Priority gender issues in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Moldova, Serbia, and Ukraine – with consideration to gender and governance

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About this report

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Priority gender issues in Bosnia and Herzegovina – with consideration to gender and governance

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Question

What does the literature indicate as priority gender issues in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH)?

Note links concerning gender and governance topics and any existing programmes in this regard.

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1. Overview

Despite some progress being made towards achieving gender equality in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), gender stereotyping and discrimination against women remain widespread – and much more needs to be done to overcome these ingrained socio-cultural attitudes and behaviours (CEDAW, 2013; HRC, 2013; Cancho and Elwan, 2015; Agency for Gender Equality in BiH (AGEBiH), 2014). While gender mainstreaming is integrated into a range of national policies, legislation, institutional structures and social and economic strategies, and progress is underway to reform or strengthen many systems, significant barriers still exist which limit women’s economic opportunities, equal participation in public life and decision-making, and exercise of human rights. These barriers disadvantage women, and reduce the growth potential,

1 Note for purposes of this review, reference to BiH includes both the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBIH) including the ten cantons of FBIH, and Republika Srpska.

2 Governance topics of high interest include: 1) tax reform and business environment; 2) public financial management reform; 3) liberalisation and modernisation of growth sectors; 4) rule of law, democratic accountability, and police and justice reform; and 5) independent media.
productivity, and performance of the economy as a whole (Cancho and Elwan, 2015; World Bank, 2015a). This report focuses on gender issues, with particular focus on sociocultural conditions and economic impacts on women; however it is acknowledged that gender analyses certainly implies inclusion of men and boys, who are integrated into this report as appropriate.

Literature collected for this rapid review draws from a mixture of research, assessments, strategic programmes and evaluations of government and major international development agencies, case studies and recommendations of good practice, journal publications and agency websites – the majority based on empirical evidence, much of it covering previous years. As BiH is still moving out of a post-conflict transitional period, and gender equality is an issue only recently rising on the national agenda, the body of evidence regarding gender and governance is limited.

Key findings from the literature include:

- The BiH legal architecture is favourable to gender equality, formalised under the **Law on Gender Equality (LGE)**, but weaknesses in awareness and implementation of the law prevail (CEDAW, 2013; Women for Women International (WfWI), 2013; HRC, 2013; Cancho and Elwan, 2015).

- The **Gender Equality Agency (GEA)**, located in the Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees, supports LGE implementation, collaborating with Gender Centres nationwide. These entities are weak, lack sufficient visibility and are in need of technical capacities and resources (CEDAW, 2013; HRC, 2013).

- **Stereotypes** are prevalent in the media which fails to address issues of gender awareness and women’s rights. Some capacity building is ongoing to improve the media’s projections of women and women’s rights (OECD, 2014; USAID, 2012).

- **Women’s political participation is limited** – women in decision-making positions and serving as political representatives are few. Increasing women’s political engagement is a priority, important to achieving gender equality and robust democratisation (USAID, 2012; AGEBiH, 2014; CEDAW, 2013; EBRD, 2014).

- Promising efforts are ongoing to support implementation of **gender responsive budgeting (GRB)**, with support from UN Women and partners (Lubani and Coello, 2013; AGEBiH, 2014; UN Women, 2014; Avdagic and Hujic, 2012). The literature indicates that **availability of comprehensive sex-disaggregated data and quality of this is weak** (CEDAW, 2013; AGEBiH, 2014). It is recommended that all statistics in the country are gender disaggregated, which is work already in progress (AGEBiH, 2014).

- Addressing **gender gaps in women’s access to economic opportunities** is a priority. Women have low participation in the **labour market** and a wide **gender gap exists in employment. Female unemployment rates are marginally rising**, while male rates are declining (European Commission (EC), 2015; AGEBiH, 2014). Challenges include access to finance, low business management knowledge and skills, limited business networks and gender discrimination. Efforts to strengthen women’s entrepreneurship are being promoted (Cancho and Elwan, 2015; AGEBiH, 2014; EBRD, 2014; USAID, 2012; UN, 2014).

- Data reflects that girls are marrying at later ages than in the past, which is a positive trend (ASBiH et al., 2013). Early marriage is reported as more common in **rural areas and amongst women with only primary education** (Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina, (ASBiH) et al., 2013).
- **Sexual violence**, and **domestic violence** in particular, is recognised as rampant and a **priority challenge**. A main cause of this is **patriarchal socio-cultural attitudes** (HRC, 2013; CEDAW, 2013; Cancho and Elwan, 2015; AGEBiH, 2014; OECD, 2014; UN Women, 2016).

2. **National context**

**Legal and policy environment**

The existing legal architecture in BiH is favourable to gender equality (CEDAW, 2013; WfWI, 2013; World Bank, 2014). A **Law on Gender Equality (LGE)** was adopted in 2003, amended in 2009 with a unified text, and adopted in 2010 by Constitutional Committees of both Houses of Parliament in 2010. This law provides the national legal framework for gender equality, endorsing gender mainstreaming into all relevant public policies and legislation. The law also serves as a critical instrument for public awareness of gender equality. The law is aligned with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), promoting gender equality in private and public spheres and anti-discrimination based on gender or sexual orientation. Chapter topics of the law include anti-discrimination in: education, employment, social and health care, culture, public life, media, statistical evidence, court protection, prohibition of gender-based violence (GBV) and sexual harassment, and outlines obligations and measures to be taken by the state. Other relevant laws with implications on gender equality include the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination, enacted in 2007, a Law on Equal Opportunities, still a draft, and a new 2015 Labour Law (Djulic and Kuzman, 2013; EBRD, 2015). Amendments to existing laws have been completed or are forthcoming (AGEBiH, 2014). A new Reform Agenda, adopted in 2015 has gender implications, with priorities covering: public finances, taxes and tax sustainability; business climate and competitiveness; labour market; social protection and pensions; the rule of law and good governance; and public authorities (EBRD, 2015).

The **National Gender Action Plan on Gender Equality (GAP)**, adopted initially in 2007, and renewed to cover the period 2013-2017, builds on national and global conventions and strategies (e.g. CEDAW, EU, UN) to promote implementation of the LGE. It is complemented by the **Financing for the Implementation of the Gender Equality Action Programme (FIGAP)** adopted to provide for the law's long-term implementation (Djulic and Kuzman, 2013; AGEBiH, 2014). Main priorities in FIGAP include ensuring measures for women’s increase in labour, employment and access to economic resources.

Despite this plethora of laws supporting gender equality, there are weaknesses with regard to consistency of laws; sufficient adaptation to the BiH context; implementation of regulations; lack of awareness of the laws; unclear reporting lines; and inaccessible data on discriminatory practices (Cancho and Elwan, 2015; CEDAW, 2013; HRC, 2013; WfWI, 2013). Policy measures aimed to tackle multiple gender equality barriers are underpinned by various laws and institutional mechanisms, yet more is needed, starting with addressing stereotyping and gender based violence, and advancing women’s economic empowerment (Cancho and Elwan, 2015; World Bank, 2014).

**Institutional environment**

A **Gender Equality Agency (GEA)** has been set up in the Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees to support implementation of the LGE. The Agency’s role is to prepare, monitor and coordinate periodic GAPs, based
on proposals from all state-level ministries and the plans prepared by entity-level\(^3\) decentralised Gender Centres. GAP and FIGAP progress is measured by indicators such as an increase in the number of women politicians (at levels of state and entities), women’s improved economic position (e.g. in public and private labour markets) and improved social position (e.g. reduced violence, cultural perceptions of gender roles, education).

A number of commissions and committees to achieve gender equality have been set up to support implementation of the LGE. These include: the Commission for Achieving Gender Equality of the Parliamentary Assembly, and of the House of Peoples and the House of Representatives of the Parliament of the Federation of BiH; the Equal Opportunities Committee of the National Assembly of Republika Srpska; and several decentralised commissions. These commissions, particularly at sub-national levels remain weak and require capacity building (AGEBiH, 2014). Despite the gender architecture, CEDAW (2013) reports that the GEA and gender machinery need greater support to perform its role to effectively coordinate line ministries and work with civil society (CEDAW, 2013). It lacks the required visibility to realise its mandate, and is also in need of technical, financial and human resources. A notable positive exception is the progress being made in the sectors of defence and security based on gender action plans stemming from the UN Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. Considerable efforts are being made to improve gender equality measures in the ministries and their work (employment in police and peacekeeping, training, decentralised human security, and decision-making positions) (Tomic, 2015).

In the wider context, state institutions in BiH have limited capacities and are driven by party-based cronyism (USAID, 2012). Strengthening the rule of law, transparency and consistency of rules and processes – administered by legislative and justice sectors – are crucial and particularly important for promoting economic growth. Citizens are reported to have mistrust of public institutions (USAID, 2012). While civil society is emerging, participation in policy-making is limited and more is required (capacities, funding), notably greater women’s participation in public processes. The government recognises the importance of public-private dialogue with civil society particularly in promoting gender equality. This has resulted in a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between government and civil society providing a coordination platform on gender issues and peace and security (AGEBiH, 2014). USAID (2012) has been supporting BiH in multiple areas of gender mainstreaming, including: mobilising civil society to address women’s empowerment issues in advocacy campaigns, jointly with the media; and providing training to the media on gender based violence; strengthening justice sector performance – including hiring more qualified women; supporting decentralised and fiscal and policy reforms; and strengthening decentralised governance structures – including in the implementation of the LGE.

