

COMMISSIONED STUDY NEEDS ASSESSMENT OF ETHNIC MINORITY WOMEN IN GEORGIA



2014, Tbilisi

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FOREWORD



Numerous research studies confirm that women and girls belonging to minorities (ethnic, religious, social, etc.) frequently face multiple forms of discrimination and have less access to education, regular paid jobs, income and property, health care and social services, participation in public life and decision making. They also more likely experience various forms of violence, including domestic violence.

In 2013 UN Women Georgia, with support of the European Union Delegation to Georgia and in cooperation with the European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI), conducted a study on *the needs and priorities of ethnic minority women in Georgia*. The goal of the study was to identify barriers that hinder ethnic minority women and girls from full participation in all spheres of societal life, and offer policy recommendations to overcome these barriers.

Among the key obstacles - the study findings have revealed - belong the lack of knowledge of the majority

language, high school drop-out rate among girls (due to the practice of early marriage), lack of the pre-school facilities that prevent women from searching for gainful jobs, and limited participation of women in local government bodies.

We believe that the findings will inform policies that are nation-wide as well as focused on ethnic minorities, providing useful evidence and recommendations for mainstreaming gender and addressing the issues and needs of ethnic minority women and girls. Other beneficiaries of this study include civil society organisations advocating for ethnic minority rights, gender equality and women's empowerment advocates, as well as international organisations providing technical assistance to relevant governmental institutions.

Erika Kvapilova

UN Women Representative in Georgia

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Starting from 2013, UN Women, with the support of the European Union (EU), has been implementing the project “Innovative Action for Gender Equality in Georgia” (IAGE), the overall objective of which is to adopt and implement relevant policies and legislation to address specific healthcare, social, and economic needs of women from excluded groups in Georgia, while the specific objective is to support women’s initiatives aimed at confidence building and social stability through addressing healthcare, social and economic needs of national minorities, those imprisoned, IDPs and conflict-affected women and women living in remote mountainous areas in Georgia.

UN Women commissioned the presented study to assess the situation and needs of ethnic minority women and girls and to elaborate the necessary policy level recommendations.

The study report adopts a cross-comparative approach to human and ethnic minority rights as a leading theme. It includes an evidence-based assessment of the needs and priorities of ethnic minority women conducted from a human rights perspective, but also with regards to specific minority rights.

Women and girls from ten ethnicities residing in compact settlements of targeted regions took part in the study: **Kakheti - Avar, Azerbaijani,¹ Kist/Chechen, Ossetian, Russian Molokan and Udi; Samtskhe-Javakheti - Armenian and Russian Dukhobor.**

The situation of **Roma women** was investigated in the largest Roma communities in **Kobuleti, Kutaisi and Tbilisi**. In addition, the situation of **Meskhethian Turk women** in **Nasakirali and Ianeti** was also included in the study. The study was conducted in the period of October-November 2013.

The scope of the study includes:

- Socio-economic overview, indicating women’s social and economic (in)dependence

- Legal services accessibility and their use in the specific cultural settings of various groups
- Access to and accessibility of public social services at the state and municipal levels
- Access to and accessibility of various elements of infrastructure
- Specific gender-related aspects of family relations such as the occurrence of domestic violence
- Gender equality awareness among women at local levels (regional and municipal) and female political participation and interest in public life
- Preservation and protection of ethnic identity

The aim and objective of the research is to provide a contextualised study of the situation of women who belong to an ethnic minority in Georgia; to identify their needs and priorities; to identify delivery of services by municipalities and the state level, to analyse to what extent these services cover the relevant women’s expectations and needs; to assess perceptions of public services provided; and finally, to draw conclusions and present recommendations.

Methodology

A set of mixed methods was used to maximise the outcome within the time allocated to the study, which included both quantitative and qualitative methods. This research included individual interviews with private persons (women and men), members of minority groups, municipal representatives at the political level – members of municipal councils and at executive levels – heads and deputy heads of municipal administrations and social services departments and also at the state level, as represented by governors’ offices in the two regions, as well as conducting focus groups. The target groups included traditional ethnic minorities in Georgia residing in compact settlements in the Samtskhe-Javakheti region (Armenians and Russian Dukhobors), and those in the Kakheti region (the Avar, Azerbaijani, Kist/Chechen, Ossetian, Russian Molokan and Udi communities). Special attention was given to the needs and priorities of Roma women based on the analysis of their situation within their largest communities in Kobuleti (approximately 300 persons), Kutaisi (200 persons) and Tbilisi (200 persons).

¹ In Georgia, the term Azerbaijani is used to identify a person belonging to the Azeri group of Turkic people, originating from the territory of current Azerbaijan.

Legal framework

The legislative framework of the cross-field of human and minority rights and gender equality is seen through the ratification of international instruments and domestic legislation such as relevant UN conventions ratified by Georgia - International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) (1994)², International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) (1999)³, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (1994), Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (1994)⁴ and domestic legislation such as the Law on Gender Equality (2010), Law on Elimination of Domestic Violence (LEDV, 2006) and the Labour Code (2012). In addition, national strategies such as the Gender Equality Law (2010), the Concept on Gender Equality & the Gender Equality National Action Plan (NAP) (2014-2016), the Domestic Violence NAP 2013-2015 and the NAP on Women, Peace and Security (2012-2015) seem not to enhance the lives of ethnic minority women. Although the Law on Gender Equality has been translated into English, Abkhazian, Ossetian, Azerbaijani, Russian and Armenian, ethnic minority women have almost no knowledge of this Law⁵. Concerning minority rights, Georgia has ratified the Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Protection of National Minorities (2006)⁶ and based on that has devised a National Concept and Action Plan for Tolerance and Civic Integration (2009-2014)⁷, which was adopted and implemented by the government. Despite the commitment of Georgia upon joining the Council of Europe in 1999 to ratify the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, the ratification is yet to be completed and minority languages are not protected.

Despite the existing extensive legislative framework related to human and minority rights, as well as gen-

der, weak enforcement and limited implementation are common, which only perpetuates gender stereotypes based on cultural/traditional grounds that are regulating ethnic minority women's and girls' opportunities to preserve their ethnic identity, and access to services and participation.

Ecological migrants' factor

In many municipalities populated by ethnic minorities, there has been a resettlement of ecological migrants from Adjara and Svaneti. The resettlement has had an impact on the distribution of land which is highly significant to minority women for the sake of their livelihood as well as housing and social support from municipal budgets. In addition, the issue of different cultures introduced by eco-migrants (ethnic Georgians) creates perceptions among minorities, particularly minority women, that these migrants receive special treatment. This additional pressure, for example, land distribution, infrastructure, and local budgets for social assistance, on resource weak communities, is not conducive to community cohesion and should be addressed by local authorities.⁸ This pressure affects minority women as their access to such services becomes limited.

The findings

The regional coverage of the assessment revealed substantial differences between minorities' integration, socio-economic inclusion and the protection of their identities. With respect to gender, it also revealed an almost identical situation in terms of needs. Differences, however, were discovered in terms of priorities with regard to identity protection and aspirations to be included in mainstream society, with a particular emphasis for some groups on the need to improve their command of the Georgian language.

The special case of illiteracy among Roma women, which has resulted in very limited access to all services and integration into society, deserves particular attention.

2 Source: ECMI Caucasus, Minority issues mainstreaming in the South Caucasus – A practical guide, Tbilisi, February 2011

3 Source: Committee on Elimination of Racial Discrimination – Concluding observations, September 2011 http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cerd/docs/GeorgiaCObs_CERD79.pdf

4 Nargiza Arjevanidze (2012), Gender Equality – An overview of Georgian and international legislation http://css.ge/files/documents/publications/Nargiza_Arjevanidze,_Gender_Equality_-_legislation,_August_2012_Eng.pdf

5 Ketevan Chkeidze, "Gender Politics in Georgia", in Gender Politics in the South Caucasus – Caucasus analytical digest, N. 21, Nov. 2010.

6 Source: <http://www.smr.gov.ge/docs/doc227.pdf>

7 Source: <http://www.smr.gov.ge/docs/doc203.pdf>

8 Art.16 of the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, ratified by Georgia, states "The Parties shall refrain from measures which alter the proportions of the population in areas inhabited by persons belonging to national minorities and are aimed at restricting the rights and freedoms flowing from the principles enshrined in the present framework Convention".

At the same time, interest in returning native language instruction to local schools (previously abolished) to preserve the minority groups' identity and culture, is high. This is particularly important for women, as they are responsible for child rearing and feel strongly about passing on their culture and awareness of their ethnic background. This is especially crucial, as in many families, women are the de facto heads of households due to the high proportion of labour migration among men.

The assessment revealed a clear demographic disparity between the sexes in minority residence areas with women and young children representing almost 60% of the minority population. This disparity is also apparent among age groups, with the number of elderly women growing. This is related to labour migration (both internal and international), to mainly Russia and Azerbaijan, as many men are unable to establish livelihoods in the areas in which they reside, thus they leave their families for extended periods of time.

The municipal competencies regarding the collection of statistical data have been removed and transferred to other state agencies, leaving municipalities with insufficient planning tools for service delivery. The municipal budgets at the disposal of local authorities are very limited, thus not allowing for the adequate servicing of the population and placing an extra burden on women, who spend much time and effort on daily chores or acquiring the necessary information.

• **Access to social services (municipal and state levels)**

The findings revealed on the one hand that minority women have limited knowledge of the available public social services; while on the other hand, they highlighted the limited de facto competencies of the municipalities and their restricted budgets, which do not cover the required needs. For example, the state level of targeted social assistance to vulnerable groups is difficult to access without the assistance of professional social agents from the Social Service Agency of the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs, who visit families only when requested to assess their eligibility for social allowances. In some cases, the geographical distance to offices and a lack of public transportation hampers accessibility. The state health insurance system recently changed to

cover all groups of the population. However, it is not adequate for some of the poorer segments of the population as it requires self-contribution for a number of services (10-30%). The availability of healthcare and medical services is very limited in a number of localities, often only amounting to a doctor's advice on where to seek help.

• **Access to Legal services**

Legal services are also divided between various agencies, while at the municipal level they offer mainly advice and simply re-direct clients to the relevant agencies. Public Service Halls, which perform such services, function in only a few locations. Due to the cultural peculiarities of minority groups, many women live by customary law rather than civil law. In some cases, the costs associated with such services prevent minority women from using them. The official civil legal system is not used in cases of domestic violence; such cases are very rarely reported as doing so is a cultural taboo in many communities.

• **Socio-economic inclusion**

In many minority communities, the availability of formal employment is very limited, and is usually restricted to jobs in the public sphere, such as the educational system, employment in municipal offices and clerical jobs. Although formal employment is a general problem in Georgia, ethnic minorities are even less likely to be employed. In such sectors, it is mainly women who are hired. The salaries are very low (50-200 GEL on average), and not sufficient for a sustainable household economy. Informal self-employment, subsistence agriculture, petty trade, and pensions received by elderly members of the household are often the only sources of income. The language barrier is not a major obstacle for smaller minorities, though this remains the case for Armenians, Azerbaijani and Roma women. Access to education beyond the primary level often depends on geographic distance, costs and cultural peculiarities regarding the role of women.

On the other hand, minority women are indifferent about organising themselves in initiative or community groups or engaging on a voluntary basis. However, when mobilised by external actors and given finances, they are willing to participate. They are not aware of gender inequality issues, and in cases when they are, they are to some extent sceptical about the possibility of change.

• **Access to infrastructure**

The infrastructure in rural areas is rather limited. Utilities, such as drinking water, are often available only at the main pipeline in the streets and the quality is not always acceptable. Consequently, women and girls spend an inordinate amount of time and energy retrieving water for the household. Gas supplies and sewage systems are almost non-existent, while roads and transportation facilities require rehabilitation. This imposes a heavy burden on women both in terms of physical exertion and time. A lack of public transportation prevents women from accessing services, while private transportation services are not sufficiently frequent. Although all issues were indicated as needs, the priorities were clearly in-house tap water, gas supply, and road rehabilitation.

• **Gender equality awareness and perceptions**

At the municipal level, there are no adopted gender policies or women present in social services, and administrative/clerical work. Often, ethnic minority women are not represented at all on local councils or employed in local administrations. On an individual level, the roles of men and women are viewed in traditional terms with men as the providers and women assuming responsibility for domestic work, caretaking, agriculture, and petty trade.

• **Preservation and protection of ethnic identity**

Preservation of ethnic identity is an important aspect of minority rights and one of the key aspirations among minority women. This is mainly achieved through language. These minorities deplore the removal of small minority languages from the school curricula and the shifting of native language teaching to the private sphere.

Conclusions

As indicated by the findings, women across various minority groups have similar needs, but different priorities all of which are related to the municipalities they live in and to their personal situations. The need to improve infrastructure, social and medical services - especially those related to women's health - and access to adult education and education for their children appears across all targeted ethnic groups of women. The women indicated a lack of information as one of the barriers limiting their access to services, the need to organize income-generating activities and scepticism about political participation and civic engagement. Many would like to engage in adult education if the opportunities were situated closer to their localities. There is a large difference

in women's rights in relation to cultural backgrounds when it comes to marriage, property rights, and relationships within the family. However, using civil law does not seem to be a priority for those affected by customary law application. In addition, their priorities concerning language needs were different, as Roma, Armenians, and a percentage of Azerbaijani women indicated that learning the Georgian language was a priority, while others indicated their preference to learn Russian, placing a priority status on the preservation of their native language, cultural heritage, and ethnic identity. Job availability and employment were also a priority for several groups, as well as obtaining a stable source of income or a change/upgrade of qualifications through training courses.

Key recommendations

- To provide better access to public services by establishing community service centres in central localities in rural areas that will perform Public Service Hall functions;
- To improve basic infrastructure;
- To simplify the assessment system for social benefits;
- To improve and facilitate access to adult education in order to obtain professional qualifications that may improve job opportunities, including literacy courses and Georgian language training;
- To make school facilities available to the local population after school hours for cultural activities, and access to modern technology;
- To promote vocational training courses and other forms of schooling for school leavers – both girls and boys in closer localities;
- To improve Georgian language study opportunities in local areas for Armenian, Azerbaijani and Roma communities who consider it a priority;
- To return native language instruction to the school system;
- To expand municipal competencies and establish gender focal points in municipalities and mobilise women to apply for jobs;
- To re-activate the Zurab Zhvania School of Public Administration's training component for minority representatives to work in public administration;
- To conduct information campaigns among minority women on the importance of gender equality and the prevention of domestic violence;
- To involve minority women in providing input to the implementation of the Gender Equality National Action Plan at the local level.

2. SITUATION ANALYSIS IN IDENTIFIED REGIONS AND MINORITY GROUPS

Chart no. 1:
Ethnic map of Georgia



The main task of the study was to provide a situation analysis along with relevant background information on the national and ethnic minority population in the Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kakheti regions and the Roma community with a special focus on women and girls, as well as to undertake a contextualised analysis of all the target locations where the study was conducted.

2.1. The scope

The scope of the study includes:

- Socio-economic overview, indicating women's social and economic (in)dependence
- Legal services accessibility and their use in the specific cultural settings of various groups
- Access to public social services at state and municipal levels
- Access to various elements of infrastructure
- Specific gender-related aspects of family relations, such as the occurrence of domestic violence
- Gender equality awareness among women at local levels (regional and municipal) and the political participation of women and interest in public life
- Preservation and protection of ethnic identity

The aims and objectives of the study were to provide a contextualised study of the situation of ethnic minority women; to identify their needs and priorities; to identify the delivery of services provided by municipalities (including at state level) and to analyse to what extent they cover these groups' expectations and needs. Accordingly, an assessment of the level of satisfaction with public services will provide a guideline for the improvement of the relevant services. Finally, the study aims to draw conclusions and present recommendations to various segments at state and municipal levels, as well as to women's organisations working in the regions. The study also aims to provide recommendations to minority women on issues relating to improved access to information, the mobilisation of ethnic minority women and the promotion of their inclusion into mainstream society on the one hand, and the protection of their ethnic identities on the other.

Ethnic groups and locations covered:

- Armenians (Akhalsikhe, Akhalkalaki, Ninotsminda);
- Azerbaijanis (Karajala, Telavi district, Ganjala, Kabali, Lagodekhi district)
- Avars (Tivi and adjacent Avar villages, Kvareli district)
- Kists/Chechens (Akhmeta and Duisi, Akhmeta district)
- Udis (Zinobiani, Kvareli district)
- Ossetians (Areshperani/Leliani, Lagodekhi district)
- Russian-Molokans (Iliatsminda, Dedoplistskaro district)
- Russian-Dukhobors (Gorelovka, Ninotsminda district)
- Roma (Kutaisi, Kobuleti and Tbilisi)

Please see Annex 1 for the list of Focus Group meetings and the list of interviewees in municipal administrations from the regions covered by the study.

A set of mixed methods was used to maximise the outcome within the time allocated to the study, which included quantitative and qualitative methods, individual interviews with private persons (women

and men) and members of minority groups, as well as focus groups.

Regarding the quantitative methodology, individual interviews and surveys were used. The sampling unit comprises of ethnic minority women and men, totalling 227, allowing for a 5.45% error margin with a confidence level of 90% (corresponding to the ethnic minority population size of 139,692 in the target regions according to the 2002 census). Classification per each ethnic group could not be achieved, as official statistics are very much outdated, illustrated vividly by the statistics for the Roma. In the official census of 2002, 450 Roma were registered in total, while the study revealed that the Roma community in Kobuleti alone amounted to 300, and that there were 200 Roma in the Kutaisi community (see Table 2).

As for the municipal representatives, these included mainly representatives at the political level (members of municipal councils) and at executive levels (heads and deputy heads of municipal administrations and social services departments), and at the state level, as represented by the governors' offices in the two regions in order to have an overview of services provided (infrastructure, legal and social services), participation and representation of minorities, particularly women. In that sense, the data was obtained primarily through qualitative rather than quantitative techniques.

The target groups included traditional ethnic minorities in Georgia residing in compact settlements in the Samtskhe-Javakheti region; Armenians and Russian Dukhobors from the Kakheti region; Avar, Azerbaijani, Kist/Chechen, Ossetian, Russian Molokan, as well as Udi communities. Special attention was paid to the needs and priorities of Roma women based on the analysis of their situation in the largest Roma communities located in Kobuleti (approximately 300 people), Kutaisi (200 people) and Tbilisi (200 people). Meskhetian Turk women, a relatively unknown group that repatriated to Georgia in the 1980s onwards and settled with their families in isolated tea plantation regions in Western Georgia, were also included.

Table no. 1:
Study methodology

Methodology	Quantitative research	Qualitative research
Methods	Interviews, Surveys	Focus groups discussions
Target groups	Private persons from each ethnic group	Women & men
		Municipal representatives, social service administration
Target population	Ethnic minorities : Armenian, Avar, Azeri, Chechen/Kist, Meskhetian Turk, Ossetian, Roma, Russian (Dukhobor, Molokan), Udi	Girls aged 13-18, adult women aged 19-70, men aged 40-60
Target regions & localities	Samtskhe-Javakheti, Kakheti	Ethnic minority localities
Sample	227 respondents	12 focus groups (136 participants)
Study period:	October-November 2013	October-November 2013

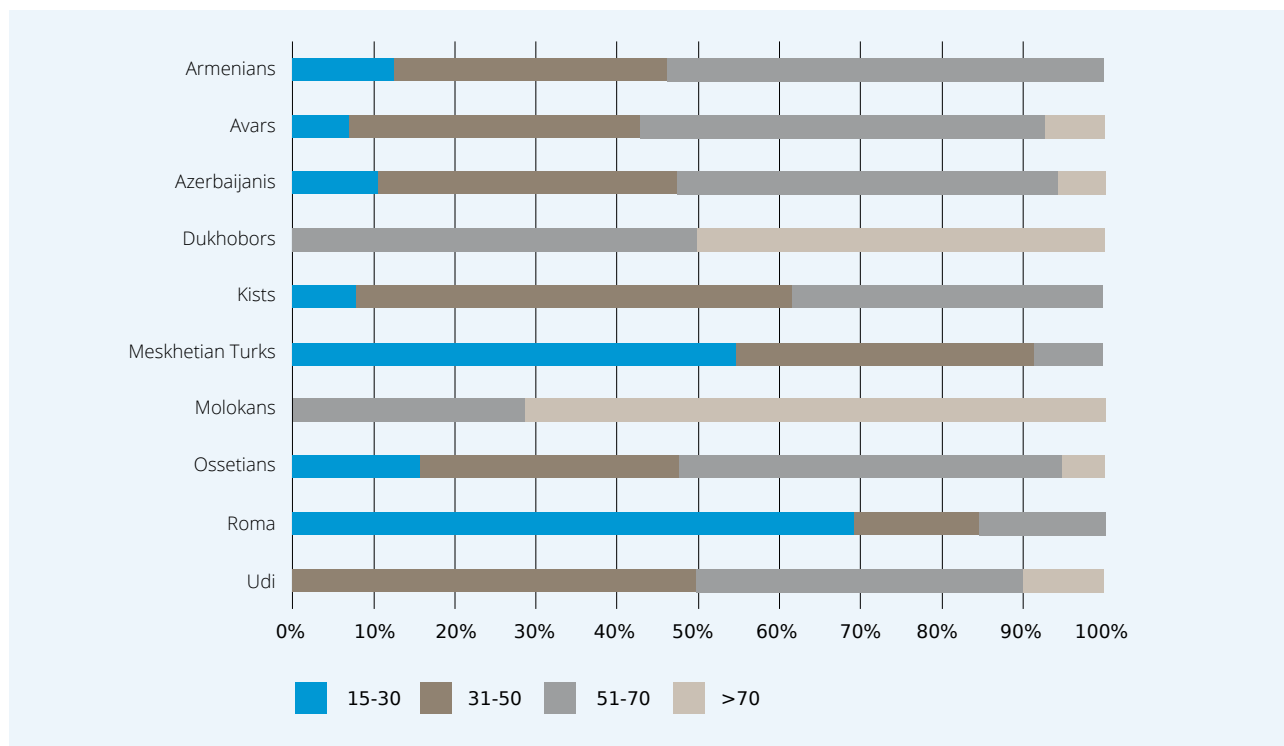
Structure of the report

The report is structured to present a comparative overview of the socio-economic conditions of ethnic minority women in identified regions in graphic form, followed by a more detailed identification of the needs and priorities of each group. Conclusions and recommendations also include a proposal for establishing the relevant indicators and benchmarks that will help in following the progress in addressing the needs and priorities of ethnic minority women.

