



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations

ISSN 2710-1622

NATIONAL GENDER PROFILE OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL LIVELIHOODS

Georgia



**COUNTRY
GENDER
ASSESSMENT
SERIES**

**EUROPE AND
CENTRAL ASIA**

NATIONAL GENDER PROFILE OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL LIVELIHOODS

COUNTRY GENDER ASSESSMENT SERIES

Georgia

Required citation:

FAO. 2025. *National gender profile of agriculture and rural livelihoods: Georgia*. Country Gender Assessment Series. Budapest. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cd3777en>

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ISSN 2710-1622 [Print]
ISSN 2710-1630 [Online]

ISBN 978-92-5-139493-9
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Acknowledgements

This Country Gender Assessment was prepared by Salome Kinkladze, National Gender Specialist with FAO in Georgia, and Elisabeth Duban, independent gender expert. Soma Chakrabarti, Gender Expert with the FAO-GEF project “Achieving Land Degradation Neutrality Targets of Georgia through Restoration and Sustainable Management of Degraded Pasturelands,” provided information on climate change adaptation and natural resources management. The process of updating and finalizing the Country Gender Assessment was carried out under the guidance of Iamze Mirazanashvili, Programme Assistant and Gender Focal Point, and Tinatin Kbilashvili, Programme Assistant and Youth Focal Point, FAO in Georgia.

Overall technical support was provided by Dono Abdurazakova, Gender and Social Protection Senior Advisor, FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia, and Anna Jenderedjian, Gender and Social Protection Specialist, Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia. The assessment also benefited from the invaluable feedback of Marianna Bicchieri, Gender Officer, FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia.

Special thanks are extended to representatives of the National Statistics Office of Georgia (Geostat) who helped with the collection and verification of relevant data, as well as the Agrarian Issues Committee of the Parliament of Georgia and the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia for supporting the assessment.

The report benefited greatly from the contributions of experts who participated in interviews and provided invaluable insights and information:

- » Javier Sanz Alvarez, FAO in Georgia
- » Dragan Angelovski, FAO in Georgia
- » Nino Tskipurishvili, Women’s Fund in Georgia
- » Ketevan Zhordania, Taso Foundation

» Mariam Jorjadze, Biological Farming Association Elkana

» Teaona Makatsaria, Care Caucasus

» Lasha Shalamberidze, Rural Development Agency

FAO is grateful to the individuals of the following organizations who reviewed a draft of this report during a validation workshop (1 December 2023). Their comments and recommendations improved this Country Gender Assessment overall.

Government ministries and agencies:

- » Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia
- » Rural Development Agency
- » National Statistics Office of Georgia

International organizations:

- » Austrian Development Agency (ADA)
- » European Union Delegation to Georgia
- » Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)
- » United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
- » United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women)
- » United Nations Resident Coordinator Office

Civil society organizations:

- » Biological Farming Association Elkana
- » Caucasus Environmental NGO Network (CENN)
- » Georgian Farmers’ Association
- » Regional Environmental Centre for the Caucasus (REC Caucasus)

Foreword



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Gender equality and women's empowerment are key pillars for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, and are essential for inclusive and sustainable development. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) recognizes that rural women play a crucial role in agriculture, food security and rural development. FAO is deeply committed to addressing gender equality in all its normative and technical work, and to promoting sustainable transformation of agrifood systems.

In Georgia, FAO has maintained a continuous dialogue with key ministries and government partners to enhance gender-responsive and inclusive rural development policies. These efforts have resulted in significant progress, with a specific focus on improving the participation of rural and young women in agriculture. However, while these achievements are significant, it remains critical to further highlight the contributions of women farmers to the agrifood systems. Equally important is to address the many challenges they continue to face, including the need for increased recognition and support of women in agriculture, forestry, fisheries and related sectors.

FAO Georgia has initiated its first Country Gender Assessment in 2018 based on the corporate guidance to provide national and international partners with an updated profile on gender, agriculture and rural

development for gender-responsive policymaking, and inform country planning and programming.. The current publication reviews the progress and achievements made since then, considering major challenges and shocks, such as the war in Ukraine, climate change-related events. It also reflects on the steps taken drawing on good practices and identifies the essential gaps that need to be addressed.

Despite their vital role in food security and the economy, a large number of women in rural Georgia face poverty risks, and their contributions often go unrecognized. While there is a considerable progress in sex-disaggregated data collection, analysis and knowledge building, some sectoral gaps remain. The absence of systematic data may hinder the effective implementation of sectoral policies aimed at promoting the development of sustainable value chains.

The challenge now lies in ensuring that women in rural areas have equal opportunities, greater access to resources, and are empowered to fully participate in the development of sustainable agrifood systems by designing evidence-based innovative approaches. This updated Country Gender Assessment sheds light on the current gaps and provides actionable recommendations. By working closely with its national partners, FAO continues to support efforts to build a future where no one is left behind from the benefits of sustainable agrifood systems.

Raimund Jehle



FAO Regional Programme Leader in Europe and Central Asia, Representative in Georgia

Abbreviations

CBP	Child Benefit Program	NEET	not in education, employment or training
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women	NGO	non-governmental organization
CGA	Country Gender Assessment	OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
CPF	Country Programming Framework	PISA	Programme for International Assessment
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	PUU	Pasture User Union
FFS	farmer field school	RAS	Rural Advisory Services
GDI	Gender Development Index	RDA	Rural Development Agency
GDP	gross domestic product	SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
GEL	Georgian lari	SME	small and medium-sized enterprise
GGPI	Global Gender Parity Index	TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
GRAST	Gender and Rural Advisory Services Assessment Tool	TSA	Targeted Social Assistance
GTUS	Georgia Time Use Survey	UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
HDI	Human Development Index	UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
HIES	Household Income and Expenditure Survey	UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
ICC	Information and Consultation Centre	UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
ICT	information and communications technology	UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
ILO	International Labour Organization	UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
MEPA	Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia	USD	United States dollar
NAITS	National Animal Identification and Traceability System	WEI	Women’s Empowerment Index
NAMA	Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Action	WSS	water supply and sanitation
NBSAP	National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan		

Currency equivalents

Currency units

As of 1 August 2024

Georgian lari (GEL) – United States dollar (USD)

GEL 1.00 – USD 0.36

USD 1.00 – GEL 2.68

Executive summary

Ensuring gender equality and women's empowerment in rural areas is imperative for fostering the socioeconomic development of Georgia. The country has committed to key international agreements that set standards on gender equality, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Platform for Action. The state is implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It has also ratified the European Convention on Human Rights, as well as the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (the Istanbul Convention).

Despite their important contributions to agrifood systems, women in rural areas of Georgia face intersecting inequalities, marginalization and discrimination (when multiple categories such as age, ethnicity, educational background and disability interact with gender to create unique forms of disadvantage). Due to structural barriers and discriminatory practices, rural women have limited access to key assets, services and opportunities. This not only hampers progress towards sustainable agrifood systems, but it also obstructs rural women's complete engagement in society and the economy and constrains their opportunities to reach their full potential.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) harmonizes its efforts with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The SDGs and targets aim to realize human rights and promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls across the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. FAO's approach is to enhance agrifood systems and rural development, following the "leave no one behind" principle.

This Country Gender Assessment (CGA) highlights gender disparities observed across various dimensions of agriculture and rural livelihoods in Georgia. In recent years, the country has seen important

improvements in terms of **attention to women's needs within agricultural and climate change strategies.**

Despite this, there still remain areas in which gender mainstreaming could be further strengthened. For example, policies for some subsectors of agriculture, such as fisheries, remain practically gender blind, and in other cases, gender equality may be mentioned as a goal but specific targets and responsible agencies have not been determined. Moreover, national **agricultural support programmes tend to lack a cohesive approach to effectively target women as potential recipients.** A further complication is incomplete sex-disaggregated data relevant to Georgian agrifood systems. For instance, the lack of such data about crop production is closely associated with the oversight of state programmes that provide financial support or subsidies to farmers, including women farmers. FAO has increasingly recognized the importance not only of policies, strategies and approaches that are sensitive to, or take into consideration, existing gender inequalities, but also of adopting new approaches that aim to transform the very systems that perpetuate inequality. FAO, working with its national partners, has demonstrated the effectiveness of gender mainstreaming in developing and implementing gender-responsive projects in Georgia. Going forwards, the task will be to expand on existing good practices and develop new approaches that are gender transformative.

Poverty levels have been falling in recent years, but the share of the rural population living in absolute poverty is considerably greater than the share of the urban population. In terms of individual poverty levels, there are few differences between women and men on the whole. However, **poverty risks are higher for women involved in agriculture in rural areas.** A significant proportion of the rural population does not depend solely on agriculture for income. However, female-headed households earn less from agriculture compared with male-headed households.

In rural areas, women are more commonly found outside the labour force compared with men.

Moreover, the gender disparity in the not in education, employment or training (NEET) rate is three times greater in rural areas compared with urban settlements, **with young women being more likely to be NEET than young men.** This situation has various socioeconomic implications, among them economic inequalities, social exclusion of women and limiting the overall potential of economic growth of different regions of Georgia.

In Georgia, **the gender wage gap** is prevalent in the earnings of individuals working in the combined sector of agriculture, forestry and fisheries and in businesses operating in the same sectors. In general, household characteristics, the sectors of the economy in which women and men work, their positions in workplace hierarchies and women's longer engagement in education are among the factors that are contributing to the widening gender wage gap. Further exploration of country-specific reasons, including the possibility of discrimination in the workplace, is needed to address the issue comprehensively.

A gender gap in entrepreneurship is still persistent in Georgia. Disparities are evident in the number, size and type of enterprises established by women and men. As the global landscape is witnessing a significant rise in women entrepreneurs in sectors such as health, technologies, agriculture, clean energy and transportation (World Bank, 2019a), it is imperative for Georgia to utilize lessons learned from various projects and programmes about what has been effective to further enhance women's economic independence.

Women's disproportionate share of unpaid work is still the norm in both rural and urban populations in Georgia. Simultaneously, there has been a growing acknowledgement of unpaid work as a crucial area for gender analysis. The first Time Use Survey conducted in Georgia between 2020 and 2021 showed that rural women bear the majority of unpaid work responsibilities, and their role in food production, specifically in processing of agricultural products for household consumption, is significant.

Off-farm agrifood-system employment is a greater source of livelihoods for women than men. **Women's participation rate in making and processing goods is ten times higher than men's.** For women, this work may be compensated or an unpaid activity. Expanding the Time Use Survey to gain additional data within specific agricultural value chains is essential for the promotion of evidence-based policies to recognize, value and redistribute rural women's unpaid work.

Policy discussions on rural to urban migration mostly focus on push factors for "young people"

as a homogeneous group, and they consequently overlook the different factors that influence internal migration of women and men. Therefore, there is a need to address different challenges and needs through a gender lens, in order to develop a comprehensive picture of the dynamics of rural out-migration.

Sustainable Development Goal Indicator 5.a.1 measures the prevalence of people in the agricultural population with ownership or secure rights over agricultural land, disaggregated by sex (FAO, 2024a). **Secure land rights are essential for promoting gender equality and sustainable development, and disaggregation of data by sex helps to identify the barriers women face in terms of exercising their right to land.** In addition, secure land rights are essential for sustainable agricultural development because they are required for long-term investments and adoption of diverse practices that improve productivity.

While public perceptions regarding equal inheritance of land and other property seem to be shifting in a positive direction, women are still the minority of property owners in Georgia. Despite legal equality in terms of ownership rights, official data indicate inequality in terms of actual landownership. Recent statistics reveal that 38.6 percent of men possess ownership or secure rights to agricultural land, in contrast to only 14.4 percent of women. Additionally, among the population with ownership or secure rights to agricultural land, a significant majority, 73.3 percent, are men, while only 27.7 percent are women. The unequal control of land not only impedes gender equality in the present, but it also has intergenerational impacts, aggravating poverty and inequality for future generations.

Women and men both play significant roles in crop production and post-harvest activities and have distinct responsibilities, yet because of the absence of sex-disaggregated data, these roles are often not well-documented. In livestock production, men and women also engage in different types of work. **There is a notable lack of gender-sensitive value chain analyses for both the crop and the livestock sectors.**

Gender-specific information about the fisheries sector is lacking as well, but of all aquaculture holdings in Georgia, 93 percent are owned by men. While women are experienced in the marketing of fish, underdeveloped storage facilities means that they are usually engaged in petty trading (in markets and at roadsides). There is an evident gender wage gap in the fisheries sector as a whole, with women earning less than half that of men, based on average monthly salaries. The situation is very much the same in the forestry sector, where the main challenge to gender

analysis is the lack of sex-disaggregated data, including information on employment, income and ownership of forestry enterprises.

Only 23 percent of the individuals who received public agricultural extension services in 2020 were women. Women face similar barriers to making use of these services as they do in accessing other resources, such as limited time due to household responsibilities, mobility constraints, lack of recognition as farmers, and exclusion from communication channels and networks. Additionally, they often lack essential resources such as land titles and financial means to participate in extension programmes. Women are also “missing” as extension agents, representing just 15 percent of extensionists. FAO programming in Georgia indicates that mainstreaming gender into agricultural extension and rural advisory services is critical for ensuring that such services are both responsive to farmers’ needs and inclusive of all people working in agrifood systems.

Climate change exacerbates poverty, gender and social disparities and food shortages, constrains access to crucial social services, and worsens physical and mental health conditions among women and men in rural communities (WFD, 2023). Research in Georgia has shown that women generally exhibit a heightened awareness of everyday local issues directly linked to climate change, in contrast to men who typically prioritize global and larger-scale events. But women who live in rural areas experience climate change more intensively compared with women in urban areas, and their willingness to seek further information on climate-related issues is greater. They are also more likely to recognize various climate change impacts, especially to agrifood systems. Women in rural areas

are less resilient to the impacts of droughts because of, for instance, their limited access to resources and information. This situation then leads to a decrease in food security, less diversity in cultivated crops, and decline in their income (ibid.). At the same time, while their participation has been improving over recent years, women in Georgia are still not well-represented as decision-makers and policymakers in the area of climate change mitigation. Women’s everyday awareness and traditional knowledge around environmental practices should, however, serve as a foundation for developing climate change interventions.

Women’s political representation and inclusion of women’s voices in political decision-making ensures that the diverse perspectives and concerns of rural women are taken into account. **Despite advancements, women remain significantly underrepresented in local executive positions.** Community and localized approaches that address the underlying structural issues are crucial for promoting gender equity and broadening leadership opportunities for women.

Interventions from both national-level and grassroots organizations continue to play a crucial role in empowering rural women. The growing number of initiatives focusing on rural development in Georgia indicates a transformative shift towards empowering rural women through context-specific strategies. These initiatives are also critical in reaching out to women in rural areas for their knowledge and skills development through diverse programmes including, for example, training, skills development and capacity building, using methods such as rural advisory services, farmer field schools or entrepreneurship support.

1. Introduction

1.1. Why is gender relevant to sustainable agriculture and rural development?

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) recognizes that gender equality is essential to the Organization's core mandate of a world free from hunger, malnutrition and poverty. FAO's contributions to promoting gender equality are shaped by global commitments to eliminate discrimination against women and girls and ensure the protection of the rights of women and girls in rural areas.

Although rural women are vital contributors to rural communities and to their household economies, too often their rights and needs "remain insufficiently addressed or ignored in laws, national and local policies, budgets, and investment strategies at all levels" (Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, 2016, p. 3). Despite legal and policy frameworks being gender-responsive, implementation is often incomplete. In Georgia, the lack of budgetary allocations and technical expertise in gender mainstreaming in ministries are some of the reasons. Therefore, achieving the intended outcomes of laws and policies is constrained.

FAO strives to counter the "invisibility" of rural women who are, in fact, a large proportion of the rural workforce. Rural women serve as managers of natural resources and shoulder most of the burden of unpaid domestic and care work. In doing so, they contribute significantly to food security and nutrition, yet "still face major gender-based constraints that limit their potential as economic agents and their capacity to reap the full benefits of their work" (FAO, 2020a, p. 3).

Although rural women play essential roles in agrifood systems, they also encounter marginalization and discrimination, as well as limited access to critical assets, resources, services and opportunities. These challenges hold back women's productivity, with far-ranging consequences for individual households, communities and national

economies. Addressing gender gaps in agrifood systems requires investing in and empowering rural women and girls, by ensuring that all interventions are gender-responsive and, wherever possible, also implementing targeted interventions to close longstanding disparities. These approaches, while aimed at women and girls, are actually a catalyst to "accelerate progress in agriculture, rural development and, ultimately, food security and nutrition" more generally (ibid., p. 4). FAO is committed to integrating gender equality into all its work and aims to transform discriminatory norms and tackle the root causes of persistent inequalities (FAO, 2020a).

FAO aligns its work with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which itself reflects global commitments to reduce intersecting inequalities and to meet gender-specific targets. **Intersecting inequalities** refers to "how gender is manifested when combined with other characteristics such as age, dis/ability, migrant background, ethnicity, sexual orientation or socioeconomic background" (European Institute of Gender Equality, 2019, p. 4). Thus, FAO supports national development, especially the improvement of agrifood systems and rural livelihood opportunities, that is inclusive, considers the diversity within gender and leaves no one behind.

1.2. FAO's work in Georgia

FAO's assistance in Georgia under the Country Programming Framework (CPF) for 2016–2020 had a strong focus on addressing gender inequalities in rural areas in order to ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of its interventions. In line with FAO policy, the office conducted a Country Gender Assessment (CGA) in 2018 that was used for country-level planning and programming under the previous CFP (FAO, 2018a).

At this time, FAO was mainstreaming gender into several of its activities with the aim of supporting national policymaking and programming to become more gender-responsive.

Table 1. Priorities and areas of cooperation between FAO and the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture in Georgia

Priority area	Main areas of cooperation
(1) Reducing disparities between urban and rural areas by increasing agrifood sector productivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Increasing competitiveness of the agrifood sector » Promoting sustainable and inclusive agricultural and rural development, strengthened food systems and improved livelihoods, including through gender-sensitive and socially inclusive policy and facilitating women's access to finance, inputs and services » Increasing capacities of agrifood sector stakeholders, with attention to women farmers' access to skills development, training and extension services
(2) Enhancing resilience of conflict-affected communities by introducing good agricultural practices and improving farm management skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Improving resilience and self-reliance of conflict-affected rural communities through enhanced capacities of farmers in improved agricultural practices » Implementing a special project on developing the capacity of women smallholder farmers to provide quality, safe dairy products » Ensuring a supply of agricultural inputs, effective extension support and upgraded farming skills to the Abkhazia Region
(3) Enhancing climate resilience of communities and the environment through improved environmental governance, climate action, and sustainable management and use of natural resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Enhancing environmental and agricultural governance and institutional capacity to enable sustainable management and use of natural resources » Strengthening adaptation and mitigation capacities through the enhanced use of climate information, products and services and early warning systems, with awareness raising for women and men farmers » Contributing to the restoration of degraded land » Contributing to the implementation of climate-smart and gender-responsive technological solutions, initiatives and projects to ensure climate change adaptation and mitigation among agrifood sector stakeholders

Source: FAO. n.d.[a]. Country Programming Framework for Georgia 2021 to 2025. In: FAO. Rome. [Cited 25 June 2024]. <https://www.fao.org/georgia/programmes-and-projects/es>

The Country Programming Framework for 2021–2025 sets out new priorities for FAO cooperation with the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture (MEPA) of Georgia. The outcomes of the CPF for 2021–2025 reflect the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2021–2025 for Georgia and are in line with Georgia's Agriculture and Rural Development Strategy for 2021–2027. The UNSDCF itself is guided by principles of gender equality and women's empowerment, while the Agriculture and Rural Development Strategy of Georgia pays particular attention to rural women's economic empowerment. The CPF, thus, anticipates a number of gender-responsive approaches and interventions.

The CPF for 2021–2025 has three expected outcomes to be achieved through several directions that also have gender considerations embedded within them. These are summarized in Table 1.

The Country Programming Framework for 2021–2025 is also supported by FAO's objectives as outlined in the Regional Gender Equality Action Plan for Europe and Central Asia 2023–2026 (FAO, 2023a). The action plan sets out three outputs relevant to the Europe and Central Asia region and FAO's Country Offices. The areas of cooperation foreseen in the current CPF are consistent with the three outputs of the regional action plan, summarized as follows:

1. Policies for agrifood systems supporting inclusion of women and men are enabled through knowledge building, awareness raising and experience sharing.

2. Enhanced capacities in the region and FAO programming countries to formulate, implement and monitor gender-responsive and transformative agrifood legislation, policies and programmes, and investment plans.

3. More efficient, resilient and sustainable agrifood systems, where women and men have equal access to markets, decent employment, knowledge and innovation, and improved control over natural and productive resources.

Of note, the Regional Gender Equality Action Plan for Europe and Central Asia calls for the implementation of FAO-specific interventions that target rural women as a particular group. This approach acknowledges the need for dedicated support for rural women in order to counteract entrenched gender disparities. It is also an approach that is highly relevant to the Georgian context and should be applied through cooperative projects anticipated under the current CPF for Georgia. Furthermore, in contrast to previous gender policy, the current regional gender equality action plan places greater emphasis on *transformative* approaches that do not merely address the gender inequalities that exist in a particular context but aim to target the deeper-rooted causes of these inequalities and transform them. Therefore, this CGA is oriented towards providing information about how, under the CPF for Georgia, interventions can move beyond addressing the specific needs of rural women and can begin to change the structures and systems that continue to reinforce inequality.

1.3. Scope and purpose of the Country Gender Assessment

FAO policy on gender equality requires that Country Offices periodically carry out a CGA to provide information on the intersections of gender and agriculture to national and international partners and to inform planning and implementation of the CPF (FAO, 2020a).

This Country Gender Assessment builds on and updates the first such CGA for Georgia (FAO, 2018a). As in the previous CGA, this assessment focuses on the intersections of gender, agrifood systems and rural development, and presents a snapshot of critical gender inequalities that affect agricultural production and rural livelihoods in Georgia. This updated CGA aims to supplement the data and analysis from the first such publication and, wherever possible, to provide information about trends observed since 2018. It also incorporates information from other research and analysis that has been conducted in recent years.

A specific feature of this CGA is that it reflects on some of the good practices and lessons learned through the gender-responsive programming carried out by FAO in Georgia. While the CGA is not an evaluation of such activities, it draws on the experiences accumulated through FAO project implementation to present information about where gender disparities still persist and also what approaches appear to be having impacts in terms of improving women's livelihoods.

Since 2018, the Europe and Central Asia region has experienced several major global events, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the outbreak of war conducted against Ukraine. The assessment is not intended to be a full review of how these very complex situations are affecting rural livelihoods and agriculture in Georgia. However, the CGA draws upon other analyses, where relevant, to provide information about potential risks that pre-existing gender inequalities have widened. As conditions are changing, the findings included in this CGA should be incorporated into planning and project design to ensure that rural populations, especially women and girls, are not further disadvantaged.

Likewise, the CGA overall provides a general framework and background information that FAO can build upon. It is suggested that FAO and its partners use the CGA as a starting point to develop targeted gender analysis in the context of particular project design and programming.

The CGA concludes with updated recommendations on supporting women across agrifood systems and in

rural development with a gender-sensitive perspective that acknowledges and considers differences between women and men in their roles in agrifood systems, and in their access to productive resources, inputs and information. These recommendations are addressed to FAO, the Government of Georgia and national institutions, FAO's key partners.

Finally, this assessment is a resource, not only for FAO's cooperation with national partners, but also for other United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and researchers, alongside diverse professionals in the fields of agriculture and rural development.

1.4. Methodology

The methodology for this CGA is recommended by FAO's internal guidance on preparing a Country Gender Assessment (FAO, 2017a). This assessment was conducted primarily through a review and analysis of quantitative data and qualitative information found in statistical compilations and contemporary research, respectively. An important component was a review of FAO documentation for projects that were either gender-mainstreamed or which targeted women. In order to enhance the qualitative information of the CGA, several expert interviews were conducted with key informants, from FAO, the government, agricultural associations, NGOs and several women farmers, from August 2023 to September 2023. The key findings of the CGA were validated in a workshop held on 1 December 2023.

1.4.1. Data sources and gender statistics

Gender statistics and sex-disaggregated data are necessary for inclusive policymaking on rural development and agriculture. Because they reveal critical disparities that would otherwise be overlooked, gender statistics are the starting point for a Country Gender Assessment. Whenever possible, this assessment refers to official data.

This CGA prioritizes the use of official gender statistics produced by the National Statistics Office of Georgia (Geostat), for example, compiled in the publication *Women and Men in Georgia* or available through online databases,¹ as well as sex-disaggregated data included in databases for agriculture and food security.

Several challenges concerning official data were encountered when preparing this CGA. First, while

¹ The gender statistics database is available at <http://gender.geostat.ge/gender/index.php?#home> and the SDG platform at <https://sdg.gov.ge/intro>.

there are extensive gender statistics for Georgia, the thematic section on agriculture covers 11 indicators (mainly related to agricultural workers)² and not the 18 that have been developed by the FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia (see FAO, n.d.[b]). In fact, the FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia recommends that this set of gender indicators be integrated into the official agricultural statistical system in order to improve gender-sensitive data collection. Second, national statistics on agriculture that are produced quarterly are largely oriented towards production and have limited sex-disaggregated data. The last agriculture census, which includes limited sex-disaggregated data (about holdings), was completed in 2014. The next joint Population and Agriculture Census will be conducted in late 2024, with data on households' agricultural activities to be collected using a special questionnaire. Finally, while many indicators in the national statistical system are disaggregated either by sex or by settlement type (urban or rural), there is a lack of cross-tabulated statistics that would give a sense of gender disparities within rural populations.

In addition, Geostat produces some data for female-headed and male-headed households (or holdings) separately, which can give a sense of gender disparities in a particular area but should also be used with caution. The methodology used by Geostat to determine who is the household head as the statistical unit is one that is commonly used in surveys and censuses, in which identification of the household head relies entirely on how individual members of the household define themselves.

This approach is considered ineffective in capturing the nuances of what it means to be the head of a household/holding and the concept itself is outdated because it requires a respondent to select one individual to represent the entire family, assuming one primary decision-maker (usually male). Direct comparisons become problematic due to differing structures and circumstances, making it challenging to attribute disparities solely to the household head's gender. Moreover, definitions of female and male-headship vary across surveys and countries, complicating accurate comparisons (FAO, 2016a). The United Nations defines female-headed households as "a household in which adult males either are not present (owing to divorce, separation, migration, non-marriage, widowhood) or do not contribute to the household income (owing to illness, alcoholism, drug addiction and so forth)" (ibid., p. vii). FAO has documented that female-headed

households face "more severe labour constraints than male-headed households because they typically have fewer members but more dependants" (FAO, 2011, p. 27). In addition, male-headed households operate larger agricultural land holdings, on average, than female-headed households (FAO, 2011). FAO therefore endorses an approach that distinguishes between two types of female-headed households: (i) "de facto, i.e., those in which an adult male partner is working away from the household but remains involved through remittances and other economic and social ties; and (ii) de jure, i.e. those which have no male partner, which would include women who are widowed, divorced or never married" (ibid., p. 24). Thus, the data included in this CGA for female/male-headed households provide a general picture of gender-based differences, but the shortcomings should also be kept in mind.

It should be noted that the National Statistics Office of Georgia has taken several measures to improve the production of gender statistics. For example, the Strategic Plan for Agricultural, Environmental and Rural Statistics in Georgia for 2016–2020 (National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2015) noted gaps in sex-disaggregated statistics and supported a dedicated survey on asset ownership, but gender considerations do not seem to have been included in specific strategic planning for the production of agricultural statistics. In line with the National Strategy for the Development of Official Statistics of Georgia for 2020–2023, Geostat introduced two gender-sensitive SDG indicators in 2021: production volume of agricultural holding per working day, by holding size and sex of holder (SDG Indicator 2.3.1) and average annual income of agricultural holdings, by holding size and sex of holder (SDG Indicator 2.3.2). The data will be updated every 3 years.

According to a satisfaction survey, users of gender statistics seek out data in the field of agriculture about as frequently as for other fields, such as for business and income and expenditures, which suggests that there is high demand for gender statistics on this topic (National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2021a). Overall, users are satisfied with gender statistics on agriculture, a pattern similar for almost all other fields. Survey respondents from NGOs, however, drew attention to the particular "scarcity of data related to agriculture," noting, for example, the need for gender statistics on agricultural employment further disaggregated by region, and about how women are represented in various types of agricultural activities and subsectors (ibid., p. 24). This CGA, likewise, highlights instances in which data are lacking and dedicated analysis is also needed to better understand women's roles across agrifood systems in Georgia.

² This section is available at <http://gender.geostat.ge/gender/index.php?action=Agriculture>.

A particular challenge is the lack of gender statistics that are further disaggregated by other characteristics such as age, socioeconomic background, ethnicity or disability status. Without such differentiation, intersecting inequalities are invisible, and gender equality appears far less complex than it is in reality.

The CGA also makes use of some data from non-governmental sources when relevant and to provide additional analysis of particular gender gaps in Georgia.

2. Gender and rural livelihoods

2.1. Administrative and territorial divisions

Georgia is divided into nine territorial regions, two autonomous regions (Abkhazia and Adjara) and the capital city Tbilisi. There are 64 municipalities in Georgia (including Tbilisi), most of which contain a mix of cities and towns as well as villages. Since 2018, a small number of settlements have changed status. In 2019, the Government of Georgia released a new Decentralization Strategy for 2020–2025 initiating a new stage in self-government reform (Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure of Georgia, 2019a).