The media

Women are less represented than men in the media, stereotypes are prevalent and the media fails to address issues of gender awareness and women’s rights (OECD, 2014; USAID, 2012). OECD (2014) notes that women are rarely consulted as “experts”. More generally, EBRD (2014) contends that despite a degree of independent pluralistic media operations in BiH, more could be done to ensure tolerance, freedom of expression and minimisation of media polarisation along political and ethnic lines. A self-regulated press code for printed media exists that contains provision to develop gender equality awareness and human rights (AGEBiH, 2014). A number of legal reforms are underway to harmonise various media laws specifically with the LGE to ensure equal gender representation in leading positions of media, employment, balanced interests in programming and the elimination of gender discrimination and stereotyping (AGEBiH, 2014). As noted above, USAID (2012) is providing a range of support to strengthen performance of the media sector regarding gender issues and women’s empowerment.

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\(^3\) BiH has two entities: the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH) and the Republika Srpska (RS).
Public financial management: gender-responsive budgeting (GRB)

The government has been unable to report on their budget allocation for gender equality to the CEDAW committee. This limitation reflects wider assessments of public finance management in BiH, which describe financial recording systems as weak and audits as insufficient to ensure efficient spending on intended targets (World Bank, 2015a). That said, the GAP (2013) contains a compulsory principle (within the Principle of Analysis of the Effects of Budget) to address needs of both women and men – which according to AGEBiH (2014), means an obligation to undertake GRB. In response, GRB has been adopted in the BiH 2010-2012 action plan in the pilot area of labour and employment; a gender sensitive budget analysis was completed in agriculture and rural development in Republika Srpska; capacity development for all line ministries on how to apply the concept of GRB is ongoing; and actions are being made to enable estimating of national gender allocations (AGEBiH, 2014). AGEBiH (2014) contends that it is essential to encourage further improvements in collecting gender disaggregated data (as per the Law on Gender Equality) to enable gender responsive statistics, analysis and surveys of gender equality in all spheres. They recommend all statistics in the country be gender disaggregated, which is work in progress led by the Agency for Statistic of BiH and entity institutes (AGEBiH, 2014).

Many of the GRB efforts in BiH have been implemented largely with support from UN Women and development partners. A specific programme started in 2011 is now in Phase II. The goal of this programme is to assist selected countries in South East Europe in GRB, including institutional strengthening at all levels of government (Lubani and Coello, 2013; UN Women, 2014; Avdagic and Hujic, 2012). The programme has supported multiple initiatives within countries (with government, civil society and academics) and regionally to promote exchange of learning and a GRB network. In BiH, complementing ongoing initiatives on public finance reform (e.g. supported by DFID and EC), the programme has supported the formation and GRB training of a working group comprising key government finance and gender agency representatives with active leadership from Ministry of Finance. This has resulted in mainstreaming of GRB in the national budget process and economic policy. This effort also included development of a set of tools and further capacity development. At municipal level, a methodology was developed to analyse the role and situation of rural women in the agricultural sector and in business, which was followed by a participatory multi-stakeholder planning exercise eventually providing subsidies for rural women’s economic empowerment. Measures are planned in phase II to support planning processes using GRB perspectives and methods and strengthen civil society capacities to engage in the GRB process (e.g. monitor, formulate proposals, and advocacy) (Lubani and Coello, 2013). Integrating GRB during mainstream finance reform is the optimal approach to promote equitable and more efficient policy and budget-making; the GRB initiative in BiH is therefore considered as good timing since it is during the reform process (Avdagic and Hujic, 2012).

3. Priority issues towards women’s empowerment

Political empowerment

Women’s political participation is limited – women in decision-making positions and serving as political representatives are few, despite the fact that the government’s Election Law requires 40 per cent female representation on party lists of candidates for parliament and for local government (EBRD, 2014; USAID, 2012). Women’s engagement in political decision-making and affairs is highlighted as a priority; important to achieving gender equality and robust democratisation (USAID, 2014; AGEBiH, 2014; CEDAW, 2013). Women’s representation in political positions is reported at: 21 per cent of parliamentary seats; 15
per cent of elected officials; 9 women out of 58 as diplomats or consuls; and 15 per cent of all elected municipal assemblies and councils (Cancho and Elwan, 2015). Political parties give only modest support to promote female representatives. According to AGEBiH (2014), official statistics indicate that in the 2010 general election, 56.6 per cent of total registered voters were women, with a female voter turnout of 49.17 per cent. Low representation in decision-making is largely due to traditional perceptions of gender roles – this is a critical barrier to overcome to attain gender equality (AGEBiH, 2014; World Bank, 2015a).

To increase women’s participation in political life and decision-making, the CEDAW committee (2013) offers recommendations – many of which are currently being addressed through initiatives supported by government (FiGAP), NGOs and partners. These include trainings and workshops on preparation of female political candidates, hosting seminars, public debates, etc. on increasing women in decision-making positions including at local levels, and sensitising the media (AGEBiH, 2014).

Economic empowerment

The business environment context in BiH is overall relatively weak – in World Bank’s “Doing Business”, BiH scores 79 out of 189 countries – and below corresponding regional scores (Europe and Central Asia), with a markedly low score of 175 in starting a business (World Bank, 2016; EBRD, 2014; USAID, 2012). The investment climate is reported as poor, in large part caused by a bloated and dominant, weakly performing public sector. The business sector is in need of improved governance and democratic systems – with conducive commercial legislation, enterprise reform (e.g. streamlining procedures), liberalisation and increased competition (World Bank, 2015a; USAID, 2012). The private sector is weak and public-private partnerships are few. Sources of financing for small and medium-scale enterprises are limited, hampering their development, growth, and job creation potential (World Bank, 2015a; EBRD, 2014; USAID, 2012). EBRD (2014) notes that although most laws pertaining to corporate governance exist, their application is lacking.

Despite improved educational outcomes for women, their low participation in the labour market is a priority challenge to attaining gender equality in BiH (Cancho and Elwan, 2015; Cutura, 2008; AGEBiH, 2014; EBRD, 2014). Sources report that severe gender gaps exist in labour market participation and in employment (Cancho and Elwan (2015); AGEBiH, 2014; EBRD, 2014). Overall, BiH has low labour market participation rates, at 44 per cent, considerably lower than the regional average of 60 per cent. Women’s rate of participation in the labour market is 33 per cent (EBRD, 2014). Cancho and Elwan (2015) also report on the significant gender gap in labour participation: 65.7 per cent males as opposed to 41 per cent females (ages 15-64) engage in the labour force according to 2013 national data. This gap is even higher in rural areas, among the poorest, and the less educated.

The European Commission (EC) (2015) report on BiH’s potential accession to the EU cites that labour market participation increased in 2014 to 59.2 per cent from 58.7 per cent in 2013 (in 2010 it was 58.4 per cent) with slight growth in both male and female participation rates. The employment rate rose to 43.2 per cent in 2014 from 42.8 per cent in 2013 (42.8 per cent in 2010). Female employment however dropped slightly from 32.2 in 2013 per cent to 31.9 per cent in 2014 (at 31.2 per cent in 2010), while male employment increased marginally from 53.3 per cent in 2013 to 54.6 per cent in 2014 (54.6 per cent in 2010). Job creation is reported modest, with the unemployment rate remaining unchanged at 27.6 per cent in 2014 (compared to 27.3 per cent in 2010). But male unemployment rates fell from 26.7 per cent in 2013

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4 Note data sets differ slightly in the literature. For in-depth detail, examination of documents, accessible below, is advised.
to 25.3 per cent in 2014 (25.6 per cent in 2010) while female unemployment rates increased from 29.1 to 31.2 per cent (29.9 per cent in 2010) (EC, 2015). These figures indicate slight trends suggesting conditions for women may not be improving with the same consistency or rate as men. The EC (2015) sums up that unemployment in BiH remains high with women’s unemployment rising – the report urgently advises addressing the unemployment situation in the country.

Cancho and Elwan (2015) report (2013 data) that the gender gap in employment is stark: 47 per cent of males are engaged in the formal employment sector, compared to 29 per cent of females, but that education attainment positively effects women’s opportunities. However, it is also reported that the gender gap in employment increases again with women’s higher educational attainment (up to 7 per cent favouring men), likely because men with higher education are often preferred for high-level “professional” positions compared to women (Cancho and Elwan, 2015). Women working in the public sector are often confined to “feminine” ministries and discriminated against at higher political and administrative levels due to traditional views of women’s role (Cancho and Elwan, 2015). However, regarding the judiciary, women represent 43 per cent of the staff in BiH courts and 67.5 per cent in municipal courts. The Ministry of Defence is introducing gender equality provisions, ensuring equal job opportunities to reach a minimum of 10 per cent women (AGEBiH, 2014; Tomic, 2015). The gap in unemployment is found to be most severe among very poor women with limited educational achievement (Cancho and Elwan, 2015). Middle-aged women having limited education for example are reportedly the first to lose jobs (HRC, 2013). In addition to gender discrimination, high labour taxes may also prevent firms from hiring low-skilled employees, who are often female (World Bank, 2015a).