2.2. Socio-economic overview

In the following series of charts, a comparative overview of the situation of ethnic minority women in the survey will present their needs and, in particular, their priorities. The respondents comprised of representative age cohorts, reflecting the composition of the female population in the targeted localities.

Chart no. 2:
Respondents' demography

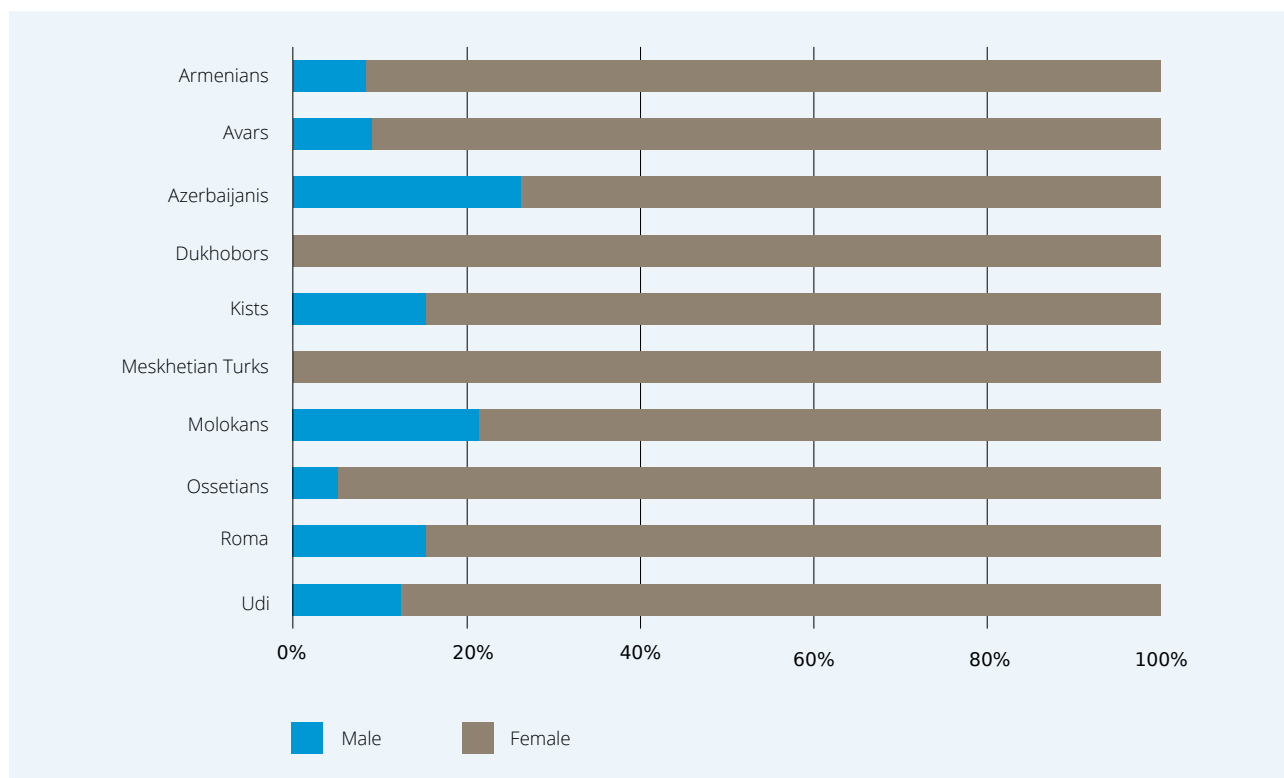


The age composition of the respondents mirrors the current demographic situation in the groups – the women are mainly represented in the cohorts of 30-70 years, with Russian Molokans having the highest proportion of women aged over 70. One of the reasons for this is that the younger generations are migrating out of Georgia, with elderly women being left behind. This will have an implication for adequately

assisting such groups of the population in terms of social services, health and medical care, and infrastructure.

The respondents' demography and analysis is also partially reflected in the gender composition of the respondents.

Chart no. 3:
Gender distribution of respondents



As the study required the inclusion of men in the respondent pool, an attempt was made to invite men from each of the ethnic groups to participate in the focus groups. Due to the continuous labour migration concerning the majority of men, and to some extent their unwillingness to participate, the proportion of men is rather limited.

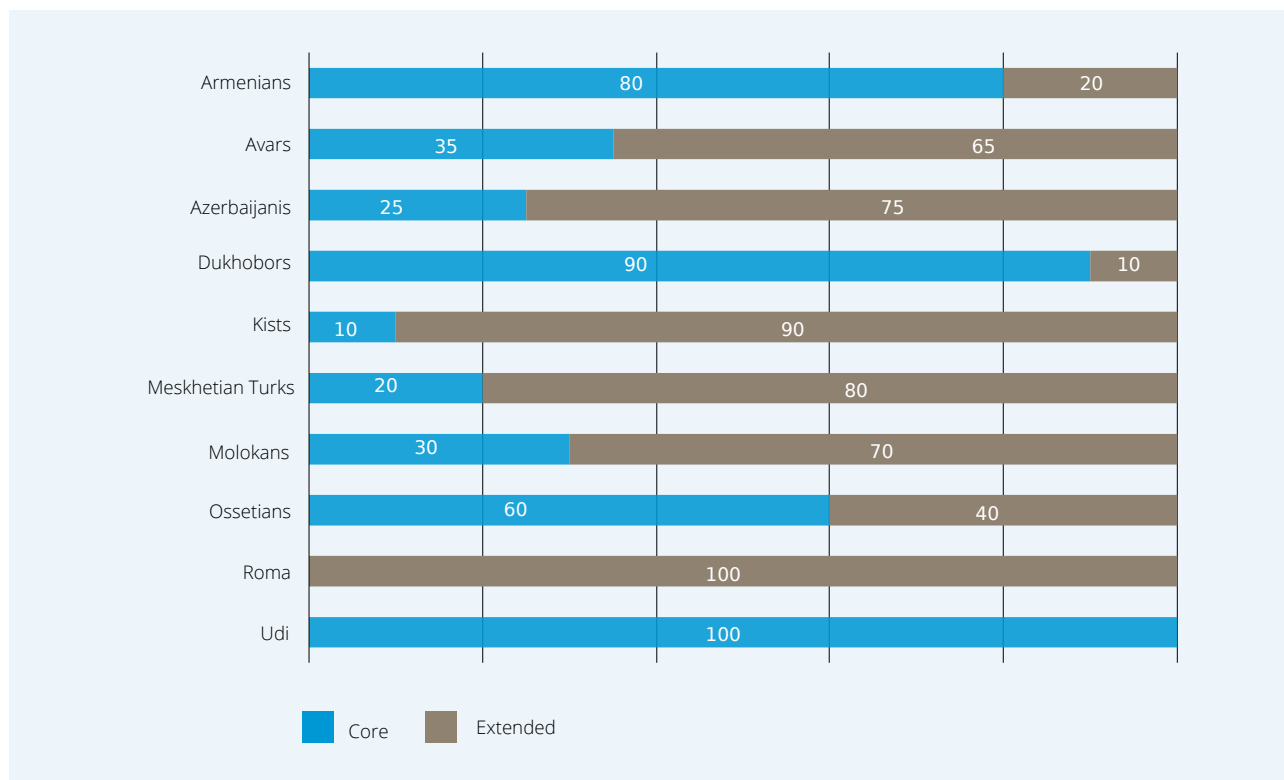
The impact of family type on women's social situation

An important aspect of appraising the situation of women and girls is to identify the family environment in which the girls are raised and assume their responsibilities, as well as the level of support they

receive, transferring these patterns into their adult life as women.

As indicated in Chart 3, most of the minority women, who participated in the study, live with extended families, mainly joining their husbands' household. This has an implication on receiving social allowances. In Georgia, in legal terms, the accessibility of social allowance is based on core/ nuclear family economic and social conditions, while the same address and assets of the extended family are included in the total appraisal. All assets count, including livestock and the interior, although 2-3 core families can live in the same joint or shared household.

Chart no. 4:
Family type

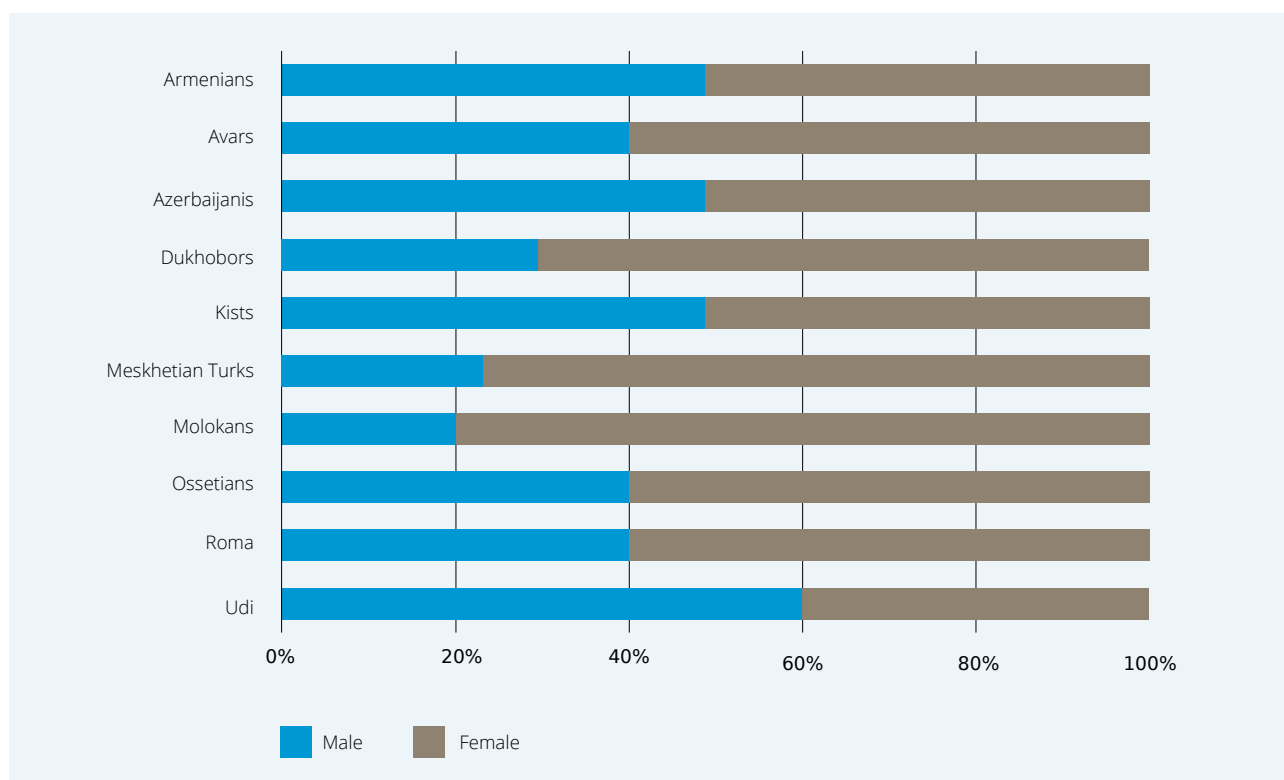


Gender composition of minority families

Another indicator of disparity between men and women in the surveyed minority families is the prevalence of women, as a consequence of men seeking income outside Georgia. In many cases, the migration is for long periods of time (minimum three months or repetitive, due to residence regulations in recipient countries). In a number of cases, the men

do not return, yet continue to financially support the families they left behind. One of the implications of this development is that women become the de facto heads of the household, taking on all functions and responsibilities related to this status, but not formally acquiring the rights to assets. In several instances, women become the breadwinners, generating additional income for the family.

Chart no. 5:
Family composition: male and female members

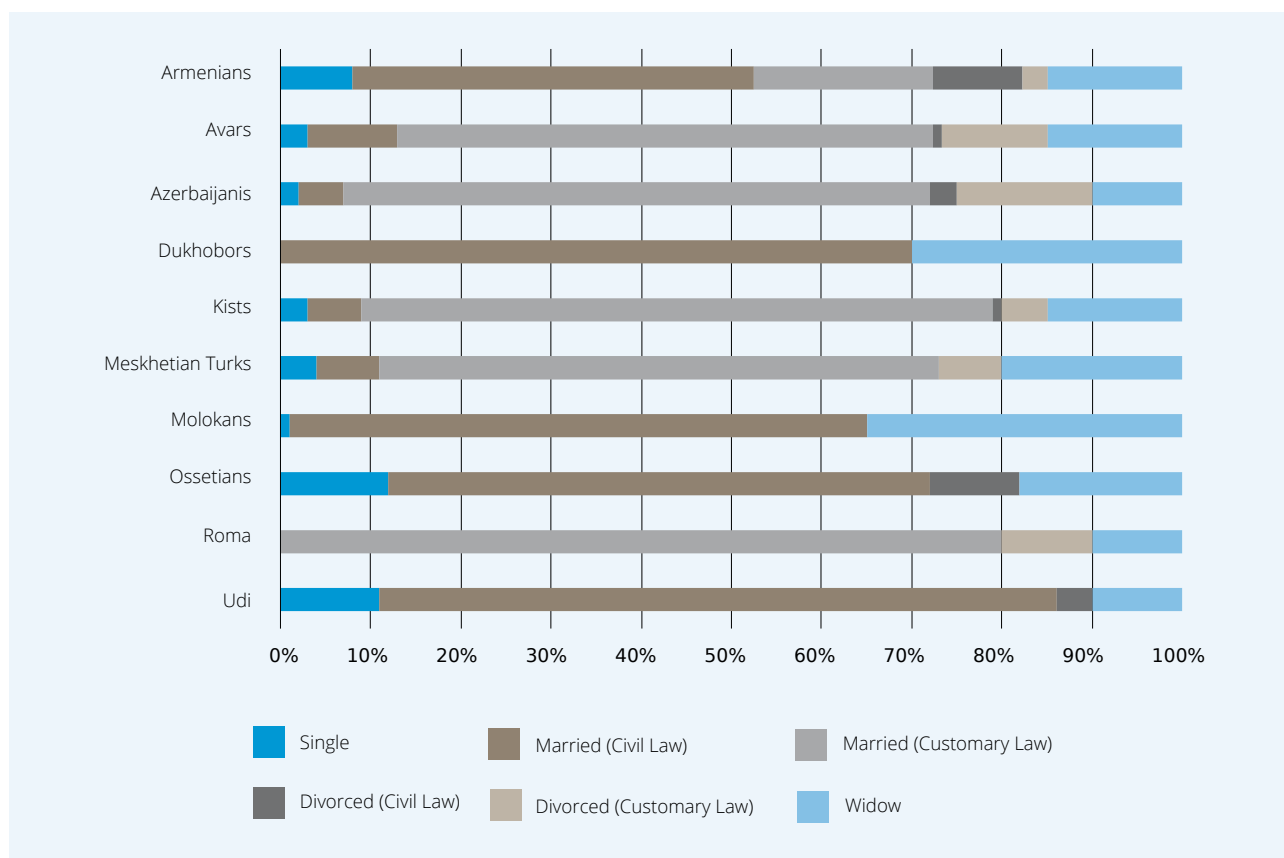


Civil status and marital age among ethnic minority women

As illustrated in the chart below, the overwhelming majority of the female respondents were married. Marriage/divorce in Georgia can be either civil or religious but among Muslim communities (Avar, Azerbaijani, Kist, Meskhetian Turk), there remains a prevalence of religious customary law marriages,

which are not registered according to civil law. Roma women are also commonly party to non-registered marriages. The implications of applying customary law strongly influence women's chances of receiving social support in cases of divorce/widowing or accessing property rights and other economic assets. In addition, chances of obtaining custody of under-age children are limited in cases of divorce.

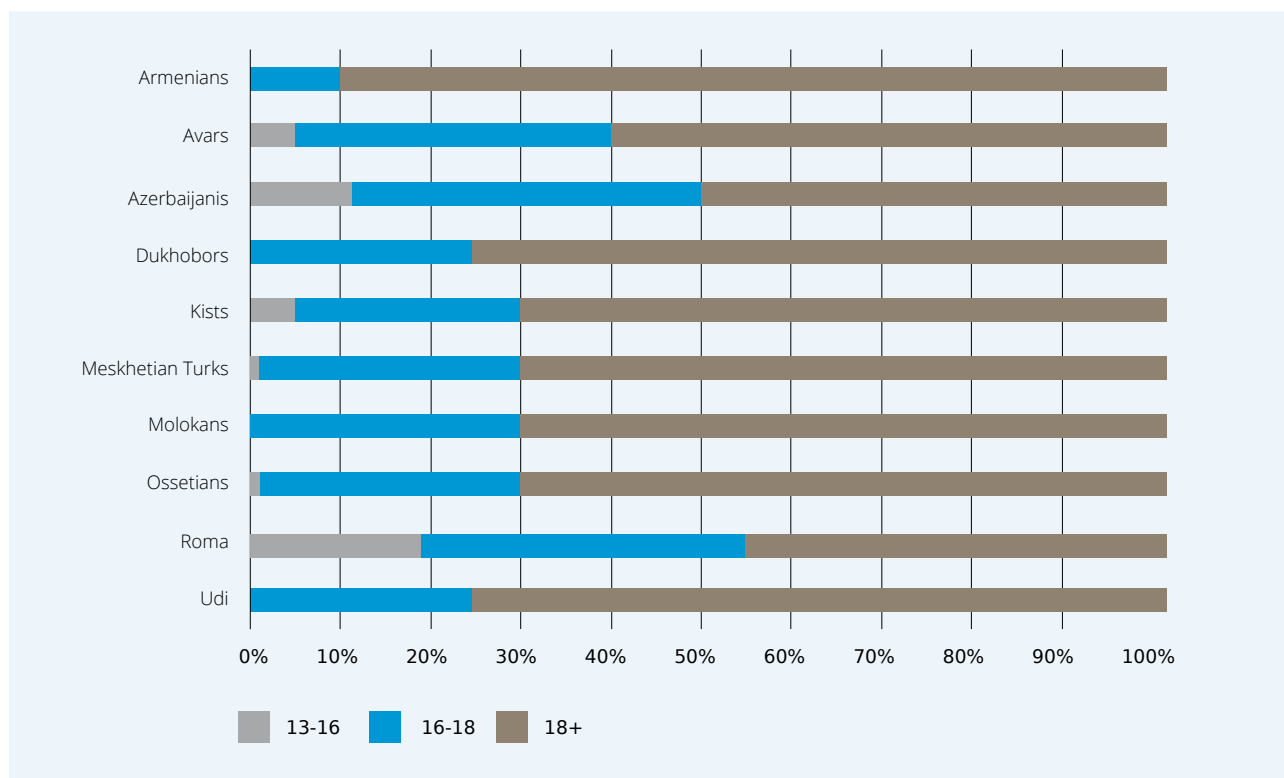
Chart no. 6:
Civil status



The marital age of women and girls varies among ethnic groups, although this gap is narrowing more and more. There are two reasons for this: 1) Traditional perception of early marriage, seen as the protection of young girls from potential abduction, which seems to be on the rise; 2) Economic factors among a predominantly agricultural population: increased labour supply on the one hand, and reduced need for caretaking in the large families, on the other. Tra-

ditionally, in Muslim communities, the bride leaves the house of her parents to move into the household of her husband, which is also common among Christian communities. In general the marital age among Christian Armenians, Ossetians, Udi, Dukhobor and Molokan is higher, while the co-habitation of brides with in-laws is mainly done for economic reasons or following a tradition to adapt to the new family.