Because this Country Gender Assessment focuses on the situation in rural areas, comparing differences between rural and urban livelihoods, and identifying the gender-based gaps that affect the rural population, it is important to clarify at the outset what is meant by a “rural settlement”. There is no standard international definition of a “rural” area because of differences between countries. FAO recommends that the definition of a rural area be based on “factors relevant in determining or explaining outcomes of interest ... as opposed to referencing outcomes themselves” (FAO, 2018b, p. 15). Most definitions of rural areas address one or more of three dimensions: scarcity of population in a settlement; land cover and land use; and remoteness of the settlement (FAO, 2018b).

When conducting gender analysis, the particular dimensions that are included or excluded in the classification of an area as “rural” may not adequately capture the realities of women’s and men’s lives. For instance, considering areas as “rural” based only on their remoteness might be helpful to understand access to some services, especially when issues of women’s more limited mobility are also taken into consideration. However, if analysing how women and men are engaged in agricultural production, the remoteness

classification might overlook people who engage in farming in peri-urban areas (FAO, 2018b).

In Georgia, settlements are distinguished as those which are primarily engaged in agricultural production (see Box 1).

This Country Gender Assessment uses the term “rural” in a general sense and in line with FAO guidance. Rural settlements are those that are characterized by the majority of the population being engaged in activities related to agriculture, forestry and/or aquaculture – essentially the same criteria used in Georgia.

Box 1. Classification of “rural” areas in Georgia

The Organic Law of Georgia on Local Self-Governance Code, Article 4 outlines three types of settlements: villages, small towns (boroughs) and cities. According to this law, “a **village** [is] a settlement the boundaries of which mainly include agricultural land and other natural resources, and the infrastructure of which is essentially focused on carrying out agricultural activities” (2015, p. 1).

Rural settlements are defined in national statistics as “a settlement the boundaries of which mainly include agricultural land and other natural resources, and the infrastructure of which is essentially focused on carrying out agricultural activities” (National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2024a, p. 1).

Sources:

- (i) Georgia. Organic Law of Georgia, Local Self Government Code, 2015. No. 4087. Also available at <https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/download/2244429/15/en/pdf>
- (ii) National Statistics Office of Georgia. 2024a. Metadata on Population. Tbilisi. https://www.geostat.ge/media/62048/0901_290424_EN.PDF

2.2. Macro-level view of gender equality

Several indices that measure progress towards gender equality from a macro perspective indicate that Georgia is a country of very high human development, yet gender inequalities persist in several areas.

The Human Development Index (HDI) is a measure used by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) that considers a long and healthy life, average years in education and a decent standard of living (income per capita). The 2022 HDI value for Georgia of 0.814 places it 60 out of 193 countries.³ Since 2001, Georgia's HDI value has been steadily increasing from year to year, with only a marginal downturn in 2020. This period corresponded with the COVID-19 pandemic that resulted in reversals in human development across the globe (UNDP, 2024a).

The Gender Development Index (GDI) assesses how gender inequality reduces a country's level of human development, by comparing HDI scores calculated separately for women and men in three dimensions: health (life expectancy at birth), education and economic empowerment (command over economic resources).⁴ In Georgia, the female HDI value for 2022 was 0.815 and the male value was 0.811, and this results in a GDI value of 1.005. The value for Georgia is slightly higher than the average value for countries of Europe and Central Asia combined – 0.963 (UNDP, 2024b). Within the dimensions that comprise the GDI, the most notable disparities are in average life expectancy (in which men are disadvantaged by life expectancies that are almost 10 years less than women's) and in the level of access to economic resources (where women earn around one-third less than men).

In 2023, two new global gender indices were launched: the Women's Empowerment Index (WEI) and the Global Gender Parity Index (GGPI), the first of which is a standalone index and the second a means to assess the status of women relative to men in the core dimensions of human development. Due to incomplete data, neither a WEI nor a GGPI score could be assigned to Georgia in this round, but available data can be compared with that compiled for countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) to give a general picture. In terms of the first index, women in Georgia have high achievement in the area of education, with an important exception for young women – quite a high

proportion of whom are not in education, employment or training compared with the rates for OECD countries. Women in Georgia are the least empowered in dimensions related to participation in decision-making, although it appears that women face greater barriers to political engagement than to economic decision-making generally (measured by the share of women in managerial positions; see Table A1.1 and Table A1.2 in Appendix 1 of this report).

As noted, Georgia was not given a GGPI score, but other countries in the high human development group are assessed to have the best performance in gender parity globally. Yet still women achieve around 79 percent of what men achieve (UNDP and UN Women, 2023). Comparing the achievements of men and women in Georgia by dimension, indicators of leadership and decision-making are where gender gaps are largest (see Table A1.2 in Appendix 1). It is also worth noting that data for an indicator on labour force participation for people of working age who are part of a couple with at least one child under the age of 6 years were not available for Georgia, and this information would be valuable to assess whether women are able to combine work and family life to the same degree as men.

The Global Gender Gap, developed by the World Economic Forum, measures gender parity in four dimensions (economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment), allowing for a more detailed assessment of progress towards gender equality. In 2024, Georgia received a score of 0.716⁵ which corresponds to a rank of 69 out of 146 countries (World Economic Forum, 2024). Of the four dimensions, Georgia is the furthest from parity in the area of political empowerment, with economic participation and opportunity being the next area where gender gaps are larger. Notably, when looking at sub-indicators in this area, it is women's lower wages as well as women's limited participation in managerial roles that contribute greatly to the disparities. For the country as a whole, there is close to gender parity in educational attainment and health (see Figure 1).

Comparing Georgia's Global Gender Gap scores today to those of 2006,⁶ there has been virtually no change in the dimension of economic participation. Those indicators that were close to gender parity more than a decade ago, educational attainment and

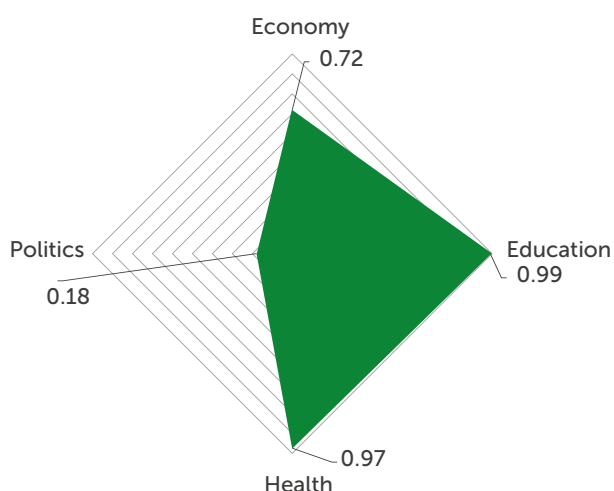
³ In simple terms, HDI scores range from 1.00 (the highest possible level of human development) to 0 (the lowest level of human development).

⁴ The GDI uses the same scale as the HDI.

⁵ A score of 1.00 represents gender parity and a score of 0 represents complete imparity.

⁶ This is the year that the Global Gender Gap methodology was launched.

Figure 1. Global Gender Gap scores for Georgia, by dimension, 2024



Source: World Economic Forum. 2024. *The Global Gender Gap Report 2024*. Geneva, Switzerland, p. 185.

health, have remained positive. While women's political empowerment has minimally improved (from 0.10 in 2006), this remains the dimension assessed by the World Economic Forum to be the one in which gender inequalities are the most pronounced in Georgia (World Economic Forum, 2006).

While none of the indices can adequately measure levels of empowerment or gender parity specifically for women and men living in rural areas, they do provide some important perspectives on the areas in which women are falling behind: economic independence and political power.

2.3. Policy and institutional profile

Georgia is a signatory to the key international human rights instruments on non-discrimination and has enacted specific legislation that reinforces international standards. The principles of gender equality and non-discrimination are enshrined in the national law of Georgia.

Since 2018, Georgia has both reported on progress towards meeting obligations of international conventions and strengthened national legislation in ways that have increased protection of the equal rights of women and men.

2.3.1. Key international commitments on gender equality

The **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)** draws attention to the significant roles that rural women play "in the economic survival of their families, including their work in the non-monetized sectors

of the economy", and requires States Parties to "ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, that they participate in and benefit from rural development" (Article 14). The CEDAW Committee's general recommendations (for example, General Recommendations No. 16 [1991] on unpaid family workers and No. 34 [2016] on the rights of rural women) provide further details on States parties' commitments. Since ratifying CEDAW, Georgia has submitted six periodic reports on implementation of the treaty, most recently in 2020.

Georgia's sixth periodic report draws attention to two related issues that affect women living in rural areas: their low level of landownership and, thus, their limited access to credit, as they lack an important form of collateral. The report, however, provides few details about other areas in which rural women face persistent discrimination (Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, 2021a). In preparing its review, the CEDAW Committee requested additional information from the government relevant to several aspects of rural women's lives, an indication that the Committee considers this an important issue for Georgia. One set of questions centres around the economic empowerment of rural women with a request for information about how the implementation of the national rural development strategy for 2017–2020 had an impact on issues such as reducing women's and girls' engagement in unpaid work, increasing access to loans and financial credit and improving access to various social benefits (Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, 2021b). In its concluding observations, the CEDAW Committee expressed concern over the feminization of poverty in Georgia and the lack of sectoral policies and programmes aimed at the economic empowerment of women, "in particular in rural areas," recommending the adoption of a national strategy on this issue (Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, 2023, paras. 39–40).

Georgia has undertaken commitments to advance the agenda of the **Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action**. In its strategic objectives, the Beijing Platform for Action includes a number of references to women in rural areas and in particular their risks for poverty and social marginalization. The Beijing Platform for Action calls on governments to formulate and implement policies that enhance the access of women agricultural and fisheries producers to a range of productive resources. When reviewing progress under the Beijing Platform for Action, over the last 30 years, Georgia noted that gender considerations had been incorporated into strategic documents concerning agriculture and rural development (discussed in a separate section of this CGA), and programmes have

been implemented that aim to stimulate women's involvement in agricultural activities but also improve non-agricultural employment opportunities for rural women. Still, the same reporting draws attention to persisting gender disparities asset ownership, especially concerning the small share of women landowners but also their access to financial resources, and spatial disparities in the limited accessibility of social infrastructure, good quality general education and health services in rural and remote areas (Government of Georgia, 2024).

The Government of Georgia has committed to implementing the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** and has established national priorities and indicators for the **Sustainable Development Goals** (SDGs). Many of the SDGs have particular relevance for rural populations, such as those on ending poverty (Goal 1), achieving food security, improving nutrition and promoting sustainable agriculture (Goal 2) and providing universal access to clean water and sanitation (Goal 6). Goal 5 on achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls includes one explicit target related to agriculture and rural livelihoods: Target 5.a on undertaking reforms to grant women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources. Additionally, other Goal 5 targets, such as ending discrimination against women and girls, recognizing unpaid care work and ensuring full and effective participation in all levels of decision-making, have a cross-cutting nature and are particularly relevant to improving the lives of women and girls in rural areas. The pledge to "leave no one behind" represents an obligation to consider the situation of women and girls in rural settlements throughout the 2030 Agenda. Georgia presented its second Voluntary National Review in 2020, noting that the government "has committed to SDG Target 5.1 to undertake reforms giving women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources" (Administration of the Government of Georgia, 2020, p. 57). In 2023, Georgia reported on SDG Indicator 5.a.2 and indicated progress has been made in joint land registration, equal inheritance rights for women and girls, and women's representation as landowners.

Georgia has also undertaken commitments to gender equality as a member state of the Council of Europe⁷

and under the Georgia–European Union Association Agreement (signed in 2014). Within their general strategies to promote gender equality, both the Council of Europe and the European Union recognize the multiple barriers that prevent rural women from realizing their rights, such as poverty, unemployment, the disproportionate burden of unpaid care work, isolation from basic services, limited participation in decision-making and persistent gender stereotypes that relegate them to a subordinate role (see, for example, Parliamentary Assembly Resolution 1806 (2011) on Rural Women in Europe, para. 2 and the European Commission, 2020, A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025).

Georgia applied for membership of the European Union in 2022. The European Council was ready to grant candidate status to Georgia once the priorities specified in the European Commission's opinion on Georgia's membership application had been addressed. Among several issues, the European Commission noted that "overall, the country's legal framework on non-discrimination and gender equality is largely in line with the EU *acquis*, but not sufficiently enforced" (European Commission, 2022, p. 10). By December 2023, Georgia was granted candidate status, based on having met recommendations of the European Commission in 12 priority areas, including having fulfilled steps on promoting gender equality (European Commission, 2024).

2.3.2. National law and policy

Georgian legislation sets forth guarantees of equal rights and opportunities for women and men. The law is not static, however, and since 2018, several key amendments have been introduced that have further strengthened the mandate of national mechanisms for gender equality and the protection from discrimination in several forms. For instance, amendments to the Law on Gender Equality (2010) clarified prohibitions on discrimination based on gender in access to goods and services (including financial services), and in certain decisions concerning insurance if based on pregnancy and maternity, while amendment of the Law on the Elimination of Discrimination (2014) set forth the legal basis for responding to sexual harassment as a form of discrimination. Amendment of the Election Code in 2020 introduced a temporary gender quota mechanism to increase women's representation on political party lists for the first time in Georgia, covering both parliamentary and local self-government elections. In 2024, however, the Parliament of Georgia abolished the mandatory gender quotas for electoral lists.

While Georgian legislation has been improved, expert assessments still point out that the laws are declaratory

⁷ Georgia joined the Council of Europe in 1999 and ratified the core treaties that guarantee gender equality and freedom from discrimination (the European Convention on Human Rights and the European Social Charter).

in nature and enforcement mechanisms have not been sufficiently developed. Thus, in practice, victims of gender discrimination have few means to protect or restore their rights through the legal system. Furthermore, the Law on Gender Equality is largely a formal document that has been assessed to have had limited influence on the formulation of gender equality policy, but is seen to have “no influence on the planning/implementation of gender equality and gender mainstreaming by relevant agencies of the State” (Gender Equality Council of the Parliament of Georgia, 2022, p. 23). Because FAO has specific experience in supporting gender mainstreaming of policy documents relevant to agriculture and rural development, this topic is discussed in more detail in a following section.

Policy documents that directly address gender equality and/or women’s empowerment

National policy of Georgia reiterates commitments to gender equality. For example, the State Concept of Gender Equality of Georgia is a far-reaching policy that addresses economic and labour rights as well as gender mainstreaming.

In 2023, the parliament endorsed a stand-alone State Concept on the Economic Empowerment of Women, which among its seven priority areas, highlights improving women’s access to economic resources, reducing and redistributing unpaid and care work, and formalizing the work of women who are employed in the shadow economy (Parliament of Georgia, 2023a).

There is no national action plan on gender equality per se, but the National Human Rights Protection Strategy of Georgia for 2022–2030 makes specific references to strengthening the legal guarantees of equality and improving mechanisms for the empowerment of women and girls, with indicators on women’s participation in local self-government and in the formal economy, as well as the involvement of women from conflict-affected villages in the peace-building process, among others (Parliament of Georgia, 2023b). The National Action Plan for the Protection of Human Rights for 2018–2020, for the implementation of the previous strategy, included an elaborated goal on women’s rights and gender quality with several objectives throughout the plan that, while not explicitly referring to women in rural areas, are nevertheless highly relevant to their livelihoods, such as creating policy to support women’s entrepreneurship, women and environmental protection, and capacity building for civil servants on women’s economic empowerment. A new action plan, covering 2024–2026, has been drafted and presented to representatives of civil society in late 2023, at which

time an agreement was made to establish thematic working groups (Government of Georgia, 2023). The working group that will address gender issues is yet to be formed.

Georgia has adopted national plans on the protection of women from violence and on increasing women’s participation in peace and security, which are referenced elsewhere in this CGA.

Gender mainstreaming in documents on agricultural policy and climate change

A particularly promising practice in Georgia is the mainstreaming of gender into several state policies in the agriculture sector. Since 2013, FAO has provided extensive support to the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture to incorporate gender considerations into its policies. As a result, several key policy documents not only acknowledge important gender disparities but also set out specific objects and targets to address them. The most recent such policies are the Agriculture and Rural Development Strategy of Georgia for 2021–2027 (Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia, 2019), the National Strategy on Agricultural Extension in Georgia for 2023–2027, and the Strategy on Aquaculture for 2023–2027 (both pending official approval at the time of writing this CGA).

Several recent policies and strategies related to climate change refer to gender considerations, and some indicative examples are provided here. For instance, Georgia’s Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), the key policy document for the country’s climate actions for 2021–2030 under the Paris Agreement, is one of the first of such national documents to include a dedicated chapter on gender and climate change. It mentions women as agents of change in addressing climate change by involving them in decision-making processes and initiatives that promote public health and awareness of climate change, as well as the importance of engaging women in decision-making on measures to enhance energy efficiency and optimize water resources utilization (Government of Georgia, 2021a). The NDC also references objectives to carry out gender analysis and collect sex-disaggregated data relevant to greenhouse gas mitigation and climate change adaptation, but there is currently no clear plan on how to achieve these objectives. Furthermore, the scope of the NDC on women’s engagement, centring on issues of public health and household energy efficiency, is rather limited. A more far-reaching articulation could have considered how women might be activated in areas such as climate smart agriculture or agritourism, for example.

While Georgia's first National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) of 2005 only had provisions targeting women within sensitization campaigns, the second was informed by the Gender Plan of Action Under the Convention on Biological Diversity. It acknowledges gender inequalities in access to resources and opportunities and the different roles of women and men with regard to biodiversity conservation and use of ecosystems services. It envisions women and men as allies working together on the development and implementation of strategy and the action plan itself (Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection of Georgia, 2014a). The second NBSAP aims to empower women and encourage their participation, and it includes provisions on gender balance and targeted messaging, with specific targets on women's engagement in consultations on development projects and natural resource management plans through NGOs and as representatives of local communities, for example.

The Second National Action Programme to Combat Desertification for 2014–2022 notes the role that women play in achieving sustainable land management, while highlighting the importance of women's and men's equal involvement in the development and implementation of the programme itself (Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection of Georgia, 2014b). It is also notable, at the time of completing this CGA, that the United Nations is supporting other initiatives to build national capacities for a gender-responsive climate adaptation plan.⁸

Further information about gender-responsive elements of particular policies are covered in the relevant sections of this CGA. Here, some lessons learned from FAO's cooperation with MEPA to improve gender mainstreaming of agricultural policies are reviewed. First, FAO elaborated a concept for a training cycle on gender mainstreaming and social inclusion that was aligned with both FAO and national gender equality policy, ensuring its relevance for the target groups. From 2020, FAO conducted training for a range of stakeholders, including from MEPA, the Rural Development Agency, the Environmental Information and Education Centre, project experts and gender advisors working on the green economy in Georgia⁹ and representatives of local government, including gender focal points. The training sessions introduced theoretical information (such as the concepts of gender equality, gender inequalities in agrifood systems and

rural development) but had a strong focus on practical skill-building in areas such as conducting gender-sensitive situational analysis, addressing inequalities in community development processes and ensuring inclusive access to services (in particular, extension services). Later, FAO provided technical support by engaging gender focal points from FAO and the European Union to review draft policy documents and provide recommendations. The results were policy documents that reflect gender considerations comprehensively – in their objectives, indicators, actions, targets, assumptions and risks.

The adoption of gender-sensitive policies relevant to agriculture is an important development, but there still remain areas in which gender mainstreaming could be improved. A review of national strategic documents found that despite attention to gender in a number of policies, "the national framework of agricultural development still lacks a gender prism" (UN Women, 2020a, p. 22). A closer look at seven recent national strategies and programmes relevant to agriculture and rural development found that while the documents refer to gender, the references tend to be brief and generic and not always linked to particular targets or actions. Moreover, strategic documents lack meaningful inclusion of gender issues because they do not rely on gender or situational analysis or use data as evidence of specific gender gaps (ibid., p. 23). As a result, areas of inequality that merit attention are not analysed, and this reinforces the misapprehension that agriculture is a gender-neutral sector and that information about broad trends speaks for the experiences of all farmers.

At the same time, FAO staff, interviewed for this CGA, noted that a policy may have "perfect" gender mainstreaming and yet not be implemented in a way that produces real change, and this is also a risk in Georgia. Key challenges that FAO identifies are not much related to the capacity to conduct gender mainstreaming, but concern the overall institutional support and buy-in for its purpose. Experts expressed the opinion that MEPA currently lacks strong gender experts and advocates within its structure and therefore, gender mainstreaming is often approached as a task required by donors rather than as a means to improve the results of development interventions. Related to this, MEPA has not sufficiently internalized the need for gender mainstreaming. Training, such as that supported by FAO, is needed on a continual basis for a larger pool of staff, including technical experts, but so far, MEPA has not taken it up as a regular part of staff development.

⁸ Specifically, the United Nations Environment Programme with funding from the Green Climate Fund.

⁹ The European Union-funded Green Economy: Sustainable Mountain Tourism and Organic Agriculture (GRETA) project.

It is important to point out that these shortcomings are not unique to MEPA, but are in fact indicative across the government. There are no binding legal norms

or policies that oblige state agencies, including line ministries, to take into account “gender specifics in their particular field (agriculture, health, employment policy, etc.) and developing intra-departmental action plans and concepts” (Public Defender of Georgia, 2021a, p. 17). The Law on Gender Equality does not establish specific methods to achieve gender equality, and neither tools nor regular training on gender mainstreaming and gender analysis have been introduced in a uniform way across government institutions and for all civil servants.

A review of the extent to which 36 national strategies, as well as the European Union Association Agreement, are aligned with nationalized SDG targets indicates that,

in general, 93 *percent* of the SDG targets are covered by national policy. However, of the 7 *percent* that were not well-aligned, gender equality goals under SDG 5 were prominent (Administration of the Government of Georgia, 2020).

2.3.3. National gender equality mechanisms and gender expertise within state institutions

According to the Law on Gender Equality, Georgia’s institutional framework for gender equality consists of bodies situated in different branches and different levels of government, as follows:

- » At the national level: the Gender Equality Council of the Parliament of Georgia (in the legislative branch),

Box 2. Gender mainstreaming capacity within the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia

The Rural Development Agency (RDA) is the structure within the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia that implements the ministry’s programmes and projects. In recent years, the RDA has taken several steps to enhance its capacity for gender mainstreaming, and this process offers a case study for how such reforms can be carried out.

In 2019, the Gender Equality Council conducted a thematic survey on women’s participation in state economic programmes leading to the formulation of recommendations, one of which was the need for the RDA to enhance women’s involvement in state programmes by conducting a more comprehensive analysis of the specific challenges they face. In response to this, in 2019, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment (UN Women) carried out a gender audit within the RDA, revealing the absence of a designated individual responsible for gender mainstreaming and a need to increase staff expertise in matters related to gender. It was recommended that the RDA develop and implement a gender strategy and action plan, conduct a gender impact assessment for its programmes and projects, and produce gender statistics. Following the signing of a memorandum of understanding between UN Women and the RDA, a gender impact assessment of the “Plant the Future” programme was conducted in 2021, identifying critical gender gaps. Since 2021, with the support of UN Women, a gender adviser has been working with the agency for a year, providing training to the agency’s staff.

In 2022, the RDA elaborated a Gender Strategy and Action Plan for 2022–2024. The document sets forth a strategic vision, specific actions, and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. The core objectives are:

- » Inclusion of women’s empowerment principles within the RDA’s programmes and ensuring their implementation in service delivery.
- » Strengthening the institutional mechanism for gender equality, women’s rights and women’s economic empowerment, and ensuring its effective provision.
- » Strengthening gender-responsive regional extension centres.

A specific outcome of the increased attention to the gender dimensions of agriculture within the RDA is a joint programme with UN Women, launched in 2022, to set up greenhouses in the municipalities of Marneuli and Lagodekhi. The pilot programme had a focus on socially-vulnerable women landowners. Because of the success of the pilot and interest from rural women, the programme will be extended to the municipalities of Chkhorotsku, Vani and Chokhatauri.

Sources: (i) UN Women. 2020a. *Gender Impact Assessment of the State Programme Plant the Future*. Tbilisi. (ii) Material provided to the authors by the Rural Development Agency.

the Inter-Agency Commission on Gender Equality, Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (in the executive branch) and the Gender Equality Department of the Public Defender of Georgia (the national human rights institution);

- » At the regional level: the Gender Equality Council of the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republics; and
- » At the municipal level: Municipal Gender Equality Councils.

Of the national-level institutions, the Parliamentary Gender Equality Council focuses on supporting legislation on gender equality, yet it also serves important awareness-raising, oversight and investigation functions that implicate other branches of government. Of particular relevance to this CGA, the Gender Equality Council also conducts thematic inquiries, including on the accessibility of financial resources for women and girls in 2023 that *inter alia* raised the issue of discriminatory practices around inheritance and property rights. The council's recently approved Action Plan for 2022–2024 anticipates conducting gender analysis of rural development programmes (Parliament of Georgia, 2023c).

The Public Defender of Georgia, through its Gender Department, both monitors the situation of gender equality/discrimination and receives individual complaints. In its regional offices, there is a gender specialist position, enabling the Public Defender to conduct on-the-ground monitoring of the human rights of women and men and to carry out activities to promote gender equality and women's rights. In fact, within the framework of FAO projects, experts from the Public Defender's office have participated in events to raise awareness among rural women of their rights and also directly received information from rural women about their issues of concern.

At all levels of the government, including in line ministries and at the subnational level in district mayor's offices, there are gender focal points who are tasked with supporting gender mainstreaming in state structures (Government of Georgia, 2019).

The Gender Equality Council also cooperates with analogous councils as part of local-level government (in *sakrebulo*s – local councils). The formation of Gender Equality Councils within municipalities began in 2017, with the primary objectives of facilitating the organization of municipal-level events to address gender-related matters and enhancing collaboration with the national Gender Equality Council. All 64

municipalities have established Gender Equality Councils, and such local councils also function in the 6 municipalities of the Autonomous Republic of Adjara. Each Gender Equality Council has adopted action plans for gender equality for 2021–2023. Development of the action plans involves the active participation of local and international organizations, and the plans themselves outline a set of actions for the municipality to implement in the shortest timeframe possible. An important component of the action plans is the development of a long-term gender equality strategy that outlines key priorities for local municipalities. Analysis, however, has found that implementation of such municipal strategies has been uneven, mainly due to the limited capacities and expertise of relevant civil servants and council members (IDFI, 2022).

2.4. Demographic profile of rural areas and populations

2.4.1. Population, sex ratios and household composition

In 2024, the population of Georgia is approximately 3 736 400 people. More than one-third of the total population (39.6 percent) lives in rural settlements. Almost another third resides in Tbilisi, the capital. Some regions are characteristically rural, meaning that only around a quarter of the population lives in urban areas (Kakheti, Mtskheta-Mtianeti, and Racha-Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti regions). The majority of the country's rural population, in number, lives in the Kvemo Kartli, Kakheti and Imereti regions, which together account for almost half of the entire rural population of Georgia (National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2024b).

The female population makes up just over half of the country's total population (52.0 percent are women or a ratio of 100 women for 92 men in 2023; National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2023a). The sex ratio in favour of women increases by age group only after the age group of 20 to 25 years. By pension age (from age 60 years), there are fewer than 90 men per every 100 women, dropping to only 46 men per 100 women by the age of 80 years (National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2023b).

A breakdown of the population of Georgia by settlement type, sex and age has not been calculated officially, but information about migration patterns, discussed below, indicates that rural areas on the whole are experiencing depopulation and ageing of the remaining population as young people¹⁰ leave for urban areas or abroad because of limited opportunities locally.

¹⁰ When referring to young people in this report, the term "young" specifically denotes individuals aged 15 to 29 years.

Official data indicate that in rural areas, 68.6 percent of households are headed by men, and only 31.4 percent are headed by women. In urban areas, in contrast, 56.1 percent of households are headed by men, and 43.9 percent by women (National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2023b). While such data give a general sense of differences in household composition that may suggest a traditional family structure is more prevalent in rural areas, they should also be used with caution due to how a household head is defined.

2.4.2. Migration and the rural population

Migration, both internally and abroad, is one of the factors behind the declining rural population. In 2022, the natural increase rate¹¹ for Georgia was -1.8, with a higher negative rate in rural areas (-4.0) in comparison with urban areas (-0.4). This negative rate declined from that of 2021 (when it was -3.8 for Georgia as a whole) – the highest that had been observed in recent years. The country's declining population is mainly a result of the greater negative growth observed in rural areas (National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2023c).

It is generally the case in Georgia that migration is driven by individuals' desire to find work and a need to support their families. According to the State Commission on Migration Issues, the registration system that tracks emigration from Georgia is not comprehensive. This results in gaps in statistical data on labour migrants, particularly about their socioeconomic and other characteristics, such as age, gender and education level (State Commission on Migration Issues, 2020).

