

**Information of the Government of Georgia in response to the questionnaire on realizing the equal enjoyment of the right to education by every girl, pursuant to the Human Rights Council resolution 32/20**

I. In recent years significant measures have been taken by Georgia to achieve gender equality and to ensure the realization of the equal enjoyment of all human rights. These actions concern both, legal and policy frameworks set with the aim to ensure coordinated state action for the purposes of the effective enjoyment of all human rights by women and girls. During the past years, numerous legislative amendments were introduced with the aim to improve Georgia's legislative framework on gender equality, domestic violence and violence against women. The aim of these amendments was to bring domestic legislation in compliance with international requirements set by pertinent Conventions Georgia is a party to.

On April 1, 2015 forced marriage was criminalized under article 150 of the Criminal Code of Georgia (in 2016, under the criminal prosecution started against 3 persons and all three of them were convicted) and on November 26, 2015, the relevant provision of the Civil Code allowing marriage of a child between 16 and 18 upon the condition of obtaining her/his parents' consent was repealed and replaced by the court's approval in such exceptional circumstances, as pregnancy. This exceptional rule will also be repealed in January 2017 and marriages under 18 will be banned completely as per CEDAW recommendation to Georgia (of July 2014).

On June 19, 2014, Georgia signed the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (hereinafter - Istanbul Convention). For the aim of the ratification of Istanbul Convention, 17 legal acts were revised by the Ministry of Justice and respective package of draft amendments was prepared. Draft amendments will be revised and approved by the newly elected parliament of Georgia by mid-2017. Ratification of the Istanbul Convention is anticipated in 2017.

In 2014, for the first time, Georgia has adopted the National Strategy (2014–2020), and subsequent Action Plan of the Government of Georgia on the Protection of Human Rights (initially for the years 2014-2015, renewed in 2016 and covering the period of 2016-2017). In contrast to the Action Plan of 2014-15 where gender equality, empowerment of women and fight against domestic violence were joined under one chapter, the Action Plan of 2016-2017 contains separate chapters on gender equality, combating violence against women and domestic violence as well as on the implementation of UN Security Council resolutions on Women, Peace and Security. The National Action Plan on the Measures to be implemented for Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence and Protection of Victims/Survivors, as well as the National Action Plan on the Implementation of the UN Security Council resolutions on Women, Peace and Security, both covering the period of 2016-2017, have been approved as stand-alone documents by the Government of Georgia. National Action Plan on Gender Equality for 2014-2016 adopted by the Parliament of Georgia will be revised and approved by mid-2017.

The Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia (MoES) ensures equal access to education for everyone, irrespective of race, nationality, gender and ethnicity.

Primary and secondary school enrollment rates are high for both males and females. Quality rather than access is the main challenge to general education in Georgia. Small pockets of unequal access to education in Georgia can be found, particularly in minority areas. Gender differences are few, with girls slightly outperforming boys throughout general education. The remaining concern is about a growing disparity in quality of education standards and poor infrastructure between rural and urban areas.

There can be hidden costs of education which may hinder access for children from low income families, and contribute to drop-out rates that become progressively higher at later stages of schooling, particularly in rural areas.

The Millennium Challenge Account - Georgia (MCA-Georgia) makes strategic investments from the beginning of students' general education to their graduation from technical training and advanced degree programs with a

focus on increasing the participation of women and socially disadvantaged groups in Science, Technologies, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) professions. MCA-Georgia is committed to the promotion of gender integration in all compact programs at every stage of implementation to ensure equitable access and benefits.

*Improved Learning Environment Infrastructure Activity* consists of rural school rehabilitation to create a safe and effective physical learning environment for Georgian students in grades 1-12. Many schools do not have adequate heating or sanitation, therefore do not provide an appropriate learning environment. Even though Georgian schools, including rural, have been provided with electricity, new windows and roofing, conditions related to water, sanitation and hygiene remain underdeveloped in most of the places impacting negatively on learning achievements. In addition, program investments are required to improve access and quality education for children with disabilities, minority groups and those from a poor background.

As for the Vocational Education field, the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia in collaboration with the line ministries, is organizing various activities in order to raise awareness on vocational education and increase enrollment of vulnerable groups, especially refugees in vocational education and training (VET). In this process, special emphasis is put on involvement of refugee women in vocational education. As a result, in the frame of spring intake 2016, 121 female refugees have been enrolled in VET institutions. Also, it should be mentioned, that VET programs are diversified and equally applicable for males, as well as females. The trend of involving females in engineering field is increasing. Nevertheless the issue still represents a challenge.