Chart no. 7:
Marital age



Legal ownership and property rights

Among minority groups, there are culturally-based differences in women's legal ownership of family assets. In most Muslim communities, women do not inherit and are not holders of titles to property. Most of the property is registered in the husband's name, and women join the husband's household. This prevents women from obtaining bank loans as collateral to capitalise businesses (funding start-ups) and from becoming actively involved in the formal economy, thus leaving them bound to their families in the case of family break-up. Although they are aware of the civil legal possibility of holding titles to property, women who join husbands' families traditionally follow customary laws. In the current situation of large scale male outmigration, the inclusion of women on the property title is a key issue; with regards to increasing rural women's access to capital, asset ownership and savings for economic development and self-sufficiency. It will also enable women to better meet their own needs. Assisting women and men at the grassroots level to develop such a system would stabilise the family and open up other opportunities.

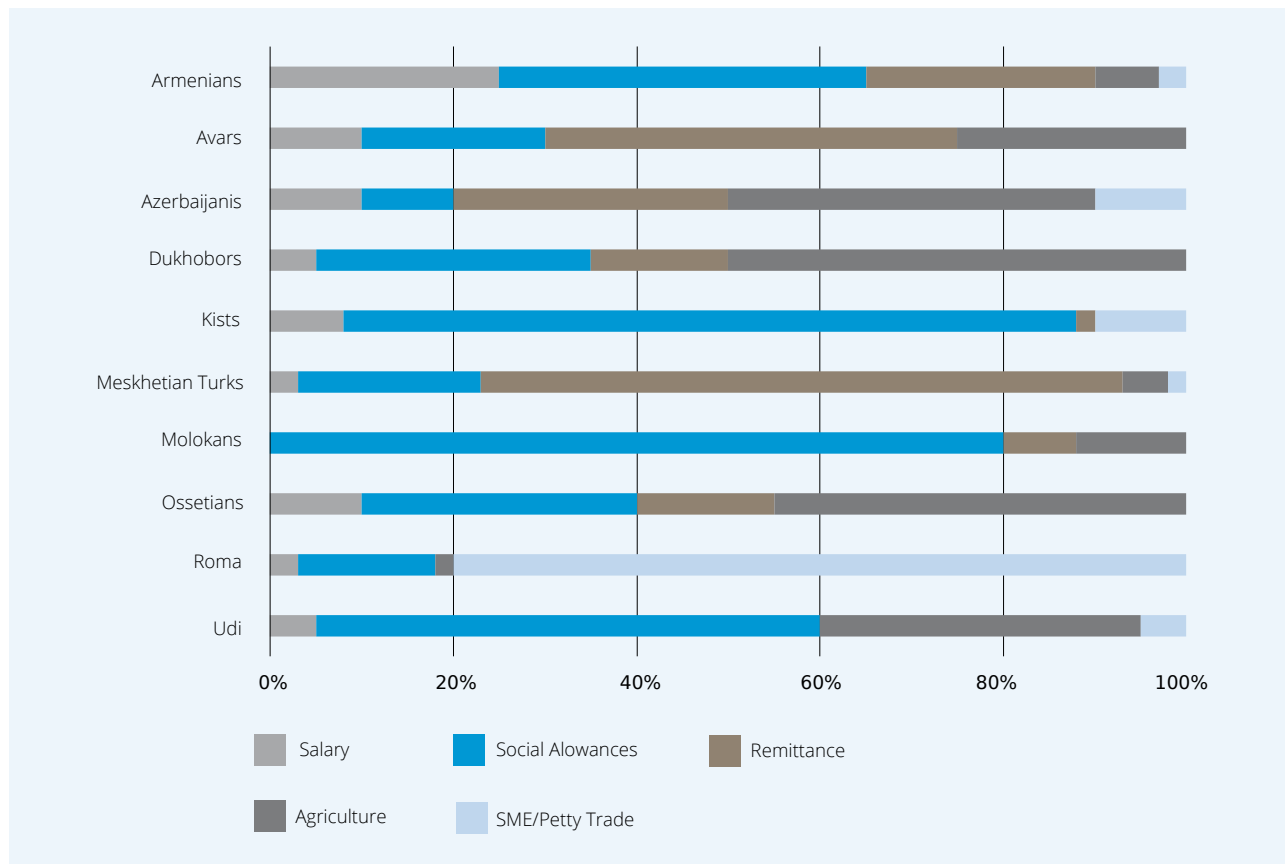
Income sources differentiation and salary levels

The main sources of income indicated in Chart 8 reflect the situation of women of various ethnic groups with regards to three major resources – social allowances, remittances from abroad, and agriculture. Petty trade is common for Roma women, mainly due to their urban dwelling. Petty trade is also a source of income for many Azerbaijanis located along the main road to Lagodekhi.

The sources of income stemming from agriculture or petty trade are often part of the informal economy, where small agricultural plots are cultivated by women and girls.

The sources of salaries include employment in the public sector – either public administration or education (school and kindergarten teachers) - with private employment being a rarity.

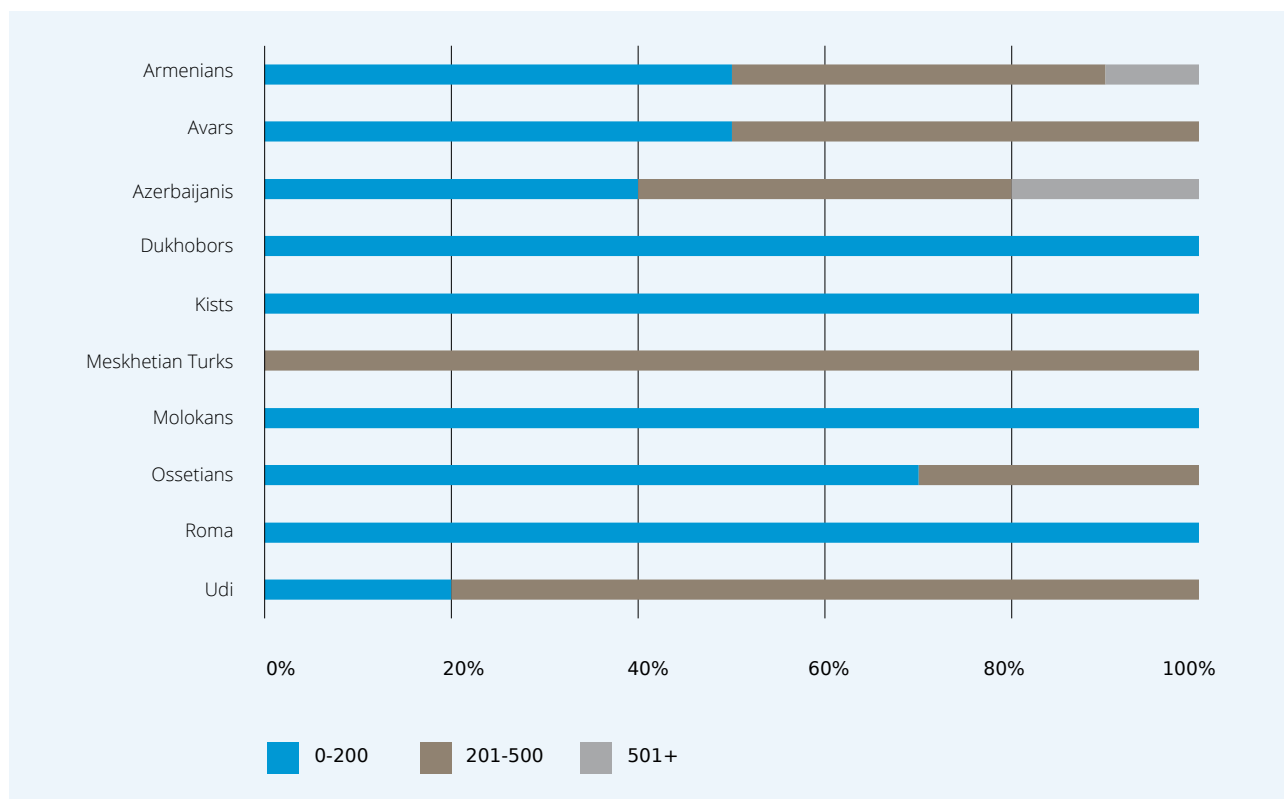
Chart no. 8:
Sources of income



Salary levels in the public sector are, in most cases, very low and few positions are available. The average salary for a kindergarten teacher is 100 GEL, which after the income tax deduction of 20% leaves only 80 GEL. The only advantage of such positions is the special teacher corporate health insurance and pension

schemes, which are provided to employees. Compared to the minimum pension of 120 GEL, the earnings in the public sector in lower positions, for which work-related costs such as transportation need to be paid, are not particularly appealing.

Chart no. 9:
Salary levels (GEL/month)



Domestic violence

Domestic violence is largely regarded as being of a physical nature. Different types of violence, such as economic and psychological, are not even considered to be a violation of women's rights. This perception is not exclusive to minorities, but is a general problem within Georgian society.⁹

Out of the three types of abuse, two (physical and economic) are more significant and feasible to research within minority communities. Verbal (psychological) violence, however, being the most widely spread type of abuse in Georgia¹⁰, seems to be part of cultural identity and daily life, thus there would be no added value to the study should further research be conducted on this matter. In any case, verbal abuse is used both by women and men and is difficult to evidence, while physical abuse is observable. In addition, economic abuse (property rights, prevention

of education or employment) can also be evidenced. In combating physical abuse, legal measures have been put in place to prevent violence. Nevertheless, the legal instruments are rarely used by the victims due to the perception that it is a "family matter and should be resolved in the family". Such a position is characteristic of both the victim and the abuser. In relation to the minorities in question, a classic pattern of men abusing their wives or children and sometimes the husband's mother, or the woman's mother-in-law, plays a role in the violence. As the eldest woman, the mother-in-law is the head of the domestic territory. As such, she may also practice physical violence against her daughters-in-law.

Another pattern that appeared during the study is economic violence.¹¹ Defined as control over the access to economic resources, acquiring resources by finding employment or education, or strong deci-

9 Chitashvili, Marine; et. al. (2010): National Research on Domestic Violence against Women in Georgia. p. 63

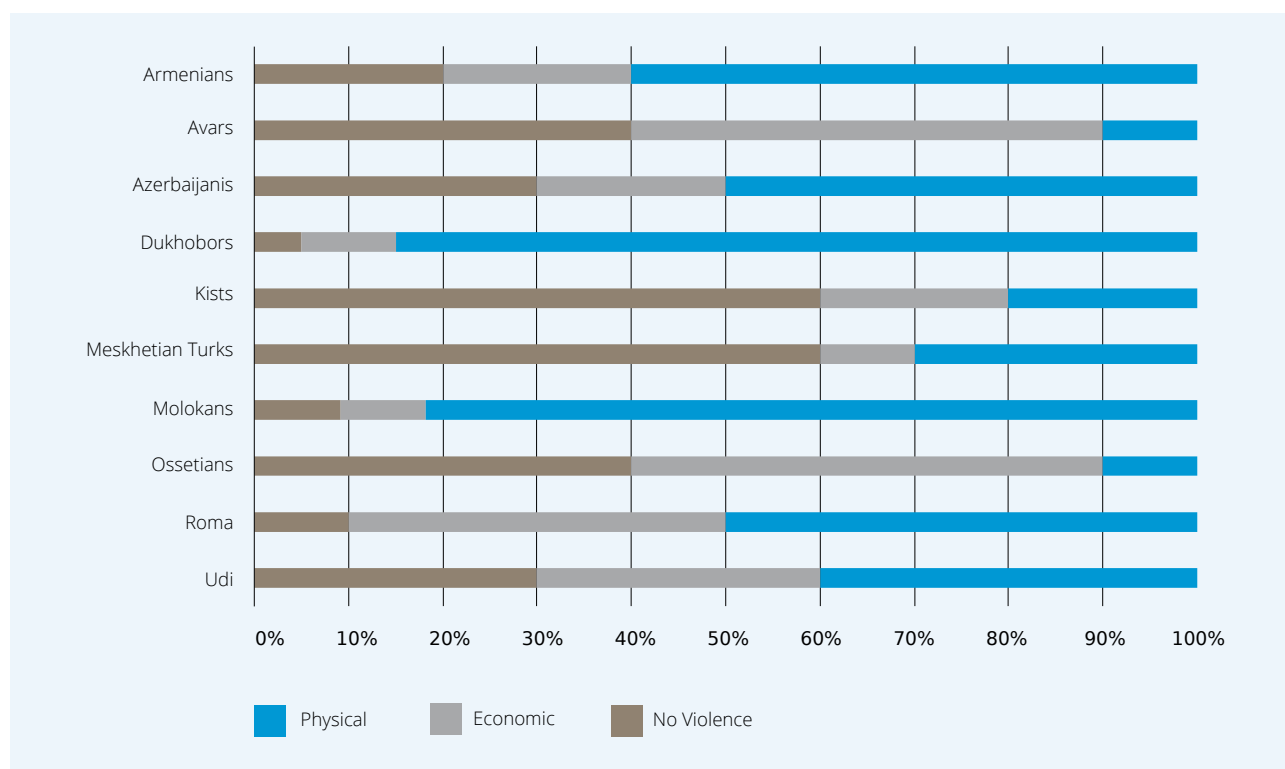
10 Source: <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cedaw/docs/AdvanceVersions/GeorgiaAnnexX.pdf>

11 A.E. Adams,; Sullivan, C.M; Bybee, D.; Greeson M.R. (2008): "Development of the Scale Economic Abuse"

sion-making over the use of financial or other means, this seems to be a growing form of violence. Instances in which this practice can be observed are when women are expected to relinquish all their salaries or other income to the household, or are restricted to performing only certain jobs, or when limits are placed on their careers. It also applies to girls being prevented from attending school or pursuing higher

education. This broader definition is not fully reflected in Georgian legislation which defines economic violence as a restriction of the right to property, the right to engage in labour activities, and the right to enjoy property in joint possession.¹² The group suffering most from both physical and economic violence is Roma women and girls, described in detail in the Roma chapter.

Chart no. 10:
Perceptions on domestic violence



Access to information

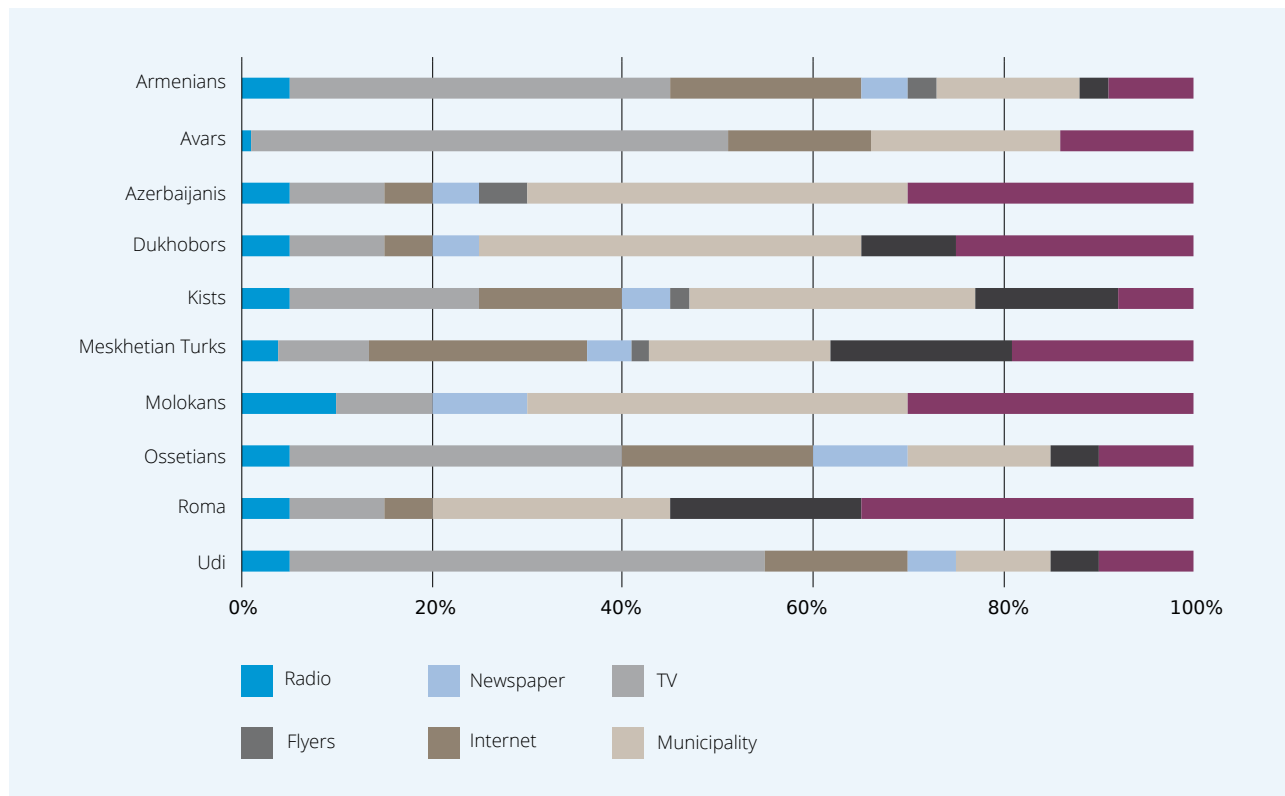
The accessibility of information, including the use of available resources, is critical for participation in society. Much of the available information provided to the population is channelled through TV programmes in Georgian. Minority women do not watch TV either because of a lack of time, problems with infrastructure (electricity) or because they watch TV channels, transmitted to Georgia from abroad in their own language. TV-produced information is often very brief, mainly alerting the public to particular issues, but

failing to provide full or adequate information. Other sources of information are obtained via municipal services, local NGOs or through friends. A growing user platform is the internet, to which young people have better access, and for which they have the necessary technical skills. Minority women in the regions rarely have access to the internet themselves and are dependent on others to convey the information. However, such secondary sources may also be distorted. Flyers in minority languages or even in Georgian are rarely disseminated or available.¹³

12 Law of Georgia on Elimination of Domestic Violence, Protection of and Support to Its Victims. Article 4 (e), 2006

13 Access to information for minorities as reflected in the state report 2012 on the implementation of the National Concept for Tolerance and Civic Integration <http://www.smr.gov.ge/docs/doc255.pdf>

Chart no. 11:
Access to information

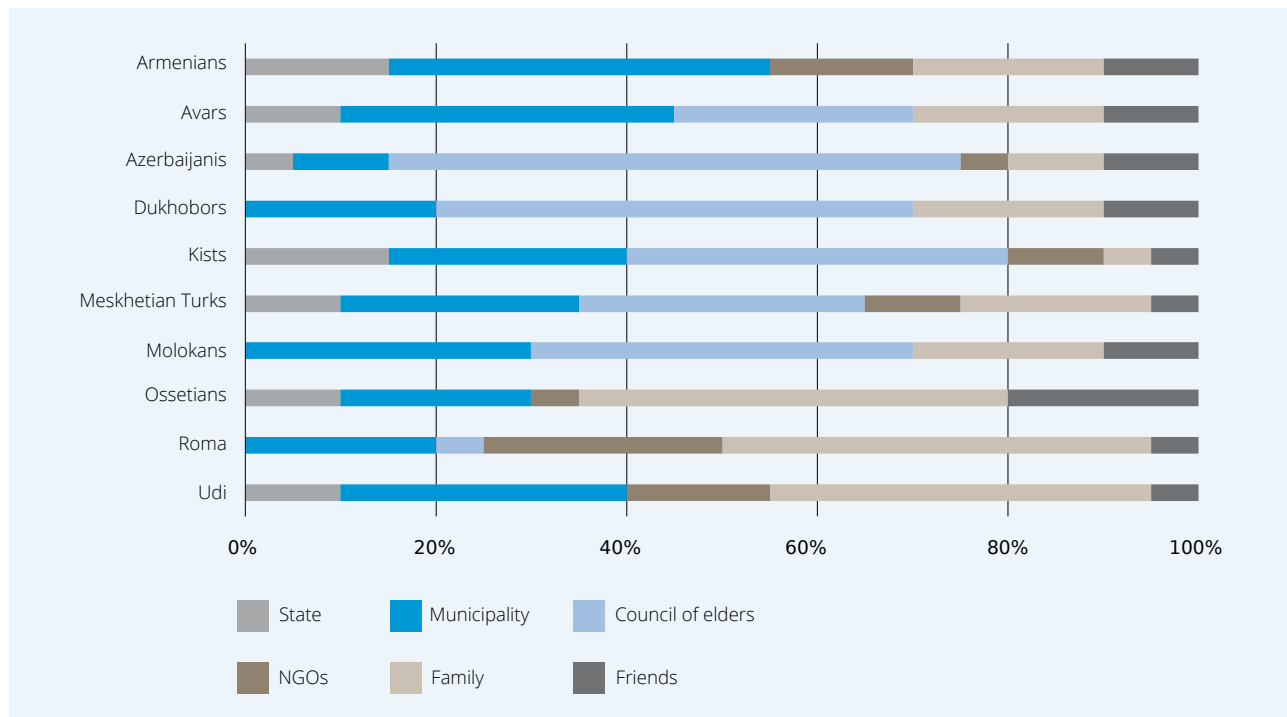


Solution to problems

When problems arise, many women refer to informal channels, mainly traditional ones, such as family, the council of elders or friends. In addition, municipal services are utilised in cases where a more formal resolution, such as social allowance support, is needed.