Survey data do indicate, however, that households that receive remittance income are more often located in rural areas (29 percent of rural households compared with 25 percent of households in urban areas), and rural areas tend to have a larger share of returned migrants (with the exception of Tbilisi; OECD and CRRC-Georgia, 2017). The regions in Georgia that have the highest rates of international returning migrants are the city of Tbilisi and areas that are predominantly rural – Imereti, Kakheti and Guria, with the latter being one of the regions with the highest dependence on seasonal and circular migration (IOM, 2021). The International Organization for Migration (IOM) suggests that at present more than half of Georgian migrants are women, a phenomenon the organization terms the "feminization of migration" (IOM, 2022, p. 1). Leaving family members behind (as

women often migrate alone) is a significant cause of stress for women themselves, especially those who migrate without their children. Women often leave to undertake care work for others, and they are effectively fulfilling parental duties for other peoples' children as well as providing care for older people. When they are physically apart from their own children, this can then cause them significant emotional distress (WECF – Georgia, 2023).

The majority of Georgians who migrate do so to support their families who remain in the country. Women usually work in domestic services such as child care, care of older people and assisting with household chores, mainly in Greece, Germany, Italy and Türkiye. Migratory flows differ for men who tend to take on seasonal work in agriculture, in factories and in the construction sector.

A clear consequence of labour migration is the rise in the volume of remittances from foreign countries. Many studies in Georgia have highlighted the significance of these remittances as livelihood support for migrant families. Moreover, these remittances also aid in the development of human capital as they are commonly utilized to cover health care and education expenses. For women, migration has specific positive and negative aspects. On the one hand, migration can provide women with economic independence. On the other hand, the fact that many women leave their children in the care of their husbands, parents or other family members for years at a time is one of the particular hardships that they face. Similarly, women who stay behind may take on a greater share of independent decision-making in the household. However, for some households, the absence of the male head can mean that women are unable to resolve some issues on their own. In fact, men who migrate are generally said to "re-assume the position of household head on their return" (OECD and CRRC-Georgia, 2017, p. 79).

Labour migration also proved to be susceptible to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic as the majority of employers of migrant workers either completely lost their incomes or experienced a significant decrease, resulting in an overall reduction in job opportunities. As a result, there was a marked increase in the number of returnee migrants to Georgia from abroad in 2020. From 1994, when official records begin, the net migration¹² of the country was positive for the first time in 2020 and again in 2022. In 2022,¹³

¹¹ The natural increase rate is "the difference between [the] crude birth rate and [the] crude death rate. It is expressed as the natural increase per 1 000 population" (National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2023c, p. 150).

¹² Net migration is the difference between immigration into and emigration from a given area during the year (EUROSTAT, 2018).

¹³ Due to changes in the methodology of data collection on emigration and immigration since 1994, the data should not be directly compared.

the net migration rate per 1 000 persons was 14.7 (National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2023d). When comparing the number of Georgian citizens who applied for asylum in the European Union, there was a dramatic decrease from 2019 (when 20 000 Georgian citizens applied) to 2020, when only 7 200 Georgians, including 3 180 women, applied for asylum in Europe. This decrease was a direct result of many Georgian migrants not being able to go abroad due to travel restrictions and as a consequence, losing their jobs or income in their destination countries and returning to Georgia. In 2021, when COVID-19 pandemic restrictions on international travel were eased, the number of asylum applicants again increased to more than 10 000, with almost 4 000 women among them (IOM, 2022).

Most of the migrant women who returned had previously been employed as domestic workers and were sending remittances or using their savings to support their families at home. Among returnees assisted by IOM, women who returned from abroad during the COVID-19 pandemic had spent more time outside of Georgia than men, and their average age upon returning was 39 years, compared to the average age of 35 years for men (ibid.).

Patterns of internal migration have remained consistent over recent years as evidenced by the growing number of residents in the country's capital. From 2018 to January 2023, the population of Tbilisi increased by 83 000 people. However, during the same period, the population of several regions, such as Imereti, Samegrelo and Zemo Svaneti, decreased (National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2024b).

For rural areas, the migration of young people to large urban centres is a significant issue because once people migrate away, they tend not to return. The main drivers of youth rural to urban migration are the lack of educational and job opportunities. In Georgia, there is some regional variation in the factors that steer young people to migrate. For instance, in Adjara highland rural settlements, youth tend to migrate due to communication and infrastructure limitations. On the other hand, in Zemo Svaneti, although migration to larger cities is common, there is a unique trend in that this region experiences positive net remigration, which could be attributed to growth of the tourism sector that is providing new opportunities for young people. The youth in Shida Kartli face challenges due to limited access to roads and infrastructure. While the region's proximity to the capital city is beneficial in some respects, it also leads to migration of young people away from the area (Jibuti and Ichkiti, 2022).

One of the objectives of Georgia's regional development policy is addressing the phenomenon of internal migration, with a key focus on creating tools and initiatives that will effectively foster local development opportunities for young people. At the same time, the positive effects of implementing national programmes are not yet evident (for example, the Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure of Georgia's Regional Development Programme of Georgia 2018–2021). Furthermore, it seems that policy discussion of migration from rural areas tends to focus on "youth" as a homogeneous group, without considering different push factors for young men and young women or whether gender-specific interventions are needed.

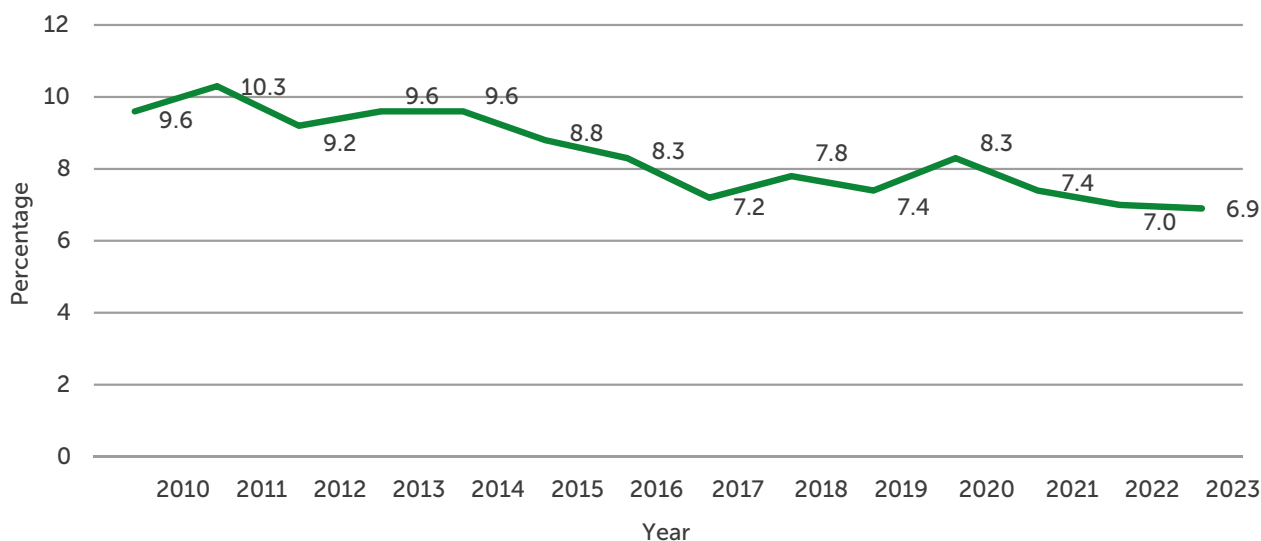
After 2015, the Law of Georgia on Labour Migration, along with other secondary legislation, has provided a legal framework for regulating labour migration. In terms of assisting returnees, the Migration Strategy of Georgia 2021–2030 considers migrant women as one of the target groups, and it emphasises that reintegration services should be expanded in the areas of funding and range of services provided that will meet the specific needs of migrant women (State Commission on Migration Issues, 2020). At the same time, this policy does not provide details on women returning to rural areas or women who work or worked as seasonal workers and/or in agriculture-related activities abroad.

2.5. Socioeconomic profile of rural areas

In 2022, real gross domestic product (GDP) growth in Georgia was 10.1 percent, and GDP per capita was GEL 19 452.7, in comparison to 2.8 percent real GDP growth and GEL 9 146.4 in 2016 when the previous CGA was completed. The World Bank attributes growth in 2022 to a surge in money transfer inflows and recovery of the tourism sector, with a projected easing into 2023 (World Bank, 2024a). The high GDP growth in 2022 is also associated with increased immigration rates resulting from the Russian Federation's invasion of Ukraine.

Agriculture plays a relatively small role in the economy of Georgia, making up 6.9 percent of the country's GDP in 2023 (see Figure 2; National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2024b). This figure has remained fairly consistent since 2017. Likewise, the combined sector of agriculture, forestry and fishing has contributed roughly GEL 45 million to the economy annually over the last decade.

Georgia has made substantial progress in reducing poverty, with significant reductions in monetary poverty. Yet spatial disparities still exist in terms of access to essential services and basic living conditions,

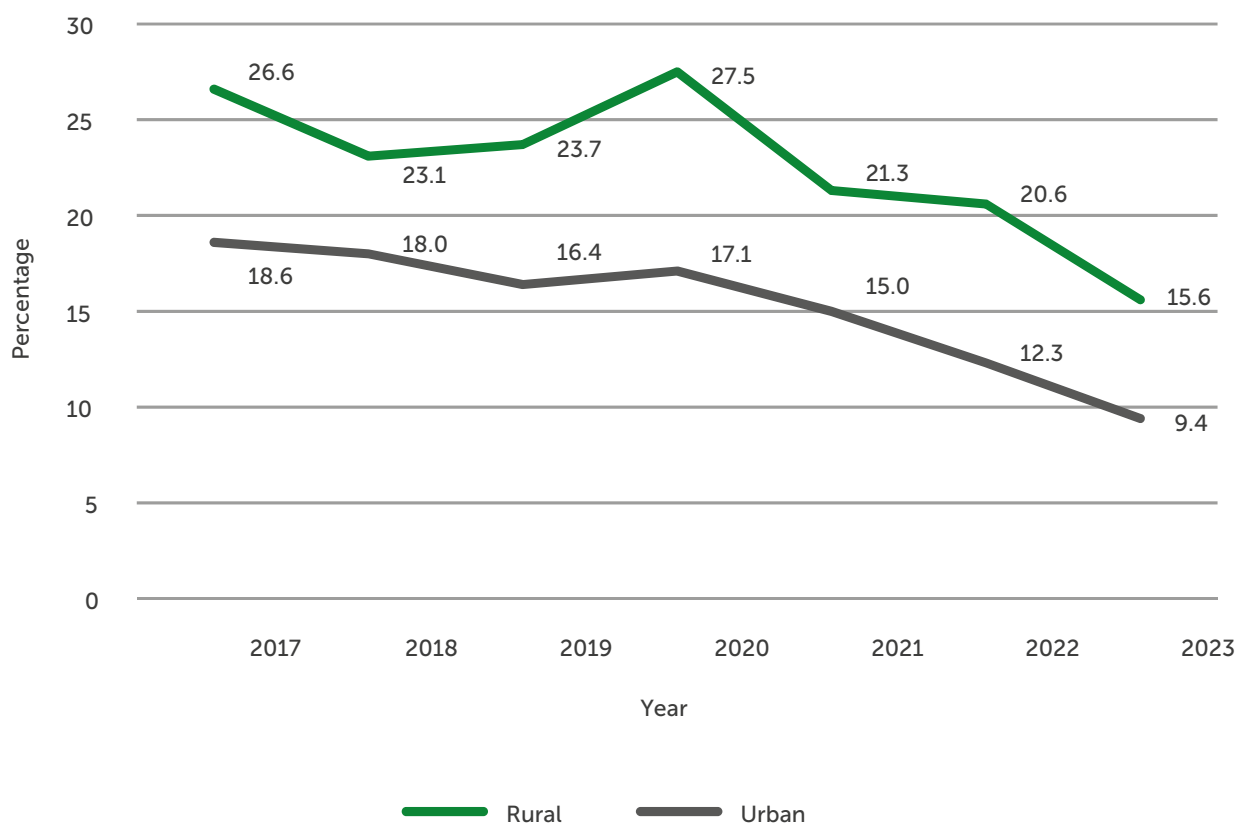
Figure 2. Share of agriculture in GDP, by year

Source: National Statistics Office of Georgia. 2024b. Geostat: Statistics. [Accessed on 4 August 2024]. <https://www.geostat.ge/en>

which are critical for social inclusion and the attainment of the SDGs. Major economic activities in Georgia are concentrated in larger cities; more than 50 percent of the total GDP is generated in the capital city Tbilisi, for instance.

Although the country has been experiencing economic growth, absolute poverty remains significant, with

15.6 percent of the rural population and 9.4 percent of the urban population living below the absolute poverty line in 2023. Since 2017, absolute poverty peaked in 2020 when more than a quarter of the rural population was considered under the absolute poverty line. Significantly, the poverty gap between rural and urban areas increased in 2020 but has since narrowed (see Figure 3). As of 2023, 11.8 percent of the total

Figure 3. Share of the population below the absolute poverty line, by settlement type and year

Source: National Statistics Office of Georgia. 2024b. Geostat: Statistics. [Accessed on 4 August 2024]. <https://www.geostat.ge/en>

population of Georgia was living below the absolute poverty line (National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2024b). Absolute poverty is calculated based on the Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES).

As for relative poverty indicators, 19.8 percent of the population was living below 60 percent of the median consumption in 2023. This disparity is more evident when examining rural and urban areas separately, with 26.8 percent of the population of rural regions experiencing relative poverty, compared with only 15.4 percent of the urban population. For the country as a whole, 7.4 percent of the population was living below 40 percent of the median consumption. However, when considering relative poverty by regions, rural areas exhibited a higher proportion of people in poverty (10.8 percent living below 40 percent of the median consumption) while urban areas had a relatively lower proportion (5.2 percent; National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2024b).

In 2022, the proportion of people living below 50 percent of the median income was 12.4 percent, an improvement compared to 15.0 percent in 2018. In rural areas, the figure was 14.0 percent of the population, contrasting with 11.4 percent in urban areas. The proportion of people living below 50 percent of the median income in rural areas has been gradually

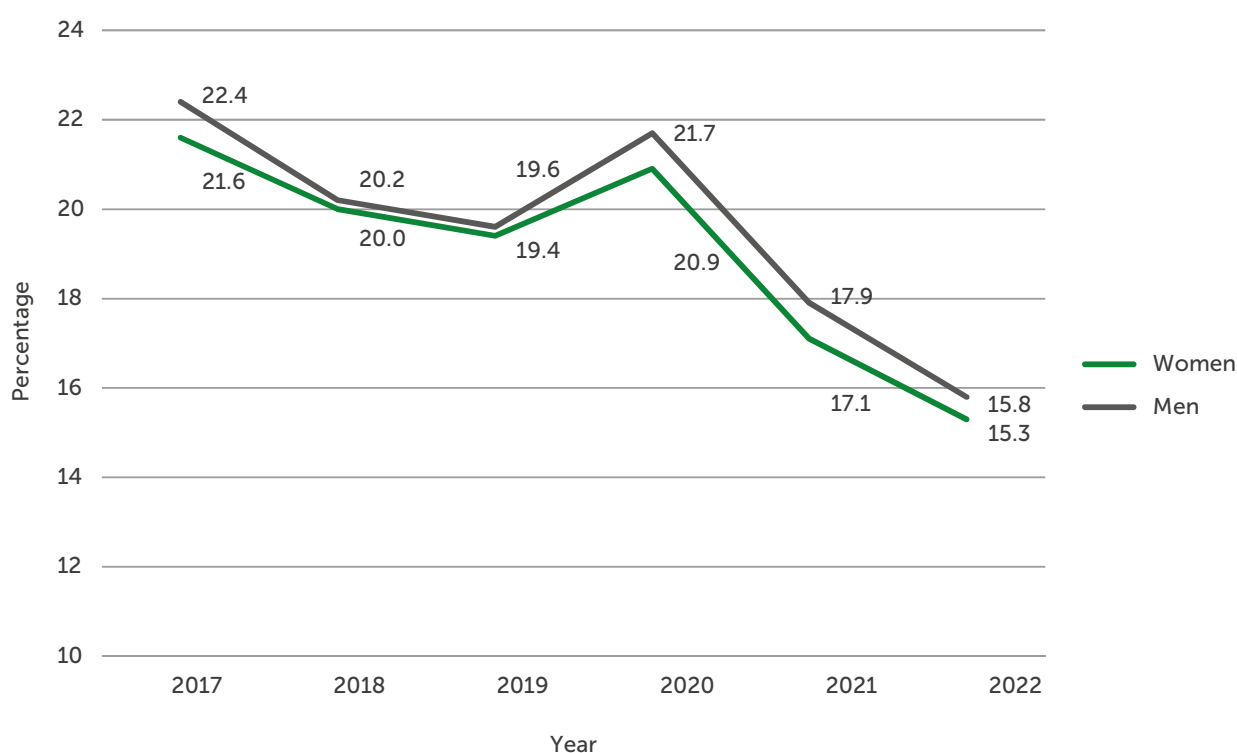
decreasing since 2018 (when it was 20.5 percent; data provided to the authors by the National Statistics Office of Georgia on request [2023]).

Unfortunately, data for women's and men's absolute and relative poverty indicators are aggregated for the country as a whole and not available for rural and urban areas separately. The share of women living in absolute and relative poverty is less than the share of men, however. Generally, there are no statistically significant variations in the monetary poverty rate based on the variable of sex alone (World Bank, 2021).

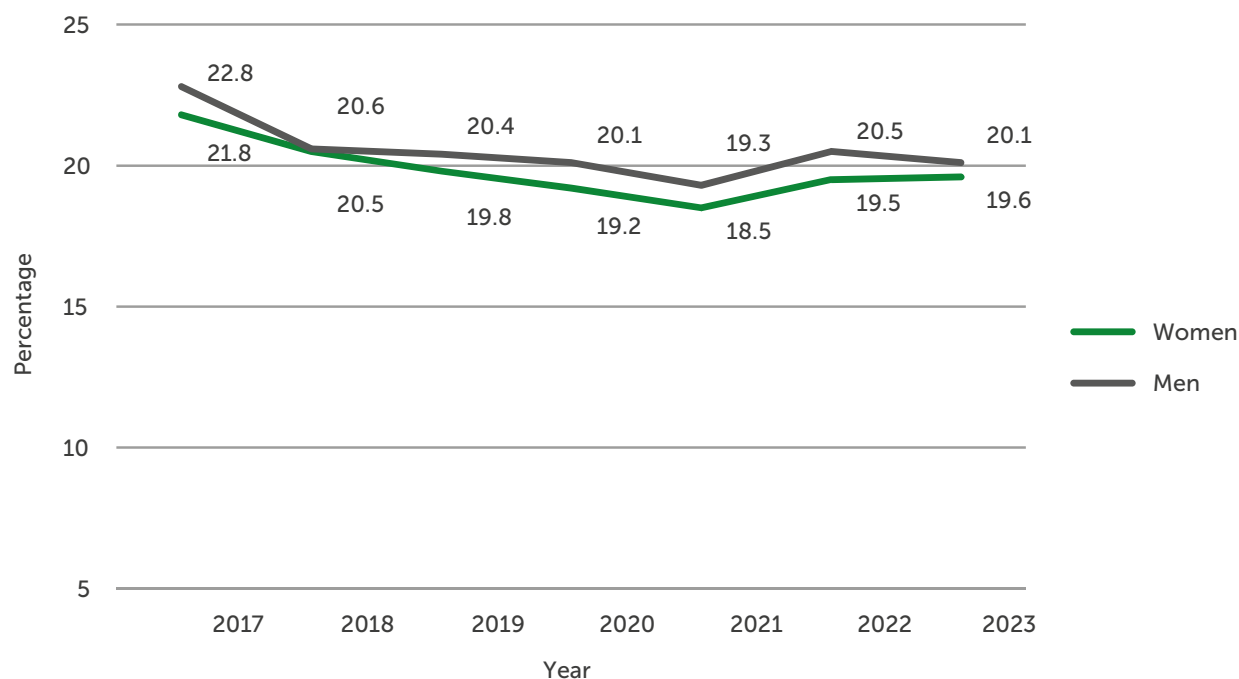
Around 15 percent of both men and women were living below the absolute poverty line in 2022, a significant decrease from the rate in 2017 (see Figure 4). In 2023, the share of women and men living below 60 percent of the median consumption was 19.6 percent and 20.1 percent, respectively. The share of women and men living below 40 percent of the median was 7.1 percent and 7.6 percent, respectively (National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2024c; see Figure 5 and Figure 6).

As noted above, rural regions have seen the most substantial decrease in poverty levels – from 2010 to 2023 a decline in the share of the rural population in absolute poverty by 27.7 percentage points (National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2024b). Both men and women have

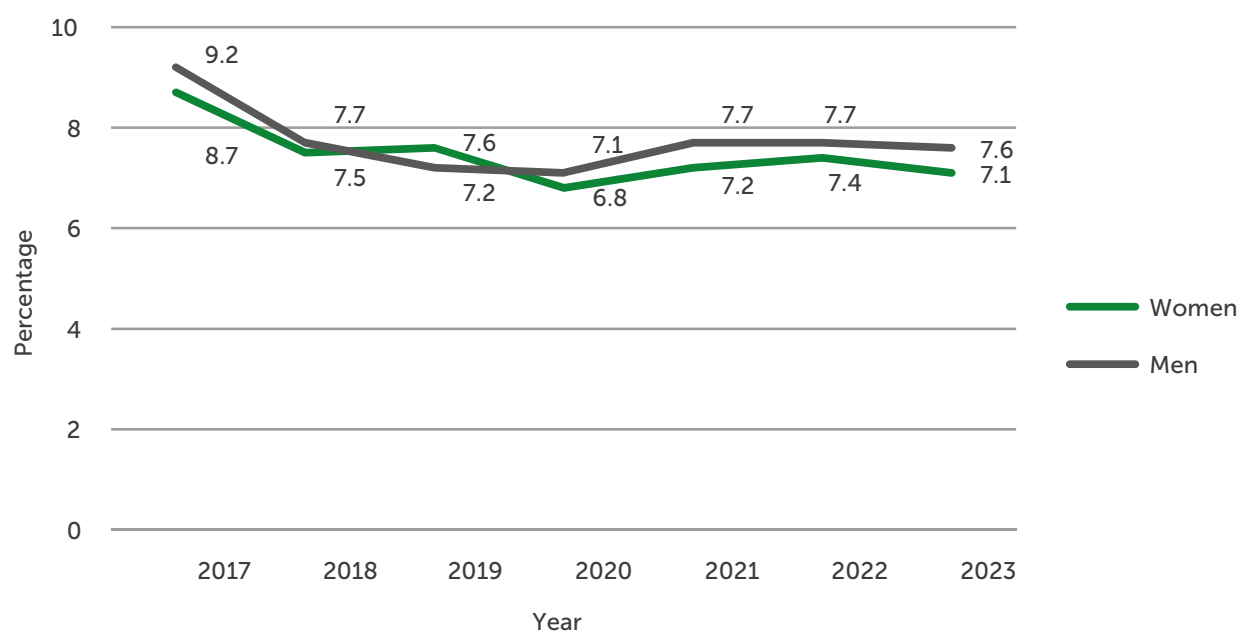
Figure 4. Share of the population below the absolute poverty line, by sex and year



Source: National Statistics Office of Georgia. 2023b. *Women and men in Georgia*. Tbilisi, p. 85.

Figure 5. Share of the population below 60 percent of the median consumption, by sex and year

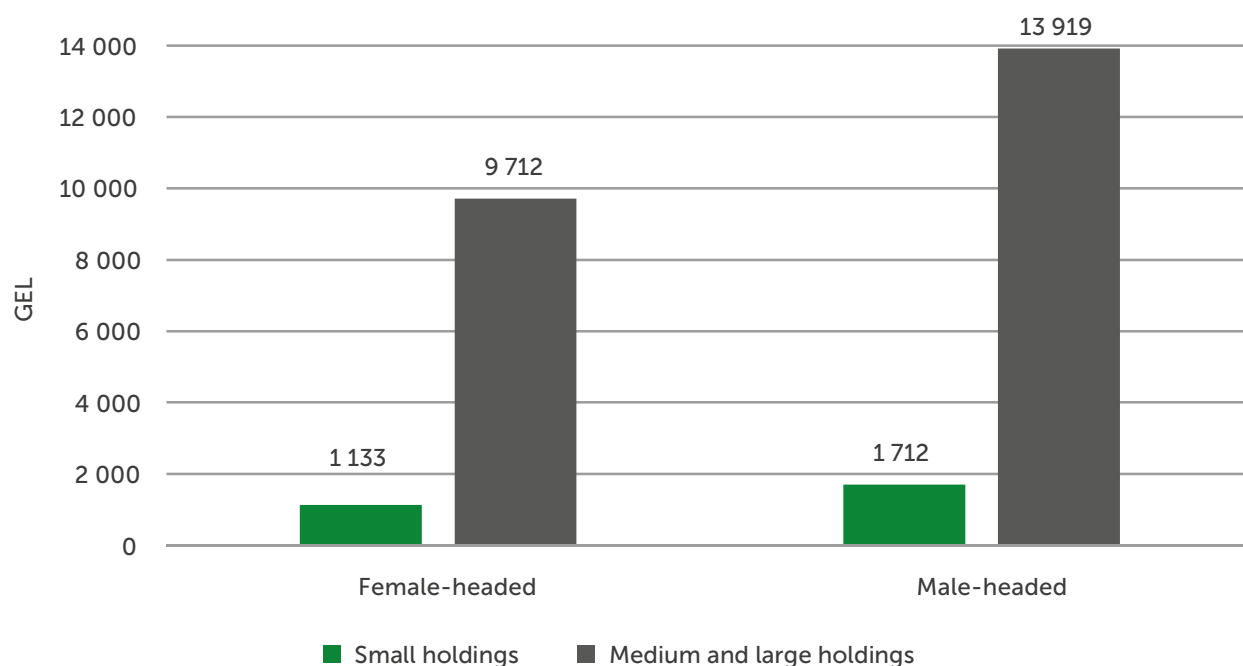
Source: National Statistics Office of Georgia. 2024c. Geostat: Gender statistics. [Accessed on 4 August 2024]. <https://gender.geostat.ge/gender/index.php?#home>

Figure 6. Share of the population below 40 percent of the median consumption, by sex and year

Source: National Statistics Office of Georgia. 2024c. Geostat: Gender statistics. [Accessed on 4 August 2024]. <https://gender.geostat.ge/gender/index.php?#home>

equally benefited from the substantial reductions in rural poverty. According to the World Bank, the prevalence of poverty among women and girls in rural households peaked in 2018 (23.3 percent), but the poverty rate among men and boys at this time was substantially the same (23.0 percent). Considering

different regions, Mtskheta-Mtianeti had the highest likelihood of women and girls experiencing poverty. On the other hand, when considering prevalence of male and female poverty together, the Samtskhe-Javakheti region and Tbilisi had the lowest probability of poverty (World Bank, 2021).

Figure 7. Average annual income of agricultural holdings, by holding size and sex of holder, in GEL, 2020

Source: National Statistics Office of Georgia. 2024d. *Agriculture of Georgia 2023*. Tbilisi, p. 48.

Looking specifically at poverty risks for people who are engaged in agriculture, it should first be noted that a considerable share of the rural population does not rely on agriculture as a primary means of generating income. For instance, in 2023, income generated from selling agricultural products accounted for only 5.3 percent of total household income, lower than it had been in 2022. Still, differences do appear in terms of income and expenditures that suggest that some gender-based factors may influence risk of poverty for people who are engaged in agriculture. In 2023, the average monthly income earned from selling agricultural products per household was GEL 85.7 (National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2024d). In 2020, for small holdings the average income was GEL 1 508, and GEL 13 151 for medium and large holdings (see Figure 7). The sex of the holder is a factor in income levels from agriculture, with female-headed holdings earning less on average than male-headed holdings, regardless of the size of the holding (ibid.).

Similarly, the share of monthly expenditures on agriculture in female-headed households was less than half of that in men-headed households in 2020. Whereas female-headed households had an average monthly expenditure on agriculture of GEL 20.6, the figure for male-headed households was GEL 52.7 in 2022. Over time, this gap in expenditures has also widened (National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2024c). This pattern suggests that women in charge of households have experienced a

relative decrease in their agricultural spending compared to men during this period.

Despite some economic improvements, it should also be noted that 1 202 105 people (32.2 percent of the population) and 373 421 households (35 percent of all households) in Georgia have registered a request to receive Targeted Social Assistance (TSA). As of January 2023, 660 265 people (17.7 percent of the population) and 174 798 households (15.8 percent of the population) were receiving cash-based social transfers, which indicates that poverty and vulnerability remain significant challenges for the country (Social Service Agency, 2023; Publika.ge, 2023). Additional information about the social infrastructure in Georgia is covered in Section 5.6 of this CGA.

2.6. Access to health care

According to analysis of progress made in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals, SDG 3 focusing on good health and well-being continues to present a significant challenge for Georgia. While some improvements have been made, the rate of progress is moderate and falls short of what is needed to achieve national goals (National Center for Disease Control and Public Health of Georgia, 2022).

Several of the national priority areas under the SDGs have a gender dimension, such as reducing

premature mortality and improving sexual and reproductive health. This CGA does not replicate general information about the health and well-being of women and men in Georgia, but rather it focuses on the intersections of health and rural livelihoods. However, because very few health indicators are disaggregated by settlement type, there is limited information about the general health status of the rural population. For example, the average life expectancy in Georgia is 73.7 years, which is better than the average for the Europe and Central Asia region (72.9 years) but several years less than the average for the OECD countries (79.0 years); women's average life expectancy in Georgia is almost 9 years longer than men's (78.1 years, compared to 69.4 years; National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2024c; UNDP, 2022). But data that would indicate how the rural population fares in terms of life expectancy are not available.