Youth, particularly young women, are most affected by high levels of unemployment in BiH – youth unemployment exceeds 60 per cent. This results in high numbers working in the informal sector (HRC, 2013; EBRD, 2014). Cutura (2008) contends that the education system does not focus on adaptability and flexibility, failing to equip young people with the skills required for private sector engagement. It should be noted that educational attainment is reported as lower for women than men in higher education, but the gender gap decreases among younger cohorts (Cancho and Elwan, 2014). However, HRC (2013) reports data (2007) showing that 17 per cent of women had no school education compared to 6 per cent of men. Women with families are reported to face difficulties securing employment due to traditional gender stereotypic attitudes. Cancho and Elwan (2014) and AGEBiH (2014) cite that women of child-bearing age are often questioned (directly or indirectly) on their marital situation and plans during interviews, and that women report that companies consider women with families ‘too family oriented’ and insufficiently career focused. The absence of childcare and support services in fact limits women’s career development.

Child marriage levels in BiH are reported by UNICEF (2015) as low, at 0 per cent of girls marrying by 15 years, and only 4 per cent by 18 years. The flagship UNICEF-supported multiple indicator cluster survey (MICS) for BiH also indicates that in 2011-2012 early marriage was very low before 15 years – less than 1 per cent, but rose to 10 per cent before the age of 18 years. Men’s rates are not comparable at the below 18 years level, and remain quite low at less than 1 per cent. MICS reports early marriage is more common in rural areas and amongst women with only primary education (ASBiH et al., 2013). Trends in the data clearly indicate differences in marriage postponement among women of different age cohorts – delaying marriage is more prevalent among younger cohorts, reflecting they are marrying at later ages than in the past, which is a positive trend. Research indicates that women who are married before 18 years tend to have more children than those delaying marriage (ASBiH et al., 2013). The literature suggests that early marriage may cause women to start and have larger families, which may have negative impacts on their employment eligibility, but that early marriage rates in BiH seem to be on the decline.
Women face particular challenges in accessing economic opportunities and confront greater barriers than men in accessing productive inputs and physical assets, such as credit and land (Cutura, 2008; Cancho and Elwan, 2015; World Bank, 2015a). Low access to credit and assets is in large part due to lack of collateral. Despite the fact that women are legally entitled to own land, they rarely own property - mainly due to local customs and traditional gender role perceptions (over 70 per cent of landowners are men and just under 40 per cent own property jointly with a spouse) (Cutura, 2008; OECD, 2014; World Bank, 2015b). This affects women’s access to credit, limiting their risk-taking and entrepreneurship in business in favour of more predictable, safer public sector jobs (OECD, 2014; Cancho and Elwan, 2015). Cancho and Elwan (2015) report that 27.3 per cent of BiH firms are female owned, lower than the regional average of 33 per cent; however, there has been a steep increase in interest among women to start their own business, particularly among female-headed households (up from 18 per cent in 1998 to 60 per cent in 2002). Cancho and Elwan (2015) report that up to 30 per cent of women compared to 26.6 per cent of men, do take out loans but there is a difference in source – women resort to informal friend and family networks rather than accessing microfinance institutions (Cancho and Elwan, 2015).

Women generally lack financial and business management knowledge and skills, and have difficulty accessing training opportunities, while support services (e.g. childcare) are mostly absent (Cancho and Elwan, 2015; WfWI, 2013). In a study of the International Finance Corporation (IFC) financed microfinance programme (MI-BOSPO), women entrepreneurs cited managing licenses, taxation, finance, and labour issues as the main obstacles to business success; they also mentioned lack of strong networks, as well as self-confidence. Professional business organisations were found to be male-dominated, impacting women’s opportunities for sharing ideas and knowledge (Cutura, 2008).

Experts contend that identifying and addressing gender gaps in women’s access to economic opportunities is a priority issue for reducing gender inequalities and a key factor to improve growth prospects and living standards (Cutura, 2008; Cancho and Elwan, 2015; World Bank, 2015a). It is estimated around 16 per cent of gross national income is lost due to gender disparities in labour force participation (Cancho and Elwan, 2015). Increasing women’s access to labour markets can increase their own and households’ income-generating capacity, contributing to poverty reduction (Cancho and Elwan, 2015). Cutura (2008) recommends: eliminating bureaucratic hurdles for women in business, providing training (e.g. financial management), and increasing awareness and advocacy on women and private sector development (e.g. creating women’s business associations).

A number of women’s economic empowerment programmes are in place supported by FIGAP and partners (e.g. UN agencies, World Bank, IFC, USAID, Cherie Blair Foundation, and MI-Bospo) covering areas including: researching and strengthening gender and employment and job creation; female entrepreneurship promotion; training and mentoring business start-ups; skills development (e.g. horticultural and organic farming with energy efficient technologies; communications training (IT); access to financial support for female-owned businesses; sensitisation on land registration and gender issues; network building (AGEBiH, 2014; World Bank, 2015a; USAID, 2012). Some programmes include gender mainstreaming within a wider development support framework, for example the One UN Programme (2015-2019) actively integrates gender equality through its equitable development and employment pillar (UN, 2014). Direct support to women entrepreneurs, including through quotas, is crosscutting in activities such as small and medium enterprise development, strengthening farmer organisations, improving access to business development services, and expanding improved farming technologies (UN, 2014). EBRD (2014) is implementing initiatives supporting small and medium enterprise development, business support and advisory services, private sector company growth, energy and resource efficiency efforts, and policy dialogue. These provide viable entry points for integrating gender mainstreaming.
Sociocultural attitudes: gender stereotyping

The LGE and CEDAW (as well as other legal measures) call for elimination of bias, customs and practices based on stereotyped gender roles, and include tackling these barriers through awareness raising and education (e.g. civil servants, the general public) (HRC, 2013; CEDAW, 2013). However, attitudes about traditional gender roles and stereotypes persist (CEDAW, 2013). With regards to employment, for example, Cancho and Elwan (2015) report that women are subjected to biases stemming from traditional patriarchal social norms (e.g. suitable work, access to higher decision-making positions). Despite laws and regulations concerning gender-based discrimination, women at work are faced with inconsistencies and irregularities (Cancho and Elwan, 2015). Women aiming to start families or already with families are discriminated against.

Based on the European Value Survey (EVS), Cancho and Elwan (2015) report that 67 per cent of men believe that what women really want is a home and children, compared with a little over 50 per cent of women; similarly, 27 per cent of men and 22 per cent of women believe that when jobs are scarce, men should be given priority in the labour market. According to Cutura (2008), although women face many difficulties being treated unequally in the labour market, when asked about this, most answered they were not. The author contends this perception is not because of the absence of gender bias but rather due to little awareness of discrimination. The CEDAW committee (2013) and HRC (2013) advise tackling stereotypes through a number of measures including the education system and sensitisation (e.g. of the media, political parties, and civil servants).

Gender based violence

Sexual and gender based violence, and domestic violence in particular, is recognised as a rampant problem in the country and a priority challenge, but one that is inadequately addressed. Issues include no specialisation in the criminal justice system, fragmentation in laws, culturally accepted and tolerated behaviour, and limited access to the justice system (HRC, 2013; Cancho and Elwan, 2015; AGBiH, 2014; OECD, 2014). Cancho and Elwan (2015) report more than half the women of BiH have experienced at least one form of violence from age 15, psychological violence being the most frequent – and that younger, poorer, rural and Roma women are most vulnerable. A major cause of this social problem is patriarchal socio-cultural attitudes (UN Women, 2016). Furthermore, it should be noted that around 60 per cent of women who have been subjected to violence fail to see themselves as victims of violence and few seek support (5.5 per cent) (Cancho and Elwan, 2015; OECD, 2014). ASBiH et al. (2013) report that 5 per cent of women and 6 per cent of men felt a husband/partner has the right to hit or beat his wife for at least one of the reasons mentioned in the survey (e.g. neglects children) – the belief that wife-beating is justifiable was more prevalent among the less educated and poorest households. Women are typically unwilling or unable to leave violent family environments as they have limited access to economic independence and finance, property is usually registered under men’s names (OECD, 2014).

HRC (2013) advises government authorities to recognise and treat domestic violence and female victims of rape and torture appropriately to ensure their equal access to remedies and services. This issue requires more attention despite the refocus of laws, strategies and institutional support to directly address the problem (e.g. signing of the Istanbul convention in 2014 combating violence against women) (UN Women, 2016; AGBiH, 2014). There is also need for society, notably media, to recognise this problem, and affirm the existence of non-physical domestic violence as well – greater awareness needs to be created concerning violence other than just domestic physical violence (HRC, 2013). Of note, human trafficking also remains an issue in BiH.
Priority actions recommended by HRC (2013) to address violence against women include: conducting a comprehensive analysis of the magnitude and trends in domestic violence and how the state can better address the problem; assessing the performance of Centres of Social Welfare (CSW) to implement reforms to improve their services in support of female victims of violence; strengthening public-private partnerships to support “mobile teams” to respond to domestic violence; launching a transitional justice strategy to strengthen the sector’s role in treating victims of violence; and launching awareness campaigns including sensitising the media, and educating and changing societal stereotypic attitudes fostering patriarchal ideas (CEDAW, 2013; HRC, 2013). CEDAW (2013) also notes under-reporting of domestic violence due to inadequate data collection and recommends collecting statistical data disaggregated by sex, age and relationship with perpetrator. UN Women has taken up this appeal through its new programme for ending violence against women and domestic violence in BiH (2016-2019). The programme’s two components aim to: 1) improve availability and quality of services (government and non-government) for victims of violence against women; and 2) promote understanding of gender roles and ending gender stereotypes, through awareness campaigns, outreach to media, schools, etc. and capacity development (UN Women, 2016).