Using the state level to resolve problems seems too distant and complicated, and is mainly employed when other options have been exhausted. Therefore, the state programme of targeted social assistance is rarely sought out by minorities.

Chart no. 12:
Ways of addressing the problems



3. ACCESS TO SERVICES: NEEDS AND PRIORITIES

Main state services

The state provides several services including social assistance and legal services. However, these services are difficult to access for various reasons. One of the main reasons that minority women cannot access the various support programmes is the fact that they are not fluent in Georgian (usually the only language the information is provided in). As such, these programmes are not easily accessible to them.

The Targeted Social Assistance Programme (for vulnerable groups) is designed to accommodate the needs of families at risk of poverty. Yet, it operates a complicated assessment system of assigning points for various insufficiencies. The system is based on a review of the assets and valuables of the applicant where the “all counts” approach (house, domestic animals, house equipment regardless of its age and condition, and income) is applied. As women are the most common applicants for such support, it often creates a lot of frustration. There is no pro-active approach by social workers to visit families. In fact, it is the applicant that is tasked with seeking out these social services on their own, with the location often being far away from their home. Applicants also struggle to find help with filling-out the complicated application forms in the Georgian language¹⁴.

Other social assistance programmes for newborns and the disabled exist, but public information about them is barely accessible for those who do not have access to the internet and do not know how to seek out this information¹⁵.

In 2013, **State Universal Health Insurance**¹⁶ became available to all citizens of Georgia free-of-charge (mainly emergencies). The insurance does not cover all services and certain services have to be

co-financed (usually 10-30%); this includes the co-financing of up to 20% of children’s healthcare beyond the age of five. Certain age groups and persons with specific conditions and diseases can qualify for free medicines upon application. Georgia’s national insurance also covers visits to maternity clinics free-of-charge. Many smaller hospitals and local out-patient facilities in the regions have been closed, making access to healthcare a difficult endeavour, especially for women who either care for the sick, or are in need of medical attention themselves (especially pregnancy and various diseases common in women).¹⁷

General education (facilities, teacher salaries, school equipment, textbooks) is also free-of-charge up to the 12th grade. All other education levels are payable, and there is also the possibility of attending vocational education in state-driven colleges or higher education institutions with scholarships awarded based on individual performance. General education attendance up to and including the 9th year of schooling is compulsory, yet many minority children, particularly Roma, do not attend school, and if they do, they attend irregularly.

It is expected that from 2014, professional education will be free-of-charge, yet there are very few vocational colleges and those that exist are generally located in the central cities of each region, requiring transportation or on-site education (minimum three months). For many women, such professional education is not possible due to family obligations and because it requires a long absence away from home. In addition, professional education is conducted in Georgian, making it difficult for those without Georgian language skills.¹⁸

14 Source: http://ssa.gov.ge/index.php?lang_id=GEO&sec_id=34

15 Source: http://www.unicef.org/georgia/BASS_final-eng.pdf

16 Source: www.moh.gov.ge

17 Source: http://www.unicef.org/georgia/BASS_finaleng.pdf

18 Development in Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine; OECD Publishing, OECD (2011), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/8789264113039>, pp.159, 164

Infrastructure and main roads, excluding public transport

Another service or task for the state is to ensure proper infrastructure and road connections. Public transportation in the regions aside from large cities has been abolished and privatised. A collective taxi system of minibuses (marshrutka) has replaced it, but it exists only where the route is profitable for the operator. Therefore, in many minority localities there is limited access to public transportation both in terms of frequency and routes. Prices also influence the accessibility of transportation, which, taking into account the levels of income, makes it difficult for many minority women to access services outside their neighbourhood.

State legal services

The main legal services are provided by the Public Service Agency (PSA)¹⁹ under the Ministry of Justice (Public Service Halls). These centres are designed as one-stop shops with over 300 services available. Currently there are 12 Public Service Halls throughout Georgia, mainly based in larger cities. In the minority localities under review, only the town of Kvareli has a fully operational Public Service Hall.

Public Service Halls deliver the following services:

- Registration of persons - issuance of personal Identification document (ID); issuance of residence documents
- Issuance of birth certificates
- Issuance of marriage certificates by civil law
- Property registration
- Business registration
- Issuance of other documents
- Document retrieval

At the Public Service Hall, one can use computer facilities for self-service. Very recently, the Service Development Agency started establishing mini Public Service Halls in remote regions like the one in the village of Poka, Samtskhe-Javakheti region.

There are also costs related to state fees for several types of services, including child birth registration and marriage registration (up to 50 GEL). Taking into account the distance to the Public Service Hall and the state fees, persons are somewhat obstructed from receiving all official documents. The implica-

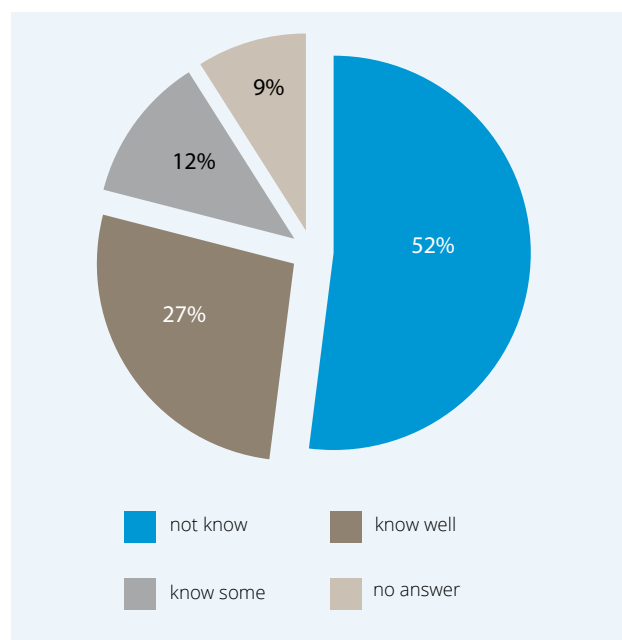
tions of this are a person not being registered – for children the school attendance voucher and free textbooks are not formally available (e.g. for Roma children). For women applying for social allowances that include children or themselves, access to state health insurance is not available either.

All personal data collection is the responsibility of the PSA, while municipalities no longer collect any data, including those related to ethnic composition. The data on ethnic composition of the population are not collected by the PSA to be passed on to the Georgian Statistical Office (GEOSTAT). GEOSTAT does not provide such information on an annual basis and it is only given in connection with the population census (the last census was done in 2002, with the next one scheduled for 2014).

Municipal level services

Since many respondents indicated that they turn to the municipal authorities to solve their problems, the respondents were asked about their knowledge regarding the function of the local government. Almost half of the respondents were not aware of the kinds of services provided by the municipalities.

Chart no. 13:
Knowledge of municipality functions and services



19 Source: http://psh.gov.ge/index.php?lang_id=ENG&sec_id=2

The lack of knowledge of municipal powers and competencies results from a combination of a lack of access to information and limited services that municipalities offer from their own budgets, which constitute less than 5% of the total municipal budget. The funds that comprise municipal budgets are obtained through transfers from the central government according to the tasks to be performed and by the initial budget request, but these are not necessarily granted.

Main municipal services

Services provided by municipalities from their own budget are rather limited and are mainly advisory services. These vary from municipality to municipality, depending on their priorities and the funds allocated to them. Some of the core services include:

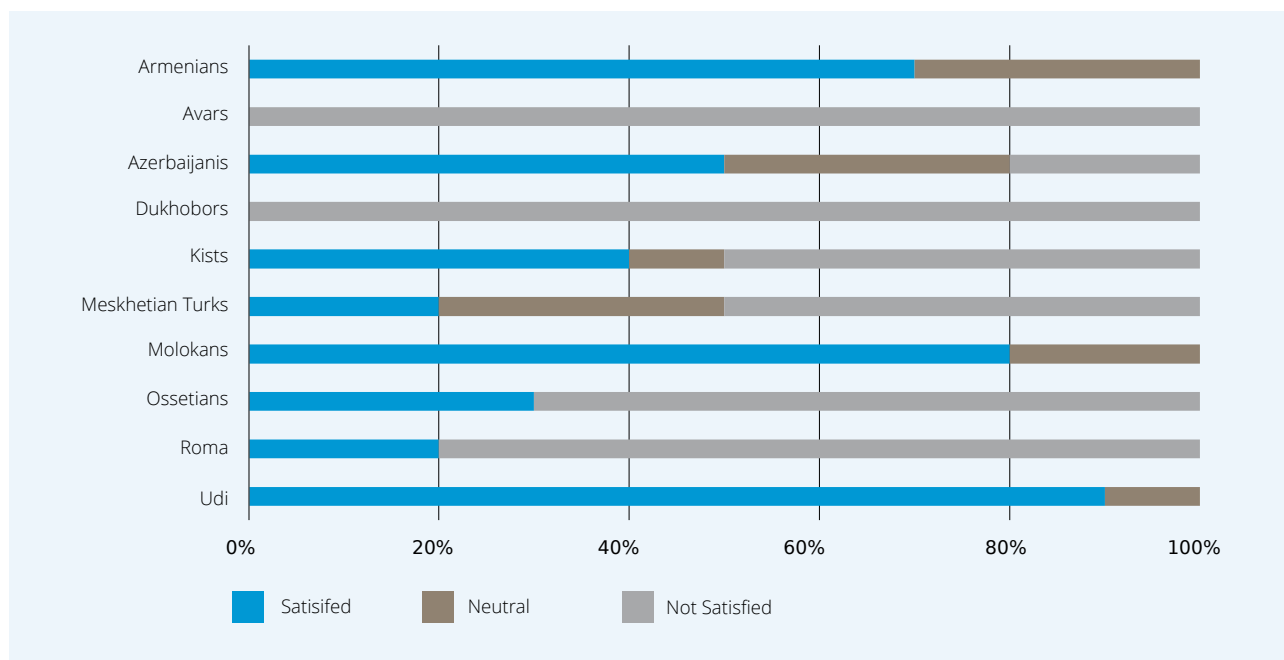
- Social support advice through social workers and emergency support for vulnerable groups, including eco-migrants
- Healthcare support (including emergencies)
- Legal services advice
- Preschool facilities (full responsibility)
- School transport (full responsibility)
- Cultural activities
- Local infrastructure (execution of the village support programme) excluding public transport

One of the critical issues raised by women is the access to pre-school facilities for children. In most

cases, ethnic minority women have very limited opportunities to send young children to kindergarten. Many kindergartens were closed partly due to the need for funding, often combined with a requirement to supply food to the facility. The financial constraints of parents had an adverse effect, forcing municipalities to close several kindergartens. Since 2013, the kindergartens have been free-of-charge, but municipalities have very limited funds for restoration work. The ethnic minority women regard kindergartens as very important educational institutions where children can acquire early childhood skills, including learning the Georgian language. Kindergartens also afford these women sufficient time to generate more income for the family. The impact of the accessibility of kindergarten also positively affects older children, especially girls, who, instead of looking after their younger siblings, can go to school.

Access to school transportation is very important for school children as school attendance requires transport from distant villages, especially for younger children who cannot walk 3-4 kilometres or have to be accompanied by their mothers. Still, only a few municipalities can afford full coverage of school transportation. It is expected that the local self-governance reforms planned for 2014 will allow the budgets of municipalities to become more independent and provide for better planning of services and related expenditures.

Chart no. 14:
Access to kindergartens



3.1. Ecological migrants factor in minority communities

For several years, the Georgian government has been resettling ecological migrants from two major natural disaster-prone areas - Adjara and Svaneti.²⁰ Much of the resettlement has taken place in remote rural areas populated by ethnic minorities.²¹ The facilitation of eco-migrant integration has not been conducted in these areas.

The housing and land available due to the large scale of outmigration from minority villages seemed to be an easy way of resettling eco-migrants, but instead it has created additional problems. In many cases, the varying cultural and religious environments of traditional settlements, and government pressure to sell

houses to the state, often below market price, has spurred resentment among minorities. In some cases, the eco-migrants were settled in houses without consent of the rightful owners.²²

Furthermore, pressure was placed on municipality budgets to provide emergency social allowances to eco-migrants from their own budgets, leaving little for the local population. Additional pressure on already limited infrastructure is still felt in many areas while the distribution of land to eco-migrants was carried out despite complaints, with some land distribution remaining unresolved.

All communities under the study have experienced such problems,²³ with the exception of the Akhalkalaki urban centre which has no resettled ecological migrants.

²⁰ Source: http://www.ecmcaucasus.org/upload/publications/working_paper_53_en.pdf

²¹ In order to strike out a demographic balance, in the early 1990s eco-migrants had been resettled to the borderline territories and the regions inhabited by ethnic minorities. However, given the existing lack of financial and human resources, the resettlement activities are carried out rather spontaneously, which hinders considerably the adaptation process following the resettlement; Source: http://www.carim-east.eu/media/exno/Explanatory%20Notes_2013-130.pdf p. 4

²² Elene Khachapuridze, Eco-migration – challenge for Georgia. Elene Khachapuridze. 19.01.2012. News Portal www.netgazeti.ge, available at: <http://netgazeti.ge/GE/89/Life/7827/>, date of access: September, 2013.

²³ Eco migrants resettlement locations in the Kakheti region: Iliatsminda; Areshperani, Chiauri, Akhmeta; Lagodekhi, Dedoplistskaro, Saruso. Info CENN info@cenn.ge; CENN Eco-migration in the South Caucasus Countries - Report in the period of March 1, 2013 - March 7, 2014.

3.2. Infrastructure

The research has revealed several problems encountered by ethnic minority women on a daily basis. These infrastructural inefficiencies lead to life-degrading situations that affect the personal development of women. The four main elements of infrastructure – access to water, gas, electricity and roads, with the assessment of the users' satisfaction with delivery are presented below.

Starting from access to tap water, gas and electricity, minority women suffer from shortcomings. As in most of the researched ethnic groups, it is the women's job to maintain family operability. Therefore, it is important for the study to identify each of the problems in a detailed manner to obtain a clearer picture of the reality in each community.

Structurally, the report describes all the infrastructural inefficiencies the research has uncovered before touching upon the specific problems each ethnic minority group has to deal with.

Methodologically, due to the social character of the research, the questions posed to the respondents have been constructed in order to measure their attitude and satisfaction with each infrastructural com-

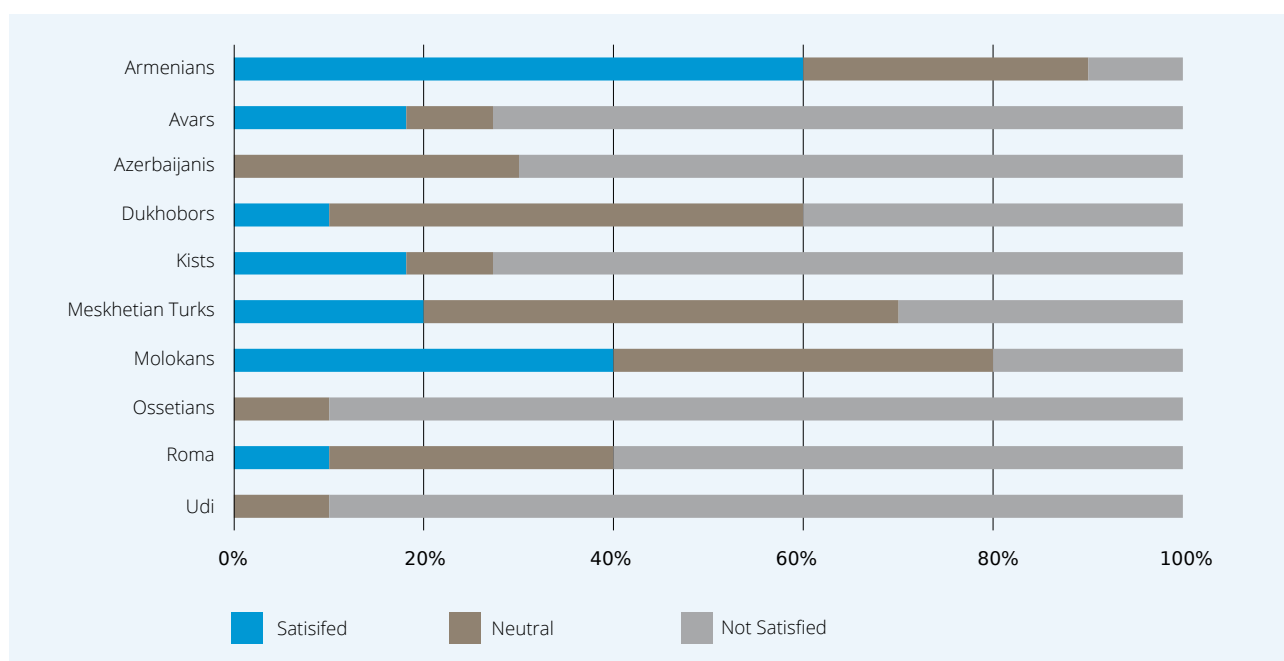
ponent. The aim of the study was not (and could not be) to technically measure the accessibility of water, gas, transportation, and electricity. This goal would have been beyond the scope of this research. Therefore, the questions have been designed in a way to evaluate the situation based on the population's perception and satisfaction with existing conditions.

• Water supply

Access to tap water remains a serious problem. In the vast majority of Georgian rural areas this has always been an issue. However, in recent years, the local governments have been implementing village support programmes. Tap water supply is one of the main priorities under the framework of this programme. As a result, the projects have been designed to address water insufficiency and have only succeeded in establishing some points of running tap water in some villages. The in-house water supply remains inaccessible with the villagers needing to make long journeys in order to bring water home (mostly women due to the culture-based labour division).

As Chart 14 shows, the only exception is in the town of Akhalkalaki. There, the issue has been more or less addressed with ethnic Armenian women residing there receiving an in-house water supply.

Chart no. 15:
Access to water



• Gas supply

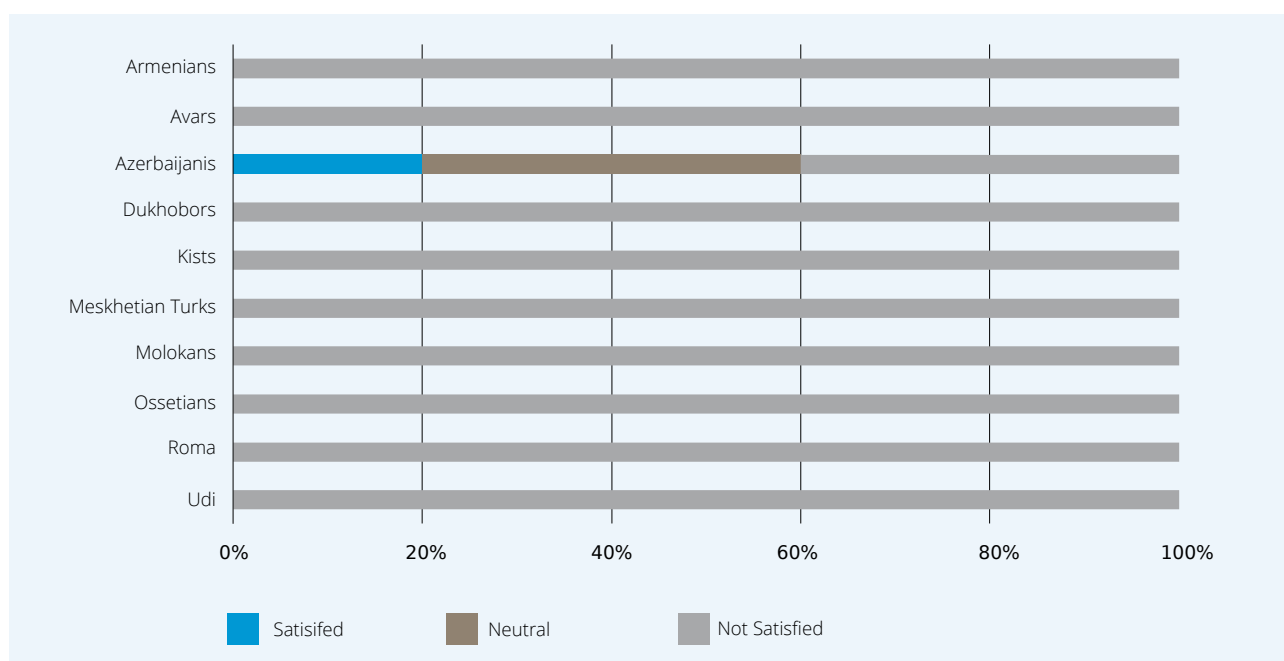
Access to gas supply is important for two purposes – cooking and heating. Even though the installation of gas lines in rural areas in Georgia was set as a goal of the central government, only villages populated with Azerbaijanis in the Lagodekhi municipality have access to gas among the groups included in the research. In the Kakheti region, an alternative source of heating and cooking is firewood, distributed by vouchers of 7m3 per household. Although there is accessibility to firewood, it still needs to be purchased and delivered to homes; otherwise, residents need to

go to the woods, cut down trees, and bring the firewood home, which can be difficult for female-headed households sustaining themselves on low incomes.