2. With the support of the UN Women, Government Administration has undertaken active measures to adjust SDG agenda and its targets to the national circumstances and to mainstream gender across all indicators in compliance with globally approved indicators. Administration of the Government of Georgia established joint technical working group including experts from different line Ministries and National Statistics Office to discuss the process of nationalization of SDG targets. Reasonable efforts have been made to identify first order, direct goals and targets and map the linkages with Georgia's policy and plans.

Special efforts will also be made to ensure that gender equality policies reflect commitments made in the nationalized SDGs and their targets and the enhanced institutional mechanism at the executive level ensures smooth implementation of gender aspects of SDGs.

Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia plans to organize promotion activities, in order to increase enrollment of women in VET. MCA-Georgia supports TVET and higher education programs that provide equal opportunities and targeted support to girls to enter programs and employment where women are dramatically underrepresented. By encouraging girls to apply to non-traditional programs, lowering barriers to enrolment and installing promotional measures and social campaigning, MCA-Georgia is trying to ensure equal access to TVET education for women and create classroom environment that equally encourages full-scale participation of female and socially disadvantaged students.

3 – 4. Despite significant achievements in prevention discrimination against women and child marriage, some challenges still remain. Due to various reasons (traditions, economic condition etc.) early marriage issue is still very problematic. In order to prevent above mentioned obstacles, Government of Georgia is implementing number of activities and continues active work against such harmful practices.

It should be mentioned, that in September 2015, Task force on the Issues of Early Marriages was established by the Inter-Agency Council and Gender Theme Group (GTG) coordinated by the UN family. The main task of the Group is addressing the practice of early marriages. In December 2015, the Task Force undertook mapping of the Government Strategies and Action Plans that were relevant to address/integrate Child Marriage prevention. As a result, relevant policy recommendations were integrated in the Action Plan of the Government of Georgia on the Protection of Human Rights (2016-17).

In September 2015 at Global Leader's Meeting in New York, Prime Minister of Georgia committed to further improve Georgia's agenda on gender equality and women's empowerment policy framework by setting up an Inter-Ministerial Commission on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment at the high-level in the executive branch.

With technical support of the UN Country Team in Georgia, considerable work has been done by the Government of Georgia to develop a relevant legal framework for setting up an Inter-Ministerial Commission on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment at the high-level in the executive branch to be approved in the nearest future. The Commission shall be mandated *inter alia* to formulate gender equality strategy and thematic action plans.

School suspension due to early marriage or pregnancy is one of the serious barriers faced by girls in effectively accessing education. The girls under these categories can continue their education in general education institutions. Besides, they can receive education in an alternative way - an externship form.

Intensive work has been carried out by the Government of Georgia to raise public awareness on preventing all forms of violence against women and girls, including early marriage. For example: within the framework of Chief Prosecutor's Office project "Public Prosecutors", prosecutors permanently conduct meetings on topics domestic violence and violence against women with population. The main subjects of discussions are: main behavioral patterns of perpetrator and victim and results of violence, domestic violence protection mechanisms and early marriage - sexual contact with a person under sixteen, illegal deprivation of liberty.

With the aim of prevention school suspension due to early marriages, the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia implements "Parent Education and Engagement Subprogramme". Within its frames information meetings are regularly held with the parents living in the regions of Georgia with the highest rates of early marriages. Issues of risks emanating from early marriages are discussed at the meetings. Subprogram on functioning of medical office on the territory of general education institutions (public schools) and school doctor activity is implemented by the Ministry as well. One of its specific aims is informing parents, teachers and pupils on the issues of healthcare, including reproductive health and risks emanating from early marriages.

National Centre for Teacher Professional Development (TPDC), a LEPL under the MoES, regularly arranges trainings aimed at improving professional skills and competences of teachers envisaging the issues of early/forced marriage, gender education at school, etc. Training module "Civic education teaching methodologies for non-Georgian school teachers was developed in 2015. It has been translated in the Russian language and in the process of translation in the Armenian and Azerbaijani languages.

