in the ranks over the past several years and is currently in 75th place.¹⁰



¹ ACT, Public Perception on Gender Equality in Politics and Business, UNDP 2013, pg. 40

² National Study on Violence Against Women, UN Women 2017, pg. 11

³ Women's Economic Empowerment in Georgia: Analysis of Existing Policies and Initiatives, Sapari, 2017, available at: http://www.ge.undp.org/content/georgia/en/home/library/democratic_governance/economic-empowerment-of-women-in-georgia.html

⁴ Public Defender of Georgia, Women's Rights and Gender Equality, 2016, p. 33, available at: <http://www.ombudsman.ge/uploads/other/4/4452.pdf>

⁵ Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences on her mission to Georgia, 9 June, 2016, A/HRC/32/42/Add.3

⁶ Women's Economic Empowerment in Georgia: Analysis of Existing Policies and Initiatives, Sapari, 2017, p. 21, available at: http://www.ge.undp.org/content/georgia/en/home/library/democratic_governance/economic-empowerment-of-women-in-georgia.html

⁷ Committee on Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women, concluding observations on the combined fourth and fifth periodic reports of Georgia, July 2014, CEDAW/C/GEO/CO/4-5

⁸ National Statistics Office of Georgia. Woman and Man in Georgia. 2017.p.52

⁹ National Statistics Office of Georgia. Monthly Salary of Employees based on Sex. 2017

¹⁰ World Economic Forum; The Global Gender Gap Report 2017. Available at: http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2017.pdf

Existing Policies and Projects

Gender Equality in Georgia is guaranteed by the Constitution of Georgia and the Law on Gender Equality adopted in 2010, according to which the state should support and ensure equal rights for men and women in political, economic, social and cultural life.

Georgia's economic policy is defined by several state strategies. One of the major programs - The government's action plan for 2016-2020 - "Freedom, Rapid Development and Welfare" only mentions gender once, notably in the chapter on human rights, democratic governance and rule of law, which demonstrates the government's awareness of the domestic violence problem in the country. There is no mention of women in the chapter on economic development.¹¹

The Small and Medium Business Development Strategy 2016-2020 consists of five strategic directions, out of which only one mentions women economic empowerment, namely the development of skills for small and medium sized entrepreneurship. It envisages activities to conduct needs assessment with an aim to support women's participation in the state programme "Produce in Georgia".¹² On the other hand, the data on the state project "Produce in Georgia" shows that 40% of grants issued for small and medium sized enterprises go to women, but extremely few women receive large-scale grants and almost no women (only 0.05%) are represented in big enterprises.¹³

It should be underlined that other strategic directions which are of paramount importance for women's economic development, such as improved access to financial resources and support for innovations, do not envisage any specific goals or activities targeting women.

Women are included in the Agricultural Development Strategy 2015-2020 only in the context of the need to collect gender-disaggregated data.¹⁴ In 2017, women made up 27% of agricultural cooperatives in Georgia, yet women lead only 20% of these cooperatives.¹⁵ As for agricultural projects run by the state, it should be highlighted that women participation varies from 7-33%, where the highest engagement of women is in the least funded projects, and the lowest percentage (7%) of female beneficiaries are part of the state's largest project, Preferential Agro-Credit.¹⁶

International Obligations

Georgia has committed itself to numerous international obligations in order to ensure gender equality and combat all kinds of discrimination against women. Article 4(3) of the European Social Charter obliges the parties to recognize the right of men and women workers to equal pay for work of equal value.¹⁷ Of particular importance is the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), ratified by Georgia in 1994. Article 3 of the convention obliges the state to take all appropriate measures to ensure the full development and advancement of women in political, social, economic and cultural fields.¹⁸

Achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls is one of the goals of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); target 5.7 is focused on

¹¹ Freedom, Fast Development, Welfare, Governmental Program 2016-2020, available at: http://gov.ge/files/41_61087_816118_GoG_Platform_LKF_19_05_2017.pdf

¹² Small and Medium Business Development Strategy 2016-2020, available at: http://www.economy.ge/uploads/files/2017/ek_politika/eng_sme_development_strategy.pdf

¹³ Women's Economic Empowerment in Georgia: Analysis of Existing Policies and Initiatives, Sapari, 2017, p. 21, available at: http://www.ge.undp.org/content/georgia/en/home/library/democratic_governance/economic-empowerment-of-women-in-georgia.html

¹⁴ Agricultural Development Strategy 2015-2020, available at: <http://www.moa.gov.ge/En/Public/Strategy/8/>

¹⁵ Women's Economic Empowerment in Georgia: Analysis of Existing Policies and Initiatives, Sapari, 2017, p. 22, available at: http://www.ge.undp.org/content/georgia/en/home/library/democratic_governance/economic-empowerment-of-women-in-georgia.html

¹⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁷ European Social Charter, Strasbourg 3 V 1996, Article. 4, sub-Para. 3

¹⁸ Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), Article 3

reforms to provide women with equal rights to economic resources. Furthermore, it aims to provide access to land ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws. Georgia has already initiated a voluntary process to nationalize the Sustainable Development Goals and thus has assumed the obligation to achieve the SDGs. Despite Georgia's commitments, however, little has been planned or achieved so far, as evidenced by this policy brief.

Recommendations

To ensure women's economic empowerment, the state should develop a vision and all relevant strategic documents and action plans should be amended to ensure they incorporate effective policies and practices. Therefore, it is recommended that:

- The government of Georgia should develop a state policy on women's economic empowerment and amend existing economic policy strategies destined to strengthen women's economic rights;
- Specific programs should be developed by the state to support female entrepreneurs and to improve women's access to finances, as well as to develop their professional skills;
- Public servants should be trained in order to ensure the implementation of gender sensitive policies at all levels of decision-making;
- Private companies should provide and uphold maternity leave rights for women as well as men in accordance with the Labour Code;
- The government should elaborate effective mechanisms to monitor and implement equal remuneration for men and women at the workplace;
- Awareness raising campaigns regarding women's economic and property rights should be implemented.