In Samtskhe-Javakheti, the upper regions of Javakheti have very limited access to firewood, as there are almost no forests. The problem is greater in the Armenian and Dukhobor communities in Samtskhe-Javakheti, not only in private households, but also in schools, kindergartens and other institutions. In villages, women make turf pads and dry them to store as a source of heating and cooking.

Chart no. 16:

Access to gas supply



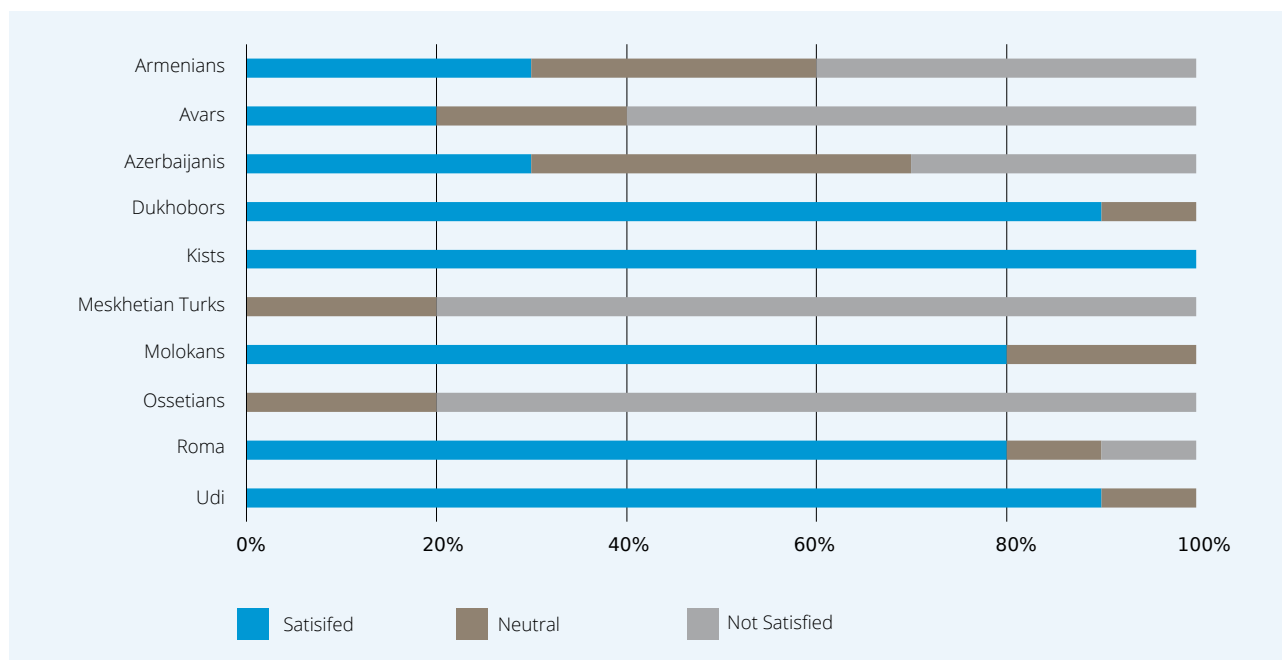
• Roads and transportation

Proper transportation requires the proper reconstruction of roads. In this regard, two major problems can be identified: 1) the main road network leading to localities, and 2) roads within the localities. The respondents maintained that roads are important for daily life in order to maintain a closer connection to the town centres, especially when needing municipal services. In most cases, access to the main roads is available where transportation is accessible. However, roads within localities are in such bad condition that it makes accessibility to transpor-

tation very difficult. Women and children are obliged to walk long distances and it is very difficult for an ambulance or other emergency assistance services to reach the villages. There is no public transport provided within the municipalities and all routes are absorbed by private companies.

Almost all of the ethnic women groups indicated roads as one of the high priority needs. Chart 17 reveals the attitudes of each ethnic group towards that element of infrastructure:

Chart no. 17:
Access to roads/transportation

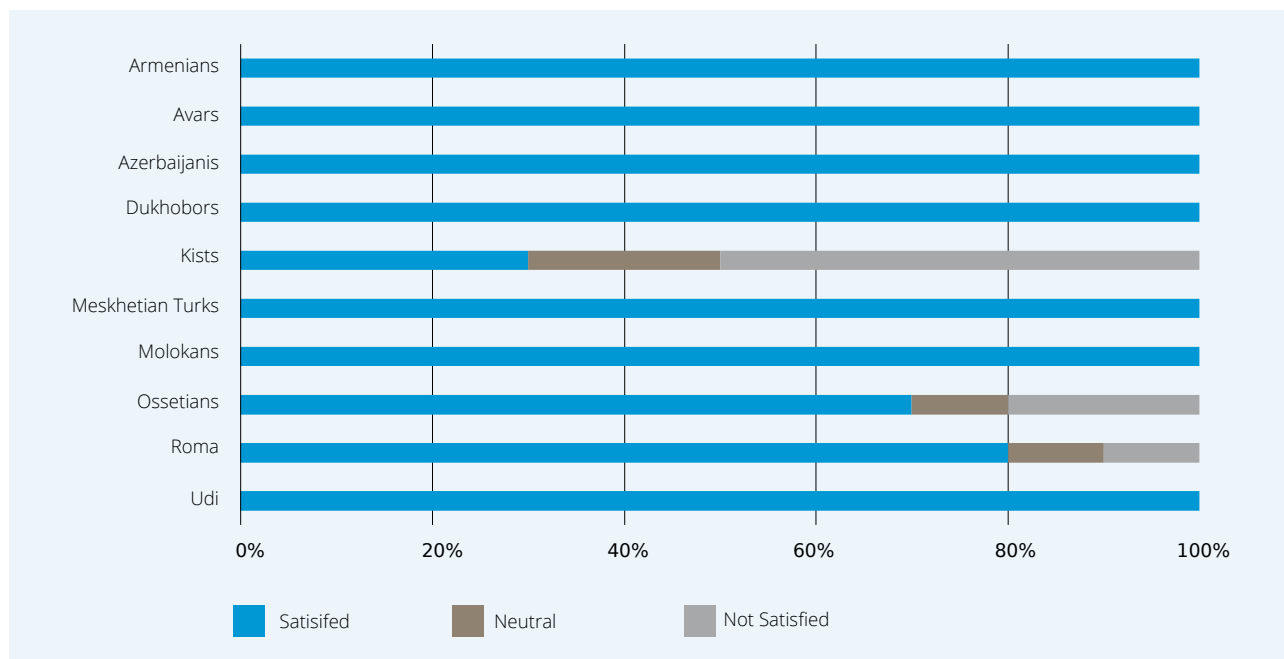


- **Electricity and outdoor lightning**

There is a shared positive approach towards the supply of electricity among the respondents. Most ethnic women are satisfied with the situation in that regard. However, in the Pankisi Gorge, the problem of properly equipped infrastructure remains. There is also limited access to electricity with only a limited number of hours' supply, sometimes only 3-4 hours per day, despite proximity to a hydroelectric power plant.

The availability of street lights has also been outlined as one of the infrastructural inefficiencies. Even though in many cases the system of outdoor lighting has been reconstructed, problems persist with regard to maintenance. If the system malfunctions, repairs take a considerable amount of time. One of the reasons why street lights are important to women is safety for themselves and their families due to the poor condition of the roads.

Chart no. 18:
Access to electricity



When analysing the needs and priorities related to infrastructure – the following were identified:

Needs: water supply in-house; separation of drinking water and waste water; gas supply; road rehabilitation; street lighting; public transportation; stable electricity supply; heating support; community house for gatherings
Priorities: in-house water supply; gas supply; road rehabilitation.

One other aspect of infrastructure mentioned was the availability of a community house for local gatherings. Since schools belong to the Ministry of Education, they are not available to the local population after school hours. Therefore, there is an outspoken need for community houses, which existed in the past, but were closed and have not been rehabilitated since. This was the responsibility of the municipalities, but due to scarce resources, only some sporadic rehabilitation has taken place and in very few locations.

3.3. Healthcare and medical services²⁴

The state or national insurance programme is accessible for every citizen. The majority of the population is already insured under this programme. However, most of the respondents covered in the study complained about its inefficiency. State co-financing is insufficient to cover the substantial medical treatment costs of patients, who are still required to pay for most of their medical services.

Problems in the healthcare system are considered as one of the main challenges in the project's targeted rural regions. The results of the focus group meetings and individual consultations with relevant respondents proved that minority communities, and particularly minority women, do not have proper access to the healthcare system. Moreover, existing medical facilities do not allow for adequate medical services to be delivered.

24 Tamari Rukhadze "An overview of the health care system in Georgia: expert recommendations in the context of predictive, preventive and personalised medicine", 2013; Source: <http://www.epmajournal.com/content/4/1/8>

The importance of such well-functioning services heavily affects minority women in rural areas. They are expected to take care of the sick members of extended families, bring them to the doctor or to organise the provision of medicine. In emergency situations, access of ambulances to villages is limited due to bad roads. In addition, there are no specialised medical services for women.

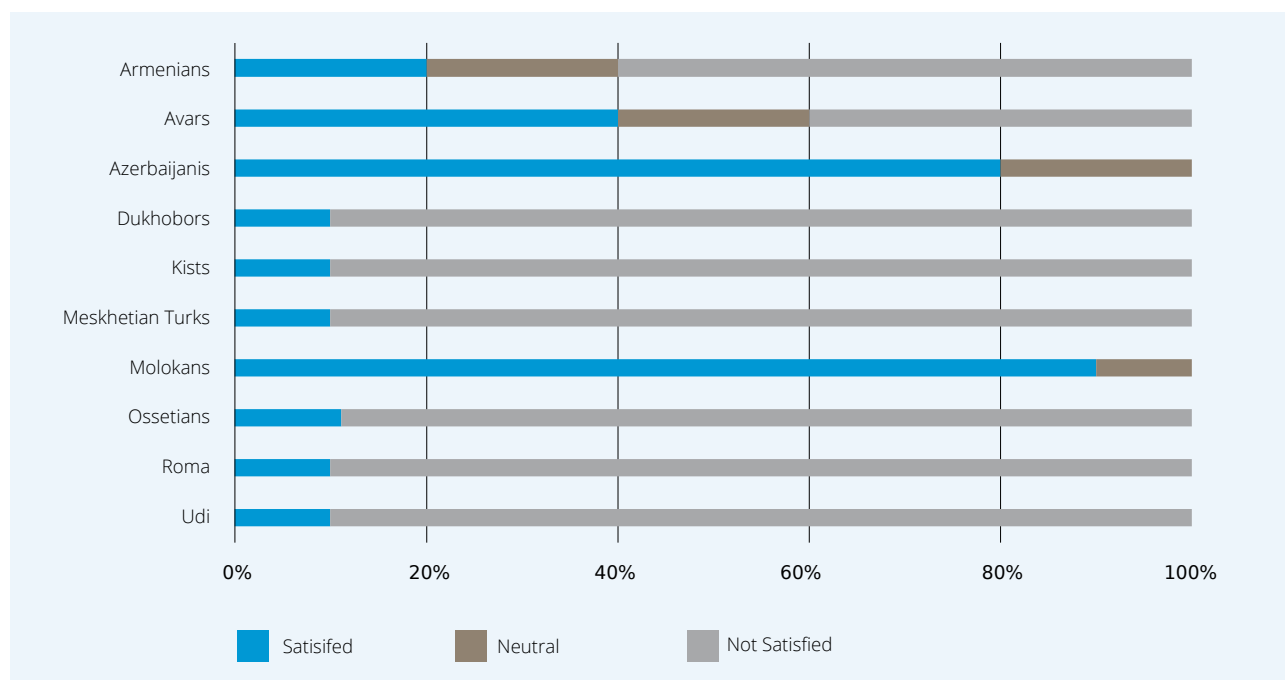
Hospitals operate in all of the project's targeted areas (Akhalkalaki, Ninotsminda, Akhmeta, Telavi, Kvareli, and Lagodekhi) but they lack necessary medical equipment. Therefore, it is impossible to carry out urgent surgical interventions there. As such, the local population is forced to visit larger medical institutions in regional centres or in the capital when medical emergencies arise. That is again a burdensome task for women.

A similar situation persists with local ambulatory

services. It has been revealed that the municipalities are poorly covered by outpatient services. Although there are ambulant clinics in certain villages (mainly closer to the municipal centres), the quality of the services they provide is inadequate. In most cases, the doctors do not perform medical services, but rather advise where the sick person should seek help. Pharmacies are only found in municipal centres and in larger villages.

The chart below shows the accessibility to healthcare services according to the different ethnic communities. It has been discovered that smaller national minority communities are suffering more from poor medical services. There are two exceptional cases: Molokans in the village of Iliatsminda (Dedoplistskaro municipality) have access to local medical services, while Azerbaijanis living in cluster villages similar to an urban settlement in the Lagodekhi municipality expressed satisfaction with existing medical services.

Chart no. 19:
Access to medical services



Needs: reduction of co-finance in health insurance policies; local medical facilities; access to pharmacies; access to specialised medical services for women; access to hospitals.

Priorities: local medical facilities; access to pharmacies; access to medical services for women.

3.4. Education

During the study, various aspects of education were taken into consideration. In particular, general education, professional education and higher education issues²⁵ have been discussed in focus groups and analysed in the project's target areas.

Women and girls' educational levels

a) General education

A number of problems have been identified in the general education system. In many minority areas, general education is only available up to the 9th grade, while senior levels of general education (up to the 12th grade) require transportation and financial resources. This restricts the ability of girls to continue their education beyond the 9th grade, based on the traditional perception of values (girls will get married and do not need education beyond a basic level, and will not be available for house/field work to generate income). In most cases of smaller minorities such as Avar, Udi, Ossetian, Russian and Kist/Chechen groups, education is available only in Georgian, while children coming to school from a home in which another language is spoken, have difficulties following the programme. One of the strong priorities for smaller minorities is to re-introduce their native language into the schooling system.

For larger minorities schooling is available in their own language, but the schoolbooks are translated from the Georgian master copy into the relevant minority language. The translated textbooks appear to be inadequate, with significant terminology and structural mistakes, and the material has not been verified by experts in the relevant subjects. For Armenian and Azerbaijani minorities, the number of Georgian language hours at school is considered insufficient.

b) Professional education

National minority communities have formal access to professional education in both the Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kakheti regions. For instance, there is a state-run LEPL Professional Development College "Opizari" in Akhaltsikhe and a Professional Development Centre "Aisi" with agricultural profiles in the village of Kachreti in the Sagarejo municipality, the "Iberia" college in Kutaisi and the "Black Sea" college in Batumi. Other colleges are tuition-based private enti-

ties.²⁶ However, state institutions are not accessible as they are not focused on ethnic minority communities and the activities of these schools are not seen as part of the general minority integration policy or minority gender enhancement. They do not offer introductory courses in Georgian and courses are only offered on school premises. As this would require girls to remain away from home for a longer time, minority girls find it especially difficult to attend.

c) Higher education

The research revealed that there has been some progress in terms of access to the higher education system. Interviews with respondents and focus group discussions showed that the "1+4 programme"²⁷ improved the accessibility of Georgian higher education institutions, but only for Armenian, Azerbaijani and Ossetian graduates. For the Azerbaijani community in Kakheti (mostly in the Karajala village of the Telavi municipality), it is mainly female school graduates who benefit from the "1+4 programme". Other ethnic communities still miss out on any preferential enrolment in higher education institutions.

d) The Zurab Zhvania School of Public Administration in Kutaisi²⁸ as an education opportunity for minorities in the field of public administration

The school was founded in 2006 with the assistance of several international donors, with the aim of addressing the low level of representation of minorities in local administrations, particularly among the Armenian and Azerbaijani communities. It offered intensive six-month courses in the Georgian language and a two-year education programme in the sphere of public administration. The school has excellent facilities, including a student dormitory. In the period of its operation, the courses were mainly attended by young women. The school operated this programme until 2010, when the administration education component was suspended while it continues as a Geor-

25 Source: <http://www.mes.gov.ge/index.php?lang=geo>

26 Vocational colleges listing available at: www.profes_ENG_20_07_2012.xlsx

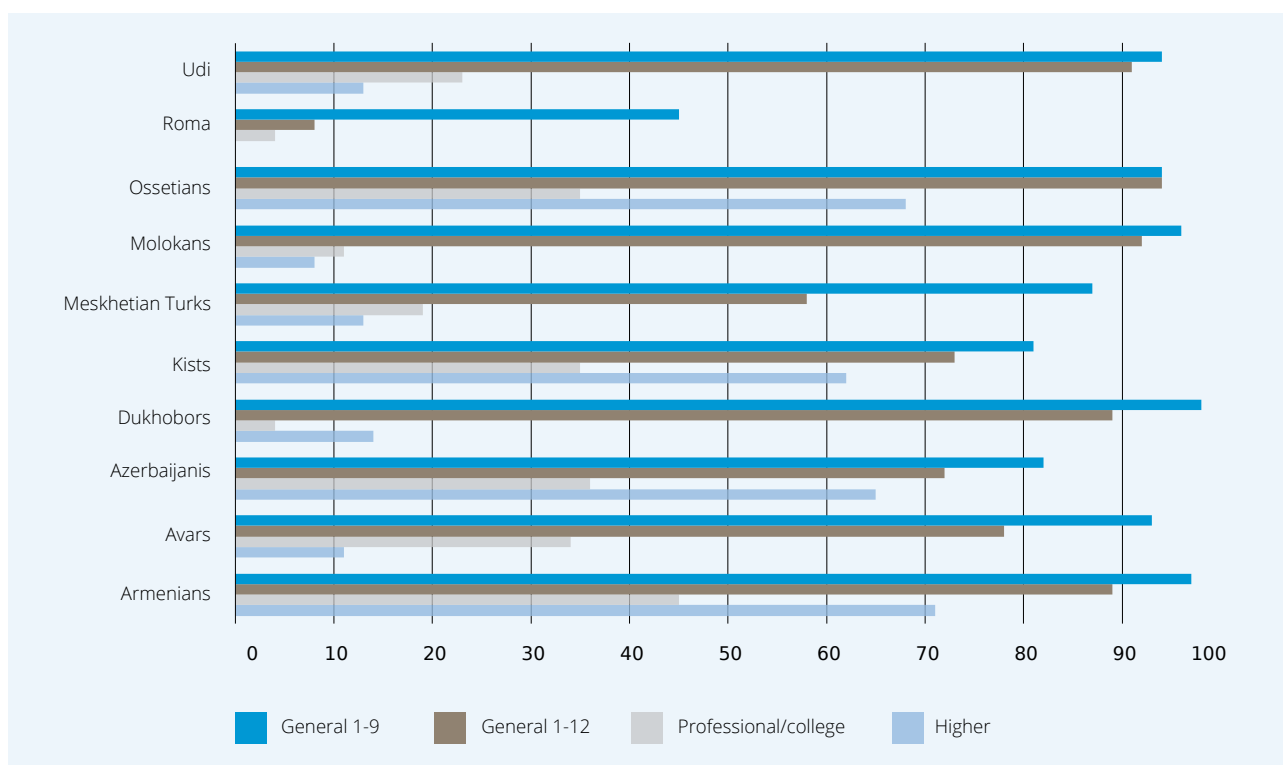
27 Programme "1+4" refers to Ministerial Decree nr 300, indicating simplification of access by specific minorities – mainly Armenian and Azeri, and gradually also Abkhaz, Ossetian and Meskhetian Turk minorities, to higher education by passing only the GAT (General Aptitude Test) in their native language. The 1st year of studies is devoted to intensive Georgian language learning, followed by 4 years of regular faculty studies. Source: https://matsne.gov.ge/index.php?option=com_idmssearch&view=docView&id=1711180&lang=ge

28 Source: www.zspa.ge

gian language training centre for school directors and teachers from non-Georgian schools. Very few minorities are aware of its existence. It would be a great opportunity to revive the public administration component and enrol students from all minorities to increase levels of female participation and representation in local governance.

The chart below shows the accessibility to different types of education for national minorities, which highlights that only general education (grades 1 through 9) is in fact accessible to most of the minority communities, and is used almost equally by girls and boys, with the exception of the Roma population, who are still marginalised. The specifics of Roma women and girls' educational problems are provided in the chapter on the Roma group.