Over the last decade, public health care spending has increased more than threefold, and the implementation of universal health insurance has resulted in a minimum 50 percent rise in patient consultations. As a consequence, there has been a noticeable surge in reported cases of various communicable and non-communicable diseases, with some differences along gender lines. New cases of tuberculosis, HIV infection, and mental health disorders among men significantly surpass those among women. Conversely, there is a higher prevalence of newly diagnosed malignant tumours in women as opposed to men (National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2023b). Although state expenses have risen, state-funded health insurance programmes frequently fail to provide coverage for even the most essential health care needs. Women from marginalized communities, as well as those living in rural and impoverished areas, encounter unique obstacles in accessing medical care and health care facilities (UN Women, 2020b).

In terms of women's sexual and reproductive health, the maternal mortality ratio in Georgia is one of the highest among European Union countries, and maternal deaths are largely preventable (UNFPA in Georgia, 2024). Cases of maternal mortality increased from 2017, when seven deaths were reported, to 2021, when there were 34 deaths. Of the mothers who passed away in 2021, 24 deaths were attributed to diseases associated with COVID-19. As of 2022, maternal mortality again decreased to pre-pandemic levels (National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2023b, 2024c).

Studies of how sexual and reproductive health indicators differ for women in rural and urban areas do not show a great deal of variation, with exceptions

for lower knowledge about and use of modern contraceptive methods, a higher total induced abortion rate and a higher rate of early pregnancy (before age 18 years) in rural areas, for example (see generally, UNFPA, 2019). These health outcomes are linked to the fact that women in rural areas face challenges to accessing high-quality prenatal and postnatal services. The scarcity of skilled professionals in maternity clinics and consultation centres, particularly in the regions, is one of the contributing factors to maternal mortality (UN Women, 2020b). Due to the limited number of family planning providers, especially in mountainous villages, women who are able to afford it must travel to larger settlements or towns for health services (Public Defender of Georgia, 2019). Access to safe abortion services is largely determined by both territorial and financial factors, and social and economic challenges make abortions a costly endeavour for rural women because the procedure requires additional expenditure and time for transportation (Coalition for Equality, 2021). The mandatory five-day reflection period for abortion services can be problematic for all women but particularly complicates the situation for women residing in rural and remote areas with very limited access to specialized services (Public Defender of Georgia, 2020). In October 2023, the existing mandatory pre-abortion five-day waiting period, which can be a serious barrier for women seeking safe and legal abortion care, was supplemented with the new obligation for patients to undergo consultations with both a psychologist and a social worker (Order No. 75/N of the Minister of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Health, Labour and Social Affairs of Georgia). Given the scarcity of psychological services in rural areas, coupled with limited access to social workers and abortion-related stigma, this development could have serious implications for the health and reproductive rights of rural women.

Municipal public health services receive funding from the local budget, but their administration falls under the jurisdiction of the National Center for Disease Control and Public Health of Georgia. Programmes involving local health services may also receive funding from the central government. The primary health care system in Georgia faces several challenges related to the lack of nurses, outdated infrastructure, limited coordination between rural doctors and other specialists, and a complex and fragmented financing system for health care facilities (Public Defender of Georgia, 2021b). Salaries within the health and social protection sector are comparatively lower than the average national pay scale. Given that women make up the overwhelming majority of workers in this sector, the issue becomes even more pronounced for them, particularly for those employed in rural regions.

Box 3. Addressing the health and well-being of women in agriculture

Within the framework of agriculture and rural development projects that work specifically with women, FAO has collaborated with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women (UN Women) since 2020 to also raise awareness of women's rights, gender stereotypes, reproductive health and domestic violence with women in rural areas.

The first such initiative was implemented by FAO and UNFPA under the scope of an integrated local community development project in the Shida Kartli, and Racha-Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti regions, later scaled up in other regions, targeting women members of farmer field schools (FFS).

With the support of UN Women, FAO established farmer field schools for women, an approach that involves regular gatherings with master farmers to acquire new knowledge and skills. The FFS are also the entry point through which technical agri-training is combined with workshops on gender equality more generally – a topic that the women at first were more reluctant to engage with. Special events were used to cover topics outside of agriculture. For example, UNFPA provided women with information on family planning and safe contraception, while also dispelling common misconceptions. The attendees had the opportunity to receive free consultations with a doctor, which was especially important as some of them had not seen a health professional in a decade. An important factor in the organization of these events was that they provided the women with a break from domestic work and gave them the opportunity to focus on themselves, but the events were also linked to the FFS with which they were already familiar. This collaboration is a useful case study as it indicates that initiatives in the agricultural sphere can also be an opportunity to address other needs of rural women, in this case their health needs. There is also potential to use the framework of FFS, or other interventions concerning agricultural production, to more proactively address the social positions of rural women, while striving to empower women and change expectations and assumptions about their roles in the household and community.

Sources:

(i) FAO. 2020b. Partnership for Women Empowerment – new initiative of UNFPA, FAO and Liberty Bank. In: *FAO*. Rome. [Cited 2 July 2024]. <https://www.fao.org/georgia/news/detail-events/ar/c/1304302/>

(ii) UNFPA. 2022a. Inform, Educate, Empower – Joint Initiative of UNFPA, FAO and Liberty Bank. In: *UNFPA Georgia*. Tbilisi. [Cited 2 July 2024]. <https://georgia.unfpa.org/en/news/inform-educate-empower-joint-initiative-unfpa-fao-and-liberty-bank>

(iii) UN Women. 2023a. Farmer Field Schools: opportunities for rural women. In: *UN Women*. New York, USA. [Cited 2 July 2024]. <https://georgia.unwomen.org/en/stories/feature-story/2023/02/farmer-field-schools-opportunities-for-rural-women>

The COVID-19 pandemic greatly exacerbated the difficult working conditions of female health care workers, intensifying risks to their physical and mental health. Furthermore, the pandemic had a detrimental effect on their households' financial situation and increased the workload for women in both paid and unpaid labour. In addition, research has highlighted the fact that nurses residing in rural areas are often required to step in for doctors and provide treatment to patients due to the shortage of medical personnel (UN Women and UNFPA, 2020).

In 2020, the Emergency Situations Coordination and Urgent Assistance Centre of the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs, in collaboration with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), launched a centralized online platform to facilitate online consultations between rural clinics and doctors and the local population. One purpose of the platform is a tool for village doctors to increase their knowledge of

COVID-19 prevention and management, but its main objective is to improve the provision of support from well-trained rural primary health care professionals to the rural population, including mothers and children (UNICEF, 2020a). Such platforms remain relevant for several reasons. Rural doctors can provide vital information remotely since rural areas have limited access to health care resources, and COVID-19 cases still arise periodically.

One important area for which sex-disaggregated data are lacking are indicators that would provide information about the health status of people who work in agrifood systems. For example, there are no data on pesticide-related health incidents. It is important to measure the number of reported cases of pesticide poisoning or adverse health effects among rural women and men, as well as assess the level of awareness and knowledge among rural women and men regarding the risks associated with pesticide application, and their use of protective measures when

Table 2. Distribution of the population aged 15 years and older by educational attainment in rural areas, by year, in percent

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Basic	15.0	15.2	14.3	14.0	13.9
Secondary	45.3	45.8	47.8	49.1	49.8
Vocational	22.4	22.1	21.4	19.9	18.7
Higher	15.9	15.7	15.4	15.9	16.6
Without education	1.4	1.3	1.1	1.1	1.1
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Source: National Statistics Office of Georgia. 2023e. Geostat: Gender statistics. [Accessed on 7 August 2023]. <https://gender.geostat.ge/gender/index.php?#home>

handling pesticides. Information on the health of specific groups of people who are intensively involved in agricultural production is also crucial. For example, the prevalence of work-related injuries and illnesses among seasonal workers and their awareness regarding health risks and safety measures, separated by gender, could be used to inform policy on improving the health of the population overall.

2.7. General and agricultural education

Overall, Georgia has maintained positive indicators on education with virtually universal literacy rates and high academic enrolment and completion in primary, secondary and tertiary education. Additionally, there are no significant gender differences in compulsory education, either in enrolment or completion. The majority of the rural population, over age 15 years, has obtained secondary or vocational education, while around 16 percent has higher education (see Table 2).

Table 2.

The challenges for Georgia that are most relevant to this CGA are in the quality of primary and secondary education, specifically disparities between rural and urban areas, and the mismatch between tertiary education and skills needed for today's labour market (Administration of the Government of Georgia, 2020). The area of educational choices, especially in vocational education, also has a distinct gender dimension.

Quality of rural education

Socioeconomic and demographic realities in rural Georgia affect the quality of education and opportunities for children to attend educational institutions. Among the 249 rural schools, ten or fewer students can be found in each, with 17 of these schools having just one student. It is common for certain grade levels to have no students at all. Other factors,

such as poor infrastructure, exacerbate the problem. Additionally, there is a considerable gap between rural and urban children in access to school materials. While more than half (59.6 percent) of rural children do not have access to certain educational materials, the same is true for only 35.6 percent of urban children (UNICEF, 2023).

Over the past few years, studies assessing overall educational performance have revealed that village pupils consistently lag behind urban ones. The scores from international assessments, such as the Programme for International Assessment (PISA) and Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), in Georgia demonstrate notably lower results among rural students (GeoWel Research, 2021). A comparative examination of schools in urban and rural areas of Georgia indicates the literacy achievement of students also tends to favour urban schools. However, a positive finding of the study is a narrowing of the gap between rural and urban schools, attributed to enhanced performance in rural schools. Additionally, positive advancements in the academic outcomes of rural students were observed in the 2019 TIMSS scores (Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia National Assessment and Examination Centre, 2023).

Gender asymmetries in educational choices

Girls and boys almost equally pursue vocational education, in terms of gender-balanced enrolment (combining both public and private vocational educational institutions). At the level of higher education, young women make up a slightly higher percentage of students (National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2023b). Gender-based asymmetries become apparent, however, when the choice in academic subjects is considered. Regarding professional choices in vocational schools, girls mostly choose the fields of health, social welfare, business administration and law,

and services, whereas boys concentrate on engineering, manufacturing, construction, and information and communications technology (ICT) specializations (ibid.). The pattern is similar in higher education with women “favouring [academic] programmes in ... business and law, arts and humanities, [and] science [and men tending] to dominate programmes in engineering, manufacturing and construction” (National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2023b, p. 43). These patterns of enrolment have important implications for the future careers of young people and their economic status. The fields in which young women are mainly enrolled correlate with some of the lower-paid public sectors. Furthermore, the rates of young people in Georgia who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) are quite high generally when compared with their peers in the European Union, but especially for young women. The fact that young women have high levels of educational attainment suggests that choice in professional subject, as well as other factors, play a role in making the transition from education to work more difficult. The topic of gender and NEET status in Georgia is discussed in greater detail in Section 3.1 of this CGA.

Education in agriculture

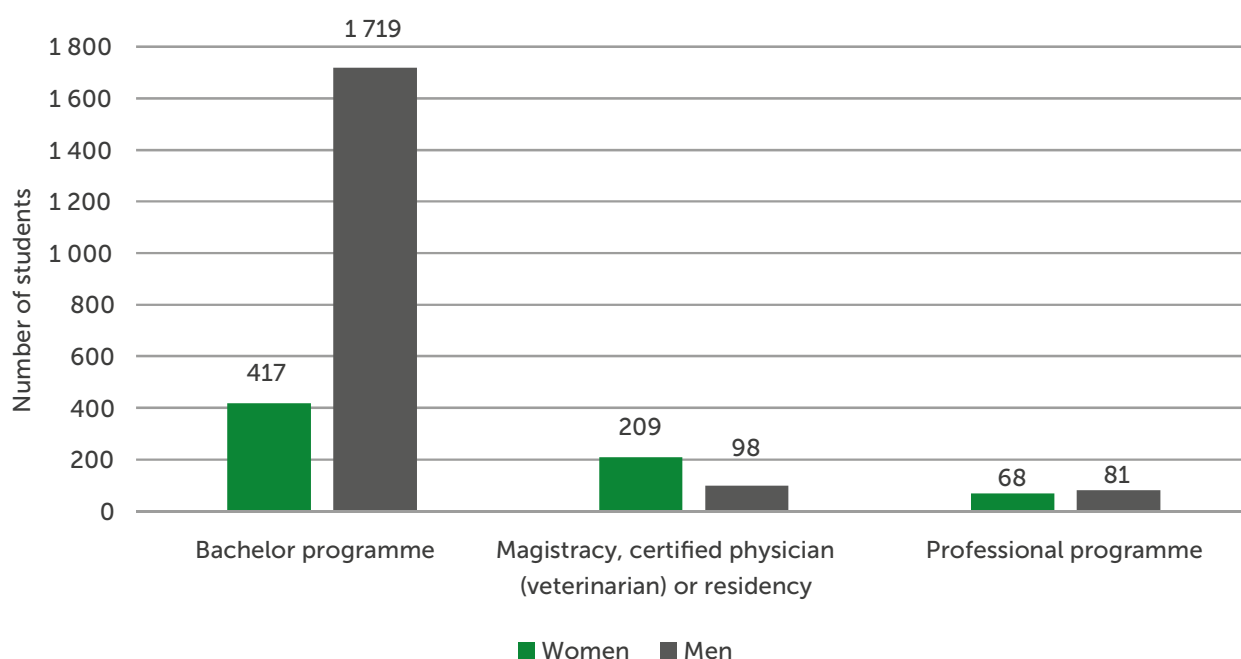
There are nine universities with agriculture programmes in Georgia (both public and private). Comparing all subjects, enrolment in agricultural programmes is

low, but it has remained relatively stable in bachelor’s and master’s programmes over the years, with women representing a minority of enrolled students. Considering admissions for doctoral degrees in agriculture in 2019, 2020 and 2021, there are very few students in general. For example, in 2019 only two women and two men were enrolled. In 2020, there were only four students (one woman and three men), while in 2022, admissions dropped to a single woman and man, just two students (National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2020, 2021b, 2023b).

In the 2023/2024 academic year, there were a total of 2 592 students enrolled in agricultural programmes in public higher educational institutions in Georgia, of which 694 were women. While the number of male students far exceeds that of female students in bachelor’s degree programmes, women are the majority of master’s students in agricultural subjects, and the numbers are more balanced in professional programmes (see Figure 8). At the same time, the gap between the numbers of male and female students in bachelor’s programmes in agriculture in public institutions appears to have been increasing in recent years, with a decline in women’s enrolment and an increase in men’s enrolment.

More detailed information about the types of agriculture-related courses available to rural students in vocational educational institutions, as well as enrolment

Figure 8. Number of students in agricultural programmes in public higher educational institutions for the 2023/2024 academic year, by sex



Source: National Statistics Office of Georgia. 2024c. Geostat: Gender statistics. [Accessed on 4 August 2024]. <https://gender.geostat.ge/gender/index.php?#home>

and graduation data for young men and women from such courses, are needed to better understand the relevant qualifications for work in agriculture or to be applied to careers in farming.

Finally, data about the educational backgrounds of farmers and agricultural workers is sometimes generated through an agricultural census, but such data do not appear to be available for Georgia. It would, however, be useful to have a better picture of how widespread agri-education is among farmers and farm workers, as well as whether there are gender differences, as it could contribute to planning around agricultural services, especially extension services.

2.8. Gender-based violence

Despite notable advancements in the enforcement of international and national obligations, the issue of violence against women in Georgia persists as a considerable obstacle to gender equality, evident through the enduringly high levels of violence. National legislation and dedicated strategy documents, such as the National Action Plan for combating domestic violence and violence against women and ensuring protection of survivors for 2022–2024, confirm that this is a recognized priority for Georgia. The action plan covers priorities such as improving the legal framework, enhancing service provision and raising public awareness of the issue.

The most recent national prevalence study, conducted in 2022, indicates that intimate partner violence by a current or former partner is a widespread form of violence against women in the country. One in four women in Georgia has experienced violence from an intimate partner in their lifetime, in the form of physical, sexual and/or psychological violence (UN Women, 2023b).

Monitoring conducted by the Office of the Public Defender of gender-based killings of women, commonly referred to as femicide, points out the very serious nature of violence against women in Georgia. Available statistics indicate that, similar to previous years, there has been no decrease in femicide cases or attempted femicides, but rather from 2021 to 2022, the number of murders and attempted murders of women increased (Public Defender of Georgia, 2022). According to the Prosecutor's Office of Georgia, of 25 female murder cases identified in 2022, 15 had a domestic dimension, and of the 37 attempted murder cases, 28 involved domestic-related crimes (*ibid.*). It is important to note that Georgian law does not classify femicide as a distinct category of crime. Nonetheless,

the frequency of femicide and attempted femicide cases remains alarmingly high in the country.

Women also experience violence from non-partners, with sexual harassment being especially common. A quarter of surveyed women has experienced sexual harassment in her lifetime, with most violations occurring in public spaces, either on the street or on public transport (41.2 percent and 28.0 percent of cases, respectively; UN Women, 2023b).

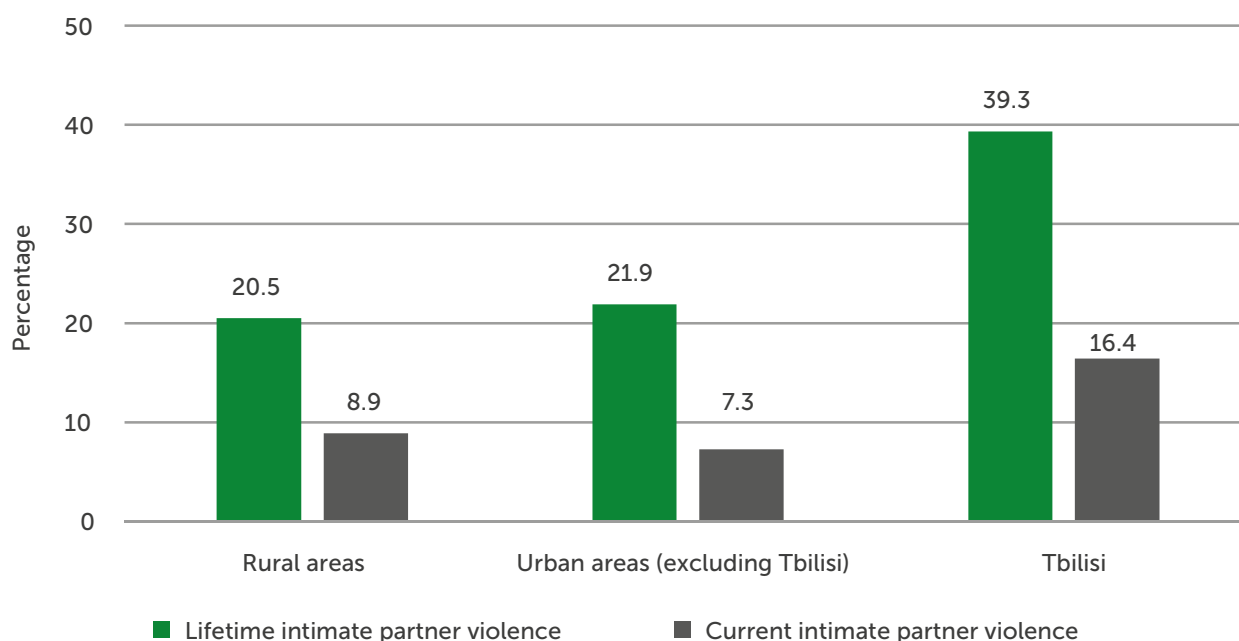
Of particular relevance for this CGA, gender-based violence, notably intimate partner violence, does not appear to be more prevalent in rural areas, which is different from the pattern in many countries. The 2022 national survey found that women in rural areas were less likely to report having experienced violence by a partner over their lifetimes than their urban counterparts, but slightly more likely to report an incident occurring in the previous 12 months. In general, women in Tbilisi were the most likely to report experiences of intimate partner violence (see Figure 9).

Generally, rural areas are associated with more conservative values and gender norms, which can mean higher rates of violence against women. In the case of Georgia, research has found that “women and men in rural areas ... held more conservative, violence-condoning attitudes than urban residents,” and so it is theorized that rates of violence against women are not actually higher in urban areas (UN Women, 2018, p. 48). Instead, “women in urban areas have higher levels of awareness; violence is less normalized in urban areas; and urban women felt more confident to disclose their experiences of violence than rural women” when responding to the survey (*ibid.*, p. 48).

Data are regularly collected on the number of women who contact Georgia's domestic violence hotline (3 135 women callers of 3 474 calls in 2022; National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2024c), as well as the number of restraining orders issued by police. The Ministry of Internal Affairs reported that in 2023, the police issued 791 restraining orders against 1 448 individuals; the majority of offenders were men, and most victims were women (Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia, 2024). However, such administrative records are not classified by rural and urban location. The absence of standardized administrative data on all forms of gender-based violence poses a significant challenge when attempting to evaluate its occurrence and its specific effects on women in rural areas.

More significant than the prevalence of violence against women in rural areas, however, is the fact

Figure 9. Percentage of ever-partnered women, aged 15 to 64 years, reporting intimate partner violence, by settlement type, 2022



Source: UN Women. 2023b. *National Study on Violence Against Women in Georgia 2022*. Tbilisi, p. 68. https://georgia.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2023-12/updated_vaw_eng_web4-2.pdf

that vital support services are far less accessible than they are in cities and towns. Rehabilitation measures available for individuals affected by domestic violence primarily revolve around shelters and crisis centres, where a range of services, such as psychological and legal counselling, are offered. While support services for victims of domestic violence are limited, and even more so for women residing in rural areas, recent legislative changes (in 2023) have facilitated access for victims of violence to much-needed services. Now people who have experienced violence are able to use the services of state-supported shelters and crisis centres even before being legally recognized as victims.

However, numerous reports indicate that the absence of additional support services and programmes at the local level, such as housing assistance and vocational training, often leaves women with no choice but to either return to their abusers or face homelessness once they leave the shelter. The general lack of witness and victim coordinators, within law enforcement for example, creates challenges to informing victims about shelter and crisis centre services. Victims themselves

confirm that they are often not adequately informed about available services. Additionally, there is a significantly low rate of case referrals to crisis centres in the regions, further underscoring the problem for rural women to remove themselves from violent situations (UNFPA, 2022b).

A recent review of Georgia's implementation of the Istanbul Convention highlighted the issue of intersecting discrimination and called attention to factors that make women and girls from national and/or ethnic minorities living in rural areas, in particular in remote villages and high mountainous settlements, especially vulnerable (GREVIO, 2022). Women in these locations lack information and access to services, opportunities, means of economic empowerment and employment, which combined with "their lack of trust in law-enforcement agencies, all constitute barriers for women in rural areas who need help and support for gender-based violence" (GREVIO, 2022, p. 13). National action plans on violence against women have not sufficiently acknowledged the challenges associated with living in rural areas in terms of women's protection from violence.

3. Gender issues in rural households and family farming

3.1. Characteristics of the labour market

Although they generally achieve high levels of education, women in Georgia are much less engaged in formal employment, resulting in a large gender gap in labour force participation. The labour force participation rate for women has been consistently lower than that for men, and the trend has been stable for decades. In 2022, the labour force participation rate for women was 41.5 percent, and for men it was 64.0 percent, with slight increases for both sexes from the previous year (National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2024c).

As for levels of employment, men consistently have a higher employment rate than women. While there have been fluctuations in the employment rate over time, the gap has remained consistent. In 2022, the employment rate for women was 35.4 percent, and for men it was 51.7 percent. Between 2021 and 2022, the employment rate increased to a greater degree for men, and in fact, is slightly higher than it was before the COVID-19 pandemic (in 2019). For women, on the other hand, the employment rate has

been gradually decreasing, particularly since the 2018 to 2019 period (ibid.).

The reasons that women and men are out of the workforce have a clear gender dimension. While a majority of those who are not working, men and women, report that they are unwilling to work, a considerably larger share of women do not seek employment due to domestic responsibilities, with rural women being the most likely to give this answer (World Bank, 2021). The Georgian labour market also exhibits both industrial and occupational segregation, with women making up a greater share of workers in education and health, in contrast to men who are better represented in the fields of construction, manufacturing and transport (ibid.).

3.1.1. Rural labour

The unemployment rate is consistently higher in urban areas compared with rural areas. The rural unemployment rate increased from 15.8 percent in 2020 to 18.2 percent in 2021, but has since fallen to 14.6 percent in 2023. In comparison, the unemployment

Table 3. Labour force indicators, by location

	Rural						Urban					
	Women			Men			Women			Men		
	2021	2022	2023	2021	2022	2023	2021	2022	2023	2021	2022	2023
Labour force participation rate (%)	33.1	36.1	38.4	61.2	62.9	63.7	45.8	45.2	46.1	64.3	64.9	66.3
Employment rate (%)	28.2	31.5	33.7	48.9	51.9	53.4	37.0	38.1	39.2	48.4	51.5	53.1
Unemployment rate (%)	14.8	12.6	12.1	20.1	17.5	16.2	19.3	15.7	15.0	24.8	20.6	19.8

Source: National Statistics Office of Georgia. 2024c. Geostat: Gender statistics. [Accessed on 4 August 2024]. <https://gender.geostat.ge/gender/index.php?#home>

rate for urban areas in 2023 was 17.6 percent (National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2024b). The total unemployment rate in 2023 was 16.4 percent (ibid.).

Not only are there differences in patterns of employment between rural and urban areas, but there are also differences between men and women. Women living in rural areas are the most likely to be outside of the labour force (with a labour force participation rate of 38.4 percent in 2023, compared with 63.7 percent for men in rural areas, and 46.1 for women in urban areas; see Table 3). Rural women are employed at a lower rate, but the difference in location is less significant here, with only around a 5 percent lower rate compared with women in urban areas.

In 2023, the NEET rate for young people aged 15 to 29 years was 30.9 percent for women, and for men it was 23.2 percent, indicating that a significant proportion of young people were not in education, employment or training, but also that young women face greater challenges in accessing opportunities than young men (National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2024b). From 2020 to 2023, the NEET rate declined for both women and men, by 7.5 percent for women and 8.9 percent for men, which is a positive trend (ibid.). Still, the NEET rate remains high, especially in comparison with the European Union where the rate in 2022 was 11.7 percent (13.1 percent of young women and 10.5 percent of young men; EUROSTAT, 2023).

Not only are women more likely to be in the NEET category than men, but the gender gap in the NEET rate is three times as high in rural areas than in urban areas in Georgia (World Bank, 2019b). Unfortunately, no data are available regarding gender differences in rural and urban areas. In 2022, the NEET rate for young people aged 15 to 29 years in rural areas was 37 percent compared with 26.8 percent in urban areas (see Table 4).

Women generally become NEET when they marry and have young children, and so they are economically inactive, while men are usually in the NEET category because they are unemployed. For women, this

Table 4. NEET rate for young people aged 15 to 29 years, by location and year, in percent

	2020	2021	2022
Total (in percent)	35.1	34.6	30.7
Urban	30.3	30.1	26.8
Rural	42.5	41.7	37.0

Source: Data provided to the authors by the National Statistics Office of Georgia on request (2023).

“detachment” from the labour market “can negatively and permanently affect [their] career prospects, expected lifetime incomes, and human capital investments” (World Bank, 2021, p. 77).

For rural areas, self-employment also plays a significant role as a source of livelihoods. In 2021, 41.6 percent of all households had one or more hired workers. In 2023, the share of informally employed individuals in the non-agricultural sector in rural areas was 32.7 percent. Notably, a lower proportion of women (21.7 percent) were employed informally in non-agricultural sectors compared with men (32.6 percent) (National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2024b).

Agricultural work

In 2023, around 220 700 people were formally employed in agriculture, forestry and fishing, as compared to 253 900 people in 2018 (ibid.). Of all employed women, 14.1 percent worked in agriculture, forestry and fishing in 2023 (around 84 300 women) as compared to 18.5 percent of all employed men (or about 136 400 men; National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2024c).