To raise awareness among teachers and school principals in 2015 TPDC planned to develop several training modules by the December 2016. These modules are concerned on issues of gender and cultural equality:

- Bullying prevention and encouraging issues of tolerant culture (module completed);
- Gender equality/Reproductive Health and Rights/Healthy Lifestyle (module is developing);
- Types of violence and domestic violence;
- Child rights at school (module completed).

These training modules will include information on the child protection referral system fulfilled by the state and will be focused on responsibilities of social workers, health care and education field personals in case of child violence, as well as measures to be taken in such cases. Teachers will also be introduced to the consequences of child marriage.

In November 2016 TPDC opened registration on the training module for civil education teachers. The title of training is "bullying prevention and encouraging issues of tolerant culture". After completion of training, teachers will get comprehensive knowledge and skills on violence issues. Along the other issues, they will be

introduced to the types of domestic violence, including child marriage and gender discrimination. In this module gender equality issues are integrated as cross cutting competences. Training was held in the course of 18-27 November, in 7 regions of Georgia. There were 175 participant teachers. A second round is scheduled for 2-11 December.

Cultural and social aspects that are strongly presented in the regions populated by ethnic minorities lead to obstacles in engaging females into VET sector. The need to leave their homes and study in nearby municipality colleges, using its dorms is unacceptable for females due to their religious and cultural values. Therefore, the Government is working on expansion of VET providers' chain and special emphasis is put on opening new institutions in the municipalities populated with ethnic minorities.

It should be mentioned that VET institutions' management database contains information on VET students, including in terms of gender issues.

According to studies, girls and boys perform equally or girls even slightly outperform boys in upper secondary grades, and about the same number of girls as boys leave school prepared to pursue science and engineering. However, fewer women than men pursue these carriers.

MCA-Georgia commissioned studies to identify main barriers and opportunities faced by girls in STEM education, the findings of which demonstrate the impact of societal beliefs and learning environment on girls' achievements and interest in science and math. Girls' achievements and interest in math and science are shaped by the environment around – this is one of the main messages learned from the studies. Teachers think boys have more “STEM” abilities; parents report that hard sciences and math are more suited for their sons than for their daughters in spite of actual performance; such influences from teachers and parents reinforce stereotypes that STEM is more for boys than girls; text books also reinforce this latent stereotype.

MCA-Georgia carries out trainings for professional development for educators, including improving secondary school teachers' and school management performance in response to modern teaching and learning requirements. Specialized training or support will be provided to educators serving large populations of vulnerable/minority students and specialized training will be developed on addressing cognitive, physical, social or behavioral challenges in the classroom, including teacher bias and gender sensitive teaching strategies.

5. Qualitative and quantitative indicators used in relation to the activities on gender equality and women empowerment envisaged by the National Action Plan on Human rights:

- Qualitative indicator to measure the achievement of envisaging gender equality issues in the modules developed for teachers;
- Qualitative indicator to monitor revision process of the legislation in force in the field of education with the aim of preparing amendments to integrate gender aspects in it;
- Qualitative indicator to measure the effectiveness of promotion of introducing gender equality in the field of general education;
- Quantity indicator to monitor the number of information campaigns and meetings held on the issues of gender equality, including prevention of child and early marriages and selection of sex in terms of gender;
- Quantity indicator to measure the degree of business education of the women, including those living and working in the village and the degree of promotion of their capacities.

#### **Additional Information**

- In terms of access/availability of pre-school institutions as one of the pre-conditions for women's employment, it is noteworthy that the establishment and maintenance of pre-school educational

institutions fall under the competence of local self-government in Georgia (Organic Law on Local Self-Government, Art. 16/2 / "o"). As per the legislative amendment of 12 July 2013, it is prohibited to introduce any payment in pre-school educational institutions for parents (Art. 461), thus all public kindergartens are now free-of charge for parents.

- In April 2016, amendment was introduced to the Law on Gender Equality and Code on Local Self-Government, which aims to establish Gender Equality Councils in the municipalities. Above mentioned legislative change implements special institutional mechanism for achieving gender equality on the local self-government level, something Georgia has never done before.
- In April 27, 2016 the Parliament of Georgia has adopted amendments to the procedural legislation of Georgia introducing a new basis for the revision of a court judgment. In particular, pursuant to new amendments, court judgment can be revised on the ground of the decision of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Besides, the person is already given the right to apply to the court on the issue of compensation, if this is declared by the relevant decision.