Chart no. 20:
Access to education²⁹



Language needs

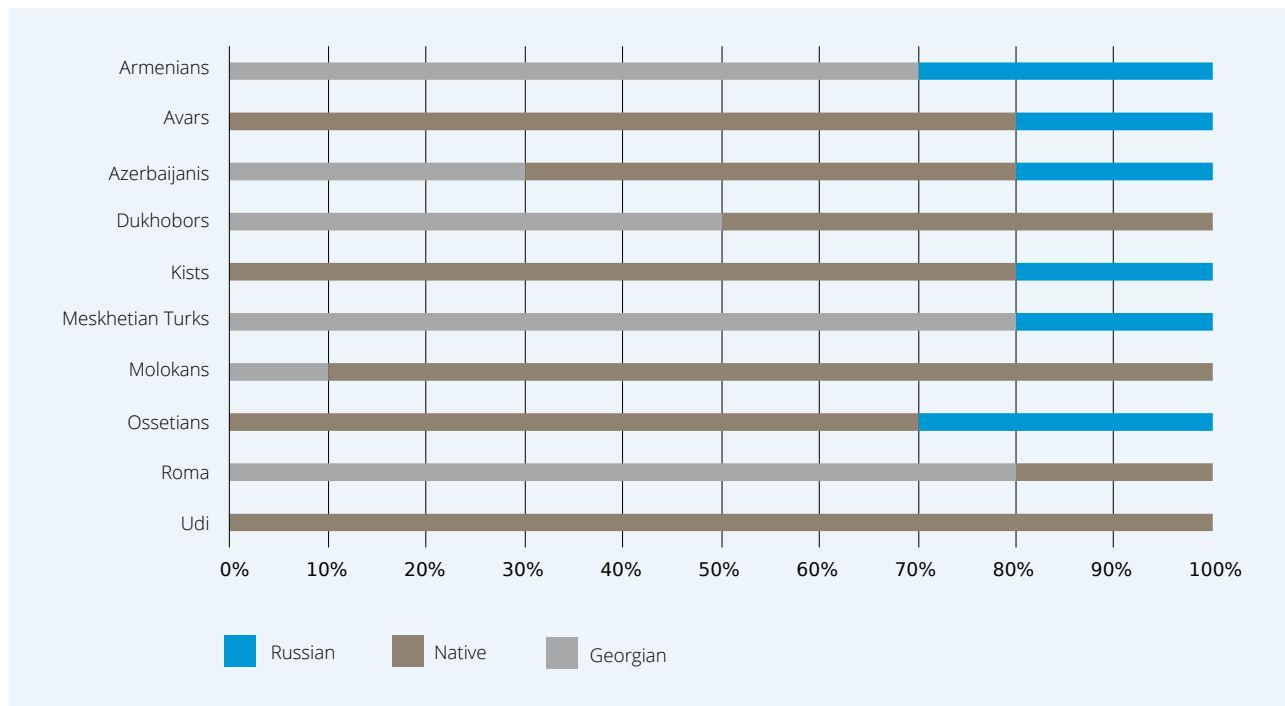
The extent to which Georgian language proficiency is a priority differs according to the particular minority group. Among Armenian, Azerbaijani, Dukhobor, Meskhetian Turk and Roma women, this is a priority, while other minority women are fluent in Georgian. These groups expressed a strong desire to learn the

native language for themselves and their children, which has been removed from the school curriculum by the Ministry of Education and Science in 2012-2013 – Avar, Chechen, Ossetian, Russian and Udi. Elsewhere, teaching Russian from an earlier stage was an expressed priority.³⁰

29 Source: http://www.ecmicaucasus.org/upload/publications/working_paper_46_en.pdf

30 Situation of minority languages education is presented in detail in each minority group chapter

Chart no. 21:
Language needs



Needs: general education of 10-12 grades; native language classes at school; training for professional certification; higher education access for minorities within the "1+4" programme improved and extended to other minorities; adult education.

Priorities: native language classes; general education of 10-12 grades; training for professional certification; adult education.

3.5. Participation and representation of minority women: Gender equality awareness

The general level of political participation and representation of women in both the Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kakheti regions is low. In Samtskhe-Javakheti, women are represented only at the lower and middle levels of local governance and administrations. According to statistical data provided by the Samtskhe-Javakheti governor's office, women constitute only 14.5% of the members of the municipal council (Sakrebulo) in all six municipalities. Women

representation in administrative structures of municipalities (apparatus of the Gamgeoba) is higher and constitutes almost 24%. However, women in local administrations are employed mainly at the secretarial level.

Minority women are especially ignored in local governance structures. In Samtskhe-Javakheti, minority women have been elected only in Akhaltsikhe (an Armenian) and Ninotsminda (an Armenian). As for the representation in municipal administrations, only 45 minority women are employed across all six municipalities.

Table no. 2:

Representation of women in local councils (Sakrebulo) and local administration (Gamgeoba) of the Samtskhe-Javakheti region

Sakrebulo Member	Akhatsikhe	Akhalkalaki	Ninotsminda
men	23	30	17
Women	3	0	2
Ethnic Min. Women	1 (AM)	0	1 (AM)
Employed in Gamgeoba			
Men	66	135	93
Women	35	27	18
Ethnic Min. Women	4 (AM)	23 (AM)	17 (AM)

In the Kakheti region, women's participation in local governance is generally higher than in Samtskhe-Javakheti. For instance, women are represented in all targeted municipalities: Akhmeta (4), Telavi (3), Kvareli (1), Lagodekhi (4); yet only one ethnic minority woman is present in the Telavi Sakrebulo.

As for the municipal administration, women constitute about 80% of the total number of employees. However, the majority is employed in secretarial and mid-level positions. Women generally do not occupy decision-making posts.

Table no. 3:

Representation of women in local councils (Sakrebulo) and local administration (Gamgeoba) of the Kakheti region (prior to the local elections of June 2014)

Sakrebulo Member	Akhmeta	Telavi	Kvareli	Lagodekhi
men	21	25	20	21
Women	4	3	1	4
Ethnic Min. Women	0	1 (AZ)	0	0
Employed in Gamgeoba				
Men	-	-	-	-
Women	-	80%	90%	80%
Ethnic Min. Women	1	0	0	0

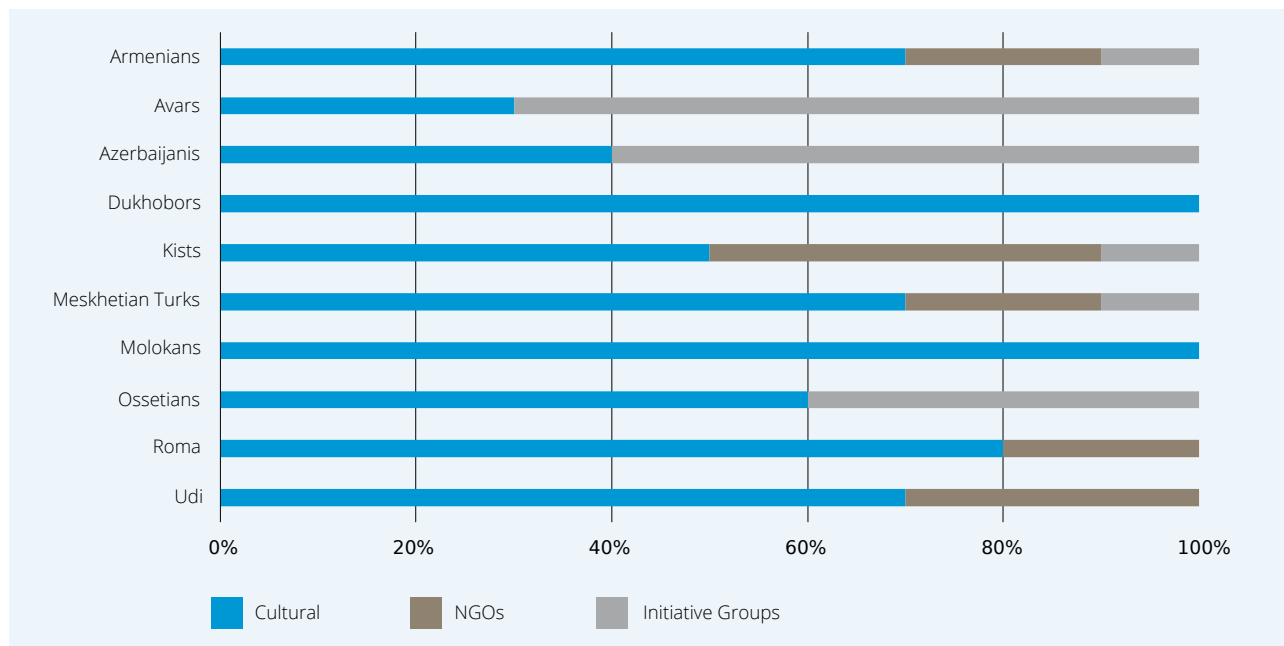
Civic engagement

The level of civic engagement and the mobilisation of ethnic minority women is also low in both regions. Minority women participate mainly in activities re-

lated to culture in a broad sense, including making arrangements for children. Only a few participate in or have established non-governmental organisations or initiative groups.

Chart no. 22:

Cultural/civic engagement of ethnic minority women



a) Samtskhe-Javakheti

There are no specialised gender-oriented organisations in Samtskhe-Javakheti. Women are represented and employed in a number of local CSOs. However, their influence and leverage in those organisations is minimal, especially in minority-dominated municipalities like Akhalkalaki and Ninotsminda.

At the same time, gender awareness in local governance is not taken into account. No gender related issues have been mainstreamed in regional development strategies or official priorities. For example, gender equality issues are ignored in the newly-adopted Samtskhe-Javakheti regional development Strategy and Action Plan for 2013-2017. Although women took an active part during the elaboration of this Strategy, the process is being coordinated by the staff of the governor's office, which is predominantly male. Moreover, two out of the four heads of the working groups were women; but these women could not lobby for the inclusion of gender-related topics into the Strategy³¹. This can be explained by the low level of awareness of women regarding gender-related issues. Even the active involvement of women did not guarantee proper incorporation

of women's problems in the regional development strategy.

a) Kakheti

Much like the Samtskhe-Javakheti region, gender issues are not taken into consideration by local governments in Kakheti either. However, with donor support, gender clubs have been established in different villages of the Pankisi Gorge. These clubs organise permanent consultation meetings in the village of Duisi and discuss different issues of regional importance, such as social problems and education possibilities. Formally, there is the possibility of community development in Duisi. For instance, the Kakheti Development Fund offers free training and vocational courses, as well as sports activities for the local population, especially for the youth. However, according to the organisers of these events, the interest and motivation to take part is very low.

31 Samtskhe-Javakheti Regional Development Strategy 2014-2021 Source: <http://static.mrdi.gov.ge/52f9bfb50cf298a857ab7d59.pdf>

4. NEEDS AND ISSUES OF SMALL GROUPS OF ETHNIC MINORITY WOMEN IN THE KAKHETI REGION - AVARS, KISTS, OSSETIANS, UDIS AND RUSSIAN MOLOKANS

4.1. Avar women

The Avar ethnic community in Georgia is compactly settled in three villages in the Kvareli municipality: Tivi, Saruso and Chantliskure. The community is relatively well integrated into the Georgian society. The majority of women in the Avar ethnic community are fluent in Georgian, although the Avars still maintain a strong national and cultural identity. The following problems have been identified by women within the community:

- Avar women tend to enter early marriages according to customary law, without civil registration;
- Domestic violence is common, but not publicly disclosed;
- Avar cultural peculiarities, especially language, are endangered. Avar language courses in local public schools were suspended in 2012 by the Ministry of Education, and currently the community must pay for the teacher's salary and school materials themselves if the Avar language instruction is to continue. The Avar language had been taught in the local school for 20 years.

Women constitute 60% of the Avar population residing in the villages due to the periodic or permanent outmigration of men. The department of social services indicated that the number of its beneficiaries in each village depended on the ethnic and gender composition of the villages. For example, in the villages of Tivi, Chantliskure and Saruso - five, 18 and 33 families respectively receive social assistance. The relatively high number of recipients in Saruso is

due to the resettlement of ecological migrants there mainly from Svaneti. Ethnic minority women are active in acquiring state and local social benefits, as they are fluent in Georgian.

Infrastructure

The municipal budget highly prioritises infrastructural development. The administration works in four main areas: water supply to every village, installation of gas supply, reconstruction and maintenance of outdoor lighting and the rehabilitation of roads.

Education

The Ministry of Education has cut funding for Avar language instruction. Despite several interventions, the community was advised to raise 2,800 GEL to pay teachers' salaries. Women from the community expressed their desire to introduce Russian language tutelage at an earlier stage rather than the 7th grade elective language component.

The absence of a proper building for a kindergarten resulted in bringing children to the neighbouring Udi village of Zinobiani. Due to financial reasons, no Avar students attend higher education.

Employment and sources of income

Unemployment is a significant problem for women. The local public school is the only place of official employment.

Self-employment in agriculture involves most of the population. There are only a few cases when women obtain mostly seasonal jobs at neighbouring farms.

Women complained that they are the driving force in conducting agricultural work.

The main source of income is through transfers made from relatives working in Dagestan, pensions, and social benefits provided by the central government and the municipality.

Access to social services

The Avars are well aware of state support programmes and have been active in the application process. Their main problem in accessing the programmes is that in order to apply for certain allowances, the families need to be registered as separate units. This is difficult, as most families live in extended units and customary marriage is prevalent. Women are more proactive in making applications for social benefits.

Healthcare

The Avar women are also well aware of the state-sponsored universal healthcare programme. However, there is a shared sceptical attitude towards this programme. The scepticism is derived from the stringent bureaucratic measures required to obtain free medical assistance. On the other hand, the Avars claim that discrimination is prevalent within the hospitals: they claim that those who pay cash obtain medical services easier and sooner than those insured by the state-sponsored universal healthcare programme.

Needs: higher education; encouragement of civil registration of marriage; improved accessibility of social system; job opportunities

Priorities: Avar language and Russian language education; kindergartens; general education up to the 12th grade

4.2. Kist/Chechen women

Kists and Chechens reside in the villages of the Pan-kisi Gorge in the Akhmeta municipality. Women constitute 65% of the community population due to the widespread labour migration of men.

Infrastructure

Infrastructure is poorly developed in the villages, and there are permanent electricity shortages. At the same time, many villages, especially those concentrated in the upper part of the gorge, are isolated because of poor road connections and no public

transportation. This results in women being isolated and contained in their villages, which impacts their economic and social development, as well as their participation in the public life.

Despite the existence of a hydro-electric power station in the valley, electricity is often only available for 3-4 hours per day. There is no gas supply, the drinking water is contained in the main pipe along the roads, yet the quality of water is not acceptable, especially during periods of rain, as it mixes with open sewage water. There is no sewage system in the villages.

Education

General education is provided at schools up to the 9th grade in the villages of Koreti, Khalatsani, and Sakobiano, with extended schooling of up to the 12th grade in Duisi, Jokolo and Birkiani, taught in the Georgian language. Children from neighbouring schools need to attend classes in these villages, which seems problematic as there is no school bus line between the villages. For this reason, many parents refrain from sending their children to schools. Yet, most children, including girls, complete their general school education. The majority of Kists are fluent in Georgian, but the loss of their native language is a serious threat to the identity of this ethnic group, a point stressed by the community's women.

One of the strongest priorities in the villages is to re-open kindergartens, which were closed due to tuition requirements until 2013. The UN has built two relatively small kindergartens, while two kindergartens have been re-established with municipality funds. There is a need for four more kindergartens in the remote villages to accommodate the specific number of children. Another significant priority is the provision of lunch in the kindergartens.

Employment and source of income

The poverty level is rather high and most income is spent on food and utility payments - mainly electricity. There are no industrial or other work opportunities aside from subsistence agriculture, the public sector and small trade. Members of the community cultivate beans, corn and recently - wheat, an activity which has traditionally involved men. It is not possible to maintain livestock, as there are not enough pastures. Due to the difficult socio-economic situation, men and older boys pursue labour migration mainly to Chechnya or Russia, leaving their families behind.

Employment opportunities for women are mainly in the public sector – schools and kindergartens. The salaries are very low, ranging from 120 to 165 GEL/month, which does not allow for investment in children's education beyond general schooling. There are no opportunities for vocational training in Pankisi, and very few attend other forms of education due to financial constraints.

Table no. 4:
Main source of income for Kist/Chechen women³²

Income type

Pensions	80%
Teacher salaries	5%
Other public sector	3%
Trade and automobile trade	10%
Remittances from abroad	2%

Healthcare

As for the public health service, its main function is to deal with different infectious diseases. A new hospital with a capacity of 25 beds was opened in Akhmeta in 2011 under a presidential programme. In addition, there are two emergency ambulatories in the villages of Duisi and Jokolo. The lower villages are well covered by these two ambulatories, though villages in upper Pankisi are barely accessible.

Access to healthcare is in high demand. Even though the universal insurance programme is available, it requires payment for a range of medical services. There is a great demand among women for gynaecological services.

Access to social services

Social programmes are mainly oriented towards the identification of different categories of vulnerable groups. Family relations are based on a patrilineal system of extended family where the man is the head of the family. Marriages are concluded between the ages of 18 and 30. In spite of good relations with Georgians, there are few inter-ethnic marriages. Moreover, bride abduction cases have substantially decreased, as the fine is very high (5,000 GEL).

This has been stated by the focus group participants throughout the individual interviews, who claimed that domestic violence cases have reduced, perhaps as a result of intensive gender awareness raising programmes conducted in the villages.

Customary law – adat, still exists however. Adat is based on traditions, local customs and blood feuds³³. The Council of Elders (men) makes decisions in cases of conflict, while the official legal system is used sparingly. Other programmes of state social protection are not well utilised, as they are quite problematic and difficult to access. The municipal budget is very small, while the state point system uses the valuing of property (house, land plots, and domestic equipment such as refrigerators, TV sets and other assets), which makes assistance difficult to obtain. In addition, the state system applies to individual households, preventing families living in extended units from being considered.

Cases of formal and customary divorce are very rare. This can be credited to the cultural setting. In cases of divorce, children follow the father and thus women try their best to keep their family and children. There has been just one case of a formal legal solution being implemented through the court. In that case, the court delegated child custody to the mother. Women have been trained in their rights, including where they can seek legal advice, but it is a scarcely used method due to socio-cultural constraints.

Women participation in public life

Kist women are poorly represented in the political and social structures of the Kakheti region. Kist women can be found only on the local level councils (Sakrebulo) in villages. The only exceptions are the Deputy Head of the Akhmeta municipality, who represents the Kist community while a female Kist secretary is also employed on the Akhmeta municipality.

There are no women's organisations, except for women's clubs, established and coached by the Kakheti Regional Development Fund (KRDF), and an alternative Council of Elders (composed of women).

32 The data is derived from two sources : Dr. Meka Khan-goshvili, Department of Civic Integration, State Ministry of Reconciliation and Civic Integration; interview with Akhmeta municipal administration

33 Source: <http://escholarship.org/uc/item/64d7v9hj#page-1> Georgia's Pankisi Gorge: An Ethnographic Survey Shorena Kurtsikidze and Vakhtang Chikovani, University of California, Berkeley, Berkeley Programme in Soviet and Post-Soviet Studies Working Paper Series, 2002

Attempts are being made to hold joint meetings of both councils to share decision-making powers. Women are keen on being involved, as it gives them an opportunity to influence decisions.

There were a number of projects implemented by international organisations, targeting both women and men, but their sustainability proved to be limited. Women prefer to hold regular jobs, even with low salaries. The awareness of gender equality is reasonably high, yet there is little knowledge of the institutional setup of the Gender Equality Council, National Action Plan, and other gender-related strategies.

Needs: improved accessibility of the social system; civil registration of marriages; job opportunities

Priorities: education – Chechen and Russian languages; kindergartens; general education up to the 12th grade; public transportation; stable water supply

4.3. Ossetian women

Ossetians of the Kakheti region are settled in the Akhmeta, Kvareli and Lagodekhi municipalities. The biggest concentration of the community is in the village of Areshperani in the Lagodekhi municipality. Like other smaller minorities in the Kakheti region, Ossetians are relatively well integrated into Georgian society, and are bilingual – Georgian/Ossetian. Women constitute 55% of the community for whom there are several important issues.

Infrastructure

There is ongoing work being implemented in the reconstruction of the village roads. Outdoor lighting is not fully functional and the means of transportation are limited. There is only one daily shuttle-bus (marshrutka) going to Tbilisi and Rustavi.

Education

Education is available through to the 12th grade and is in Georgian. Most female students finish the school. The local school is equipped with a computer lab and an internet connection, which is accessible to anyone. The school operates a school bus which shuttles the children to the villages, as a result of the targeted efforts of the school's dedicated schoolmaster and staff. There is a strong demand for the introduction of Ossetian language teaching in school classrooms. However, there has been no substantial progress in this regard. The community is undergoing gradual

assimilation as two years ago the Ministry of Education cut funding for the teaching of Ossetian, arguing that the language was not standardised, although it had been taught in the public school before. Using external grants, the language was taught for one semester. However, since September 2013, the Ossetian language has again been removed from the school curricula. As is the case in the Avar community, there is also great interest in introducing the Russian language to children from an early age. Elsewhere, young women seem to be disappointed as there are no professional or educational prospects for them. Although there is a kindergarten functioning on the premises of the school, another is required to accommodate the large number of children.

Employment and sources of income

Women are mostly employed in the education sector and in agriculture. Although qualified, women expressed their scepticism about applying for jobs in the Lagodekhi municipal administration. There was a shared opinion that people from villages are not hired in Lagodekhi. However, discrimination based on ethnicity has declined. Most of the focus group participants indicated that they would appreciate the opportunity to go to North Ossetia, where they would be able to find employment and support their families. There is an influx of eco-migrants in the village coming from Adjara. Ossetian relatives of people who immigrated to the Russian Federation are dissatisfied as they were obliged to sell their houses to the government at a cheaper price than the market dictates. In addition, the eco-migrants from Adjara received small plots of agricultural land, which were not offered to Ossetians. There seems to be tension between the groups and even within the Ossetian community itself.