4. References


Priority gender issues in Bosnia and Herzegovina


Priority gender issues in Bosnia and Herzegovina


**Key websites**

- **UN Women – Bosnia and Herzegovina:**
  http://eca.unwomen.org/en/where-we-are/bosnia-and-herzegovina

- **European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) – Bosnia and Herzegovina**
  http://www.ebrd.com/where-we-are/bosnia-and-herzegovina/overview.html

- **United States Agency for International Development (USAID) – Bosnia and Herzegovina**
  https://www.usaid.gov/where-we-work/europe-and-eurasia/bosnia
Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) – Social Institution and Gender Index (SIGI)
http://www.genderindex.org/country/bosnia-and-herzegovina

Suggested citation

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Question

What does the literature indicate as priority gender issues in Georgia? Note links concerning gender and governance topics and any existing programmes in this regard.

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1. Overview

The gender context in Georgia reflects deep-rooted biases concerning gender roles and equality. Gender stereotyping and discrimination continue, largely due to traditional cultural values, the legacy of Soviet policy on gender equality, and social and economic uncertainties caused by the transitional country context (ADB, 2014; UNECE, 2014; UN, 2015; Duban, 2010; CEDAW, 2013). Recent policy and legal reforms that ensure equal rights and opportunities to women and men and protection of women against violence provide an essential groundwork for improving gender equality and women’s empowerment. But implementation of the laws and policies is weak, and more effort is needed for transformation of persistent patriarchal attitudes (ADB, 2014; CEDAW, 2013).

This rapid review draws on a range of sources from available literature including research, assessments, strategic programmes and evaluations of government and international development agencies, journal publications and agency websites – the majority based on empirical evidence. As Georgia continues through a transitional period into democracy, and gender equality is an emerging issue on the national

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5 Governance topics of high interest include: 1) tax reform and business environment; 2) public financial management reform; 3) liberalisation and modernisation of growth sectors; 4) rule of law, democratic accountability, and police and justice reform; and 5) independent media.
agenda, the body of evidence (in particular data) regarding gender and governance is limited (Hofmann and Buckley, 2013).

Key findings from the literature include:

- The pivotal Law on Gender Equality (2010), the Law of Georgia on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination (2014), along with a range of additional policies, strategies and national action plans set a legal basis supportive to gender equality and antidiscrimination (ADB, 2014; Duban; 2010). However, weaknesses in implementation prevail (CEDAW, 2014; UNECE, 2014; Duban, 2010; UN, 2015).

- A Gender Equality Council serves as focal point for gender equality and is a permanent body of government (ADB, 2014; UN, 2015; CEDAW, 2014). Civil society is an active partner of government on gender issues. Despite the large number of NGOs that address women’s issue (70 reported in 2008), there is lack of coordination among them and no common platform (Duban, 2010).

- Sexualisation of women in the media is reported as prevalent and even increasing (CEDAW, 2014; Duban, 2010; UNECE, 2014). This exacerbates patriarchal stereotypic attitudes and norms, which undermines women’s participation in public life and in careers.

- Success cases in gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) are providing the evidence to build government buy in and to promote and inform civil society engagement. Conditions for undertaking GRB are developing and GRB is beginning to take place (UNECE, 2014).

- Women’s participation in governance is low – the main reasons for this include lack of financing, traditional societal attitudes, little experience in public life roles and low interest (Duban, 2010). A majority of ethnic minority women surveyed (78 per cent) had no information about local political issues or responsibilities – this was even higher (81 per cent) in rural areas (Institute for Social Studies and Analysis, 2014). Strengthening public institutions and local governments to incorporate gender-sensitive approaches in their planning and interventions is needed (UN, 2015).

- Limited access to finance, an absence of a “culture” of entrepreneurship, patriarchal attitudes and social customs that underpin traditional gender roles (i.e. women are caretakers) limit women’s economic opportunities and constrain their business development (ADB, 2014; UN, 2015; Duban, 2010; World Bank, 2014; Kuriakose, 2013).

- Female labour force participation is much lower compared to that of males (57 per cent and 75 per cent respectively) as is the female employment rate (48.8 per cent compared to 54.5 per cent) (UN, 2015; Duban, 2010). The gender wage rate differential is an estimated 34.8 per cent (lower in all sectors), with women occupying lower-paid jobs incommensurate with their educational levels (UN, 2015; Arganashvili, 2015).

- Sexual violence, domestic violence, and trafficking are priority challenges. A main cause of this is patriarchal socio-cultural attitudes (ADB, 2014; CEDAW, 2014; UNECE, 2014). A number of donors are supporting initiatives to combat violence against women (UN, 2015; UN Women, website see below, n.d.).
2. National context

Legal and policy environment

Georgia’s constitution guarantees equal rights to women and men and the country is a signatory to the Beijing Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). The pivotal Law on Gender Equality was adopted in 2010 through a highly participatory process, and in 2014 the Law of Georgia on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination came into force, strengthening Georgia’s antidiscrimination standards (ADB, 2014; Duban; 2010). However, a gender equality entity within the government’s executive branch is lacking. There are a number of additional supportive policies and legislative acts promoting gender equality and combatting violence against women, notably the Domestic Violence Action Plans (most recent 2013-2015), the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (2012-2015), the National Strategy for Protection of Human Rights in Georgia (2014-2020) and the Action Plan for Human Rights (2014-2015) (UN, 2015). Georgia was in the lead among south Caucasus countries in adopting a national action plan on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 incorporating principles of women’s participation in decision-making, peace building and security, and women’s needs and protection in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict periods, particularly including sexual violence (UNECE, 2014).

A gender equality National Action Plan for 2014–2016 is in place in support of the respective law; it addresses gender equality issues in the economy, health and social protection and promotion of women’s involvement in environmental protection and law enforcement. There is also a 2013-2015 action plan for combating domestic violence and implementing measures for the protection of victims of domestic violence (CEDAW, 2014). A quota system is in force, which provides 30 per cent additional funding for parties who include at least three women out of each 10 names on the parliamentary candidate list, with the aim to boost women’s representation in the legislative branch of government (CEDAW, 2014).

Despite existing such policies, laws and acts, awareness of rights remains limited, women’s reporting of discrimination and violence to judicial entities is low, and general implementation of the laws and policies is weak (CEDAW, 2014; UNECE, 2014; Duban, 2010; UN, 2015). The absence of a mechanism for gender equality within the executive branch mechanism for gender equality in particular weakens application of gender mainstreaming in government policy and programmes (CEDAW, 2014). Political will and commitment from government has been noted as questionable, yet vital to achieving gender equality (Duban, 2010). These challenges are in large part due to deep-seated entrenchment of gender stereotypes which create barriers to achieving gender equality and women’s empowerment (UN Women /Georgia website, n.d.). In addition, some policies are viewed as over-general, providing little clarity on authority, roles, and budgets for implementation, nor is coordination among stakeholders sufficiently clarified or effective to support implementation (UNECE, 2014).

Institutional environment

A Gender Equality Council serves as focal point for gender equality and is a permanent body of government, established in 2004. The council is led by a Deputy Chair of the Parliament and is composed of parliamentarians and government officials, while civil society is represented in another expert council (Abdurazakova, 2010). The council’s mandate is to develop a gender equality action plan and ensure coordination and monitoring of its implementation. The council also carries out gender audits and proposes measures to reduce gender gaps; reviews draft laws for gender equality; develops gender equality promotion programmes; and institutionalises monitoring and evaluation of interventions (ADB, 2014; UN,
In addition to the gender equality council, an overarching human rights inter-agency coordination council has been set up which includes, importantly, a gender equality working group on human rights (UN, 2015).

Civil society has been an active partner of government on gender issues in a serious manner since the debate and adoption of the law on gender equality. Despite the large number of NGOs that address women’s issues (70 reported in 2008) – in advocacy and also service provision – there is lack of coordination and no common platform (Duban, 2010). Scarce resources are a barrier to effective coordination among organisations working on women’s rights and gender equality – support to their networks and capacity development is recommended (Duban, 2010; UN, 2015). It is noteworthy that women dominate the NGO workforce, which likely indicates the lack of employment opportunities elsewhere, few available political positions, and considerable donor support for women’s NGOs (Duban, 2010).

The media

Sexualisation of women in the media is reported as prevalent and even increasing (CEDAW, 2014; Duban, 2010; UNECE, 2014). This exacerbates patriarchal stereotypic attitudes and norms, which undermines women’s participation in public life and in careers. The media is reported as reinforcing traditional gender roles (men as breadwinners, women as housekeepers) and sensationalising women’s issues without presenting solutions or useful information (Duban, 2010). Rape cases often reveal victims’ names and question their character.

There are NGOs in Georgia experienced in gender sensitivity and implementing training on this for the media, and some organisations manage their own news web portals on women’s rights etc. Duban (2010) recommends supporting these portals and networks to promote a gender-sensitive media. The UN Joint Programme (2015-2019) aims to strengthen capacities of the media to raise awareness and shift opinions and views on gender equality, gender discrimination, and sexual violence. Activities include supporting workshops and other events for journalists/media specialists on various issues, facilitating public discourse around gender issues, providing assistance to higher education institutions on sensitive reporting, and developing media monitoring tools (UN, 2015).