There is a notable gender wage gap in the earnings of people working in the combined sector of agriculture, forestry and fishing. In 2022, women earned an average of GEL 854.50 per month, while men earned an average of GEL 1 149.10 (ibid.). There is a comparable wage gap in businesses operating in agriculture, forestry and fishing. The average monthly salary for women and men employed in agriculture-related enterprises was

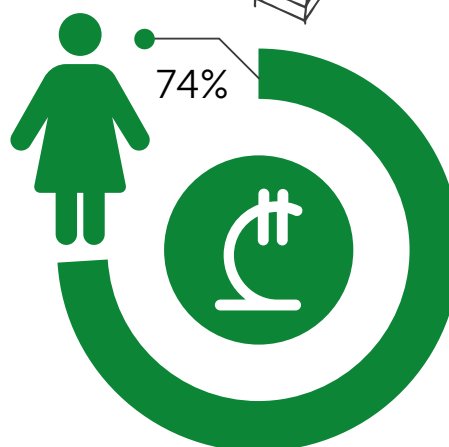
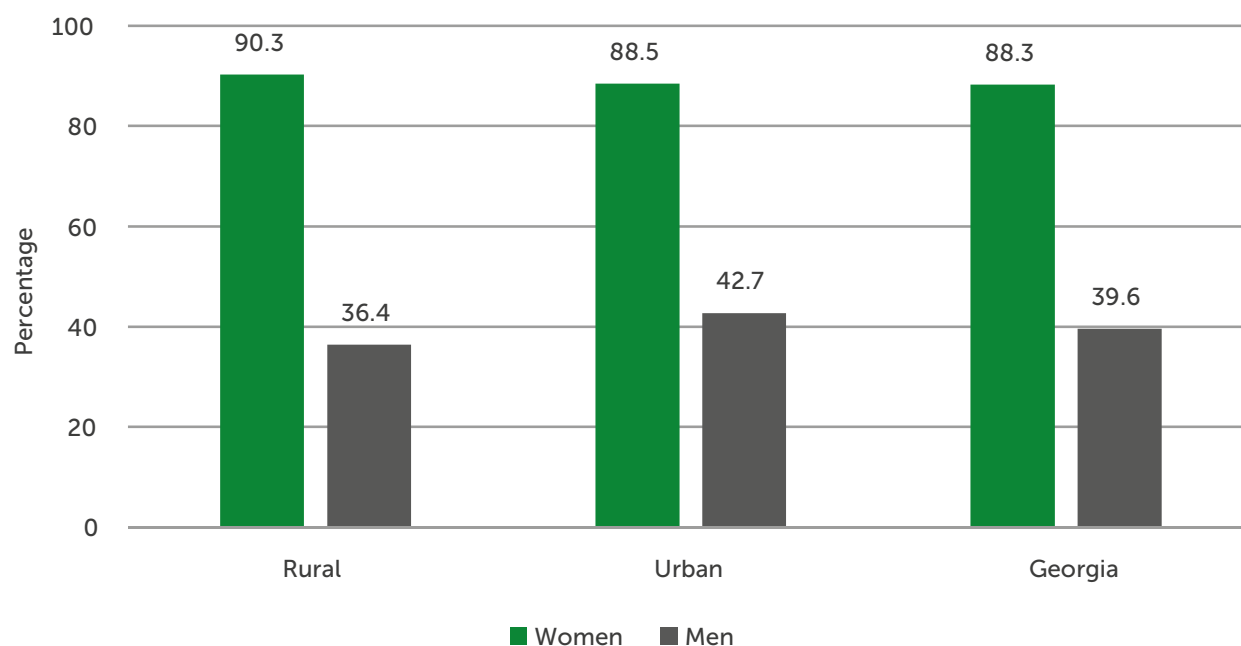


Figure 10. Participation rates in unpaid domestic services, by location and sex

Source: UN Women. 2022. *Time use survey in Georgia: 2020–2021*. Tbilisi, p. 47. https://eca.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-12/GTUS%20Report%20ENG%20WEB%20%281%29_0.pdf

GEL 855 and GEL 1 156, respectively. Women’s average salaries in this sector were the equivalent of 74 percent of men’s salaries, in comparison to the wage gap across businesses in all sectors of 67 percent (ibid.).

As of 2022, there was a 10 percent disparity in the average number of men and women employed in agricultural holdings, with men having greater representation. Furthermore, men worked 3 percent more person-days than their female counterparts. However, women worked on average for a greater duration, potentially attributable to their significant contribution to animal husbandry activities such as feeding cattle and poultry, and milking cattle, which require engagement throughout the year (ibid.).

Unpaid work

It is worth noting that unlike formal employment, as described above, a great deal of agricultural work is, in fact, unpaid work on family farms. Furthermore, rural women engage in the largest share of unpaid work overall.

There has been an increasing recognition of the importance of sex-disaggregated data on time use in recent years, and the Georgia Time Use Survey (GTUS) is a significant step in this direction. Geostat conducted the first GTUS between 2020 and 2021.¹⁴ The GTUS aims to generate and analyse high-quality data on

time-use patterns of men and women, helping to monitor progress towards SDG Target 5.4 – recognizing and valuing unpaid care and domestic work through public services, infrastructure and social protection policies.

A significant proportion of Georgia’s population, around 66.0 percent, performs unpaid domestic work. However, there is a noticeable disparity in participation rates between genders, with women having a much higher participation rate (88.3 percent) compared with men (39.6 percent; see Figure 10). The time use survey revealed that rural women are responsible for the majority of unpaid work, with a participation rate of 90.3 percent (UN Women, 2022).

Women in rural areas spend an average of 3.6 hours on unpaid domestic services per day, while men spend only 0.7 hours a day. In the capital of Georgia and other urban areas, these numbers are slightly lower, with women spending an average of 3.2 hours, and men spending the same amount of time on unpaid domestic services as their rural counterparts, 0.7 hours (ibid.). The unequal distribution of unpaid work hinders women’s engagement in paid employment and education.

The participation rate in the production of goods for one’s own final use is the highest in rural areas. The overall participation rate of women and men in rural areas own-use production activities is equal, but women’s participation rate in the specific activity

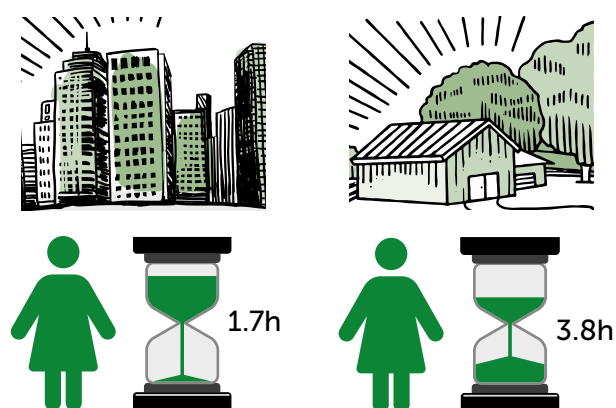
¹⁴ With the financial and technical support of UN Women.

of making and processing goods is 10 times higher than men's, with 14.2 percent of women participating compared with only 3.1 percent of men (ibid.). The data and the observed patterns suggest that women play a crucial role in food production processes generally, and in processing agricultural products for home consumption specifically.

On average, the population of Georgia spends 0.6 hours per day on unpaid care work. In rural areas, women spend 0.8 hours, while men spend 0.2 hours per day (ibid.). Unpaid domestic care work for rural households generally begins around 6 a.m. and lasts until 10 p.m. (ibid.) Mothers in rural areas spend six times more time on child care than fathers do; and full-time employed mothers spend 2.0 hours on child care and instruction, which is 5.8 times higher than the 0.3 hours spent by full-time employed fathers (ibid.).

Young women's (from the age of 15 to 24 years) level of committed time¹⁵ varies significantly depending on their place of residence, with urban-rural differences being notable. For instance, young women living in Tbilisi spend an average of 1.7 hours per day, while those residing in rural areas spend up to 3.8 hours per day on unpaid activities (ibid.). Among young people who live with their families, the most common activities that occupy their time are self-care and maintenance, recreation and leisure, social and community interaction, and learning. Young women spend more time on unpaid domestic and caregiving tasks compared with young men, with the biggest difference observed in rural areas (ibid.).

It is crucial to extend the GTUS to include agricultural activities in greater detail, particularly for specific value chains, to gain a better understanding of the tasks and responsibilities that women and men undertake. This type of gender-specific information and data is essential



¹⁵ Committed time refers to activities covering unpaid domestic and caregiving services as well as volunteering (UN Women, 2022).

for policymakers to identify areas where disparities exist in the agriculture sector, including unpaid work, such as food processing, harvesting and storage.

Evidence-based policies will facilitate reducing the workload of rural women as well as improving their participation in higher-paying jobs within agrifood systems, with a long-term strategic goal to foster new attitudes towards a more equitable distribution of unpaid domestic work.

3.2. Land tenure and access to other productive assets

Development practitioners acknowledge that "secure control and ownership of land have a strong empowering effect on women: it reduces their reliance on male partners and relatives, increases their bargaining power within the household, and improves their chances of accessing a wide variety of productive resource including extension services and credit" (FAO, 2021, p. 10). Enforcing equitable property rights is particularly important in the context of agricultural land, where women are often excluded from landownership and control. By recognizing and enforcing women's property rights, including their rights to own and inherit agricultural land, women can access the resources necessary to invest in and improve their agricultural productivity.

In Georgia, there are gender differences in documented and reported ownership of agricultural land, but such data have not been collected since 2015. Still, at that time, documented ownership of agricultural land was significantly lower for women at 12.6 percent, compared with men at 30.6 percent. However, when considering *reported* ownership, the gap was smaller as the numbers increased to 34.1 percent for women and 47.7 percent for men (National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2018). According to more recent national statistics provided to the authors by the National Statistics Office of Georgia, women represent

Box 4. Classification of agricultural land

The Organic Law of Georgia on Agricultural Land Ownership defines agricultural land as land area of either a pasture, a hayfield, arable land (including the land under perennial crops) or a category of homestead land, which is used or may be used for agricultural purposes with or without buildings and structures on it.

Source: Georgia. *Organic Law of Georgia on Agricultural Land Ownership*, 2019. No. 4848-IIS. Also available at: <https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/4596123?publication=0> work

Table 5. Six proxies to assess progress under Indicator 5.a.2

Proxy A:	Is the joint registration of land compulsory or encouraged through economic incentives?
Proxy B:	Does the legal and policy framework require spousal consent for land transactions?
Proxy C:	Does the legal and policy framework support women's and girls' equal inheritance rights?
Proxy D:	Does the legal and policy framework provide for the allocation of financial resources to increase women's ownership and control over land?
Proxy E:	In legal systems that recognize customary land tenure, does the legal and policy framework explicitly protect the land rights of women?
Proxy F:	Does the legal and policy framework mandate women's participation in land management and administration institutions?

Source: Reproduced from FAO. 2021. *Realizing women's rights to land in the law: A guide for reporting on SDG indicator 5.a.2*. Rome, p. 12. <https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/1aa1ae53-517f-4161-94da-99ce623a175d/content>

41.2 percent of *all* registered landowners in Georgia, a category that is broader than owners of agricultural land specifically.¹⁶

Georgia began reporting on SDG Indicator 5.a.2: *Proportion of countries where the legal framework (including customary law) guarantees women's equal rights to land ownership and/or control* in September 2022. Because it is not possible to directly measure Indicator 5.a.2, six proxies are used to assess progress against the indicator,¹⁷ as shown in Table 5 (FAO, 2021).

Georgia has achieved a score of 5, denoting a high level of protection for women's equal right to landownership, based on four proxies being present in the national legal framework. Only 15 countries, out of 68, have received this score, putting Georgia in the company of Hungary, Lithuania and Sweden, among others (FAO, 2023b).

Despite de jure equality in landownership, official data reveal that gender disparities persist in de facto ownership, based on the following indicators:

For Indicator 5.a.1.a (*proportion of total agricultural population with ownership or secure rights over agricultural land by sex*) in 2022, 26.3 percent of the entire agricultural population of Georgia had ownership or secure rights to agricultural land. Within this population, 38.6 percent of men have ownership or secure rights, in contrast to only 14.4 percent of women (National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2024c).

For Indicator 5.a.1.b (*distribution of persons with ownership or secure rights over agricultural land by sex*) in 2022, of the population with either ownership or secure rights to agricultural land, 73.3 percent were men, and 27.7 percent were women (National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2024c).

No data are available on the share of holdings with irrigated land by land use type and gender of the holder that would help to identify any gender differences in access to irrigated land that can have different implications for food security, as well as productivity and income.

However, it is worth noting that policy in the area of pastureland management reiterates the importance of women's equal access to land and land tenure security. Specifically, a National Pastureland Management Policy Document, developed in 2022, that includes a dedicated section on gender and pasture management, notes that women's "limited access to ownership of land and other property" has an impact on their access to pastures, agricultural services and to gender-responsive infrastructure for livestock production (GEF and FAO, 2022, p. 19). The policy document recommends measures to ensure women's equitable access to pastures, namely using temporary special measures to prioritize women pasture user applicants for leaseholds and processes to ensure that women owners of homesteads can become pasture user union (PUU) founding members and regularly attend all meetings (with a suggested quota of a 30 percent minimum for women among active PUU members and at least one woman member on the management committee; GEF and FAO, 2022).

Public attitudes towards the concept of equal inheritance appear to be changing in a positive direction. In 2013, merely 44 percent of population believed that parental assets should be divided evenly,

¹⁶ Data provided to the authors by the statistics department based on queries to the database of the National Agency of Public Registry (NAPR) of Georgia on registration of land rights and extracting the relevant data. The National Agency of Public Registry is under the Ministry of Justice of Georgia, which is responsible for real estate registration.

¹⁷ The indicators used in this context are based on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and FAO's (2022) *Voluntary Guidelines on the responsible governance of tenure of land, fisheries and forests in the context of national food security*.

Box 5. Definitions: agricultural producers and farmers

For the purposes of national statistics, an **agricultural holding** is an “economic unit of agricultural production under single management comprising all livestock kept and all land used wholly or partly for agricultural production purposes, without regard to title, legal form or size in which agricultural activities are conducted by the supervision of a holder, who is responsible for making decisions and takes all economic risks and expenses related to agricultural activities” (National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2024f, p. 1). National accounts define two types of agricultural holding: family holdings (referred to in this Country Gender Assessment as family or household farms) and agricultural enterprises.

Concerning policy and programme development in Georgia, it seems that an expansive definition of “farmer” is used that refers not only to the person (the agricultural holder) who has legal ownership of the holding. For instance, the Agriculture and Rural Development Strategy for 2021–2027 notes that the farms/farmers registry will include all “**individuals engaged in agricultural activities,**” so that these data can be the basis for selecting target groups “and for planning and implementing the various needs-based stimulating projects/programs for them” (Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia, 2019, no pagination).

Sources:

(i) National Statistics Office of Georgia. 2024f. Metadata: Agricultural statistics. In: *Geostat*. Tbilisi. [Cited 4 August 2024]. <https://www.geostat.ge/en/modules/categories/570/metadata-agricultural-statistics>

(ii) Ministry of Environment Protection and Agriculture of Georgia. 2019. *Agriculture and Rural Development Strategy of Georgia 2021–2027*. Tbilisi. <https://mepa.gov.ge/Ge/PublicInformation/20395> [in Georgian]

while this figure increased to 62 percent in 2019. In the same vein, nearly 50 percent of respondents expressed that land should be divided equally in 2013, whereas over 67 percent did so in 2019 (UNDP, 2020). It may be useful to consider how such attitudinal change can be further accelerated.

Formal recognition of women’s landownership rights can help to address the problem of their limited economic opportunities by providing them with greater security of tenure and access to credit and agricultural programmes and projects, and will extend women’s ability to invest in and manage land.

3.2.1. Farm ownership and management

Currently available information about agricultural holdings in Georgia is derived from the 2014 Agricultural Census, which is likely to be conducted again in 2024. The vast majority of agricultural holdings are household farms (639 963 households in total in 2014); less than 1 percent are legal entities (National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2024e). In fact, 57.7 percent of all households in Georgia are agricultural holdings.

Three out of four farms in Georgia are small-sized: “more than three-fourths of holdings (77.1 percent) operate agricultural land smaller than 1 ha, and their total area constitutes 21.5 percent of all of the operated agricultural land” (FAO, 2020c, p. 31). The average smallholding is 1.4 hectares (FAO, 2020c). Most smallholdings – family farms – are primarily oriented towards production for their own consumption. In 2023, for instance, 53.9 percent of all holdings were in this category, selling 10 percent or less of what they produced. In contrast, less than 6 percent of all holdings were primarily commercially-oriented with more than 90 percent of their products going to sale (National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2024d).

There is a significant gender disparity in the distribution of agricultural holdings. Despite a slight increase in the share of holdings operated by women from 2016 to 2023, men still head the majority of farms in Georgia (UN Women, 2021). Among the almost 640 000 household farms in 2014, women headed 198 176 of them, or 31.0 percent. In fact, women’s representation as the head of agricultural holdings has remained stable for almost a decade, without clear improvement in women’s status (see Figure 11).

Holdings headed by women are smaller on average, even more so than their representation as holders.

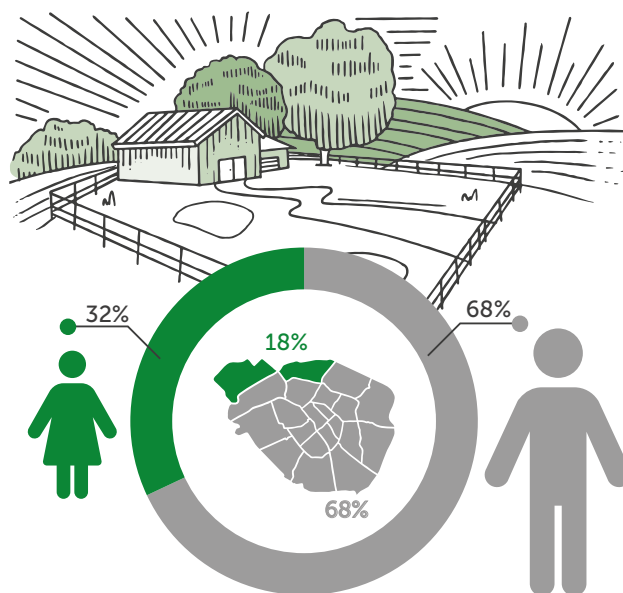
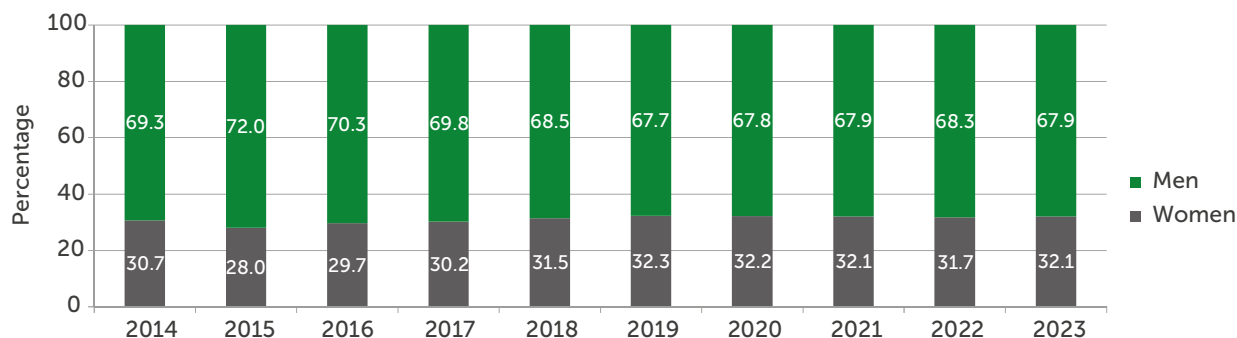


Figure 11. Share of agricultural holdings by sex of the holder or head of the holding, by year



Source: National Statistics Office of Georgia. 2024c. Geostat: Gender statistics. [Accessed on 4 August 2024]. <https://gender.geostat.ge/gender/index.php?#home>

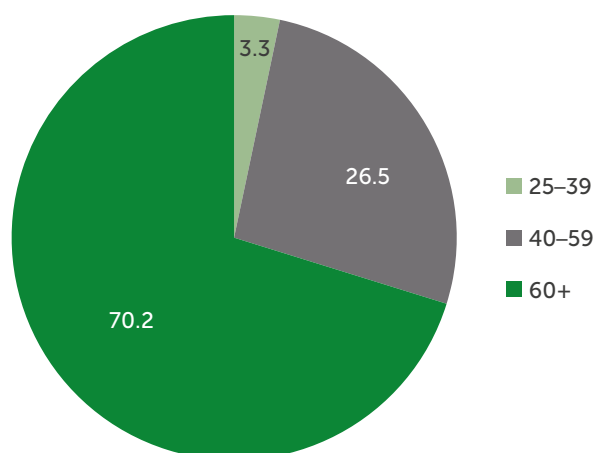
Thus, if women represent 32 percent of holders, the percentage of land that they manage is lower, only 18 percent of the total land (including leased land) occupied by women-held holdings in 2022 (National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2023b). In fact, since 2020, the share of the total land area occupied by holdings headed by women has decreased from 21 percent (National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2022a).

In addition to disparities based on sex, age is also a factor in farm ownership and management, with consistently low youth involvement in agricultural holdings since 2016 (see Figure 12 and Figure 13). Specifically, in 2023, individuals under the age of 25 years managed less than 1 percent of all agricultural holdings, while holders aged 25 to 39 years managed around 5 percent. Here, the share of young men is considerably larger. Of all men who headed farms, 7.5

percent were aged 25 to 29 years, compared with only 3.3 percent of young women in the same age group. Across all age groups, the largest share of women heading farms – 70.2 percent of the total women – are over age 60 years. For men farmers, just over half – 51.7 percent – are in this age group (National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2024c).

From the data presented, it can be concluded that a significant majority of agricultural holdings are managed by older individuals, even after the official age of retirement. The clear gender disparity in this age group, with older women holding a much larger share of agricultural holdings than older men, highlights the need for targeted efforts not only to address the gender inequalities in the agriculture sector, particularly among these populations, but also to encourage more youth participation in agriculture as commercial ventures (UN Women, 2021).

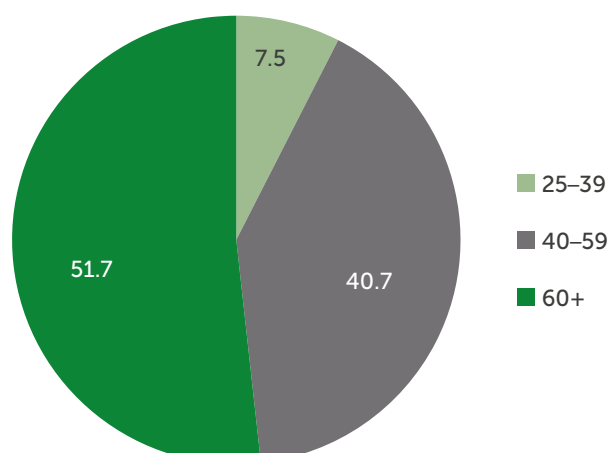
Figure 12. Agricultural holdings, headed by women, by age group, 2023, in percent



Note: Data for the age group 25 years and under are excluded, as they represent less than 1 percent of female holders.

Source: National Statistics Office of Georgia. 2024c. Geostat: Gender statistics. [Accessed on 4 August 2024]. <https://gender.geostat.ge/gender/index.php?#home>

Figure 13. Agricultural holdings, headed by men, by age group, 2023, in percent



Note: Data for the age group 25 years and under are excluded, as they represent less than 1 percent of male holders.

Source: National Statistics Office of Georgia. 2024c. Geostat: Gender statistics. [Accessed on 4 August 2024]. <https://gender.geostat.ge/gender/index.php?#home>

As noted in Section 2.5 of this CGA, the total average annual income for women-led farms in 2020 was around GEL 5 000 less than it was for men-led farms (GEL 10 845 for women and GEL 15 631 for men, for small, medium and large holdings combined; National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2022b). The lower average income from farming reflects not only the smaller size of women-led farms, but most likely their more limited access to agricultural inputs. The agriculture sector in Georgia is one that is mainly oriented towards subsistence farming, but even within the sector, women are more likely to be involved in farming to produce food for their own household consumption. This situation reflects both prevailing attitudes and expectations of women as farmers, as well as the very serious challenges they face in accessing resources and inputs that would support them to develop their farms to be more commercially-oriented.

3.3. Gender roles, leadership and empowerment

Attitudes towards gender equality have been changing for the better in Georgia. There has been an increasing acknowledgment that the attainment of gender equality holds significant value for the country, with a higher number of Georgians endorsing the concept of gender equality at present than what was observed 6 years ago (UNDP, 2020).

Support for gender equality as a concept can clearly coexist with the existence of gender stereotypes, however. The previous CGA for Georgia described how gender stereotypes and perceptions about women's "accepted" role in agrifood systems remain influential and have negative consequences for women as farmers and as stakeholders in rural development generally. While awareness about gender inequalities in agriculture has improved, as evidenced by recent gender mainstreaming of several national policy documents, overall women are largely expected to have a secondary or supporting role in farming. As discussed throughout this CGA, the impacts of such gender norms can be seen in rural women's lower rates of asset ownership, greater share of unpaid work, lesser earning power and more limited participation in decision-making. Challenging gender stereotypes remains an essential element of empowering women living in rural areas.

Empowerment itself encompasses not only the power and ability to influence change and access opportunities and resources but also a sense of self-worth (see FAO, 2017b, p. 3). This section of the CGA focuses on the decision-making aspect of empowerment, while in other sections, information is

presented about the outcomes of specific projects that can be said to have empowered rural women in other ways, through greater economic independence, for example.

3.3.1. Rural women's role in leadership and decision-making

Even though overall support for women's participation in leadership has increased, half of all respondents to a survey of current attitudes hold the view that men exhibit superior capabilities as political leaders. But there have been changes in perceptions regarding women in politics since 2013 when the survey was first conducted. This shift has primarily transpired as a result of a change in women's viewpoints (in 2013, 56 percent of female respondents and 69 percent of male respondents held the belief that men made better political leaders than women. By 2019, this perspective was shared by only 37 percent of women and 62 percent of men). Unfortunately, respondents were not asked specific questions about women in different levels of political office – from national to local – and while sampling was done in different regions, towns and villages, respondents' attitudes were not analysed for any distinctions between rural and urban settlements (UNDP, 2020).

Important amendments to the Election Code in 2020 and 2021 to reduce the gender gap in elected office introduced gender quotas that were expected to increase the proportion of female members of the national parliament and municipal assemblies. The quota required that such lists include at least one of four candidates of the opposite gender (for parliamentary elections) and at least one of three in local self-government elections. After introducing the mandatory quota, women's representation in decision-making positions in the central legislature and executive bodies increased in comparison to previous years. While a later amendment prolonged the use of the quota through to the 2032 elections, in 2024 the Parliament of Georgia abolished the gender quotas under the Election Code, along with financial incentives for political parties that complied with the quotas (with 85 members of parliament voting in favour and 22 against).

Despite some improvements in political representation under the quota system, women only managed to achieve 18 percent of parliamentary seats as of 2022 (National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2024c). The electoral quota appears to have had a much more positive effect at the local level. Following the 2017 elections, women made up only 13.4 percent of members of local councils (*sakrebulo*s), but this figure almost doubled to 23.7 percent after the 2021 elections (*ibid.*). Still, even the almost 24 percent women in local

councils falls short of the recommended minimum of 40 percent of the under-represented sex. The impacts of abandoning the gender quota before women have achieved a “critical mass” in political representation are not clear, but almost certainly it will mean even less support for women from rural areas to gain seats in elected office.

The executive branch has not seen a considerable increase in female representation, with 2 of 12 ministers being women, which is equal to what it was in 2016. There are no women among the 9 State Representatives. As of July 2024, the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia is headed by a male minister, the First Deputy Minister is a woman, and 4 deputy ministers are men.

In local executive offices, women have not made the same gains, however. In 2021, out of 64 heads of local authorities (mayors), only 3 were women (still, this is an improvement from 2017 when there was only 1 female mayor in Georgia; *ibid.*).

Even when not represented in formal government office, citizens living in rural areas can also take part in local decision-making processes. However, involvement in local community decision-making is not common in Georgian villages and municipalities generally. Almost 90 percent of respondents to a particular survey, women and men, said that they did not take part in such processes, mainly because they were not interested (given by 78.4 percent of the respondents), followed by a belief that their voices would not influence the decisions, and lastly because they did not know how to participate. The share of women and men giving such responses was virtually consistent (UN Women, SCO and ADC, 2018). At the same time, research indicates that women in rural areas of Georgia are especially unlikely to participate in public and local community meetings and thus are “lacking a voice in decision-making processes in their own households and communities” (UN Women, 2020b, p. 10). For women, traditional gender roles and stereotypes limit their agency in ways that are not relevant for men. It is a common notion that rural women are “passive” about taking part in community development, based on widespread attitudes that women should be occupied with the domestic sphere, while “their husbands should represent the family outside of the household” (*ibid.*, p. 18). Thus, many rural women may not even consider the possibility of expressing their independent views in community forums, but this is not an indicator of their lack of interest in local development.

Indeed, interventions of national-level and grassroots groups remain highly significant for the empowerment

of rural women. An increase in the number of initiatives around rural development in Georgia demonstrates a transformative trend in empowering rural women through context-specific strategies implemented by these organizations and initiative groups. The active involvement of local organizations and women’s groups, coupled with targeted training, empowers community representatives to spearhead grassroots movements. In fact, approaches, such as social mobilization, have been used effectively to overcome some of the barriers that make it difficult for rural women to take part in a range of initiatives around improving rural livelihoods.

Since 2010, we have actively implemented a methodology known as social mobilization, engaging with rural communities. This approach includes both educational efforts and a small grant component, with our primary objective centred around advancing women’s economic empowerment ... One of the factors hindering women’s participation in ours, as well as other, programmes is the distance from the administrative centre. Rural women, burdened with household responsibilities, also face challenges such as lack of transportation. To address this, we meet women directly within their villages, ensuring ease of access. (Interview with Ketevan Zhordania, Chair of the Board, Taso Foundation)

The increased number of tailored project submissions reflects growing confidence among rural women, while successful funding acquisition and additional training solidify their role in decision-making processes. The experience of Georgian organizations that work regularly with rural women demonstrates that, with support, they have the capacity to take the lead in engaging with a variety of stakeholders not only to articulate local needs but also to develop their own projects to address these needs.