Healthcare

There is no out-patient clinic or pharmacy in the village. The local population needs to visit neighbouring villages to receive treatment for illnesses, while there is also no pharmacy in the village.

Women participation in public life

Ossetian women are active in the public life, but there are no formal possibilities for the mobilisation of women in their settlements. There is no activity centre for women to organize a common approach to daily problems. When asked whether they could imagine organising such facilities themselves, they

declined citing a lack of financial means and no prospects for funding. One of the issues of significance brought up was domestic violence. This remains a problem but it is concealed from public attention. There have been no reports of legal action being taken on domestic violence.

Needs: improved medical services; better access to land; eco-migrants resettlement policy clarification

Priorities: education in the Ossetian and Russian languages; adult education

4.4. Udi women

The Udi ethnic group is settled in the village of Zinobiani in the Kvareli municipality. Udis belong to one of the smallest ethnic communities in Georgia, and their group faces a serious threat of extinction. Udis represent around 70% of the local population. Women constitute approximately 55% of the latter, and there are many mixed families. A small Udi museum is located within the local school building supported by an OSGF and USAID project. The museum collection displays the history of the Udi population in Georgia. Moreover, some locals organise events and annual sale exhibitions. At such events, alongside exhibits on Udi culture, people are invited from different villages to promote their own culture as well. The Zinobiani public school yard has been used as a venue for these events.

Infrastructure

The infrastructure in Zinobiani is more or less developed compared to other villages in Kakheti. Within the framework of the annual infrastructural projects provided by the municipality, a community centre has been partly reconstructed. Its roof was repaired but other aspects of infrastructure do not appear to be a need or a priority.

Education

The Udi public school provides general education up to the 9th grade. After leaving school, few students continue secondary education and motivation to apply for vocational education is low due to the long distances and financial burden involved. Therefore, young girls stay at home until they get married. The main problems of the community are related to identity preservation. The Udi language is spoken only by elderly members of the Udi group, and the intro-

duction of Udi language courses in the local public school programme is one of the main demands of the community. Even though there is a strong ethnic awareness and affiliation in the Udi community, they do not use the Udi language on a daily basis and the younger generation are unable to learn it, as Udi language classes are conducted on a voluntary basis during after school hours. Like in the Avar and Ossetian communities, funding for teaching native languages has been cut by the Ministry of Education. English and Russian are the two foreign languages taught at the local school. The school is equipped with a computer lab and has access to the internet. However, it is used only during school hours and there is no possibility for the general local population to have access to this service.

Employment and sources of income

The only sphere where women are employed, except at the public school, is in the agricultural sector. It accounts for the majority of each family's income. There are some seasonal jobs as well for which good contacts are essential. When asked about establishing a community initiative group for women, the respondents claimed it was prohibitive due to a lack of funding.

Healthcare

There are no ambulatory medical services. In order to receive primary medical assistance patients need to go to the neighbouring village of Gavazi which is 7km away. This is a problem due to the limited access to transportation. Although inhabitants are well aware of the state-sponsored universal healthcare programme, they seem reluctant to register for it. Furthermore, as there is no general practitioner available, it is even more difficult to make use of the universal healthcare.

Access to social services

Udi women are able to access social services as they speak the Georgian language, yet there is scepticism about this accessibility as practically no applications for social allowances have been submitted.

Women participation in public life

Udi women participate in social and cultural events organised within the community, mainly based on school premises. They are involved in the organisation of the events, but not in other NGO-type activities.

Needs: better prospects for young women (jobs, agriculture); medical services – ambulatory; improved access to of Universal State Health Insurance and services

Priorities: education - Udi language; Russian language; general education up to the 12th grade; professional education

4.5. Russian Molokan women

The Russian Molokan settlement was established in the village of Iliatsminda about 150 years ago. Its original name was Akhali Alexandrovka in honour of Tsar Alexander of Russia. Later, in the Soviet era, the name was changed to Ulianovka. The Molokans belong to a Russian sect of “Spiritual Christians” who disobeyed the Russian Orthodox Church in their rituals. The Molokans were exiled to the Caucasus and are currently to be found in all three South Caucasus countries with their regional head based in Azerbaijan. The Molokans live a collective community life, participating in a partly spiritual and economic environment. Other ethnic groups – Christian Georgians, Armenians, and most recently, eco-migrants from Adjara - have settled in the village. Most of Iliatsminda’s Molokan population (75%) is elderly women aged over 50, as the younger generation has either emigrated to Russia or are in mixed marriages with Georgians. The biggest concern of the community is the preservation and respect for their identity so that there will be “no end to Molokans in Georgia after a 150 year presence and the development of the region.” The Molokan Museum in Iliatsminda opened in 1989 and was attended and maintained by a local Molokan. The museum stopped functioning after the death of its curator and all the exhibits were removed or perished. The museum displayed the lives and history of the Molokans with the local women adamant that the building be restored. They are also interested in obtaining the status of an official heritage site (as is the case with the Dukhobors) for the characteristic architecture of the village and the historical cemetery that features very old tombs. The Molokan women complained that other villagers use this part of the cemetery as a pasture. Although the cemetery is fenced-in, it is regularly opened on one side. Despite several appeals to the local authorities, the problem has not been resolved, nor has the issue of restoring the original name of the village, as the current name Iliatsminda was introduced after Georgia’s independence.

Infrastructure

Molokan women tend to complain less about the efficiency of the local government. They have expressed their contentment with full-time electricity. Otherwise, installation of the gas supply and in-house water supply remains a problem. A few collective taps are the only source of drinking water in the village streets with even elderly women needing to bring it home from those sources. There are regular minibuses connections to Tbilisi in the morning and evening.

Education

In the early 1990s, the Russian schools were closed and since then only one public secondary school has remained, operating in the Georgian language. The Russian language was not even part of the curriculum over the past 10 years, but now it is offered for one hour per week. Currently, no one from the community works at the local school, although several women are qualified Russian language teachers.

Employment and sources of income

Agriculture, pensions and remittances from relatives abroad are the main sources of income for Molokan women. However, access to land is their biggest problem. When land was being distributed, those of Russian ethnicity faced considerable discrimination. Therefore, Molokans were given inferior plots and this remains a problem even today. The small plots around the houses are also used as vineyards and with good prices for grapes there is additional income available.

Healthcare

There is an ambulatory medical service available and elderly Molokans are content with this, as well as with the general practitioner of the village, who also speaks fluent Russian and is attentive. They do not pay money for medical visits, as they are well aware of the state’s Universal Health Insurance programme. There are few pharmacies providing access to required medicines.

Access to social services

Molokan women are not seeking social services as the community is accustomed to self-reliance, except for pensions.

Women participation in public life

Molokan women of all ages are active within their own community, also helping each other with daily

tasks. Their participation in public life is assessed as inefficient, as the issues of importance to them that have been repeatedly raised with authorities – either locally or at central level – remain unresolved. Should there be any possibility to resolve their issues of concern, they would engage themselves more in public life and mobilize the rest of the community.

Needs: agriculture - addressing unfair distribution of land plots; in-house water supply

Priorities: preservation of cultural heritage: open-air museum of the village architecture; museum restoration; respect for historical cemetery; return of the original name of village; education – additional teaching of Russian at school

4.6. Azerbaijani women

The Azerbaijani ethnic community in the Kakheti region is the largest such community in Georgia outside of the Kvemo Kartli region. The Azerbaijanis are settled in three different locations: 1) the village of Yormughanlo in the Sagarejo municipality, 2) the village of Karajala in the Telavi municipality, and 3) the villages of Kabali, Uzuntala, Ganjala and Karajala in the Lagodekhi municipality, where the population of these four villages constitutes 25% of all inhabitants, while 5% are Ossetians.³⁴ There are also villages partially settled by Russians and Poles, but their numbers have diminished. Out of 23 members of the local council - four are women, who are employed in the administration. No representatives of ethnic minorities have been elected to the local council (Sakrebulo) or employed there.

Infrastructure

Drinking water remains a serious problem in the village of Karajala in the Telavi municipality. Even though the municipality has drilled some wells, people still need to travel long distances in order to obtain water for domestic use. Collecting water is a task commonly carried out by women in the village. Karajala has been very active in the framework of infrastructural development in the villages. Outdoor lighting has been installed, a football stadium was built and several wells have been drilled to supply drinking water.

The installation of gas piping is another problem which needs to be addressed. Gas supply has been introduced to the village, but it has not been distributed yet to households. Roads inside Karajala need to be repaired. Locals do not recall any project funded by the Lagodekhi municipality within the framework of the infrastructural support to villages, and there was no knowledge about this programme either. Access to local information is limited, as most of the population watches only Turkish and Azerbaijani TV channels.

Education

There are common problems in all villages. Gender issues seem to be the most problematic in relation to education, early marriage and civic participation. Here, the cultural setting is consistent with traditional Muslim customs.

Girls attend school at the primary level. While the number of girls starting school is higher than that of boys, by the time of graduation just a few girls remain. A local ethnic Georgian teacher outlined: "About 10-20% of school girls attend the full course of secondary education." Beyond the 9th grade, very few girls continue their education. Family is a decisive factor in this process. They claim that obtaining higher education is, for them, futile. "They will have to work in agriculture, anyway and thus, there is no point."

Although there are vocational education opportunities in Tsnori, there have been just two cases of girls continuing on to professional college. Early marriages are still quite common in Azerbaijani communities. These marriages are based on customary rules, which are respected by most families.

After finishing their general education (usually with Azerbaijani as the language of instruction), most young girls help their parents (mothers) with agricultural activities until they get married.

Yet, in recent years, there have been three cases where girls from Karajala were admitted to different Georgian universities, a source of pride for the

34 Source: GEOSTAT, Population census 2002

families and local teachers involved. Each year, the number of applications sent to universities by school graduates increases. This is largely due to the simplified admissions procedures Georgian universities offer Azerbaijani minorities under the “1+4” programme³⁵. These students are not only from Kve-mo Kartli; there are also students from the school in Karajala. The language profile in this school was changed from Azerbaijani to Georgian several years ago. Although parents recognise the need to know the Georgian language, they have petitioned the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) for the introduction of Azerbaijani (at least a few hours per week), but this has so far remained unaddressed.

The lack of financial means is another barrier that impedes continued education. In addition, some students lack official birth registration documents and have not been issued with ID cards. Children without such documents cannot be officially enrolled in the educational system.

Employment and sources of income

The main sphere of economic activities lies in agriculture, possessing arable lands and vineyards and tending sheep. Agricultural duties are almost totally absorbed by women, while petty trade is another developing source of income. Trade is divided in two directions: petty trading at the local level (Telavi, Tbilisi, Lilo) and petty trading at the international level with Azerbaijan and Turkey. Women are mostly involved in the former, while the latter is generally managed by men.

Access to social services

Although the villages are comparatively well developed in terms of economics (there are restaurants, banks, pharmacies, hotels, etc.), there are still a number of families living in poor conditions. As the participants of the focus group maintained, these families do receive support from the state. However, this was the only state-funded programme of which they are aware. They could not name any programmes that offer support for newborns, or for large families and single mothers. In addition, many were not aware of the state-sponsored universal health insurance programme. Ethnic Georgians, well aware of all of these

programmes, stated that ethnic Azerbaijanis mainly in the villages of the Lagodekhi municipality miss out on numerous benefits due to the language barrier. Owing to seasonal jobs and the uncertainty of agricultural production as a result of climate change³⁶, many inhabitants are vulnerable to poverty. This is why the local government has established a limited system of social protection, which is separate from the central government’s social programmes and financed by the local budget. There are a number of programmes organised for the most vulnerable groups: infants and large families with four or more children, veterans, families of soldiers lost during the Abkhazian and South Ossetian conflicts, and single mothers. For example, in the Lagodekhi municipality, information about these programmes is distributed through local TV channels and newspapers. As for the applications for social allowances, the administration has ruled out any ethnic discrimination. The social services were unable to identify the ethnic background of the families receiving social allowance. In the entire municipality, there are around 2,000 families receiving allowance due to living below the poverty line; while 38 single mothers receive one-time-support from the state budget. In these practices, ethnic minority women are more active. The social service of the municipality has independently established special programmes designated for medical assistance.

A social services representative of the Telavi municipality was aware of the functioning of the Gender Equality Council of the Parliament of Georgia. She has been involved in one of its activities. However, this was not followed up at the local level with no impact made whatsoever.

Women participation in public life

Domestic violence, both physical and economic, was reported to be a problem in the Azerbaijani communities. The presence of men at the focus groups made it difficult to get a clear picture. Ethnic Azerbaijani men maintained that “generally, family relations are harmonious and if there is something wrong within the family, it must remain private.” They claimed that family relations are based on the gender equality principle and that all family budgets are equally divided between men and women (regardless of who

35 Shalva Tabatadze; Natia Gorgadze; “Evaluation of the effectiveness of the quota system in Georgia”, Tbilisi, 2013

36 Source: <http://nala.ge/uploads/telavi.pdf> National Association of Local Administration of Georgia

earns what). Women admitted though that while domestic violence exists, in most cases they would rather keep it undisclosed. However, there have been cases when women have reported domestic violence cases to the village council (or at least threatened to do so). Although this institution is not vested with any formal legal status, it has an authority, proven to be useful in many cases, even though it refrains from using any official legal instruments (police or court). While many marriages are officially registered, there is no official record of divorce in the villages. There is no community centre or any CSO working in the community.

There are no shelters or other similar rehabilitation centres for victims of violence. However, there is free-of-charge legal advice offered at the local administration of the municipality.

In terms of economic violence, female engagement in different types of income generation is regulated by the family – women are not permitted to work in service-related areas such as restaurants or hotels.

The only exception is selling agricultural products by the roadside.

In terms of political participation, the language barrier can be problematic for the Azerbaijani women. It renders the Azerbaijani population less competent and more vulnerable in local political developments. The last two elections revealed that minorities, especially women, vote mainly on local kinship sympathies, rather than ideological considerations. Women are particularly influenced by the collective approach, although they vote individually. The local election committees have been trained several times by the Central Election Commission of Georgia to address the issue of collective voting.

Needs: prevention of early marriages; addressing and disclosure of domestic violence cases; access to gender-related information in the minority language; access to education beyond the 9th grade

Priorities: Azerbaijani language in school (Karajala); improvement of infrastructure: gas and water supply

5. NEEDS AND PRIORITIES OF ARMENIAN AND RUSSIAN DUKHOBOR WOMEN IN THE SAMTSKHE-JAVAKHETI REGION

5.1. Armenian women

Minority women do not possess adequate language skills in Georgian, especially in the Akhalkalaki and Ninotsminda districts. There are two language houses in each municipality that offer a three-month Georgian language course free-of-charge. Interviews were requested with the heads of the language houses in both municipalities on the use and effectiveness of the programme but were not accommodated.

With regard to minority women, mobilisation is a general problem for women in the region. There are no gender-oriented organisations in Samtskhe-Javakheti. Women are represented and employed in a number of local CSOs. However, the influence and leverage of those organisations is minimal, especially in dense minority-populated municipalities (Akhalkalaki and Ninotsminda). Gender-related issues are not mainstreamed in regional development strategies and official priorities. Gender equality issues were also ignored in the newly-adopted Samtskhe-Javakheti Regional Development Strategy and Action Plan for 2013-2017. Despite the fact that women took active part in the elaboration of the strategy coordinated by Marina Gachechiladze, who is on staff at the Governor's office, and the fact that two heads of working groups out of four were women, they could not successfully lobby for the inclusion of gender-related topics into the strategy.

Infrastructure

Infrastructure in urban centres has improved. In particular, women were satisfied with having access to a gas supply. In rural areas, the accessibility of drinking water and gas is still problematic and firewood and charcoal are very expensive. Beyond urbanised centres, there is no sewage system in the villages.

Although the main road to Akhaltsikhe has been re-

paired, it is still difficult to access other locations, as smaller roads are in poor condition.

Education

Access to pre-school education³⁷ is rather limited. There are 34 nursery schools in the regions, mostly in urban areas. There are virtually no kindergartens in villages. Most of the nursery schools in the towns are in extremely poor condition because they are financed from the local municipal budget, and the budget cannot afford the necessary repair and maintenance of the nursery school buildings.

The local Armenian population in the Akhalkalaki and Ninotsminda municipalities has access to education in their native language. The majority of the schools in these municipalities are Armenian language schools and a few Russian language schools. However, the following problems have been mentioned in focus group discussions:

- The quality of textbooks translated from Georgian into Armenian is very low. Translators have not consulted with professionals on the relevant subject;
- Armenian schools lack textbooks in the Armenian language. Schools do not receive textbooks, despite the agreement between the ministries of education of both countries.³⁸

After the introduction of the "1+4" system for minority preferential access to higher education, the number of applicants, male and female, to Geor-

37 Source: <http://static.mrdi.gov.ge/52f9bfb50cf298a857ab7d59.pdf>, p.9

38 Giorgi Lomsadze, Georgia: Ethnic Minorities Confront Education Hurdles, March 18, 2011, available at: <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/63106>

gian universities from Akhalkalaki and Ninotsminda increased dramatically. Consultation meetings with teachers and focus groups proved that the first priority for the graduates is Georgian universities and only those who fail in that aim will apply to Armenian universities as a back-up.

Adult education, formal or informal, is not accessible in urbanised centres or in the rural areas, particularly for non-traditional female professions such as IT or other fields that issue certificates.

Employment and sources of income

Employment was cited as the main problem for minority women in all districts of the Samtskhe-Javakheti region. Women are mainly employed in public schools, kindergartens, banks and healthcare services. No female activity is observed in the private sectors, except self-employed small businesses of service providers. The main problem in this regard is the absence of jobs and the generally low qualification level of women. However, in recent years, the local population including women has been able to benefit from the Akhaltsikhe Professional Development College, which offers 16 different courses for adults. Statistics obtained from the college administration show that the majority of the students are women. In the current semester, 249 students out of 404 were women. With regards to minority participation, it was revealed that the college is mainly focused on students from the Akhaltsikhe, Adigeni and Borjomi districts in which there is a low presence of minorities. It was mentioned that in terms of employment, Armenian women in Akhaltsikhe fare better than Georgians, as they continued in their traditional occupations such as petty trading, hairdressing, and catering, which still proves to be useful. Economically, women are mostly dependent on their husbands, who often migrate and transfer money.

Healthcare

Access to healthcare and medical facilities is better in Akhalkalaki, although specialised services can only be accessed in the regional capital of Akhaltsikhe. Women's dissatisfaction was mainly related to the extensive time and costs required. For rural women, particularly in the Ninotsminda district, it is even more difficult, as only medical advice by a local doctor is accessible.³⁹

Access to social services

Social issues are managed by the municipal social services office and by the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs. Municipal social services exist in all

districts' administrations. They provide standard services for various vulnerable groups. According to the local heads of the social service offices, the main beneficiaries of their assistance are women. Focus group discussions proved that most women are informed about existing social services.⁴⁰

Women's participation in public life

Domestic violence is quite common, both in Georgian and minority communities, with women being the principal victims. However, there are no reliable statistics on this issue, since victims almost never complain or report these instances to official law enforcement bodies. In cases of violence, no women's shelters are available throughout the entire region. The level of political participation of ethnic women in the Samtskhe-Javakheti region is extremely low. Minority women are seldom represented in government structures. As members of local councils (Sakrebulo), minority women have been elected only in Borjomi (a Greek woman), Akhaltsikhe (an Armenian woman) and Ninotsminda (an Armenian/Georgian woman). As for the municipal administrations, only 45 minority women are employed within these six municipalities. In their cases, language is not a barrier, and in some cases, the women have completed a special course at the Zurab Zhvania School of Public Administration.

Women in Akhaltsikhe and Akhalkalaki indicated that they would like to realise the need for better representation in political decision-making positions. For this purpose, some women proposed the introduction of a special quota system for women in local councils and administrative municipal services, discussing it within existing structures. Men confirmed that this would be fully acceptable.

Needs: adult education; better political representation; gender equality issues; addressing domestic violence and establishment of a crisis centre

Priorities: Georgian language learning; more Georgian language hours at school; better quality of translation of textbooks from Georgian to Armenian; access to medical services in upland Ninotsminda

39 The region has 2.1 doctors per 1,000 patients, which is a low figure compared to the other regions of Georgia. The lack of up-to-date medical equipment and limited opportunities for the medical personnel to improve their skills negatively affect the quality of health services that the region's population receives". <http://static.mrdi.gov.ge/52f9bfb50cf298a857ab7d59.pdf> p. 7

40 Source: <http://static.mrdi.gov.ge/52f9bfb50cf298a857ab7d59.pdf> p. 7

5.2. Russian Dukhobor women in the Ninotsminda district

Russian Dukhobors, along with the Molokans, have been present in Georgia for over 150 years. The group is now concentrated in only one village of the Ninotsminda district, in the village of Gorelovka (approximately 150 persons), as there is strong outmigration mainly to Russia, especially since 2000. Women constitute approximately 40% of the community, although there are no reliable sex-disaggregated statistics available on the number of community members. The current process of outmigration has ceased, although, in recent years, very few families have returned from Russia.