Public financial management: gender-responsive budgeting (GRB)

Integration of gender mainstreaming in national planning and budgeting processes is gradually being put into practice in Georgia, notably with successful pilot cases supported by UN Women. In rural municipalities, women’s committees were formed to engage with local authorities on planning and budget allocations, which were based on their own surveys of priority needs in rural areas (e.g. drinking water). Half of these priorities were taken up in public budgets (UN Women /Georgia country website, n.d.; UN Women, 2016). These GRB success cases are providing the evidence to build government buy in and to promote and inform civil society engagement. Conditions for undertaking GRB are developing and GRB is beginning to take place starting with establishing an open dialogue platform among partners to reflect on priorities for integrating gender mainstreaming into national planning and budgets. Nonetheless, there remain obstacles, such as refusals to engage as a result of misunderstanding about gender responsible budgets as additional funds allocated for women; lack of sufficient sex-disaggregated statistical data; and scarcity of resources (UNECE, 2014).

The UN Joint Programme (UNJP) (UN, 2015) is building on this, launching a range of activities to institutionalise GRB and planning throughout the country, targeting, in particular, the Ministry of Finance
(MoF), executive branch ministries and other independent public bodies (e.g. judiciary) including at local levels. A national level methodology has been drafted by MoF, which is expected to be implemented at municipal levels as well, followed by a rapid scale up during the UN Joint Programme. A key aim of this support is to entrench gender sensitive service delivery in the public sector among government-wide programmes (UN, 2015).

3. Priority issues towards women’s empowerment

Political empowerment

Women’s political participation is low but rising gradually in Georgia, and women are gaining more skills and experience through engaging in political processes. The UN (2015) reports that women represent only 12 per cent of parliamentarians (rarely in leadership roles) and that only 11.6 per cent women were elected in local elections in 2014 (up from 11 per cent in 2010). There is no quota for women’s parliamentary representation. However, in 2011 the election code and law on political parties were amended, and further changes made in 2014. The revisions provide for **30 per cent financing to parties with at least 3 women out of 10** names on the candidate list (UNICEF, 2014). CEDAW (2014) recommends that the political quota be mandatory and there be greater representation of women at senior levels, including in local legislative bodies. The main reasons for women’s absence from elected office include lack of financing, traditional societal attitudes, little experience in public life roles, notably in leadership, and low interest among women (Duban, 2010). The Institute for Social Studies and Analysis (2014) reports findings in their study conducted in Kvemo Kartli region that a majority of ethnic minority women surveyed (78 per cent) had no information about local political issues or responsibilities – this was even higher (81 per cent) in rural areas. This data is actually an improvement from previous studies in 2011, which indicated 91 per cent of women were uninformed. Findings also indicated the majority of women did not participate in any form of local planning, budgeting or evaluation of implementation (Institute for Social Studies and Analysis, 2014).

Duban’s (2010) gender assessment indicated that NGO/civil society advocates of gender equality were often not invited to wider policy discussions which have gender implications, despite the establishment of some formal mechanisms for government-civil society consultation. This raises questions about the government’s commitment to civil society engagement and overcoming marginalisation of women’s rights. Duban (2010) similarly reported that women’s organisations outside the capital feel even more marginalised, and have little access to funding to support their activities. The findings also showed that women NGO leaders were unsatisfied with donor-support approaches as these were often short-term projects (i.e. suited to donor priorities), rather than longer-term empowerment efforts (e.g. advocacy, legislative reform) (Duban, 2010).

Through the UNJP on gender equality, UN agencies are promoting women’s engagement in decision-making while also strengthening public institutions and local governments to incorporate gender-sensitive approaches in their planning and interventions, such as in service delivery. A number of activities are being implemented under the UNJP, including: strengthening capacities, notably of the Gender Equality Advisory Council and the Council on Human Rights, and enhancing their collaboration with civil society organisations (CSO); providing capacity development to executive authorities as well as to local authorities (e.g. women’s councillor’s forums, elected officials) and municipal service providers; supporting public awareness campaigns and advocacy nationwide regarding gender roles and gender equality; and mainstreaming gender priorities into the civil service reform plan and draft law.
UNDP is supporting women’s inclusion in decision-making processes through multiple entry points. For example, training female councillors; promoting the institutionalisation of sex-disaggregated data collection and analysis to support the Central Electoral Commission; and supporting women in rural communities to gain knowledge and skills in participatory governance (UNDP, 2015). With regard to peacekeeping, UNDP (2015) has also supported women’s participation in reconciliation processes. In relation to the judicial sector specifically, UNDP has successfully supported the incorporation of gender equality principles and issues into the curriculum for training of future judges (UNDP, 2015). Also of note, the Open Government Partnership (OGP) 2014-2015 plan, supported through USAID, has multiple entry points to potentially leverage enhancing women’s participation in public decision-making and engagement in public sphere discourse (USAID, 2014). The programme aims to improve transparency and citizen participation and enhance governance performance with planning processes based on extensive consultation. Priorities of the plan include improving the following: public services; public integrity; management of public resources; and creating safer communities.

In her gender assessment report Duban (2010) advises a number of strategies to USAID for moving forward on gender issues specifically, including: supporting networks to support and advocate for women’s empowerment and build their alliances with other organisations; working with political parties to include women on party lists and also develop campaigns around women’s issues; enhancing leadership for young women and girls and promoting their involvement in political work; promoting GRB approaches, notably to improve women’s access to services and resources; and supporting implementation of the national action plan on gender equality. These are viable entry points for donors to support and build partnerships.

Economic empowerment

The business environment in Georgia overall has shown consistent improvement. Indeed, the country is ranked as the top improver since 2005 in Eastern Europe and Central Asia and globally according to the World Bank’s Doing Business index and ranked 24 out of 189 countries in 2016 (EBRD, 2015; World Bank, 2016). Reforms and improvements in the tax system, for example, have been accomplished, and overall corruption is low – Georgia ranks 48 out of 167 countries in the Transparency International’s Corruption Perceptions Index in 2015 (EBRD, 2013; Transparency International, 2016).

Despite an improving economic environment, challenges exist in the business environment, and particularly for women to participate and benefit from economic opportunities. Entrepreneurial development for both men and women is weak, though it is more acutely felt by women, and is due to a combination of factors, e.g. a weak entrepreneurial-promotion policy and legal environment, poorly skilled employees, limited access to finance, an absence of a “culture” of entrepreneurship, and for women, patriarchal attitudes and social customs that underpin traditional gender roles and limit women’s opportunities (i.e. women are caretakers) (ADB, 2014; UN, 2015; Duban, 2010; World Bank, 2014; Kuriakose, 2013). The World Economic Forum’s Global Gender Gap Index reports Georgia ranking at 82 among 145 countries, with a score of 0.692 (1 being the highest) in the overall economic participation score (indicating the female to male gap in economic participation is 69.2 per cent). Figures particularly low for women’s economic participation include estimated earned income 0.50 (i.e. female to male ratio is 50 per cent) and female legislators, senior officials and managers (0.51) (World Economic Forum, 2015). Further, contextual data shows vertical segregation – only 32 per cent of firms have top female managers, while 34 per cent have female participation in ownership. Kuriakose (2013) found only 20 per cent as firm founders in her survey based on World Bank 2012 entrepreneurship surveys. Women tend to own micro- and small businesses rather than large ones, but tend to employ more women than male-owned firms (Duban, 2010).
Duban (2010) reports constraints women face in starting or expanding businesses including corruption, access to finance (high levels of collateral), and security.

Unemployment is high in Georgia, at 14.6 per cent in 2013 – female labour force participation is much lower compared to male’s (57 per cent and 75 per cent respectively) as is the female employment rate (48.8 per cent compared to 54.5 per cent) (UN, 2015; Duban, 2010). The gender wage rate differential is an estimated 34.8 per cent, with women occupying lower-paid jobs, which are not commensurate with their educational levels (UN, 2015). Arganashvili (2015) reports that salaries for women are lower in every sector, largely due to a glass ceiling caused by discrimination and preventing women rising in employment leaving them to rely on low-paying jobs. The pay gap prevails in both private and public sectors. Occupational segregation is reported, whereby women dominate traditionally viewed “feminine” jobs such as education, social assistance etc. although typically not in senior and higher-paying positions, and are represented more in the informal, unoffical economy (Duban, 2010; ADB, 2014). Despite some amendments to the labour code in 2013 (e.g. maternity protection), there is need to address a number of employment issues for women (through legislation and policy support) concerning: women’s low-pay job status; equal pay for equal work; addressing care responsibilities; and sexual harassment in the workplace (CEDAW, 2013; Arganashvili, 2015). Another critical feature characterising the economic landscape for women is labour migration. Hofmann and Buckley (2013), in their study on the feminisation of migration in Georgia, argue that the dramatic increase in women’s labour migration, due largely to the absence of local economic opportunities, can potentially create conditions for a change or reframing of cultural stereotypic beliefs. This can provide pathways for renegotiated views, or cognitive adjustments, of women’s status and can then lead to women’s greater autonomy and empowerment. Evidence suggests, however, that women’s labour migration still aligns with traditional gender stereotypes, although there seems to a reframing of traditional caregiving roles. Further research is recommended.