When initiating a project, more than half of our partners consist of local non-governmental organizations and women’s organizations. They are actively engaged from the project’s inception, contributing to the formulation process, and providing essential insights into on-the-ground needs. To ensure comprehensive representation from all target regions, we conduct advance training sessions with these partners. Through these training sessions, they

acquire the knowledge and skills needed to effectively disseminate ideas within their respective villages. Subsequently, women trained by these partners develop and present projects for our consideration, seeking financial support. Upon successfully obtaining funding through the Women's Fund, rural women attend training on how to collaborate with the municipal government, draft policy papers and other skills that ensure the sustainability of their project ideas. (Interview with Nino Tskipurishvili, Programme Manager, Women's Fund in Georgia)

In the area of agriculture, specifically, women may have opportunities for leadership through professional organizations. Unfortunately, the various gender equality assessments in Georgia lack specific information on the participation of rural women in farmers'/producers' associations, unions or cooperatives. Additionally, such organizations do not routinely publish information about their members, but it is generally understood that women are underrepresented in farmers' and producers' organizations. A very brief review of several organizations indicates that some do have explicit goals to support women in agriculture (one example is the Georgian Beekeepers Union, an umbrella organization that unites several associations and has over 4 000 beekeeper members). Additionally, when positive steps are taken to engage with women, membership tends to increase. For example, the Georgian Farmers' Association aims for gender balance and, as of 2023, 35 percent of individual members (farmers) were women, while women represented 43 percent of the association's board members (Georgian Farmers' Association, 2023).

Farming cooperatives are seen as a means to empower women because, through collective action, rural women can leverage their collective strength, increase their bargaining power, negotiate better prices for their products and access to resources, reduce transaction costs, share knowledge and increase their visibility. It appears that sex-disaggregated data about members of agricultural cooperatives, held by the

Rural Development Agency of MEPA, are not available for research purposes, but in the Agriculture and Rural Development Strategy of Georgia 2021–2027 it is noted that there were 1 021 cooperatives registered with the agricultural status in Georgia (Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, 2019). Estimates of women's membership in cooperatives ranges from 24 percent to 30 percent, and women represent 5 percent of chairpersons of their cooperatives (UN Women, 2020a).

There is state support for the development of agricultural cooperatives, and previous national strategies had aims to attract more women to cooperatives, but it does not appear that national programmes have used specific methods to address gender disparities that create barriers for women to form cooperatives. The experience of CARE International in Georgia is an interesting case study of supporting women's empowerment through promoting women's engagement in cooperatives. Affirmative actions were taken to reach women, and women's participation was made a selection criterion for certain business support, with the result that women's membership in and leadership of cooperatives increased (from 30 percent to 34 percent, with 20 percent female cooperative leaders) as did the number of female employees (CARE, 2022). While it appears that the experience of cooperative membership did empower some women, especially in terms of involvement in decision-making, overall an identified gap in the project was a lack of "specific measures ... to ensure meaningful engagement of women in cooperatives," meaning that positive outcomes tended to be sporadic and not systemic (ibid., p. 14).

Related to this point, there is a shortage of documentation of best practices for women's empowerment in Georgia, either through associations, informal and formal agriculture-oriented groups, cooperatives or other means. Additionally, sex-disaggregated data can serve as evidence to support advocacy efforts that focus on enhancing women's participation and leadership in cooperatives and farmers' associations. For instance, information regarding women's increased economic influence after involvement in specific initiatives can be utilized to present a case for additional investment in programmes that promote women's participation.

4. Gender and agriculture, fisheries and forestry

At the core of this CGA is an analysis of the roles that women and men play in agrifood systems, fisheries and in forestry, as well as an assessment of their ability to access key resources to support them in such activities. Research conducted in Georgia, including FAO's previous CGA, points to many gender gaps that have direct impacts on farming practices. These gaps result in women's generally lower levels of production, even against a general backdrop of traditional subsistence farming that is characterized by low productivity.

This section collects available data and information to develop a picture of critical gender gaps, while at the same time noting the need for the development of gender statistics and sectoral analysis that would be the basis for future gender-transformative interventions.

4.1. Crop production and horticulture

Just over half of agricultural holdings are oriented mainly towards crop production (59.4 percent; National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2024d). Due to the country's fertile soil, water resources and favourable climate, a rich variety of crops are grown in Georgia, including high-value agricultural products (such as grapes and wine, several sorts of nuts, and citrus, stone and subtropical fruits, for example).

Maize is the most produced cereal crop, followed by wheat and barley. Among non-cereal crops, potatoes and vegetables (mainly tomatoes, cucumbers and cabbages, but a number of other varieties) have the highest production (in tonnes), with melons at a close second. Hay from perennial grasses has higher production compared with hay from annual grasses (ibid.). As for permanent crops, during the last 4 years, the production of fruit (including grapes and citrus) remained stable, while tea leaf production has significantly increased. The share of agricultural enterprises in the total production of tea leaves increased by more than 25 percent from 2019 to 2023 (ibid.).

Most of the agricultural holdings that are oriented mainly towards crop production are smallholders that sell less than 10 percent of what they produce (in 2023, 61.4 percent of holdings that produced crops were in this category; ibid.). Holdings that produced crops primarily for sale accounted for only 7.7 percent in the same year.

Women and men typically have distinct roles in crop production, but these roles are not adequately documented due to the lack of sex-disaggregated data. Without such data, it is difficult to track changes in female and male workforce participation over time at the national level. Furthermore, while the development of agricultural value chains is a core national goal, as included in the Agriculture and Rural Development Strategy of Georgia 2021–2027 for instance, there is a distinct lack of value chain analyses of various crops that include a gender perspective.

Both women and men play an important role in crop production and post-harvesting within agricultural holdings. In general, women are responsible for weeding, planting and harvesting. Further along the value chain, women take on sorting and packing of agricultural products and are also responsible for preserving fruits and vegetables, mainly for household consumption but potentially also for sale. Men perform tasks such as ploughing and tilling the land, pruning trees, pesticide spraying (pest and disease management), irrigation, transport of products and marketing – tasks that are associated with men because they often involve heavier physical labour or financial transactions. Notably, women are slightly better represented than men as workers on agricultural holdings that are oriented mainly towards crop production (52.3 percent of female workers are on holdings that primarily undertake crop production compared with 50.7 percent of male workers; National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2022b).

In general, people in Georgia spend an average of 2.6 hours per day on crop production, growing vegetables and managing kitchen gardens for their own consumption. Men spend more time per day on such tasks: 3.1 hours daily compared to 2 hours for women (National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2022c). As a general rule, women are mainly involved in producing subsistence crops for household consumption and are not often involved in commercial crop production. On the other hand, men have the main responsibility for the production of cash crops but undertake subsistence farming as well (UN Women, 2020a). It is important to highlight that while rural women spend almost as much time as men on farming activities, they do so in addition to heavy domestic workloads in support of their households.

In cooperation with MEPA and other agriculture agencies, international organizations working in Georgia have identified several agricultural value chains as commercially viable. Gender-sensitive value chain analysis is not a common practice, however, and so sector-specific research does not identify particular gaps or opportunities for women. One exception, however, is the Georgia Potato Program (2019–2022)¹⁸ that aimed to improve gender mainstreaming of its activities. Under the programme, desk research was conducted of gender, agriculture and seed system policies in Georgia, followed by participatory gender-responsive research to identify “particular constraints and opportunities in potato production” for women and men (CIP, 2021, no pagination). Key findings of the study confirmed what is known about crop value chains generally: women are active in potato farming for subsistence needs; they also assist men with “larger potato production activities” but following men’s directives and decisions. Women emphasized that their role was not as “real farmers” but as assistants to men who have more experience managing large-scale commercial crops (CIP, 2020, p. 17). Opportunities were identified to increase women’s engagement in potato seed selection, as these activities do not require physical strength, women already have experience in seed selection and storage, and women demonstrated particular interest in the details of selecting good quality potato varieties.

Women are involved in hazelnut production, including in pruning and husking, but men dominate this value chain. As an expert interviewed for this CGA noted, the distance to nut plantations and the physical tasks required mean that it is mainly men engaged at the

production end of the value chain. One study suggests that women may be more involved in post-harvest processing, as they make up around 20 percent of employees in husking, drying and storage facilities (CNFA, 2020).

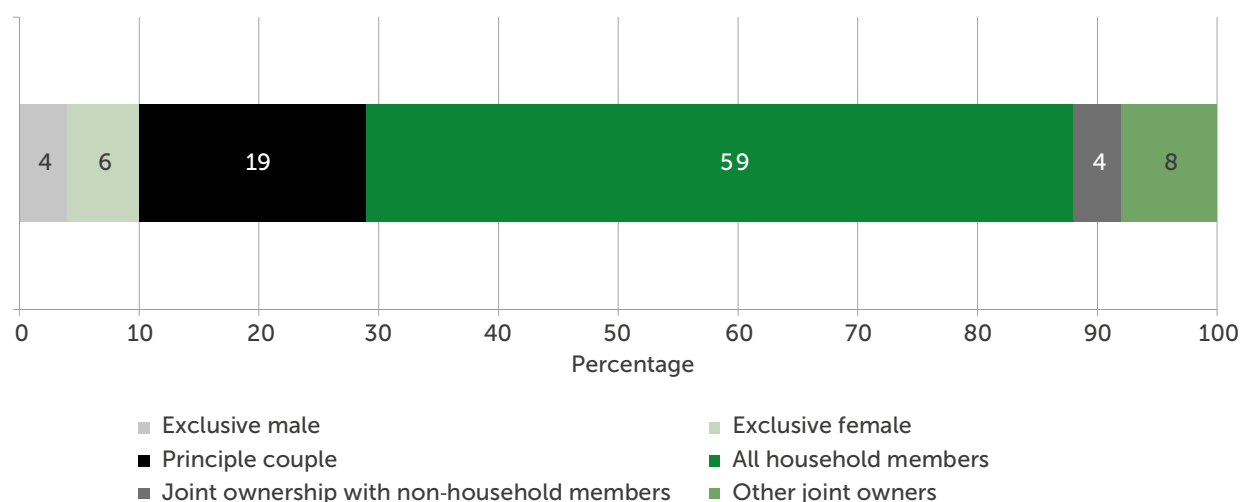
Women’s participation is significantly higher in berry production, due to the fact that less land and start-up resources are needed compared to growing other products. Analysis of the national Plant the Future Program found that after a subcomponent on berry production was introduced, the involvement of beneficiaries with smaller land plots increased considerably, and the involvement of women improved. The choices in crops of men and women in the programme reflected land size and access to resources, and so women were less likely to choose capital-intensive production. An important observation from the programme was the efficiency of women farmers, especially in berry production; women farmers with smaller-sized land plots had similar agricultural production (in kg) and higher producers’ income (in GEL) than men farmers with a similar size of land. At the same time, as land size increased, the same indicators were better for men, “highlighting the gender gap with respect to access to capital, irrigation and additional finance” (UN Women, 2020a, p. 52). Further gender analysis of berry value chains, along with those of other horticultural products, is needed, especially to identify constraints in accessing important resources and means to create opportunities for women to access the higher-value stages of marketing and sales.

To achieve gender equality and inclusive growth in the agriculture sector, it is crucial to address the underlying cultural and economic barriers that prevent women from participating fully in all stages of crop production. This can be achieved by providing targeted support and resources to women farmers, promoting gender-sensitive policies and practices, and raising awareness about the importance of gender equality in agriculture.

4.2. Livestock and livestock products

In comparison to crop production, a considerably smaller share of agricultural holdings are oriented mainly to livestock production – just 15.9 percent of the total in 2023 (National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2024d). Still, there has been a gradual increase in the proportion of agricultural holdings that are primarily focused on livestock production over the last 5 years. Based on share of products sold by agricultural holdings that focus on livestock, production of meat, milk and eggs have all increased since 2019 (ibid.).

¹⁸ The programme was conducted by the International Potato Center (CIP) and funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

Figure 14. Distribution of livestock ownership

Source: National Statistics Office of Georgia and Asian Development Bank. 2018. *Pilot survey on measuring asset ownership and entrepreneurship from a gender perspective: Georgia*. Tbilisi, p. 56.

Smallholders – meaning those that mainly produce for their own consumption (and sell 10 percent or less) – represent more than a third (39.9 percent) of all holdings that are oriented towards livestock production. Another 56.0 percent of holdings produce livestock for a combination of sale and household use, leaving less than 3 percent that are primarily commercially-oriented (ibid.).

As is the case for other forms of agricultural production, women and men perform distinct kinds of work in raising livestock. As a general rule, women are responsible for activities with animals close to the home, in the barn, such as feeding, hygiene, milking and milk processing. Men's tasks involve grazing and concern the health and nutrition of animals, as well as sales and slaughtering. Women also represent a smaller proportion of agricultural workers on holdings that are oriented to livestock production. Whereas, 11.6 percent of male agricultural workers are employed on such holdings, the same is true for only 9.8 percent of female workers (ibid.). This indicates that in general, rearing of livestock is more closely associated with a man's role.

A time use survey indicates that people in rural Georgia generally spend 1.9 hours per day on activities related to cattle breeding and production of livestock products for their own use. The participation rate of rural women and men in breeding and raising animals for their own final use is 17.3 percent and 16.0 percent respectively (National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2022c).

The question of how livestock assets are distributed is somewhat complicated by the fact that livestock mainly belong to households and are not registered to an individual owner. A pilot asset ownership survey

that included non-financial assets found that, based on reported ownership, 41.6 percent of men and 38.6 percent of women own livestock; the moderate gender gap confirms that individual ownership is not common, as does a more detailed breakdown of how livestock are owned, shown in Figure 14 (National Statistics Office of Georgia and Asian Development Bank, 2018).

The establishment of the National Animal Identification and Traceability System (NAITS) of the National Food Agency of MEPA is an important development in Georgia. With the technical assistance of FAO, NAITS began operating in 2019 and now contains around 1 000 system users and over 250 000 animal holdings. While NAITS is a system for collecting country-level information about animal health and food safety for cattle and small ruminants, because the sex of each animal keeper is registered in the database, it is of particular value for this CGA.

Among the total number of animal keepers, 153 623 are men, 66 957 are women, and 563 013 are not identified. A total of 3 750 277 cattle are registered in the database presently. Excluding entries for which the sex was not identified, women represent 30.4 percent of animal keepers in the database.

Among the identified keepers in all regions, the number of male keepers is consistently higher than that of female keepers. The majority of registered female keepers are concentrated in three regions: Imereti (15 501), Adjara (9 747) and Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti (9 651). Among the identified keepers, the majority are engaged in subsistence farming, according to the NAITS classifications.

Among commercial farms, women's representation as keepers of cattle is even lower than for subsistence farms. Of the 13 358 keepers registered with commercial farms in NAITS, 11 590 are men and 1 768 are women (or 13.2 percent of keepers).

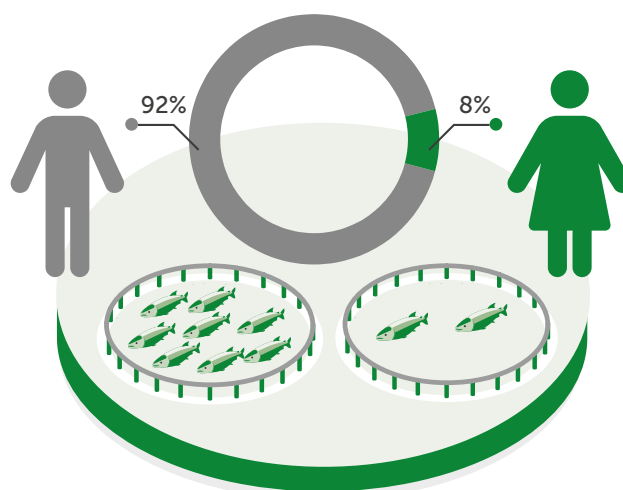
Gender-sensitive value chain analysis is lacking for the livestock sector. Research suggests that in the dairy and beef sectors, women face the same kinds of generalized barriers seen across agrifood systems, namely the prevalence of gender stereotypes and thus "challenges related to labour-intensive work, operation of machinery, and driving a tractor," and the difficulty of combining farm work with household responsibilities, leading to the underestimation of women's contributions to these sectors (IMPAQ International, LLC, 2021, p. 110). The representation of women in relevant associations for livestock farming, and in leadership positions, is not clear, with some estimations suggesting that as many as two-thirds of members are women and others that women have much lower representation than men (ibid.). Here, it would be important to distinguish between women heading large milk processing factories and women smallholders.

FAO has identified both dairy production and beekeeping as areas in which women either have a major role (the former), or in which there are entry points for women (the latter). Dairy production and cheese-making are very much associated with women in Georgia, and FAO has worked with women dairy farmers as a particular target group to improve their production but also their access to resources and overall empowerment (discussed in more detail in Section 4.5).

4.3. Fisheries and aquaculture

The aquaculture industry in Georgia is largely comprised of family-run businesses rather than large corporate enterprises. The majority of aquaculture holdings are family holdings, accounting for 90 percent, with enterprises only making up 10 percent. Out of the total fish in waterbodies (ponds and pools), 49 percent are owned by family holdings and 51 percent are owned by enterprises. Three regions, Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti, Kakheti and Shida Kartli have the highest concentration of aquaculture holdings in the country (National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2024g).

In 2023, out of the total aquaculture holdings, 92 percent were owned by men and only 8 percent were owned by women. There has been no significant change in the distribution of aquaculture holdings by sex of the holder in recent years. Out of the total fish production in 2023, 88 percent was produced by men, with women having a



very minor share (ibid.). It is important to note that these data only refer to the distribution of aquaculture holdings and fish production by sex of the holder and they do not provide any information on the actual production or profitability of aquaculture operations owned or managed by women and men.

Distribution of aquaculture holdings based on the age of the holder shows that individuals aged 45 to 64 years are the significant majority (56 percent), while younger groups, such as people less than 25 years of age, represent only 1 percent.

The average monthly nominal earnings of employees in the fishing industry in 2019 was GEL 905.90, with women earning an average of GEL 435.10 per month compared with men's average monthly nominal earnings of GEL 997.40 (National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2024b).

Primarily, women engage in the trade of fish, selling their products on the roadside, and in agricultural and fish markets. However, there are a lack of data regarding their earnings.

FAO has provided support to MEPA in creating a preliminary version of the Aquaculture Strategy for 2023, in which gender has been mainstreamed. The strategy is pending adoption. Despite a lack of gender statistics about aquaculture and fisheries in the country, the strategy provides special action in conducting assessments to understand the gender dimensions of the aquaculture sector at the country level and to provide evidence-based recommendations for gender-transformative development of the sector.

4.4. Forestry

As Georgia is a country of high elevation, the majority of its forests (97.7 percent) are situated on mountain slopes. In 2022, the forested area of Georgia covered

more than 2.8 million hectares, representing 40.4 percent of the total land area of the country¹⁹ (National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2022d).

While illegal logging in Georgia increased between 2016 and 2019, there was a notable decrease from 2020 (16 998 m³) continuing to 2022 (8 293 m³). It is possible that increased enforcement efforts have contributed to this decrease. It could also be attributed to government efforts to provide gasification to villages in rural areas, which reduces the dependence on fuelwood (ibid.).

Gathering sex-specific data on education and employment in forestry, and rural women's and men's roles in forest-based livelihoods, is essential to creating forest sector policies that are gender-responsive. Research and data that are disaggregated by sex are needed to determine how forest-related benefits and employment are distributed and who owns, accesses and controls productive forest resources. Integrating gender issues into agricultural surveys and censuses and retabulating existing census data can increase the quantity and quality of gender-specific data available for policymaking (FAO, 2016b). Unfortunately, there is still a lack of sex-disaggregated data on forestry in Georgia, including data on employment, income and ownership of forestry enterprises.

In 2021, the Government of Georgia approved a new Forest Code and initiated forest reform. The goal of the code is to protect biodiversity, conserve natural and cultural environments, support the rational use of forest resources, and establish the core principles that will serve as the basis for sustainable forest management. As part of a forestry reform initiative, the Forest Code has the goal of encouraging sustainable forest management and minimizing the likelihood of illegal logging and wildfires. It should be noted that gender is not mainstreamed in the code, nor was gender analysis conducted when it was elaborated, which would have identified differences in forest sector employment, as well as in access to forest resources, division of activities and roles of men and women within and around forests, decision-making regarding use, management and ownership, and the existing knowledge of rural communities, men and women about forest management.

At the same time, Georgia's 2030 Climate Change Strategy, in the process of integrating climate change mitigation measures into all Sustainable Forest Management Plans of protected areas by 2030, also intends that more than half of such plans are

gender-sensitive – albeit without including details of what gender-sensitivity might entail in this context (Government of Georgia, 2021b). The National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan for 2014–2020 also contains strategic objectives referring to the education and training of forestry specialists, with a gender perspective in mind, and considering the role of women and their access to forest resources when implementing community forestry schemes (Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection of Georgia, 2014a).

In Georgia, the Department of Biodiversity and Forestry, the Department of Environment and Climate Change, and the National Forestry Agency (NFA) within the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture all share responsibilities for managing forests. In general, having a gender-balanced leadership team can bring diverse perspectives and promote inclusivity and equality within government and in the forest sector. Women are underrepresented in decision-making within MEPA with responsibilities for forest management. The leadership of the National Forestry Agency consists of one male head, two male deputy heads and one female deputy head. Out of nine department managers across the agency, only two are women (National Forestry Agency, 2024). All nine regional services of the National Forestry Agency are headed by men.²⁰

Forest sector reform is likely to impact on communities, especially those which depend on forest resources, and therefore it is essential to understand how women and men use forest products. Generally, women and men have different levels of engagement with forests and pursue distinct objectives. Men's engagement in forests has economic motives, such as gathering fuelwood, or timber for construction and/or for profit. Using timber as a source of heating is a common practice in Georgia, and men are generally responsible for cutting fuelwood in the forest while women are responsible for splitting it, bringing it into the house and using it to fuel the stove. Therefore, women are largely involved in controlling the use of timber as a fuel source (GIZ, 2019).

The disparity between the employment of women and men in the formal forestry sector hides the fact that rural women have significant traditional knowledge regarding non-timber forest products and sustainable forestry practices. Women visit forests to gather different fruits, berries, mushrooms, nuts and medicinal herbs, primarily for household consumption. However, in some instances, this activity serves as a vital income

¹⁹ Including area covered by forest in the Abkhazia AR and Tskhinvali regions.

²⁰ The information is accurate as of 13 May 2024.

source for their families. Their foraging practices highlight the close connection between women, forest resources and economic sustainability. It is important that policymakers both recognize and incorporate this knowledge in planning, policy development and the implementation of programmes for sustainable forest management.

4.5. Agricultural extension and rural advisory services

Agricultural extension and rural advisory services (RAS) are a particular type of resource that is critical to support farmers and others in agrifood systems, to receive technical advice, adopt new technologies, and exchange knowledge and experiences, all of which can contribute to increased productivity.

There are three primary entities that offer agricultural extension in Georgia: the public sector, civil society and the private sector. The Rural Development Agency and its Regional Relations Department and the Scientific-Research Center of Agriculture are part of the public sector extension system. Local and international NGOs, foundations, farmers' associations, bilateral and multilateral aid projects, and non-commercial associations make up the civil society sector. The private sector is comprised of commercial production and marketing firms that provide advisory services along with selling products. Cooperatives, however, are not a significant source of agricultural consulting in Georgia.

To establish regional centres for extension and other information and policy functions, as well as to provide assistance to municipal-level extension activities, MEPA established 9 Regional Extension Centers, with 1 centre designated for each region, and 45 Information and Consultation Centres (ICCs).

According to the National Strategy on Agricultural Extension in Georgia for 2023–2027, the extension services in the country have several shortcomings, including limited access to information and technologies for women, lack of awareness regarding services offered by ICCs, and poor participation among young people and women in some areas. To address these obstacles and challenges, the strategy aims to provide extension services that are inclusive, accessible, impartial, demand-driven, tailored and participatory, with a particular emphasis on meeting the needs of vulnerable groups such as smallholders, young farmers and women. Additionally, for the first time, a gender perspective was applied to analyse the current rural advisory services in Georgia. In 2020, FAO conducted specific analysis using the Gender and Rural

Advisory Services Assessment Tool (GRAST)²¹ to identify gaps in RAS, and key findings included the fact that women make up a minority of extensionists, that most extension agents lack knowledge on how to conduct gender analysis and are not aware of the specific issues that women farmers face, and that few women use extension services as clients.

In terms of women as extension agents, only three of the nine Regional Extension Centers are women-managed, and only 15 percent of all extension agents are women (UN Women, 2020a). As for women as clients, in 2020, women accounted for only 23 percent of the individuals who received public agricultural extension services (The European Union in Georgia, 2020). Barriers that women face to receiving extension services and participating in RAS are much the same structural inequalities that have an impact on their opportunities to access other resources, namely limited time to participate in and constraints on mobility that make it more difficult to travel to training events, due to household responsibilities, lack of recognition of women's role as farmers as well as their absence from communication channels and networks (leading to their exclusion from mainstream services when men are targeted with information about services or services that are not tailored to women's needs and interests), and lack of other resources that are often prerequisites to taking part in extension (such as land titles and the financial means to purchase new technologies).

FAO in Georgia used the findings from the GRAST study as the basis for a project to increase the gender-sensitivity of extensionists. In 2020, FAO conducted a series of workshops on gender mainstreaming for representatives of ICCs and of the Regional Relations Department of the Rural Development Agency (RDA). The workshops not only provided conceptual information about gender equality but also included tools for incorporating gender considerations into extension work. The workshops were carried out in seven regions, including Tbilisi, and 103 extensionists, including 49 women, received training in gender-sensitive advisory services (FAO, 2020d). Some of the immediate lessons learned from the workshops included the importance of building the capacity of extension agents to recognize individual needs of women and men; to recruit local agents for some regions; and to conduct regular and comprehensive training on gender mainstreaming for extensionists that also includes more advanced sessions for those who have already taken courses to increase awareness (*ibid.*). Representatives of FAO who were

²¹ The GRAST is available at <https://www.fao.org/policy-support/tools-and-publications/resources-details/en/c/1207160>.

Box 6. Reaching women farmers through farmer field schools

FAO recognized that women in Georgia face distinct barriers in accessing mainstream extension and advisory services, and so chose a methodology of demonstration plots and farmer field schools (FFS) to both provide direct support to women farmers and also to encourage them to take on roles as leaders and resource persons in their communities.

Because societal norms make it difficult for women to take part in external training and traditional extension activities, FAO first focused on dairy production, including cheese-making. Women have a prominent role in this value chain, and so their participation in FFS is seen as socially “appropriate”. FAO has since expanded this approach to other value chains in Georgia in which women also play key roles, such as fruit and vegetable production (including the making of jams, dried fruits and sauces) and beekeeping. The aim behind the women-focused FFS is to train women farmers, who will then take the lead in training others. The FFS are hosted by a lead farmer for between 15 to 20 women who meet every 2 weeks to discuss and learn about technical processes. Because the FFS provide an acceptable and “safe space” to reach out to women in rural areas about very sensitive topics, they have been used as the basis for other activities with a women’s empowerment objective on topics such as gender roles, reproductive health and domestic violence.

An evaluation of the FFS in dairy production found not only that women who applied new skills saw economic benefits (better animal health, milk yields and more produce for sale, for example), but also that women themselves reported higher levels of self-esteem and confidence to become economically independent. The fact that women have been very actively involved in the FFS has also confirmed that affirmative steps to design and implement activities that target women are critical in agricultural projects that aim to reduce gender inequalities and reach disadvantaged women. This approach also has the potential to have a transformative effect over the longer term, and so it would be especially important to capture what practices have been effective through evaluation of the outcomes thus far.

Sources: Adapted from (i) FAO. 2024b. *Ensuring rural advisory services are responsive to women: good practices from FAO experiences in Europe and Central Asia*. Budapest, pp. 25–26. <https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/5ff3b474-d507-4bf3-ae1f-774f66476a95/content> (ii) Project materials provided to the authors by FAO in Georgia.

interviewed for this assessment also had a longer-term view of the effectiveness of the workshops, and have noted that gender mainstreaming has not yet become an institutionalized practice. The public extension system has not created incentives for agents to reach out to women as clients, but in many ways the system is not adequately addressing the needs of farmers in general (extension staff salaries are low, offices lack cars and fuel, and there is a need to update the knowledge of extensionists themselves). The new national strategy offers an opportunity to include gender considerations while upgrading the public extension systems overall.