The preservation of cultural heritage is the main concern of the women who care for those who remain in the village. Dukhobors still maintain their traditional customs, including group prayer, which is conducted on a weekly basis in a prayer house located on the territory of a former orphanage (the so-called “Sirotski Dom”). After six years of applications, the orphanage was finally granted museum status by the Ministry of Culture of Georgia in 2013. The Ninotsminda municipality also stated that two museum officers will be hired to attend to the building which requires urgent repair. This fact has been pointed out to the Ministry, but no action has been taken so far.

Infrastructure

The infrastructure in the village is very limited. Only a few households have running water and there is no gas supply. The nearest urban centre is Ninotsminda, where there are shopping facilities.

Education

There is one public school in the village of Gorelovka with a general level of education. The school is attended by 32 students, including 26 Dukhobors. The language of instruction in the school is Russian. However, the school is not equipped with new textbooks. Teachers complain about the absence of textbooks in the Russian language. After graduation, young people mainly go to Armenian universities, where education is delivered in the Russian language. Only three Dukhobor graduates have applied to the various Georgian universities in the last five years. The Dukhobor minority is not included in the “1+4” simplified access programme. There is a kindergarten facility in Gorelovka with Georgian/Armenian caretakers. Employment and source of income

Dukhobor community members are self-employed and mainly engaged in animal husbandry. However, Dukhobors complain that currently they do not have enough pastures for their animals. Their lands have been appropriated by local Armenian businessmen and Georgians from Tusheti, who rent this territory for their sheep. Some women work at school as teachers. Due to the collective nature of the community, Dukhobors requested that the state provide them land as a community, but during the privatisation period, the request was refused. Instead, the Dukhobors could receive land only as individuals or were obliged to purchase additional land, which they could not afford. Forming a cooperative was not a solution, as it would require the provision of personal assets they did not possess.

Dukhobor men were expecting to find employment at the nearby construction site of the Kars-Tbilisi railway, but this did not materialise. The construction company brought their own workers, which affected the opportunities of the Armenian population to improve their qualifications as well.

Healthcare

Dukhobor women have very poor access to healthcare and social services. In the village there is no ambulatory patient care, and the population is not informed regarding social programmes and initiatives. The only source of information is through Georgian and Armenian language programmes on television.

Access to social services

Although there is access to social services in Ninotsminda, the community is mainly self-reliant, including monetary assistance from abroad and the application of pensions. The complicated system and the language barrier prevent them from applying for state benefits. Local social services are not readily accessible due to the limited municipal budget.

Women participation in public life

Dukhobor women hardly participate in public life or in civil society organisations. A Dukhobor NGO does formally exist, mainly mobilised by female teachers at school, but it has not been able to acquire even minimal funding for its activities. Participation is limited to taking care of heritage sites, fundraising for their maintenance, and organising community events.

Needs: access to information in Georgian media in the Russian language; access to land

Priorities: preservation of cultural heritage – The orphanage; Russian textbooks; healthcare

6. ROMA WOMEN

In order to identify the needs of Roma women, the research was conducted in the largest settlements where the Roma reside permanently and have Georgian citizenship – Kobuleti, Kutaisi and Tbilisi.

Table no. 5:

Composition of the Roma community

Location	Number of persons	% of women and girls
Kobuleti	250-300	65%
Kutaisi	300 -350	70%
Tbilisi	200-250	65%

The term Roma is often generically used in Europe to cover several groups with a similar lifestyle or perceived origin. In Georgia, it is alternatively used with Tsigan (Gypsy), but in fact, five distinct groups with their own identities reside in Georgia:

- Roma - who are the largest group (approximately 800)
- Loms - who are a smaller group mainly in South-east Georgia
- Doms - who reside mainly in Azerbaijan and come to Georgia for temporary residence
- Migrant Kurdish-speaking people living in Kutaisi and Tbilisi (150)
- Moldovans (700)

In addition, an assessment was conducted with the Roma living in the Samgori district in Tbilisi and in the city's "Africa" district. This group is mainly comprised of Azerbaijani citizens who come to Georgia regularly to earn money by begging and fortune-telling. As Georgia is not their permanent place of residence, the group is living in poor and cramped conditions.

The Kobuleti community follows the strict religious⁴¹ code of the Pentecostals, adhering to different val-

ues – education, work and respect for the rules⁴². Yet, this adherence does not particularly influence gender roles: women perform much of the work both at home and outside the home, while men seek only temporary work.

The most acute problem for the Roma is access to legal services, with particular regard to obtaining ID cards. In Kobuleti and Tbilisi, this issue is almost resolved for those who are Georgian citizens (there are still problems in Kutaisi and other settlements). In order to register for an ID card, a person needs to collect a number of documents for verification and submit an application. In such cases, the state duty on the ID card can amount to between 50-130 GEL per person, which they cannot afford. NGOs are mainly assisting the Roma in obtaining the IDs, paying the state duty on their behalf.

Infrastructure

The Roma have problems associated with the accessibility of basic infrastructure, partly because they live in the outskirts of urban centres where such infrastructure is marginal, and partly due to the costs of utilities. When choosing to pay bills, electricity is deemed most important.

Education

The majority of women are illiterate, although they speak Russian, in addition to Romani, and have a great desire to learn the Georgian language. Research highlighted that most Roma women would also like to learn a profession to help them find better paying jobs. For example, in Kobuleti, Roma women do not have access to vocational education, as the nearest professional college is in Batumi, thus, attendance

41 "Unlike some Christians, Pentecostals are united by the belief that after the Holy Spirit applies Christ's salvation to the sinner, there is another experience available to the believer where the Holy Spirit fills them, which many believe is evidence[d] by speaking in tongues." (http://www.religionfacts.com/christianity/denominations/pentecostalism/summary_of_pentecostal_theology.htm)

42 "Pentecostal conversion which promotes an ideology of 'born-again' is often conceptualised as a tool of self-empowerment. The Gosper of Prosperity preaches the people can attain wealth and success through the power of prayer. However, to achieve this, one has to break all links with their past". Ekaterine Chitanava, "Between Sinful and Righteous: Conversion to Pentecostalism in a Roma community in Georgia" MA thesis CEU, Budapest, 2013, Source: http://www.etd.ceu.hu/2013/chitanava_ekaterine.pdf

requires transportation costs and time, while there is no introductory Georgian language course.⁴³

Roma women understand the need for education for their children - among the Kobuleti community, 48 Roma children attend school regularly. Initially, these children were discriminated against both within the school and by the parents of other children, but the Georgian school master, herself a member of the Sakrebulo, was able to eliminate the discriminatory treatment from the school. In other communities, Roma children attend school irregularly for different reasons, one of them being that girls perform domestic duties instead. Another reason is the fear of parents of alienating girls from community values that they are expected to transfer to the next generation.

Employment and sources of income

Women are providers for the entire family. They are petty traders and street vendors. In Kobuleti though, 20 women have found stable work after being hired by the local municipality to clean and sweep streets. Although this generates a very low salary (80 GEL/month), it ensures the stability of the family budget. As this work is performed in the very early morning hours, it also provides an opportunity to generate additional income from petty trade. The husbands of these women do not perform any income generating work. The average income of each Roma family ranges between 150-180 GEL.

In Tbilisi, the Roma groups residing either in Samgori or in the "Africa" district sustain themselves partly with social assistance and partly with begging and fortune-telling. They collect roughly 5-7 GEL per day. Healthcare

Although women with Georgian citizenship and ID cards have state insurance, they are mostly ignored at medical facilities and do not use them because they feel they are being discriminated against. There are also children with chronic diseases, who are not being medically treated. Due to dense cohabitation, there are often outbreaks of diseases among women and children. Treatment is rather discriminatory and there are rare cases of free medicine afforded to this

group. Almost all families have a member with a disability or requiring urgent medical service. There has been a case when a child with hepatic (liver) disorder was not given medical treatment in hospital. Therefore, he was treated at home, spreading the disease to other members of the family.

Roma women suffer from discrimination and are often not admitted to maternity wards. They are forced to give birth at home, as hospitals do not accept them.

Access to social services

Roma women mainly seek assistance from municipal services rather than that of the state which is inaccessible to them. During a survey at a municipal social service department, it was revealed that many families are put on the list as vulnerable, but do not receive any support due to the very limited social budget of the municipality. The Roma are referred to NGOs who may help. In some cases, when conducting poverty assessments, all domestic appliances such as refrigerators are valued, bringing the required minimum level down, which results in the denial of assistance. There is no information from the authorities on local or state programmes, e.g. disability assistance.

Women's participation in public life

Roma women do not participate in public affairs due to very low levels of education, if any, and illiteracy. This is confirmed by very low turnout in elections. They do not vote as they consider the state to be ignorant of their problems.

There are hardly any Roma-established NGOs and the ones that do exist are coached by other NGOs. Recently, an initiative in Kobuleti established the NGO 'Protection of Rights of Minorities', but in fact only one Roma woman joined this organisation.

Women recognise domestic violence but would never report cases to law enforcement or to the local authorities. Divorce occurs but on an informal level, as most marriages are not formally registered in the first place. When the family is dissolved, women carry the responsibility for the family, but have no opportunity to apply for social support.

43 In 2010 the OSGF's Civil Society Support Programme supported research titled "Roma and Moldovan Ethnic Groups in Georgia - Problems of Integration and Civil Participation". One hundred and fifty migrant Kurdish-speaking people living in Kutaisi and Tbilisi, European Centre on Minority Issues-Caucasus "Support and Development of the Roma Community in Georgia".

Needs: kindergarten; ID cards; access to social allowances
Priorities: education – literacy and Georgian language training; access to medical services; non-discrimination awareness raising among local authorities, social and medical services

7. MESKHETIAN TURK WOMEN

Meskhethian Turk women are part of communities formerly deported from Georgia in 1944 that either repatriated themselves after 1969, or were allowed to return to Georgia to work on tea plantations. The largest communities are in Nasakirali and Ianeti. Since the 1990s, the situation has deteriorated, as the plantations have been closed.⁴⁴ Today, the towns comprise mainly of a younger generation, with females exceeding the number of males, who regularly migrate for work mainly to Turkey.

Infrastructure

There is outdoor water tap access, and some need to obtain water from distant places. Roads, particularly in Nasakirali, are damaged and need to be reconstructed. Ianeti is easily accessible from the main road from Kutaisi to Batumi. Poor roads and no public transport make it difficult for women leave of the settlement and for children to attend school.

A gas supply pipeline has recently been installed but gas is not yet distributed.

Education

The level of education among women and girls rarely goes beyond the 9th grade. They attend Georgian schools and are bilingual in Turkish (dialect) and Georgian. In a few exceptional cases, international organisations have helped young girls as well as several young boys to obtain professional education. Although they completed their education in IT, they have difficulties in finding employment. Some women would like to qualify as kindergarten teachers, but the distance to the institution that provides the necessary qualification (in Kutaisi), makes such aspirations unrealistic. Also, enrolment in higher education institutions is not accessible due to a lack of financial means, although Meskhethian Turk children (because they are considered a deported population) have been included in the preferential admission programme to Georgian universities, though without any financial support attached to it.

Employment and sources of income

Employment is the biggest problem for the Meskhethian Turk community. Younger and middle-aged men go abroad to find work and support their families

through remittances. Women engage in the sale of agricultural products and home-made crafts, such as baskets. Yet, the associated costs often negate the income these activities generate, as the women need to travel to Batumi and Kutaisi for trade. Otherwise, pensions and social benefits are the main source of income.

Healthcare

Accessibility of medical assistance is mainly in the form of general practitioner advisory services, rather than treatment. The women expressed their wish to also have access to a gynaecologist who would make professional recommendations.

Access to social services

Most Meskhethian Turk women are well aware of the state programmes; in total, 139 persons receive benefits for living below the poverty line. ECMI Caucasus with the support of the US Taft grant has conducted training courses for Meskhethian Turk women on social programmes.

Women consider the system of assessment of living below the poverty line unfair. They believe that it needs to be revised, as there have been cases when people who live in a neighbour's house and pay rent, were not able to receive social allowance, as even the house which is not their property was considered an asset.

Women's participation in public life

No civil society organisations exist for Meskhethian Turk women. Although women would like to establish an initiative group and design projects to address different problems of the community, the lack of financial support makes this idea unfeasible.

The young generation ruled out domestic violence as a practice in the community. However, only one more experienced participant of the focus group volunteered to mention that there are always some cases of domestic violence. However, everyone regards it as a family issue and no one gets involved.

Needs: continuation of education beyond the 9th grade; domestic violence; infrastructure – gas and roads **Priorities:** no access to adult education; public transportation; healthcare

44 Sordia, Giorgi (2010) - Muslim Meskhethians and the issues of their repatriation. Solidarity 2010 #2(35)

8. CONCLUSIONS OF THE BASELINE STUDY

The study revealed that ethnic minority communities display a high level of collectivism, gender hierarchy and strong control exercised by parents over young girls, problems related to levels of education, family types and issues of sharing property rights.

On the other hand, there are a number of systemic flaws in the provision of state services that affect ethnic minority women's access to the following: information; state legal services in the regions; health-care. These limitations, along with language difficulties, aggravate women's participation opportunities in education, economic issues and, to some extent, public life.

Isolation from mainstream society perpetuates traditional perceptions of women's roles on the one hand, forcing them to acquire new roles as breadwinners and as de facto heads of households as a result of the mass labour migration of men, on the other hand. Gender issues are not systematically discussed and presented to women in terms of how to deal with them in a non-partisan way and how to use civil legal and other systems efficiently.

The study uncovered that ethnic minority women, particularly from smaller minorities, have similar needs – yet slightly different priorities, depending on

their particular situation, socio-cultural background and age.

- **Similar needs – different priorities**
 - Improved infrastructure
 - Improved education, including access to Georgian language learning
 - Improved social and medical services
 - Access to social and legal services in the nearby localities
 - Preservation of cultural heritage and ethnic identity by access to native language learning
 - Access to information
 - Women's rights and opportunities (participation, civic engagement)
 - Women in the family (marriage, property rights)
 - Women as providers (access to trainings, adult education)

8.1. Indicators

Establishing performance indicators to measure change will facilitate the observation of progress in the improvement of access to and accessibility of services through regular monitoring cycles. With regards to this, a few indicators based on existing data from the baseline study can be derived:

Table no. 6:
Performance indicators proposed

Indicator	Minority Gender criteria
Family type	Extended, patrilocal, core family
Property rights	Inheritance, shared or personal property
Access to state legal services	Accessibility of services at local level
Access to social service	Accessibility of social services – change of assessment system for social benefits
Access to health services	Accessibility of local medical treatment
Education levels	Higher education, adult, professional, full secondary
Employment and source of income	Other forms of employment than traditional; other sources of income than informal (incl. remittances)
Cultural heritage and native language	Respect for cultural heritage and accessibility of native language learning in formal system
Domestic violence	Reporting of violence (physical and economic)

8.2. Benchmarks

There is an urgent need to establish **statistical gender and minority disaggregated data collection**. Such data will allow for the developments to be followed with regards to ethnic minority women's access to and accessibility of services, education and employment.

Another benchmark would be to **adopt the Law on Non-Discrimination** and to follow its implementation in relation to ethnic minority women.

A provision on **gender and minorities** should be established under the **Gender Equality National Action Plan** in synergy with the gender and minority

State **Strategy for Civil Equality & Action Plan for Minority Integration** (State Ministry for Reconciliation and Civil Integration).

In order to protect minority languages, the benchmark **of the ratification of the Council of Europe European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages**, committed to by Georgia in 1999 would set the relevant measures for minority language schooling and learning.

The indicated benchmarks will provide for significant ramifications at the state level to address ethnic minority women's needs and priorities in a systemic way.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

Minimal studies and literature exist on ethnic minority women from smaller minorities in Georgia. It is hoped that this report will contribute to further investigations into the issues of these communities.

Based on the analysis of needs and priorities expressed by minority women, as well as further analysis of service-providing agencies, capacities and competencies, the following twelve key recommendations can be regarded as the guiding principles for improvement of the situation of ethnic minority women:

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- To provide better access to legal services by establishing community service centres in larger central localities in rural areas that will perform Public Service Hall functions
- To improve basic infrastructure
- To simplify assessment system for social benefits
- To improve and facilitate access to adult education in order to obtain professional qualifications that may improve job opportunities, including literacy courses and Georgian language training
- To make school facilities available to the local population after school hours for cultural activities and access to modern technologies
- To promote vocational trainings and other forms of schooling for school dropouts – both girls and boys - in closer localities
- To improve Georgian language learning accessibility in local areas
- To return native language teaching to the school system
- To expand municipal competencies and establish gender focal points in municipalities and mobilise women to apply for jobs
- To re-activate the training component for minority representatives at the Zurab Zhvania School of Public Administration to promote their engagement in the field of public administration
- To conduct information campaigns among minority women on the significance of gender equality and to address physical and economic domestic violence
- To involve minority women in providing inputs to the implementation of the local Gender Equality National Action Plans

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ANNEX

Annex 1: List of Focus Group meetings and list of interviewees

List of Focus Group meetings:

- 1) Focus group meeting in Akhaltsikhe with the participation of eight women, comprising of members of different CSOs (six Georgian, two Armenian);
- 2) Focus group meeting in Akhalkalaki with the participation of 12 women, comprising members of different CSOs (11 Armenian, one Georgian)
- 3) Focus group meeting in Ninotsminda with the participation of 20 women including teachers, CSO members and local activists (18 Armenians, two Georgians);
- 4) Focus group meeting in the village of Gorelovka and the Ninotsminda district with the participation of four Russian-Dukhobor women;
- 5) Focus group meeting in Akhmeta and Duisi and the Akhmeta district with the participation of 12 local Kist/Chechen women;
- 6) Focus group meeting in Tivi, Kvareli district with the participation of seven Avar women, including from the adjacent villages;
- 7) Focus group meeting in Zinobiani, Kvareli district with the participation of four Udi women;
- 8) Focus group meeting in Karajala, Telavi district with the participation of 10 Azerbaijani women;
- 9) Focus group meeting in the village of Ganjala, Lagodekhi district with the participation of 15 women and three men (12 Azerbaijani, three Georgian);
- 10) Focus group meeting in Areshperani, Lagodekhi district with the participation of 15 women (10 Ossetians, five Georgians);
- 11) Focus group meeting in Iliatsminda (former Ulianovka), Dedoplistskaro district with the participation of eight Russian Molokan women and men;
- 12) Focus group meeting in Kobuleti with 11 Roma women and three men;
- 13) Focus group meeting in Kutaisi with 10 Roma women;
- 14) Focus group meeting in Tbilisi with 10 Roma women;
- 15) Focus group meeting with Meskhetian women from Nasakirali (12) and Ianeti (10).

List of interviews conducted in municipal administrations:

- 1) Hamlet Movsesyan, Head of Sakrebulo, Akhalkalaki
- 2) Eduard Agasaryan, Gamgebeli of Akhalkalaki
- 3) Nairi Iritsyan, Deputy Gamgebeli
- 4) Arutun Oganessian, First Deputy governor
- 5) Giorgi Petrosyan, Deputy Head of Sakrebulo
- 6) Hasmik Marangozyan, Head of Akhalkalaki CEC commission
- 7) Father Babken, Armenian priest in Akhalkalaki
- 8) Gagik Karslyan, Gamgebeli of Ninotsminda
- 9) Marina Gachechiladze, Samtskhe-Javakheti Governor's Office
- 10) Tinatin Akopyan, Samtskhe-Javakheti Governor's Office
- 11) Bela Abramashvili, Director of Akhaltsikhe Professional Development College
- 12) Ia Natsvlishvili, Head of Akhaltsikhe Social Service
- 13) Seda Melkumyan, Representative of Ombudsman in the Samtskhe-Javakheti region
- 14) Ali Aliev, Member of Kvareli Sakrebulo
- 15) Mamuli Neshumashvili, Leader of the Udi community in the village of Zinobiani in the Kvareli district
- 16) Deputy Gamgebeli of the Kvareli municipality
- 17) Nodar Latibashvili, former Deputy Gamgebeli of the Telavi municipality
- 18) Jemal Gadumadze, Member of the Telavi Sakrebulo, Head of the Social Commission
- 19) Head of Social Services of Dedoplistskaro municipality
- 20) Head of Social Services of Kvareli municipality
- 21) Elza Sharipova, Director of Karajala Public School in the Telavi municipality
- 22) Nargiz Jincharadze, member of Kobuleti Sakrebulo, Kobuleti Director of Kobuleti #2 public school
- 23) Head of Kobuleti Municipal Social Service
- 24) Venera Martkopashvili, Leader of Kakheti Roma community
- 25) Roman Aslanov, Leader of Kobuleti Roma community

Interviews conducted with other interlocutors:

- 1) Public Defender's Office regional representative in Samtskhe-Javakheti
- 2) Public Defender's Office Gender Department
- 3) The Women of Multinational Georgia Association, an umbrella organization comprised of women from 16 ethnic communities, Chairperson Alla Bezhentseva