NGOs and donors share similar concerns and priorities with regard to improving gender equality in the economic and business sectors. Recommendations put forward by NGOs focus first on the “care economy” concept, which needs to be better integrated into policymaking so that women’s unpaid domestic work is acknowledged (UNECE, 2014). NGOs also recommend that government should give more focus to projects for rural women, facilitating improvements in their agricultural production activities. Further, NGOs put emphasis on addressing the absence of state credit programmes or micro-finance institutions (MFI) with a focus on women (e.g. focused products), even though women are almost half of MFI clients (UNECE, 2014). The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (2014) highlights constraints on financial inclusion for women, noting that rural women’s access to credit (in their own right) is particularly difficult (UNECE, 2014). Land is often used as collateral in accessing financial credit, and although women and men share equal rights in law to own and access land and other property, in practice, land is usually registered in the man’s name only, particularly in rural areas. Women therefore face difficulties accessing loans, and more generally, have little influence over economic decisions or awareness of their rights (OECD, 2014). EBRD (2013) similarly highlights critical challenges to business development such as access to capital, the need to enhance corporate governance and business standards, and to improve agricultural sector efficiency, all of which they address in their strategic operations (e.g. develop local supply chains); these have potentially vast implications to strengthen women’s empowerment.

Multiple donors are supporting components of the economic sector. UNJP’s five-year programme (2015-2019) (a follow up to the first joint programme) is supporting a range of interventions in selected areas to strengthen women’s economic empowerment and promote a favourable governance and enabling economic environment including at local levels. The programme supports: women’s employability (e.g. vocational training and professional programmes, women’s participation in cooperatives); women’s
business development including broadening access to finance and promoting linkages with government-supported MFI programmes; women’s engagement in community self-government bodies and specifically in local decision-making and policy-making; and advocacy and promotion for programme scale up (e.g. success stories, study tours, local media). UNDP (2015) reports setting up three cooperatives enhancing rural women’s agricultural income base and also supporting nearly 300 women and 10 men in agricultural vocational training to increase their self-employment rates. UN Women is also giving particular emphasis to internally-displaced persons (IDP) who are women, promoting local infrastructure and services (e.g. affordable childcare) to improve their social and economic conditions and livelihoods. UN Women is partnering with the private sector to promote gender equality, specifically focussing on developing employment opportunities for survivors of violence and for female entrepreneurs (see Georgia website below). Despite this range of support, UN agencies made an appeal to other donors to collaborate in scaling up these initiatives nationwide (UN, 2015).

Asian Development Bank’s gender analysis and country strategy plan (2014-2018) parallels UN agency support. It includes capacity building, business skills development, business network promotion for women, and supporting a gender equitable approach to national reforms, specifically pension reform and old-age income. They also identify as important improving sex-disaggregated statistics with gender analysis to inform programmes and projects, and encouraging inclusion of women-focused CSOs for collaboration with their activities (ADB, 2014).

Of note, the World Bank 2014-2017 country partnership strategy includes objectives that contribute directly and indirectly to improving gender equality in the economic sector and business environment. For example, identified outcomes (with indicators disaggregated) include: improving decentralised public services, notably for women; strengthening citizen engagement in local development and social accountability; increasing enterprise/firms’ development of new products; increasing access to finance (e.g. diversified products, sources of funds); and improving labour market demand – workforce supply match (with gender differentiation) through training, improved information systems and policy reform (World Bank, 2014).

Duban (2010) suggests a range of measures to improve women’s economic opportunities and labour contribution, including: promoting women’s rights to secure property; strengthening lending agencies’ (e.g. MFI) gender-sensitive practices (credit, business support) and tracking implementation; assessing and improving upon the business environment to ease women’s enterprise ownership; promoting women’s equitable decision-making with men on household income; and assessing agricultural projects and access to farming technologies and services in relation to gender equality to ensure women benefit equally to men.

Sociocultural attitudes: gender stereotyping

The patriarchal stereotypes and practices in Georgia are driven by and sustained through multiple factors and channels such as traditional views regarding the gender division of labour (e.g. women’s double burden of work and care), women in lower-level employment positions with lower paying salaries, and pervasive underlying discriminatory perceptions and attitudes about women in society (e.g. violence against women). These views are continuously reinforced through public discourse, the media and perpetuation of sociocultural beliefs and behaviours (Marra, 2009, 2014; ADB, 2014; UN, 2015). A worrying impact of this discrimination is the gender imbalance in childbirth – by 2011 the boy to girl ratio was 111 to 100, indicating a large proportion of missing girls at birth (ADB, 2014; UN, 2015). Cultural beliefs spill over to the economic sphere, affecting family benefits, women’s access to finance, business services and support, information
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networks, etc. This limits women’s capacities to generate income and benefit from government policies and programmes that promote entrepreneurial development and market-oriented initiatives. These cultural norms also affect the public sphere, leading to women’s low participation in formal decision-making, public office and leadership (Duban, 2010). Effective awareness-raising on gender equality for the wider public is greatly needed (Marra, 2009; CEDAW, 2014).

Despite relative gender parity in school attendance rates, high numbers of girls were reported to drop out around the ages 12-15 years, most likely due to early marriage. Of note, data indicate up to 17 per cent of Georgian women are married before the 18 years (in some cases through bride kidnapping), which is the highest among European countries (UNECE, 2014; OECD, 2014; UN, 2015). Seen as a problematic situation, government plans to undertake research on the topic and address the issue through policy and action plans comprising sensitisation and education campaigns related to gender equality and youth development. It should be noted that educational materials in schools have been found to reinforce gender stereotypes, which contribute to girls steering away from areas of science, technology and engineering (UNECE, 2014).

Greater action is needed to combat discrimination and stereotypic attitudes about women. In addition to increasing attention to implementation of the various laws (including allocation of required resources), awareness-raising, particularly for women, is a priority recommendation. This should also include promoting shared responsibilities between men and women, promoting women’s economic independence, and strengthening civil society alliances and performance (CEDAW, 2014; USAID, 2014).

Gender based violence

Rates of violence against women in Georgia – consisting of domestic violence, sexual harassment, and trafficking – are high and have serious effects on women’s social, economic and political participation (ADB, 2014; CEDAW, 2014; UNECE, 2014). It is estimated about every 11th women in a relationship in Georgia experiences physical violence and 35 per cent experience controlling behaviours, according to a 2010 survey (ADB, 2014). A range of critical policy and legal instruments as well as national action plans have been developed to address violence against women, including provision of assistance and services to victims, and capacity building for key government entities and staff (e.g. Ministry of Interior, police academy) (UNECE, 2014). With the recent ratification of the Istanbul convention, formal measures are in place to enhance the country’s response to violence. Disclosure of violence is low however, due to stigma, fear, shame and lack of trust in the system, but a study on perceptions and attitudes shows a rise in intolerance of violence against women, and that people are increasingly viewing domestic violence as a crime rather than a domestic family affair (UNECE, 2014; CEDAW, 2014; Duban, 2010). It has been found, however, that police do not yet fully understand the domestic violence issue or measures to protect women, despite ongoing capacity building.

Civil society is active in awareness-raising activities, and in assisting victims, but they require more resources (CEDAW, 2014). Female IDPs, particularly conflict-related, are a target group being specifically supported by government, donors and partners, including through legal aid, capacity building of government staff, and facilitating IDP women’s business start-up. More work is needed to improve implementation of the policy, and improve the socio-cultural environment in relation to violence against women, specifically IDP women (Duban, 2010). Recommended priority actions are implementing and monitoring the various laws in place, increasing awareness-raising, ensuring adequate resources to assist victims of violence and trafficking, and reinforcing security/police capacities (UNECE, 2014; CEDAW, 2014; OECD, 2014). The UNJP is supporting several initiatives in this regard, many building on previous UN efforts: providing technical assistance to government and civil society in the review, reform/update and
preparation of relevant legal and policy measures and action plans as needed to address violence against women; assisting government to monitor implementation of these measures, notably the newly ratified Istanbul convention; capacity building and professional training to service providers working in areas of violence against women and gender equality, judiciary and legal sectors, police, ministerial units (social workers, education, etc.), NGOs, and the media; and public awareness support (UN, 2015, UN Women website, n.d., see below). UN Women is working with government in supporting the country’s first women’s shelters (four in place), and is also launching a domestic violence helpline for survivors of domestic violence (UN Women website, n.d. see below).

4. References


Priority gender issues in Georgia


Priority gender issues in Georgia


Key websites

- UN Women – Georgia  
  http://georgia.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/economic-empowerment

- United National Development Programme (UNDP) – Georgia  
  http://www.ge.undp.org/

- European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) – Georgia  
  http://www.ebrd.com/where-we-are/georgia/overview.html

- United States Agency for International Development (USAID) – Georgia  
  https://www.usaid.gov/georgia

- Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) – Social Institution and Gender Index (SIGI)  
  http://www.genderindex.org/country/georgia

- United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) – Gender  
  http://www.unece.org/gender/welcome.html

Suggested citation


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Priority gender issues in Moldova – with consideration to gender and governance

Pamela Pozarny

10.06.2016

Question

What does the literature indicate as priority gender issues in Moldova? Note links concerning gender and governance topics and any existing programmes in this regard.  