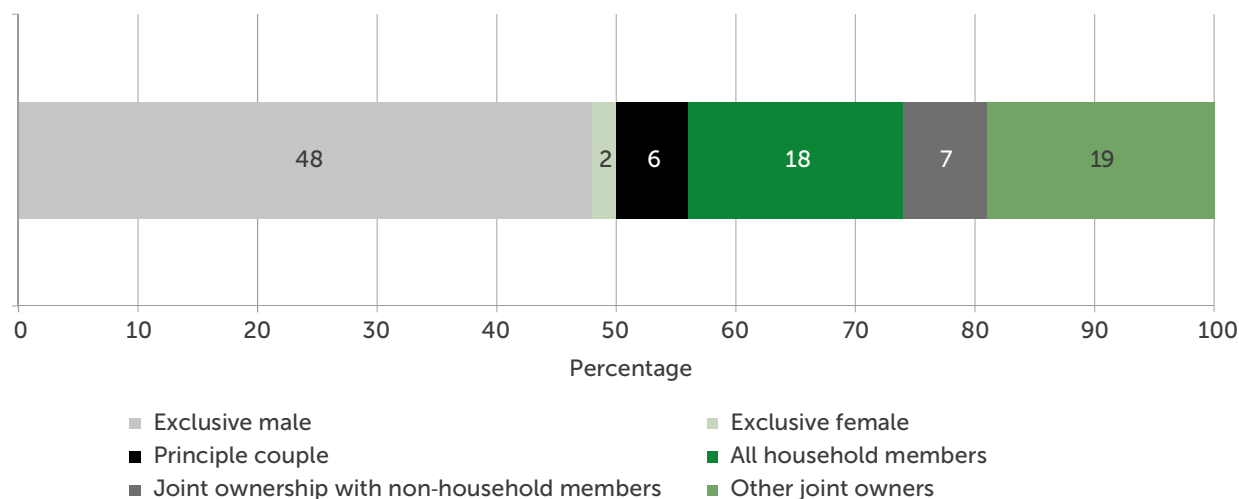
During the past few years, progress has been made in the government’s awareness of the need for gender-responsive extension services. The draft National Strategy on Agricultural Extension in Georgia incorporates a gender perspective and is guided by principles of inclusivity and accessibility. The strategy envisions such approaches as enhancing engagement and coordination of women and other stakeholders to ensure inclusiveness and ownership, and developing and using gender-sensitive extension materials and methods based on female and male farmers’ needs (Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture

of Georgia, n.d.).²² The strategy includes a number of specific actions and methods to improve engagement with women, such as adopting gender-inclusive communication channels; providing women with alternative methodologies for learning; recruiting female extensionists; and segregating farmer records by sex to track the impact on women and men. In addition, one of the objectives of the Gender Strategy and Action Plan for 2022–2024 of the RDA is to strengthen Regional Extension Centers so that they are better equipped to provide gender-responsive services. These measures will help to ensure that the extension services meet the needs of all farmers in the country, including women and young people who have been historically marginalized.

4.6. Access to productive inputs

Lack of agricultural inputs and the knowledge of how to use them effectively are characteristic problems for the agriculture sector in Georgia. In focus groups, farmers

²² This strategy was developed within an FAO project funded by the European Union’s European Neighbourhood Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development (ENPARD).

Figure 15. Distribution of large agricultural equipment ownership

Source: National Statistics Office of Georgia and Asian Development Bank. 2018. *Pilot survey on measuring asset ownership and entrepreneurship from a gender perspective: Georgia*. Tbilisi, p. 56.

have identified such challenges as a lack of fertilizers, irrigation systems and affordable irrigation water, as well as insufficient and outdated machinery (UN Women, SCO and ADC, 2018). Many smallholders are facing these challenges. For instance, one survey showed that only 5.9 percent of farmers own a tractor (5.7 percent of women and 6.0 percent of men reported owning a tractor). Of women who are involved in farming specifically, 63 percent reported having facilities, such as storage buildings, and machinery, such as tractors, but of these, only 21 percent owned the resources; 79 percent either rent or are able to use these inputs for free (ibid.).

The first CGA produced for Georgia highlighted the fact that in addition to common issues around the lack of inputs, women farmers face gendered barriers to accessing important resources. The Agriculture and Rural Development Strategy of Georgia for 2021–2027 also identifies women’s limited access to modern technology and agricultural resources as a weakness. Indeed, gender disparities in access to a range of inputs, which can also include seeds, fertilizers and pesticides, is one factor behind women’s lower levels of production. Women’s lower economic status means it is more difficult for them to purchase modern equipment. The fact that extension and advisory services do not engage with women to the same extent as men also means that female farmers lack information about new inputs.

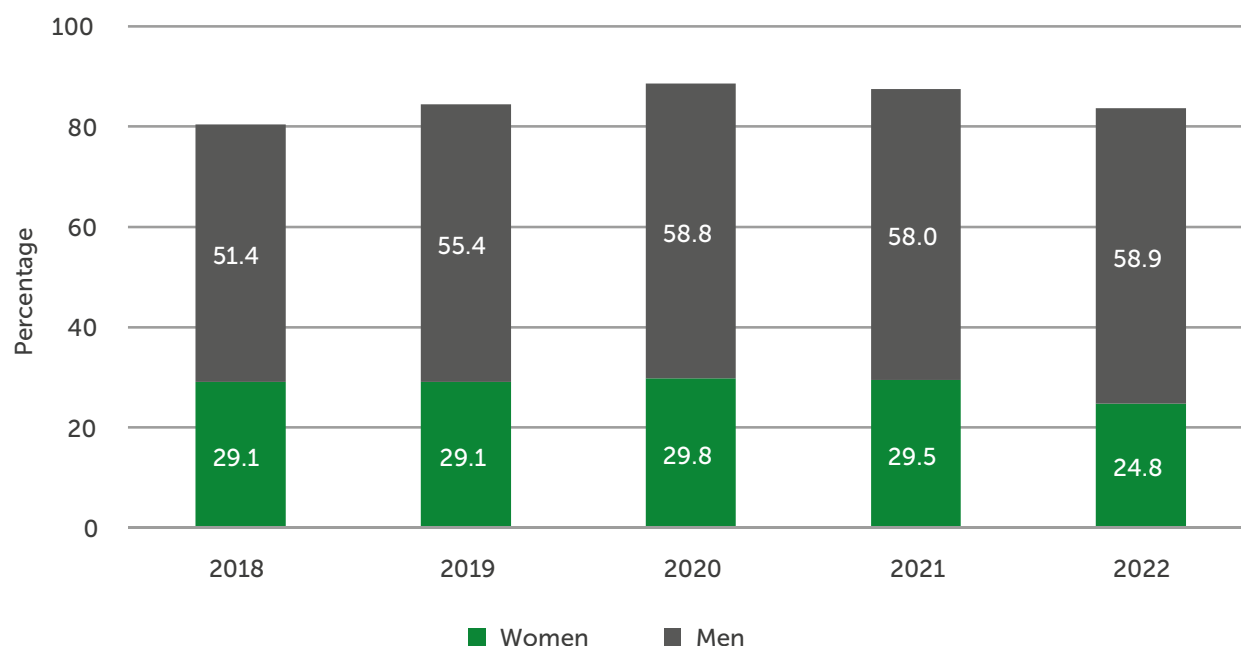
Furthermore, gender stereotypes impede women’s access to agricultural inputs. For instance, the handling of machinery, pesticides, fertilizers and irrigation infrastructure is widely thought to be “men’s work” in Georgia, because “they have more freedom of

movement and are better connected to local farmers’ networks” (UN Women, 2020a, p. 39). Ownership of resources differs from being able to use them, and various studies note the prevailing attitude that “women are not tractor drivers,” for example (see CARE, 2022, p. 9).

Quantifying the gender gaps in access to various resources is made more difficult by the fact that the information in the 2014 Agricultural Census includes the numbers of specific types of agricultural machinery by holding, which is not disaggregated by the sex of the holder, or even size of the holding. A pilot assessment of asset ownership, however, does confirm that men are the main owners of large agricultural equipment, and that women are almost never independent owners, although they may be joint owners within households (see Figure 15).

4.7. Entrepreneurship

Supporting small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) is at the heart of Georgia’s economic development policy, because they fuel economic growth and job creation. National policy also recognizes the development of women’s entrepreneurship as a special priority, while at the same time acknowledging that “women have significant unutilized entrepreneurial potential, [that] is hampered by various cultural, social and economic factors” (Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia, 2021, p. 47). Among the seven main priority directions of Georgia’s SME Development Strategy for 2021–2025 is the promotion of women’s entrepreneurship. The objectives under Priority 6 on women’s entrepreneurship are:

Figure 16. Newly established enterprises, by sex of owner and year

Note: Data for enterprises for which the sex of the owner was not identified are not indicated in the figure.

Source: National Statistics Office of Georgia. 2024c. Geostat: Gender statistics. [Accessed on 4 August 2024]. <https://gender.geostat.ge/gender/index.php?#home>

6.1. Popularisation of “Women Empowerment Principles” (WEPs)

6.2. Improving gender-based statistics in state programs

6.3. Encouraging [women’s] participation in state programs

6.4. Strengthening digital skills of women entrepreneurs

6.5. Supporting capacity building of state institutions for the development of gender-based approaches (ibid., pp. 49–50).

Entrepreneurship in Georgia is characterized by small businesses, and SMEs represent 99 percent of all currently active enterprises. Although women in rural areas are responsible for the majority of agricultural and household work and have valuable skills and knowledge related to agriculture, food production and small-scale business management, they are not as active as men in entrepreneurship. Women face distinct barriers in starting and growing their businesses.

Throughout the years, there has been a persistent disparity in the number of enterprises established by men versus women, with men consistently outpacing women in this regard (National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2024c). In 2022, 65 150 new enterprises were established, with 59 percent owned by men and only 25 percent owned by women, as shown in Figure 16

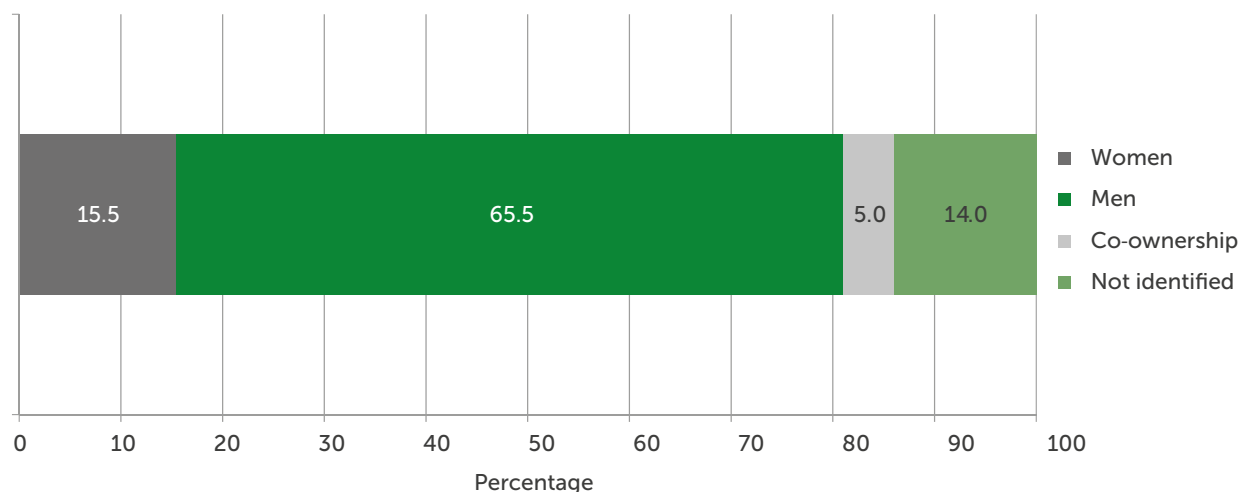
(for 16 percent of enterprises, the sex of the owner was not identified; National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2023b).

Characteristics of women’s businesses

Gender disparities are evident not only in business ownership but also in the size of the enterprises and the industries in which they operate. While women represent one-third of all registered business owners, their participation in ownership decreases with size. Women own 34 percent of all small businesses, but only 16 percent and 11 percent of medium and large businesses, respectively (UN Women and ILO, 2023).

In 2024, there are 261 449 active enterprises, out of which 3 382 are in the combined agriculture, forestry and fishing sector. The majority of agriculture-related enterprises are small in size. Among the identified individual owners, there were 396 women and 1 674 men. Women and men were joint owners of 127 enterprises. For the remaining agricultural businesses, the gender of the co-owner or the owner was not identified. (Data provided to the authors by the National Statistics Office of Georgia on request [2023]; see Figure 17).

Men’s dominance of commercial agriculture is in sharp contrast to women’s key role in subsistence farming, illustrating the fact that women are not perceived as business leaders in agriculture.

Figure 17. Distribution of ownership of enterprises in agriculture, forestry and fisheries, 2022

Source: Data provided to the authors by the National Statistics Office of Georgia on request (2023).

Women's representation as individual owners of businesses in agriculture, forestry and fisheries is considerably lower than it is for other sectors. According to the Women Entrepreneurs Survey,²³ women-owned enterprises are largely in trade, representing 59 percent of such businesses, compared with only 2 percent of owners of all businesses engaged in agricultural activities (UN Women and ILO, 2023).

Women have distinct motivations to start their own businesses, and according to one survey, the need for flexibility in work and a desire for autonomy and the opportunity to be in control of their own businesses: 54 percent of women survey respondents stated they wanted more flexibility while 49 percent were motivated by an interest in "being their own boss" (UN Women and ILO, 2023, p. 33). Meanwhile, 44 percent are motivated by the goal of potentially earning a higher income, and an additional third (32 percent) saw a market opportunity for establishing a profitable business (UN Women and ILO, 2023). Another significant factor that encourages women to venture into entrepreneurship is the need to secure their children's financial future. The latter motivation is more common in the regions rather than in Tbilisi (Economic Policy Research Center, 2021).

Women entrepreneurs face a number of challenges, which generally are the same for women in rural and urban areas, although may differ in intensity. Difficulties securing start-up capital and insufficient financial support are the greatest obstacles to starting a business. Lack of financing also makes it difficult for women to grow their businesses. Many women entrepreneurs

express difficulty in selling their products due to the lack of food storage facilities, and because the majority of them are small or micro-entrepreneurs, they feel exposed to risks in the market and struggle to compete with larger corporations, let alone export their products (Gender Equality Council of the Parliament of Georgia, 2019).

Another set of obstacles revolves around societal norms and beliefs that cast a negative light on women's engagement in business activities and restrict their access to inheritances. The dual responsibilities of managing household and caregiving duties, that are difficult to combine with business responsibilities, impede women from fully realizing their entrepreneurial potential (Economic Policy Research Center, 2021). Moreover, a considerable number of women face a deficiency in the social capital crucial for establishing connections within the business community. Lack of personal connections and networks, as well as social norms that women are not associated with entrepreneurship, can "prevent women from starting a business, growing enterprises and being active in business circles, including associations and policy dialogues" (UN Women and ILO, 2023, p. 36).

Despite these difficulties, evidence on the innovation performance of women-led firms (not necessarily women-owned, however), even though only in the preliminary stages, seems to suggest that businesses with a female top manager have a higher likelihood of introducing new and innovative products or services, even those that are novel to their primary market. In addition, a significant proportion of these companies (25 percent) have implemented process innovations, which is considerably higher compared to businesses led by men (15 percent; World Bank, 2021).

²³ They survey covered 2 000 Georgian enterprises with either a female owner or in which a woman owned at least company shares.

Impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic

The SME sector experienced a significant negative impact in terms of business development due to the global COVID-19 pandemic and resulting constraints. The turnover, output and employment of SMEs decreased significantly in 2020 compared to the previous year, with a drop of 8 percent in turnover, 9 percent in output and 22 percent in employment (Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia, 2021).

Because women dominate in industries that were hit hardest by the crisis, such as trade and tourism, female entrepreneurs and women as employees in enterprises were affected by restrictions brought about by the pandemic. It should be noted that the majority of women entrepreneurs (65 percent) surveyed in 2020 were optimistic about the future of their business and did not anticipate having to halt operations in the upcoming months. Notably, a higher percentage of respondents in rural areas, specifically 72 percent, expressed this positive outlook compared with 55 percent in Tbilisi (Economic Policy Research Center, 2021). Still, during the pandemic, women entrepreneurs did not take an active role in adapting to the new circumstances by utilizing new sales channels, such as online sales and delivery services, and exploring new markets (*ibid.*).

It is also notable that rural tourism proved to be especially resilient during the COVID-19 pandemic. This is a sector in which women are well represented yet face many difficulties that women in business in Georgia experience generally. Still, the experience during the pandemic suggests that with targeted support, rural-based tourism offers opportunities for women to realize their aspirations in business.

Women's participation in rural tourism is 75 percent in registered businesses. Despite this, they face challenges such as property issues, as property is mostly registered in the name of their husbands and/or brothers. As most of the time women have to remain at home, they proactively assume leadership roles. This not only results in financial gains but also facilitates increased social engagement, leading to their participation in novel and enriching activities. By the time of the COVID-19 outbreak, Elkana had about 200 households involved in rural tourism. However, 40 percent of families remained in the sector following the introduction of restrictions [during the pandemic]

because families had to implement additional measures and investments to comply with the regulations. (Interview with Mariam Jorjadze, Director, Biological Farming Association, Elkana)

4.8. Access to finance and agricultural support

As noted in the previous section, access to start-up and business development funds is a significant challenge. Most female entrepreneurs acquire the required capital to initiate their business ventures through sources such as banks or microfinance institutions, as well as utilizing their personal savings. In comparison to the capital city, a larger percentage of women in regional areas require loans to finance their businesses (Economic Policy Research Center, 2021).

Women's engagement in state programmes is also an important indicator for assessing the situation of gender equality in access to financial support. Based on the results of the research conducted by the Permanent Parliamentary Gender Equality Council in 2019, it was found that 40.3 percent of individuals enrolled in the small entrepreneurship promotion programme with a focus on micro-production were women (Gender Equality Council of the Parliament of Georgia, 2019). In 2021, women comprised 50 percent of successful applicants in the Micro and Small Business Support Program implemented by Enterprise Georgia. Still, experts note that women mainly benefit from programmes that support small businesses and that the large share of women in such programmes is, in fact, the exception and not the rule (UN Women and ILO, 2023). In contrast to the abovementioned programme, only 27 percent of funded proposals under Enterprise Georgia's industrial programmes had women in management positions in 2018 (Economic Policy Research Center, 2021).

State support to farmers and agribusinesses is initiated by MEPA and delivered through the Rural Development Agency, which was created in 2019 in order to promote rural development and to improve the conditions needed for greater and more sustainable production of high-quality goods. Agricultural support programmes have tended not to have a consistent strategy for reaching women as potential beneficiaries. For example, from 2014 to 2019, women represented only 7.6 percent of the beneficiaries of the RDA's Preferential Agrocredit Program.²⁴ Of note, the agrocredit

²⁴ Within the Agriculture Modernization, Market Access and Resilience (AMMAR) project, implemented by MEPA and funded by the International Fund for Agricultural Development.

programme originally included a separate component targeting women, which was later cancelled due to insufficient applicants.

Under the Unified Agro Project, the RDA is implementing several state programmes “on improving access to financial resources, promoting investment in agriculture, adapting modern technologies and enriching human capital” (Administration of the Government of Georgia, 2020, p. 22). From 2013 to 2019, more than 75 000 people benefited from programmes under the Unified Agro Project. However, in 2018, women represented 23 percent of all beneficiaries of RDA programmes (15 400 women and 52 100 men) and received GEL 25 031 000 in co-financing (which is equivalent to 14.1 percent of the total co-financing in that year; male beneficiaries received GEL 152 562 000 in co-financing; UN Women, 2020a). In general, women are better represented as beneficiaries of projects that require low levels of co-financing. This is due to women’s limited access to financial services and credit, as well as, in some cases, when facing financial constraints, women prioritizing investment in immediate household needs, such as food, basic health, education and utilities. Data about the sex of declined applicants for RDA programmes have not been collected or analysed.

However, one programme under the Unified Agro Project, Plant the Future, has been the subject of a gender impact assessment that provides some general information about women’s access to state support for agriculture. Plant the Future is a co-financing programme of perennial and nursery gardens, for installing anti-hail systems and/or the arrangement of wells/bore hole pumping stations. It aims to use uncultivated lands more effectively, to increase food self-sufficiency and create new or additional jobs in rural areas.²⁵ A gender assessment of Plant the Future

revealed that in 2019, women made up 22 percent of participants in this programme. Although the average subsidy and financing received are similar between both sexes, the programme’s preconditions favour men and do not consider the cultural barriers that female participants face. The programme takes a gender-blind approach and does not discriminate against women; nor does it have any special targets or incentives for women. In this way, it fails to consider the distinct roles that women and men play in crop production and the obstacles that women may encounter, such as lack of land and other property, limited financial resources and uneven access to productive resources and extension services, for instance (UN Women, 2020a). Women are more likely to be involved in low-value-added and smaller-scale agricultural production, such as berry production, and the introduction of this subcomponent to the Plant the Future programme may be behind the slight increase in the share of female beneficiaries in recent years.

Nevertheless, the lack of gender-specific data in crop production can be seen as closely linked to the gender blindness of the state programmes that offer farmers financial support and subsidies. Without sex-disaggregated data and gender-specific analysis, policymakers may mistakenly view these programmes as gender-neutral and accessible to both women and men, potentially overlooking the different roles and barriers that women farmers face. As noted in the gender impact assessment, the Plant the Future programme, as is the case for other agricultural support initiatives, could have a gender-transformative effect if it were to aim for structural changes and also respond to factors such as “the long-term needs of rural women, their decision-making power, their access to and control of resources and their own labour,” with consideration for differences based on age, social status, ethnicity and region, for example (ibid., p. 41).

²⁵ Further information about Plant the Future is available at <https://www.rda.gov.ge/en/programs/572746-plant-the-future/ca9c173d-887a-4ce8-a891-7988e9311c88>.

5. Rural infrastructure and gender impacts

Poor quality physical and social infrastructure associated with rural areas negatively affects the population as whole. Investment in upgrading rural infrastructure not only improves the living conditions for the rural population but has other positive effects in terms of developing agribusinesses and other forms of enterprise, and increasing opportunities for employment.

Deficiencies in rural infrastructure can also be viewed through a gender lens because they have differential impacts based on gender roles. For example, women and girls are more frequent users of some basic services, such as fuel for cooking and heating and water for cleaning in the home. Therefore, they experience insufficiencies more acutely.

5.1. Housing conditions and durable goods

Most of the rural population lives in individual houses. Rural households are somewhat less likely to own certain goods that are mainly used by women for domestic labour, such as washing machines, refrigerators and appliances for cooking (see Table 6). Having fewer such amenities has a direct impact on increasing the burden of domestic work for women. Whether rural households own such goods is dependent on income level but also how the family budget is prioritized. Women's ability to influence household decision-making and their economic empowerment are also critical factors. Anecdotal information from FAO's work supporting women dairy

Table 6. Households in possession of selected durable goods, by location, 2018

Percentage of households with:	Percentage of households with:	
	Rural (%)	Urban (%)
Refrigerator	89.5	94.9
Gas stove/electric stove	85.9	96.9
Electric kettle	40.5	50.6
Microwave	14.3	24.5
Washing machine	74.4	89.0
Iron	86.0	94.9
Air conditioner	3.8	24.4
Television	95.9	95.5
Car, truck or van	43.3	47.2

Source: National Statistics Office of Georgia. 2019. *Georgia Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2018, survey findings report*. Tbilisi, pp. 33–34.

Table 7. Share of households by main type of energy commodity for individual heating and cooking, 2022

Percentage of households using:		
	Rural (%)	Urban (%)
For heating		
Animal waste	1.0	0.0
Coal	0.6	0.0
Electricity	2.0	9.3
Fuelwood, agricultural waste	68.1	10.5
Liquefied petroleum gas	0.2	0.2
Natural gas	31.8	59.4
For cooking		
Coal	0.6	0.0
Electricity	15.6	11.1
Fuelwood, agricultural waste	42.8	6.2
Liquefied petroleum gas	18.9	2.9
Natural gas	77.3	96.5

Source: National Statistics Office of Georgia. 2022e. *Energy consumption in households*. Tbilisi, p. 28, p. 32. https://www.geostat.ge/media/52116/Publication_Energy-Consumption-in-Households.pdf

farmers suggests that when women are earning their own income, often one of their first purchases for the home is an upgraded washing machine.

5.2. Energy sources

Georgia joined the Energy Community in 2016, enabling the country to align its energy sector with European Union standards and develop competitive markets, improve the investment environment, enhance energy security, and promote renewable energy sources and energy efficiency.

Electricity connectivity is virtually universal in Georgia, covering rural and urban households to the same extent, but consumption of both electricity and natural gas is higher in urban areas. In rural areas, households rely heavily on solid fuels, and 84.7 percent of all consumed fuelwood is from rural areas (National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2022e). In fact, Georgia is among the countries with the highest solid fuel use in Europe (used by 84 percent of the rural population and 12 percent of the urban population, or 46 percent for the nation as a whole). In rural areas of Georgia, wood-burning stoves continue to be the main

heating and cooking appliances in both public and private buildings (nearly 65 percent of kindergartens [preschools] in rural areas still rely on wood burning, for example).

Household heating systems in Georgia primarily consist of two types: individual central heating systems that run on natural gas, and individual facilities that can use natural gas, electricity, fuelwood, agricultural waste, and solid or liquid fuel (see Table 7). The majority of dwellings (81.3 percent) use individual heating facilities that operate on various energy sources (National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2022e).

During the cold season in Georgia, the rural population heats a smaller portion of their dwelling space. In general, most households heat up to 30 m², with rural households being somewhat more likely to heat only this area of their houses (ibid.). Rural households heat their homes for fewer hours per day (11.8 hours compared with 13.2 hours for urban dwellings; ibid.).

Most of Georgia's population has access to clean fuels and technologies for cooking (80.6 percent as estimated by the World Bank in 2021), and this figure

has been increasing over the years (World Bank, 2023). Most rural households – more than 70 percent – use natural gas for cooking but a sizeable proportion rely on fuelwood or agricultural waste, around 40 percent (see Table 7; National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2022e).

The reliance on solid fuels, such as fuelwood, has specific gender implications. As noted in Section 4.4 of this CGA, men are most often responsible for cutting and transporting fuelwood and women then prepare it and use it for heating and cooking in the home. Because women carry out most of the domestic work, including cooking, they use considerable time dealing with fuelwood. Additionally, solid fuel use causes high levels of indoor air pollution. The population groups that are potentially more vulnerable than others to indoor air pollution are children, pregnant women, older people, and people suffering from cardiovascular or respiratory diseases. Although kindergarten staff have largely not voiced concerns about poor air quality conditions, most children, as well as the predominantly-female staff, are exposed to unsafe levels of particulate matter throughout the school day. Some kindergartens have never met safe or “normal” levels of exposure during their monitoring periods (WECF – Georgia and National Center for Disease Control and Public Health of Georgia, 2020, p. 4). The Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Action (NAMA) recognizes that replacing wood-burning stoves with clean stoves can both support climate change mitigation and benefit women.

Likewise, the draft National Sustainable Energy Action Plan of Georgia draws attention to the fact that women and men interact with natural resources in different ways. Because women are primarily responsible for housework and cooking on a daily basis, they are major users of household energy and also stand to benefit from cleaner and easier-to-obtain fuels. Access to energy not only creates opportunities for women (by freeing up their time and generating opportunities for work from home, for example), but it also “reduces the importance of physical gender distinctions in the workforce,” thus opening up professional opportunities for women, including in agrifood systems (UNECE, 2020, p. 44).

5.3. Safe drinking water supply and sanitation

Nationwide, almost all of the population has access to basic water supply services, with a coverage rate of 98–100 percent. The urban population accounts for 90 percent of all water used for domestic and potable purposes, while the remaining 10 percent is consumed by the rural population (UNECE, 2022). The urban

population also has much higher access to unpolluted water (97–98 percent), compared with rural areas where the percentage of unpolluted water drops to 42–43 percent. In rural Georgia, around 5.7 percent of rural population uses water that does not meet sanitary safety standards (ibid.).

The country’s centralized water supply serves around 70 percent of the total population, consisting of 95 percent of the urban population and 35 percent of the rural population (ibid.). While the proportion of the rural population with access to improved drinking water is high and had been increasing (from 95 percent in 2018 to 97 percent in 2021), less than half of rural households have drinking water piped into the home (46.7 percent). Others have water piped into the yard or available from protected wells (22.7 and 11.7 percent, respectively; National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2019). Although most of the rural population has improved drinking water available at their premises, around 10 percent must spend up to 30 minutes per day collecting water (ibid.).

In terms of heating water for household use, individual water heaters are common in both rural and urban areas. However, rural households are much more likely to depend on fuelwood for water heating. After natural gas, used by 64.5 percent of rural households, just over one-third (35.1 percent) use fuelwood or agricultural waste to heat water (National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2022e).

In 2020, 61 percent of the population in the country had access to improved sanitation facilities with connected sewerage systems. This percentage varies greatly between urban and rural areas, with 96 percent of the urban population having access compared with only 8 percent of the rural population (UNECE, 2022). At the national level, 86 percent of the population is covered by basic sanitary conditions, but for rural areas it is 72 percent (ibid.).

In Georgia, efficient service delivery is hindered by ageing and outdated rural water supply and sanitation (WSS) infrastructure, leading to many villages and cities experiencing intermittent water supply. When water supply is not available 24/7, households resort to storing water in tanks, which might not be suitable for drinking purposes. In supplying effective, efficient and sustainable water services, municipalities have the option to either handle the services themselves or hire suitable providers. Unfortunately, the majority of municipalities lack the financial resources, technical know-how or managerial skills required to carry out this task (Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure of Georgia, 2021). The government’s goal

is to provide uninterrupted water supply services to rural areas by the end of the 2030s.

The improper disposal of untreated or inadequately treated sewage by water utilities is a major source of water pollution. This can cause the spread of water-related diseases – that pose serious health risks, particularly for children and older people – and also harm the natural balance of ecosystems (ibid.).

In terms of gender impacts, women are disproportionately affected by inadequate water supply and sanitation, due to the fact that they have the larger burden of cooking, cleaning, laundering, bathing children and other household tasks that require water. They also have a larger role in caring for family members who are ill.

Women are not well-represented in the WSS sector workforce, where they occupy 25 percent of workers but only 20 percent of managerial positions (ibid.). Women tend to occupy administrative roles, while technical positions are largely dominated by men. Women's participation in WSS systems is important because their perspectives and experiences are critical in designing and implementing effective water and sanitation services that meet the needs of all users, including women and girls who live in rural areas.