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1. Overview

The gender context in Moldova reflects persistent biases and discriminating practices concerning gender roles and equality. Recent policy and legal reforms that ensure equal rights and opportunities to women and men, and protection of women and girls against violence, provide a favourable environment supporting gender equality and women’s empowerment. But implementation of laws and policies across social, economic and political sectors is lagging largely due to slowness on the part of those responsible, deep-seated patriarchal norms, resistance to change, budgetary constraints and subsequent over-reliance on donors (UN Women website, n.d., see below; Cozzarelli, 2011; CEDAW, 2013; Sattar et al., 2014; World Bank, 2013). A range of partners are working with government and civil society to promote gender equality and women’s and girls’ empowerment in diverse areas, including broadening economic opportunities, supporting gender-sensitive democratisation by increasing women’s representation in government and public financing, and implementing measures to combat gender-based violence (UN Women website, n.d., see below, UNDP website, 2016, see below).

Literature for this review draws from a mixture of sources including research, assessments, strategic programmes and evaluations of government and major international development agencies, journal

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Governance topics of high interest include: 1) tax reform and business environment; 2) public financial management reform; 3) liberalisation and modernisation of growth sectors; 4) rule of law, democratic accountability, and police and justice reform; and 5) independent media.
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publications and agency websites – the majority is based on empirical evidence. Moldova is still in a transitional phase to democracy and in the early stages of operationalising formalised democratic principles, laws and democratic systems and structures. In addition, gender equality is currently an emerging issue on the national agenda. Due to these factors, the body of evidence, and availability of sex-disaggregated data regarding gender and governance, is still limited (Cozzarelli, 2011; Moisic-Lisjak and Caraseni, 2010).

Key findings from the literature include:


- The law established a Commission for Equality between Women and Men, representing all ministries. The Commission coordinates monitoring implementation of the Gender Equality Law and the aligned National Strategy on Gender Equality (NSGE) and associated National Action Plan (NAP) for 2010-2015. Other ministries are required to create gender units or councils, and local public administrations are also required to establish gender focal points. There are multiple barriers to effective functioning of these structures.

- Gender issues do not feature prominently in the media; there is almost no coverage of women’s rights or gender equality. The media portrays occupational stereotypes: men but not women are seen as working as professionals, employed in fields such as politics and economics, while women are portrayed in traditional household roles (UNECE, 2014; Cozzarelli, 2011).

- Gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) is a priority for the government, at national and local levels (UNECE, 2014). With support from UNDP and UN Women, an action plan has been drafted for parliament to integrate GRB in its work (2013-2022) and there is an ongoing UN Women regional programme covering Moldova, which has developed a gender-responsive budgeting masters’ course that will be the first of its kind in the region (UN Women and UNDP websites, n.d. see below).

- Women’s political representation is low in Moldova and is a key priority for government (UN Women website, n.d., see below; CEDAW, 2013; Bulte, 2015; Sattar et al., 2014; UNECE, 2014). Limited engagement is due to multiple challenges facing women, e.g. weak enabling environment and climate for participatory decision-making, low access to information and networks, little economic independence, lack of role models, low self-esteem and confidence, socio-cultural constraints (e.g. childcare), discrimination, and intimidation. Women are underrepresented in leading roles in government, politics, and civil society, as well as business.

- Difficulties posed by the economic and employment environment effect men and women similarly, but UN Women, among others, contends that women face specific challenges linked to education, skills and labour barriers, and traditional stereotypic views of gender roles (UN Women website, n.d., see below; UNECE, 2014; EBRD, 2014; Turcan and Colesnicova, 2013).

- Economic empowerment of women and strengthening their financial independence is a key priority for government (UNECE, 2014). Women’s engagement in some form of entrepreneurialism is reported at 25 per cent, almost twice as high as the average regional rate
Priority gender issues in Moldova

(Sattar et al., 2014). However, women in Moldova are less represented in the private sector than men (number of businessmen is 2.6 times higher than businesswomen), tend to have smaller micro-enterprises, hire less employees, earn less revenue and are less likely to engage in export markets (Sattar et al., 2014; Cozzarelli, 2011; World Bank, 2013; UNECE, 2014; Turcan and Colescova, 2013).

- **Expectations** about women being the primary care-giver and assuming household responsibilities and men being the primary bread-winners are entrenched, and further reinforced through education, media and advertising (Cozzarelli, 2011; CEDAW, 2013; UN Women, website, n.d., see below; Sattar et al., 2014).

- **Domestic violence is a serious problem** – there is clear consensus in the literature that domestic violence and human trafficking are highly prevalent, yet still insufficiently addressed (Cozzarelli, 2011; NBS, 2011; UN Women website, n.d. see below; CEDAW, 2013; OECD, 2014; UNECE, 2014). The literature suggests that inconsistency and weak application of the law concerning violence against women, low service provision (including support services), and limited resources are the main reasons for insufficiently tackling violence against women and girls.

2. National context

**Legal and policy environment**

The constitution of the Republic of Moldova guarantees equal rights to women and men, and the country has ratified the Beijing Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). The Law on Ensuring the Equality of Opportunities between Women and Men (Gender Equality Law) was adopted in 2006, and focuses on gender and equal opportunities and prohibits discrimination based on sex. The law specifies the bodies which are responsible for ensuring gender equality across the government (Cozzarelli, 2011; CEDAW, 2013). Other relevant and critical laws of note include the Law on Prevention and Combating Violence in the Family (2008) and the Law on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Human Beings (2005). Revision of the national labour law was also undertaken to enhance provision of protective measures for women (e.g. sexual harassment, childcare flexibility). Moldova has not yet signed the Istanbul convention concerning violence against women (OECD, 2014). Implementation of these laws and policies is lagging, largely due to slowness on the part of those responsible, deep-seated patriarchal norms, resistance to change, budgetary constraints and over-reliance on donors (UN Women website, n.d., see below; Cozzarelli, 2011; CEDAW, 2013; Sattar et al., 2014; World Bank, 2013; UNECE, 2014). Awareness of the laws among parliamentarians, judges and others in the judicial sector is also low; this is needed, particularly in relation to domestic violence (CEDAW; 2013; Bulte, 2015; OECD, 2014).

The National Strategy on Gender Equality (NSGE) and associated National Action Plan (NAP) for 2010-2015 outlines eight priorities: employment and labour migration, gender responsive budgeting (GRB), women’s participation in political decision-making, social protection and family, education, health care, violence and human trafficking, and public awareness (Cozzarelli, 2011; UNECE, 2014). There are problems in assuring alignment among these, including harmonising interventions and actions, budgets and responsible lead units, all coordinated by the National Commission (see below). It is further noted by Cozzarelli (2011) that more robust partnerships should be developed with civil society, donors and the media.
Institutional environment

The main entity responsible for overseeing implementation of the Gender Equality Law, as well as human trafficking, is the Department for Equal Opportunities and Prevention of Violence in the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family (MoLSPF). Other ministries are required to create gender units or councils, and local public administrations are also required to establish gender focal points. The law also established the Commission for Equality between Women and Men, led by the Vice Prime Minister and with representatives from all ministries. The Commission coordinates overall monitoring of the implementation of the Gender Equality Law and the NAP.

There are multiple barriers to effective functioning of these structures, including: staff are typically junior; action plans to be financed by respective ministries or donors are under-resourced; coordination among entities is weak; and gender mainstreaming is insufficient in line ministries (CEDAW, 2013; Cozzarelli, 2011). In addition, focal points are often ineffective as they view their gender work as an “add on” to their ongoing tasks, and are often ill-suited for the assignment (Cozzarelli, 2011; Bulte, 2015). Institutional and human capacity strengthening is recommended (Bulte, 2015). Gender focal points which are to be established at local levels are in many cases absent, largely due to budget constraints (Cozzarelli, 2011; UNECE, 2014).

There is also limited knowledge or experience of gender issues, for example of GRB. These weaknesses are compounded by the fact that to date, availability and use of sex-disaggregated data by government staff has not been comprehensive. UN Women, along with UNDP, have consistently supported the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) in building capacity in the collection, use and analysis of this type of data; notably to contextualise the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 3 indicators (Cozzarelli, 2011; Moisic-Lisjak and Caraseni, 2010; UNECE, 2014). In February 2015, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) launched a Gender Statistics department, with support from UNDP and UN Women. Sex-disaggregated data is grouped into sections including: women’s economic empowerment, education and training, participation in decision-making processes, and health (Bulte, 2015). This data will be widely available, for example to parliament for their legislative work and to other decision-makers (UNECE, 2014). Abdurazakova (2010) also reports gender training for civil servants has been in practice in Moldova for the past several years.

There are few credible CSOs/NGOs working consistently on gender issues. UNECE (2014) reports that of the 8,200 registered CSOs in the country, only about 25 per cent are active and 4.6 per cent focussed on women’s issues. Within this their focus is mostly on providing social services to women (e.g. victims of violence), but also on engaging in the political process, legislation formulation, and promoting economic empowerment, notably in rural areas, as well as on legal literacy and working with the media. Coordination is reported as effective in many sectors, and collaboration with government as favourable. There are several platforms of exchange (see UNDP below), including some linked with government, with the aim to enhance policy dialogue and monitoring of implementation of laws and policies (UNECE, 2014). However budgetary constraints are formidable for CSOs, and capacity is weak, which hinders their activities and ability, notably to serve as ‘watchdogs’ of government (Cozzarelli, 21010).