5.4. Roads and rural transport

In Georgia, limited accessibility to services and markets in various regions is a result of a combination of underdeveloped transport and road infrastructure and poor road quality. According to the Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure of Georgia, the country's road density is relatively low, with approximately 36 km per 100 km² of land area under the government's control, placing it in a similar range to China, Bulgaria and Norway, but with variation within the country (compare, for example, the Guria and Imereti regions with the highest road density of 43 km per 100 km² to Kakheti's, which has the lowest road density in the country of 23 km per 100 km², making it the least accessible region (Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure of Georgia, 2019b).

Domestic passenger transport in Georgia is almost entirely reliant on roads, and it is widely available, accessible and reasonably priced. However, the situation is not uniform for the entire country. For instance, in Racha-Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti, public transport is either unsuitable for commuters' and travellers' needs or is entirely unavailable in some areas. Moreover, most of the associated infrastructure, such as stations and bus stops, is not appropriately maintained

or repaired. The rail network in Georgia is a part of the broader concept of the Silk Road, which connects Baku/Yerevan with Tbilisi, Kutaisi, Samtredia, Batumi and Kars in Türkiye, and while trains are an alternative mode of domestic passenger transport, they are primarily used for travel between Tbilisi, Samtredia and Batumi only (ibid.).

While the government's Pilot Integrated Regional Development Programme implementation systems and executed measures, activities and projects aim to address gender inequalities by reducing the gap between men and women in access to transport, information about specific measures taken since 2020 could not be verified. Furthermore, it does not appear that the programme itself relied on gender analysis.

Women in Georgia are less often independent drivers than men, and this is especially the case in rural areas. In 2022, women constituted 23 percent of all recipients of driving licences and 17 percent of owners of registered vehicles (National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2023b). This means that women are more reliant on public transportation than men. Public transport is organized by municipalities in Georgia, and because they do not have budgets to purchase or maintain a municipal transport infrastructure, the vast majority use private companies through a tender process. There has been limited long-term strategic planning around municipal public transport, and as a result, transport schedules, routes and stops often do not meet the needs of the population, especially considering gender-specific needs (Public Defender of Georgia, 2021c).

Deficiencies in transport and road infrastructure mean that women "do not have equal access to different means of transportation, which would allow them to move in the preferred direction, at the desired time and at an affordable price" (ibid., p. 5). Rural women, however, face even greater challenges to their mobility – for most of them, public transport is inaccessible because there are none or very limited transport links between villages and municipal centres. For women in rural areas, walking is their main means of transportation, but even this is complicated by a lack of pedestrian crossings, road signs, traffic lights and rest areas, all of which make walking more dangerous (Public Defender of Georgia, 2021c). While 69.0 percent of surveyed women living in rural areas move daily, this is the case for only 40.2 percent of women in urban areas. One-third (32.7 percent) of surveyed women in villages "rarely or never leave the house" (ibid., p. 17). Women in rural areas with young children, as well as those who are older, most often experience limitations on their mobility due to the inconvenience of walking and difficulties of having to use several means of public

transportation to reach their destination. Mobility limitations therefore mean that women in rural areas become isolated from educational and employment opportunities and from municipal services and amenities (i.e., pharmacies, markets, banks).

For women who are involved in agricultural production, limited transport options and the cost of public transportation all make it more difficult for women to travel to larger markets to sell their products, and so they often sell home-produced goods, such as cheese, locally. These conditions also limit rural women's access to training and extension services that are usually offered in regional centres or in Tbilisi. It should also be noted that the limitations imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic made it more difficult to use local transportation and raised the expenses associated with travelling.

5.5. Information and communications technologies

Access to information and communications technologies plays a crucial role in empowering rural communities, promoting sustainable agriculture and fostering development. Information and communications technology tools can enable farmers to access vital information about weather patterns, crop prices and market possibilities. By utilizing ICT tools, farmers can stay up-to-date with the latest technological advancements, which can lead to increased productivity, higher yields and better market access. Moreover, ICTs can facilitate active citizenship in rural areas by providing people with access to information and resources necessary to participate in decision-making processes. In this respect, ICTs are an especially valuable tool for engaging vulnerable populations, such as women and marginalized communities. In rural areas where women have limited access to paid employment and perform most of the unpaid work at home, ICTs can provide them with a platform to explore income-generating activities, expand their knowledge and networks, and obtain vital information about their rights and opportunities. Furthermore, ICTs can help to bridge the digital divide and provide coverage to the poorest communities of information about agricultural and social programmes.

The use of personal computers with internet access is crucial for gaining knowledge, reaching new agricultural markets and for lifelong learning opportunities. Generally, access to the digital infrastructure is high in Georgia, but there is an apparent digital divide between urban and rural populations (driven primarily by service availability and cost; UN Women, 2023c). While the digital gender gap does not appear to be significant,

there is also an absence of sex-disaggregated data for rural populations on indicators such as computer access, internet access and mobile phone ownership and usage (ibid.). Further analysis is also needed to assess the potential digital gender gap, taking into consideration the intersection of factors such as settlement type, age and educational levels of women and men.

Usage of computers in rural households remains low, with a slight decrease from 2016 (47.0 percent) to 2023 (46.0 percent). In contrast, in 2023, 66.3 percent of urban households had computer access, but this figure was also a decline from the share in 2016 (National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2024b).

In 2023, 32.4 percent of the total population had never used a computer. The breakdown reveals that in urban areas, 22.1 percent of the population had never used a computer, while in rural areas, this figure was higher at 48.9 percent. Looking at gender-specific data, the share of women in the total population who had never used a computer was 33.4 percent, while the corresponding figure for men was slightly lower at 31.3 percent. Gender-disaggregated data for computer usage in rural and urban areas are not available (ibid.).

However, the share of rural households with internet access increased considerably from 57.4 percent in 2016 to 83.4 percent in 2023; in the same year, 93.1 percent of urban households had internet access, indicating that there is still a spatial gap in Georgia (ibid.). Access to technologies has a financial component, and thus households headed by women are less likely to have access to a computer or to the internet than those headed by men, regardless of where they are located.

The share of people in rural areas who use mobile devices (a mobile phone, laptop or tablet, for example) to access the internet has risen steadily from 61.8 percent in 2016 to 99.3 percent in 2023, and there is virtually no variation between women and men in terms of high use of mobile devices (ibid.). As of 2023, 95.6 percent of the total population aged 15 years and older participated in social networks. There is a slight difference between rural (94.7 percent) and urban (96.1 percent) areas and between female (96.1 percent) and male users (95.0 percent), but more significant differences appear depending on the purpose for using the internet. For instance, rural residents are considerably less likely than their urban counterparts to use the internet for banking, finding out information about goods and services or for seeking health-related information. In contrast, women are much more likely than men to seek health information on the internet, but less often use the internet for job searches and

applications and for banking (ibid.). In 2021, a slightly larger share of women than men opted to use their mobile phones or the internet for bill payments. However, the usage rate among women in Georgia falls short in comparison to both the Europe and Central Asia region and the upper-middle-income category (World Bank, 2024b).

Disparities in internet access came to the fore during the COVID-19 pandemic and demonstrated that different groups experience differential impacts during times of crisis. For instance, during the pandemic, limited internet access posed additional challenges for those living in occupied territories and nearby villages located along the boundary line, where access to a reliable internet service and financial resources to purchase it had already been a problem. As a result, middle-aged and older individuals in these areas faced difficulties accessing crucial information related to COVID-19 prevention and management. In the absence of reliable internet, people living in nearby villages relied on each other for information about pandemic-related restrictions (UNDP, 2021).

The COVID-19 pandemic also exposed the fact that women in agriculture in Georgia had less access to digital tools and generally lacked capacities to use e-commerce and digital marketing. However, once these gaps were exposed, various projects were initiated to use social media and vocational education to address missing skills, with the result that some rural women started businesses during the pandemic that are still operational.

In recent years, the Georgian government has undertaken commitments to promote gender equality in the area of ICTs, most significantly when it joined the Gender Equality Forum in 2021. Georgia took commitments in two thematic areas: the elimination of gender-based violence, and technologies and innovations for gender equality. The Permanent Parliamentary Gender Equality Council created a coordination mechanism – a monitoring group that includes members of the government, United Nations' organizations and the Public Defender's Office – to ensure the fulfilment of the mentioned obligations, coordinated monitoring and proactive publication of progress.

In the context of increased attention to ICTs and gender equality in Georgia, there is a need for special attention to ensure equitable access to digital technologies in support of agrifood systems.

5.6. Social infrastructure and protection

Georgia has a diverse range of cash-based social transfer programmes aimed at supporting vulnerable groups in society. The country's social protection system comprises three main elements: (i) a universal old age pension; (ii) universal disability benefits; and (iii) the Targeted Social Assistance programme – a family-oriented means-tested transfer of cash and some in-kind benefits. Georgia's social protection system also includes poverty-targeted benefits for children living in families assessed as poor. Additionally, there are specific cash transfers aimed at particular interest groups, such as residents of high mountainous areas, internally displaced persons and families with more than two children in regions experiencing low birth rates. Furthermore, eco-migrants – those who have been affected by natural catastrophes – are supported for resettlement. They have to register in the unified database to request support, although out of 9 326 eco-migrant households registered under this database, only 3 088 families have been provided with housing. The main challenge is the lack of funds allocated for resettlement (Public Defender of Georgia, 2023).

Georgia's Code on the Rights of the Child (2019) has a specific emphasis on social protection. Even earlier, the government incorporated a child-specific benefit (the Child Benefit Program or CBP) within the TSA framework in 2015, and have increased the benefit amount several times. Primary income transfers for social protection in Georgia that are disbursed per child encompass the following categories: child benefits based on means testing, distributed through the CBP; universal child disability benefits provided as a component of the Social Package; and orphan benefits, referred to as survivors' benefits, dispensed as part of the Social Package (ILO, 2020).

Families registered in the TSA database receive additional support per child each month, regardless of their eligibility for family assistance. This supplemental support is extended to families below a specific welfare threshold, ensuring a safety net for vulnerable households. The amount per child was most recently increased in 2023 and is now GEL 200. While aimed at assisting vulnerable families with children, such benefits provide essential support to women who are raising children. There is no significant gender gap between child recipients of CBP, but women are a larger share of TSA recipients overall (this figure also includes older women who claim the TSA for a longer period of time than older men due to a longer life expectancy; ibid.).

As for maternity leave, until 2023 the benefit amounted GEL 1 000 for a six-month period and the compensation was limited to women formally employed in the public and private sectors. After

2023, the benefit increased to GEL 2 000, but the amount still does not comply with International Labour Organization (ILO) standards.²⁶ There is also a lack of non-transferable paternity leave, and women who are informally employed cannot enjoy this essential right and are left behind.

Targeted Social Assistance programme beneficiaries are concentrated in rural areas and regions with higher poverty rates. While there are no specific rules for indexing these transfers, the old-age pension and disability benefits are more frequently subject to increases compared with the TSA (UNICEF, 2020b).

About 21 percent of the population receives some form of pension. Because women have a longer life expectancy on average, they are 2.5 times more often the recipients of old age pensions than men. In 2023, women represented 71.1 percent of people receiving an old age pension in Georgia (National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2024c).

Georgia's old age pension system uses a three-pillar approach. The initial pillar constitutes a universal, tax-funded redistribution plan. Women can receive a pension from the age of 60 years, while men must wait until 65 years. In 2018, the Georgian government introduced a new mandatory, contribution-funded pension model as a second pillar. The third pillar encompasses voluntary contributions made to private pension funds. For older citizens, the old age pension provides essential financial assistance with a monthly transfer of GEL 315 to citizens up to 70 years old and GEL 415 for those older than 70 years. Individuals with a disability that has been medically assessed to fall into one of three categories receive universal disability benefits.

Other cash benefits specifically for older people include state compensation for citizens living in the territory of Georgia who have undertaken specific services for the state (once they reach 65 years), a living allowance for older people living in poverty, a household subsidy, social benefits for older persons living in mountainous settlements and social protection for war veterans and defence forces. Other forms of noncash assistance also exist for older people, including specialized accommodation (community organizations and residential homes), state health care programmes, provision of assistance devices, and rehabilitation of war veterans (Georgian Young Lawyer's Association, 2022).

Men tend to receive social packages more frequently due to their status as war veterans, state compensation recipients, victims of political repression and disability pensioners. Conversely, women are more likely to receive housing subsidies, with women representing 77 percent of all such beneficiaries. As for registered internally displaced persons, in 2022 women represented 53 percent and men 47 percent (National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2023b).

Access to other important social services is still a challenge in the country. Significant deficiencies exist in the availability of services for individuals with disabilities, particularly shelter and temporary accommodation, as well as in crisis centre services for rural residents, a deficiency which has particularly harmful consequences for women (UN Women, 2021). In addition, along with other gaps in social protection, the state does not yet offer unemployment benefits (aside from a temporary initiative introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic), or mandatory employment injury insurance (Maier-Rigaud and Helmsmüller, 2022).

Child care and preschool education

The availability of preschool education and its facilities has a significant influence on women's general well-being and social standing. According to UNICEF, the overall enrolment of young children in preschool education in Georgia is limited, with only 69.5 percent of children attending, which falls short of the European objective of 95 percent. Enrolment rates are even lower for specific groups, such as children living in rural areas, from ethnic minority backgrounds, with disabilities and from socially vulnerable families.

The number of preschool education and care institutions has increased, with 1 706 such facilities for Georgia as a whole in 2023 and 2024 (National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2024b). There was a noteworthy increase in participation in early childhood programmes from 2005 to 2018, up from 45 percent to 78 percent during this period. The rise was most visible among three-year-olds, and the most significant spike occurred in rural areas where the participation rate increased by 43 percent, as opposed to urban areas where it rose by only 17 percent (UNICEF, 2020c).

Still, urban children are more than seven times more likely to have access to preschool education than their counterparts in rural areas. Preschool education is not part of the mandatory 9 years of general education in Georgia, and some rural areas have no preschool institutions. Around 12.4 percent of children living in

²⁶ According to the Maternity Protection Convention (2020, Article 6), "the maternity benefit shall not be less than two-thirds of a woman's previous earnings" or a comparable amount.

rural areas and 1.1 percent of those in urban areas are impacted on by the unavailability of preschool education. The primary obstacles preventing access to preschool education are the non-existence of nearby preschool services and kindergartens, and being placed on a waiting list (UNICEF, 2023).

For women living in rural areas, the unavailability of affordable and quality preschool education means that they spend considerably more time on child care, and this, in turn, limits the amount of time they have for employment outside the home, income-earning activities, education and other forms of training.

6. Responses to uncertainty, shocks and pressures

6.1. Food insecurity

Food security refers to food availability, food access, food utilization and stability (FAO, 2006). Under SDG 2 on zero hunger, Georgia is implementing a number of activities, many in partnership with FAO, that aim to ensure that agrifood systems are sustainable and that production, food quality, safety and nutrition are improved along entire value chains.

Undernourishment is not an issue in Georgia; however, some segments of the population experience malnourishment (which includes micronutrient deficiencies, overweight and obesity). The obesity prevalence in Georgia is higher for women than for men (an estimated 26.8 *percent* of adult women – aged 18 years and over – and 22.2 *percent* of adult men experience obesity), while men are slightly more likely than women to experience overweight (56.8 *percent* compared with 55.4 *percent* for women; Development Initiatives Poverty Research Ltd., 2022).

Levels of anaemia have increased for all women, but it is especially prevalent among pregnant women (over one-quarter are anaemic; *ibid.*). People with low dietary diversity are at risk for deficiencies of other micronutrients such as iron and vitamin A due to poor quality diets. Research into nutrition in three countries of the South Caucasus has found that the largest percentage of women with low dietary diversity is in Georgia (65 percent). At the same time, there are also gender-based differences in dietary diversity, with men generally having “slightly but significantly” higher diversity than women (Oxfam, 2016, p. 7).

Several factors influence dietary patterns, including household income and food availability and affordability (which varies by season). Additionally, the COVID-19

pandemic and Russia’s war against Ukraine have also led to a rise in global food prices. Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the disparity between men and women in terms of food insecurity has grown, with women experiencing greater levels of food insecurity than men in all regions (FAO, 2023b).

The global pandemic also had a significant effect on food security in Georgia. The proportion of expenditures on food consumption out of total household consumption expenditure had already been on the rise in Georgia since 2016 (when it was 41.5 percent). In 2022, these expenditures accounted for 46.3 percent of the total household consumption expenditure, which is actually a slight decrease from almost 49 percent in 2021 (National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2024b). Since the first COVID-19 case was reported in Georgia in February 2020, the average monthly price for food and non-alcoholic beverages increased by 9.3 percent compared with the previous year. In August 2021, the Food Price Index revealed a significant increase of 16.2 percent in prices for food and nonalcoholic beverages compared with August 2020, which is the highest rate observed since July 2011. Thus, in 2020, household spending on food increased from 43.0 percent in 2019 to 47.4 percent in 2020, according to Geostat (ISET, 2021). Another method to cope with rising food prices and the decrease in income during the COVID-19 pandemic was to limit spending on food. In 2021, under half (42.4 percent) of households, in rural and urban locations equally, reduced their food expenses (National Statistics Office of Georgia and UNICEF, 2021). It is clear that households are allocating a larger portion of their expenditure towards food consumption. They may also be economizing by purchasing less food or buying cheaper but less nutrient-rich foods.

Unfortunately, no data on female- and male-headed households separately were found that would help to identify any gender differences. Still, it is known that, generally, women with low household income who have problems affording enough food and women living in rural areas are more likely to have low dietary diversity scores than women with better living conditions (Oxfam, 2016). Gender norms play a role as well, because women typically prepare and serve food and it is a “cultural food habit” for them to serve “the first plate and best portion to men” (ibid., p. 7). Thus, it can be assumed that in households that have had to reduce their expenditures on food, or limit the amount of nutritionally-dense food they purchase, women’s generally lower dietary diversity has worsened.

In 2022, FAO supported the Parliament of Georgia to revise a draft Law on Food Loss and Waste Reduction, Food Recovery and Redistribution, which included integrating gender and social considerations. One aspect of the draft law is the introduction of charitable food donations systems that would decrease food waste and increase food security.

6.2. Gendered implications of climate change

Rural women in Georgia continue to be disproportionately affected by the interconnected issues of climate change, land degradation and biodiversity loss. This is due in part to their gender roles – as farmers, they are dependent on the climate and natural resources. On the other hand, they are also knowledgeable about the resources they manage and can provide important inputs to national policy and programmes on climate change and the environment.

Concerns about climate change are significant at both the national and regional levels, with women expressing greater concern compared to men. The rating for the significance of climate change at a regional level is 3.71 (out of 5), with a higher score among women (UNDP, 2020b). Women tend to be more attuned than men to everyday local issues that are directly and intensely connected to climate change, while men tend to place greater importance on global and larger-scale events (ibid.).

Women are disproportionately affected by natural disasters such as floods and landslides because they lack adaptive capacity, and are more likely to die as a result of them (UN Women, 2020b). Women’s limited adaptive capacity to climate change is due to their

generally lesser access to assets, including productive assets such as land, as well as lesser influence in decision-making due to traditional gender roles.

Over the past few years, the share of women participating in United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) missions in Georgia has been on the rise, reaching approximately 50 percent but seldom exceeding it. Additionally, in the last 5 years, women have been appointed as the head of delegations on three separate occasions (Samwel, 2021).

As noted throughout this CGA, and particularly in Section 2.3.2, there are several good examples of gender mainstreaming in national policy documents on climate change, biodiversity and the use of natural resources. Georgia’s Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) for 2021–2030, for example, has a dedicated section on gender and climate change. It states that “Georgia ... considers empowering women as agents of change through their participation in decision-making processes related to energy efficiency measures and efficient use of water resources in households,” among other measures (Government of Georgia, 2021a, p. 36). The National Pastureland Management Policy Document (GEF and FAO, 2022) and the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan of Georgia 2014–2020 (Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection of Georgia, 2014a) acknowledge that men and women have differing roles and aim to increase women’s participation in decision-making around issues related to climate change.

In terms of climate change mitigation, Georgia’s 2030 Climate Change Strategy lacks gender analysis, but does contain an objective to ensure that more than 50 percent of sustainable forest management plans are gender-sensitive by 2030 (Government of Georgia, 2021b). Both the Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Action and the draft National Sustainable Energy Action Plan of Georgia give priority to further increasing access to clean fuels and technologies, with expected positive results not only in terms of climate change mitigation, but also in bringing about benefits for women specifically. This topic is described in more detail in Section 5.2 on energy sources in rural areas.

The existence of climate change strategic documents that give due consideration to gender issues is a sound basis for deeper analysis of how gender intersects with rural locality and for the identification of good practices in the implementation of gender-responsive policy.

7. Conclusion

Inclusive policymaking on rural development and agriculture requires the process of generating comprehensive knowledge on the vulnerabilities and opportunities of women and men in rural areas. This includes the collection of information on gender gaps through various indicators, as well as documentation of the best practices that enhance gender equity and foster the transformation of gender roles and norms in rural areas in Georgia.

As emphasized throughout the CGA, there is a critical need for the continuous collection of sex-disaggregated data that also integrates key socioeconomic differences in agrifood systems. In particular, there is a need for gender analysis of crop production, animal husbandry, fisheries and forestry value chains, considering that the development of agricultural value chains is one of the main national goals. As the state has been more dedicated to the inclusion and empowerment of rural women in recent years, ensuring the availability of systematic data collection should guarantee that policies and targeted programmes adequately address their needs. Furthermore, women's representation and leadership in cooperatives, farmers' associations, and informal and formal agriculture-oriented groups should be more adequately documented, drawing attention to good practices. This would create a country-specific profile on women's influence in the field, serve as evidence for advocating policies and programmes that support gender equality, promote

inclusion in agrifood systems, and become a source of inspiration for other women to aspire to leadership roles.

The analysis of various data suggest that several factors influence women's economic empowerment in Georgia, including the unequal distribution of unpaid work that further hinders their participation in paid employment and education. Unequal property rights, such as the right to own, control and inherit agricultural land, are significant barriers to women's ability to invest in and improve agricultural productivity. However, sufficient and continuous efforts in knowledge sharing in sustainable agricultural practices, business skills and market opportunities for women in rural areas, are an important means to promote women's economic independence and financial stability.

This assessment provides information and perspectives on the gender gaps and opportunities in critical areas in the agriculture sector and rural livelihoods in Georgia. It offers recommendations on how interventions can begin to change the structures and systems that continue to reinforce inequality. These recommendations for FAO, and the Government of Georgia and national institutions, focus on the main areas for transformative interventions and different methods tailored to the country context to address the challenges, needs and future prospects of rural women and men to achieve outcomes that are viable, sustainable and equitable.

8. Recommendations

The recommendations in the following section are generated from the findings and validation exercise of this Country Gender Assessment. The recommendations also reflect a consensus call for action that was a key outcome of a regional conference on *Promoting socially inclusive rural development in Europe and Central Asia: Action for the 2030 Agenda*, convened by the FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia with the support of the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), in Vilnius, Lithuania in 2017 (FAO, 2018).

8.1. For FAO

- » Conduct and disseminate dedicated gender analysis for specific subsectors of agriculture (such as dedicated value chain analysis) in order to add to the evidence base in Georgia. Importantly, gender analysis should reflect an intersectional approach, in which other characteristics, such as age, disability status, ethnic minority status, and remote rural locations, are also given consideration in order to ensure that no one is left behind.
- » Carry out gender-sensitive monitoring and evaluation of projects with gender mainstreaming to identify challenges for implementation, lessons learned and good practices. Evaluation is especially needed for projects that target rural women in order to assess, document and disseminate information about how gender transformation works in practice in agriculture and rural development in Georgia.
- » Improve data collection, analysis, dissemination and utilization of gender statistics in agriculture. Strengthen collaboration with the National Statistics Office of Georgia, the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia and other relevant institutions.
- » Continue to organize awareness-raising, sensitization and capacity-building for relevant state agencies on gender-transformative policymaking in order to improve the productivity

of women farmers and enhance the well-being of rural women in general.

- » Promote a holistic approach and interventions that aim for transformation of gender roles and norms. Such interventions should: (a) recognize, value and redistribute the unpaid work of rural women; (b) raise the awareness of the importance of shared responsibilities, by actively engaging with men and boys; (c) provide support for adopting technologies to alleviate the burden of unpaid work; and (d) facilitate income generation.
- » Support the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia to raise awareness and knowledge of women farmers and entrepreneurs regarding sustainable agricultural practices, business skills and market opportunities.
- » Continue to use agriculture-focused interventions to address other aspects of gender inequalities impacting on rural women in order to bring about transformation of discriminatory gender norms and systems that perpetuate inequality.
- » Establish mechanisms for ongoing collaboration and knowledge-sharing between agricultural projects and national, as well as local community, municipal and regional organizations, including women's organizations, to foster dynamic exchange of information, experiences and best practices.
- » Encourage the establishment of internal sustainable mechanisms to foster gender mainstreaming and social inclusion at the organizational level. Continue the development of staff awareness-raising initiatives at the local level to address country-specific needs.

8.2. For the Government of Georgia and national institutions

- » Focus on the implementation of measures to ensure that gender-transformative policy and strategies are

reflected in projects and programmes so that gender equality goals are realized in practice.

- » Develop comprehensive gender-sensitive indicators for the agriculture sector to generate gender statistics that are regularly analysed and published. Special attention is needed for expanding gender statistics on women's and men's roles in fisheries and forestry. Data disaggregated at the municipal level would also be useful to better understand disparities in access to resources within rural areas.
- » Conduct gender-sensitive value chain analyses in both existing value chains in which women have a significant role, in order to better understand their contributions, as well as those that potentially offer opportunities for women farmers. Likewise, market assessments could also be used to identify entry points for rural women to become more active in sectors such as agritourism.
- » Identify and capitalize on potential collaboration opportunities between agriculture and rural development institutions and women's organizations at both the national and regional/municipal levels. Actively promote and foster partnerships to exchange the collective expertise and resources of these entities.
- » Develop and implement targeted investment support schemes specifically designed for rural women, emphasizing dual objectives: reducing labour burdens and promoting income generation.
- » Carry out gender analysis of beneficiaries of state support for agriculture to shed additional light on barriers that women face. Information is needed about the participation of women and men in programmes that support the purchase of technologies and adopting innovations for agriculture. Develop stand-alone grant programmes for women. Special attention is needed to ensure equitable access to digital technologies.
- » Conduct gender analysis of Vocational Education and Training programmes in the field of agriculture and provide insights for designing targeted interventions to address gender disparities and ensure equal access and outcomes for women and men. Tracking of postgraduate employment of men and women would also help to identify where education in agriculture could be improved to better match labour market needs.
- » Improve access to social protection systems for women working in the agriculture sector by enhancing the coordination between ministries.
- » Develop/improve a rural transportation system between villages and municipal centres.
- » Facilitate improvement of the gender objectives under the NDC and expand the scope of women's engagement, including in climate-smart agriculture and agritourism.
- » Conduct gender impact assessments for existing laws and strategic documents related to agriculture and rural development.
- » Increase opportunities for women in rural areas to participate in decision-making and prioritysetting as a means to empower them and counteract gender-based barriers.

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Appendix 1. Women’s Empowerment Index and Global Gender Parity Index Scores for Georgia

Table A1.1 Women’s Empowerment Index for Georgia, compared with regional values, 2022

2022 WEI value	Women of reproductive age whose need for family planning is satisfied with modern methods (% aged 15–49 years)	Adolescent birth rate (births per 1 000 women aged 15–19 years)	Population with completed secondary education or higher (% female, aged 25 years and older)	NEET (% female, aged 15–24 years)	Account at a financial institution or mobile moneyservice provider (% female, aged 15 years and older)	Share of seats held by women (%)	Share of managerial positions held by women	Everpartnered women subjected to physical and/or sexual violence by a current/former partner in last 12 months (% aged 15–49 years)
n/a	51.8	29.7	91.8	26.4	70.7	18.4	36.1	3.0
0.185	80.2	18.5	73.8	15.9	88.6	32.7	36.5	6.4

Note: The indicator “Female labour force participation rate among prime-working age individuals who are living in a household comprising a couple and at least one child under age six, ages 25–54” was omitted as there was no data for Georgia.

Source: Adapted from UNDP and UN Women. 2023. *The paths to equal. Twin indices on women’s empowerment and gender equality*. New York, USA, p. 45, p. 47.

Table A1.2 Global Gender Parity Index for Georgia, compared with regional values, 2022

2022 GGPI value	Fraction of life expectancy at birth spent in good health (%)	Population with completed secondary education or higher (% aged 25 years and older)	Youth NEET (%)	Account at a financial institution or mobile money-service provider (% aged 15 years and older)	Share of seats held by women (%)	Share of managerial positions held by women (%)
n/a	87.3	91.8	26.4	70.7	18.4	36.1
0.802	85.1	73.8	15.9	88.6	32.7	36.5

Note: The indicator “Labour force participation rate among prime-working age individuals who are living in a household comprising a couple and at least one child under age six, ages 25–54” was omitted as there was no data for Georgia.

Source: Adapted from UNDP and UN Women. 2023. *The paths to equal. Twin indices on women’s empowerment and gender equality*. New York, USA, pp. 51–52.

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ISBN 978-92-5-139493-9 ISSN 2710-1622



9 789251 394939
CD3777EN/1/01.25