The media

Gender issues do not feature prominently in the media; there is almost no coverage of women’s rights or gender equality. The media portrays occupational stereotypes, men but not women are presented as working, as professionals, employed in fields such as politics and economics, while women are portrayed in traditional household roles (UNECE, 2014; Cozzarelli, 2011). This may be due to insufficient awareness and capacity (Cozzarelli, 2011). Overall, women are well represented as journalists, but reportedly scarce in decision-making roles (Cozzarelli, 2011; OECD, 2014). Cozzarelli (2011) reports that the media presents
sexist material, traditional gender roles are reinforced, women are often presented as ‘victims’, and female journalists often produce reports on ‘softer’ women’s issues. NGOs contend there is an absence of prevention measures in place to control for sexism in the media (OECD, 2014). Awareness raising has been promoted, for example by the Association of Independent Press (AIP) supported by UN Women, through a series of roundtable discussions on how journalists can change how they portray women and gender equality (UNECE, 2014).

Public financial management: gender-responsive budgeting (GRB)

As noted, GRB is a priority for the government, at national and local levels (UNECE, 2014). With support from UNDP and UN Women, an action plan has been drafted for parliament to integrate GRB in its work (2013-2022). A GRB working group has been created to promote training (of relevant stakeholders) and to organise gender analyses of ministerial programmes and budgets (Bulte, 2015). This parallels the national decentralisation strategy and action plan (2012-2015), based on the decentralisation law, which includes principles of gender equality and emphasises for the first time GRB in the context of decentralisation in order to reduce gender inequalities. There is, however, concern that the strategy does not specify separate budgets for women’s programmes, but only provides for adjustments of public resources to improve gender equality (UNECE, 2014). An ongoing UN Women regional programme covering Moldova aims to support central and local governments with CSO participation to implement GRB through planning and budgeting processes. The programme also supports exchange among countries to share good practices (UN Women website, n.d., see below). In Moldova, specifically, the project has worked with a leading university in economic studies to develop a gender-responsive budgeting masters’ course that will be the first of its kind in the region (UNWOMEN, n.d., see below). Related to this, a UN Women -UNDP joint integrated local development programme (JILDP) is supporting government efforts to reform policies and laws to improve service delivery by local authorities, including through enhanced social inclusion and engagement of men and women, and increased fiscal decentralisation (UN Women website, n.d., see below).

3. Priority issues towards women’s empowerment

Political empowerment

Women’s political representation is low in Moldova and is a key priority for government (UN Women website, n.d., see below; CEDAW, 2013; Bulte, 2015; Sattar et al., 2014; UNECE, 2014). UNECE (2014) reports limited engagement is due to multiple challenges facing women, e.g. the weak enabling environment and climate for participatory decision-making, women’s low level of access to information and networks, low level of economic independence, lack of role models, low self-esteem and confidence, socio-cultural constraints (e.g. childcare), discrimination and intimidation. Women are under-represented in leading roles in government, politics, and civil society, as well as business. The Gender Equality Law states that Parliament will: adopt gender-sensitive laws; monitor gender impacts; and will hold other state institutions accountable to promote gender equality (Bulte, 2015). However, as of September 2015, Bulte (2015) reports there were just 22 female members of parliament (MP), representing only 21.78 per cent of MPs. This is below the 40 per cent recommendation of the Council of Europe (the regional average for Europe – OSCE countries excluding Nordic countries is 24.4 per cent) and below Moldova’s 30 per cent target for the Millennium Development Goals (Bulte, 2015). This low number is mainly due to women’s small representation and low placement on political party candidate lists (20 per cent of eligible places). A draft law in place provides for establishing a 40 per cent quota for either women or men on political party electoral lists and a temporary measure encouraging respect for the 40 per cent quota for female
MPs (Bulte, 2015). With regard to leadership positions, Bulte (2015) reports one of two deputy speakers is a woman, two women are chairs among the five Parliamentary Factions, and four of the nine standing committees are chaired by women.

Bulte (2015) contends few efforts have been made to mainstream gender equality in parliament. He also underlines as a critical pending issue the harmonisation of national laws relevant to gender equality, as recommended by CEDAW (CEDAW, 2013). He provides a comprehensive set of recommendations, namely: increase numbers of women MPs, establish a stronger policy and legislation environment on gender equality, and increase sensitisation of MPs on gender issues. He also highlights as critical the need for capacity building of Parliament to analyse and address how its work impacts women in society. UNDP and UN Women’s advocacy for the establishment of a Cross-Party Women’s Caucus is an initiative in support of female MPs. First steps have included a number of female MPs (from all political groups) meeting to discuss the creation of a common platform for dialogue on women’s role in public life and politics as agents of change. As a result, a Coordination Council of the Women’s Platform has been established consisting of five members, one member from each Parliamentary Faction (Bulte, 2015).

In 2011, the executive branch of government had few women in higher positions, with only one female minister of 17 (Labour). UNECE (2014) reports five ministerial positions held by women and in 2015 the World Economic Forum reported that 28 per cent of females were appointed in ministerial portfolio positions. Local government reflects similar patterns, with only 3.1 per cent female heads of Council, 20.6 per cent mayors, 18.55 per cent district and municipal councillors, and 30.04 per cent local councillors (note UNECE, 2014 reports slightly different ratios) (UN Women website, n.d. see below; Cozzarelli, 2011). OECD (2014) reports that in the 2011 local elections, most political parties met a self-imposed 30 per cent quota of female candidates for council seats. The justice sector overall, has been described as dysfunctional, and in need of reform due to unfair trials, improper treatment and violations of citizen rights (Cozzarelli, 2011). On average in 2008, about 35 per cent of sitting judges and 27 per cent of registered lawyers were female (Cozzarelli, 2011).

UN Women -UNDP is supporting gender equality and increased political participation under the Women in Politics (WIP) initiative, which includes training of political candidates, supporting civil education (including to the media), promoting women in electoral processes (as candidates and voters), supporting gender responsive electoral management, as well as increasing media coverage of gender issues (UN Women website, n.d.; UNDP website, 2016, see below). Impacts to date are many, including: eight voter education campaigns that increased voter turnout by 60 per cent; training of 1,000 female candidates, helping in the election of 98 women in various positions; promoting the gender quota in politics; training 200 elected women councillors; and strengthening capacity in gender equality issues of key MPs and committees of parliament. The project also assisted in formalising the Gender Equality Platform, comprising 19 NGOs/CSOs advocating for gender equality. UNDP with partners are also supporting parliamentary public hearings to consult with citizens on key policies. Vulnerable women are reported to have had particularly active participation in regional hearings (UNDP website, 2016, see below). In addition, UNDP is supporting activities to strengthen the capacity of the justice sector, including in gender issues, anti-discrimination and human rights (UNDP website, 2016, see below).

Economic empowerment

The business environment in Moldova is challenging, similar to other transitional countries (Sattar et al., 2014). Moldova ranks 52 out of 189 countries according to the World Bank’s Doing Business index 2016 (World Bank, 2016) – it ranks particularly highly on starting a new business (26 out of 189 countries), above
the regional average and comparative economies. The domestic market, however, has limited competition and low innovation, which is further constrained by an undeveloped and relatively closed regional market economy and high cross-border costs (World Bank, 2013). Other obstacles to doing business include weak institutional and administrative capacities, high tax rates, an inadequately educated labour force, lack of access to land and finance, corruption, a partial judicial system and political instability (Sattar et al., 2014; World Bank, 2013; EBRD, 2014). Corruption is a concern – Moldova ranked 33 out of 167 countries in Transparency International’s Corruption Perceptions Index in 2015 with a score of 33, well below the regional average of 54 (World Bank, 2013; Transparency International, 2016). Indications suggest high corruption may also have gender implications – female managers are reported twice as likely to give gifts for government contracts as males.

The government has identified private sector development as a priority in the national development strategy ‘Moldova 2020’ in order to improve economic growth (EBRD, 2014). There have been efforts to improve the business environment, such as civil service reforms to professionalise the civil service and business environment; easing of administrative and regulatory steps for business; and strengthening the trade climate (World Bank, 2013, EBRD, 2014). Difficulties posed by the economic and employment environment in the country effect men and women in similar ways, however UN Women, among others, contends that women face specific challenges linked to education, skills and labour barriers and traditional stereotypic views of gender roles (UN Women website, n.d., see below; UNECE, 2014; EBRD, 2014; Turcan and Colesnicova, 2013). Women are reported as making up 49.5 per cent of the economically active population, with an unemployment rate (5.7 per cent), slightly lower than men’s (8.9 per cent), and an inactivity rate in the labour market reported as 60 per cent (compared to men at 50 per cent) (2007 data) (Cozzarelli, 2011). The World Bank (2013) reports that only 37 per cent of working age women have jobs (2010 data). The wage gap is evidence of discrimination – women’s earning are 73.3 per cent those of men. UNECE (2014) reports this is largely due to women being in traditionally ‘female jobs’ (e.g. healthcare), but adds that the wage gap is improving (women earned 12.2 per cent less than men in 2012-2013) (UN Women website n.d. see below). The WEF Global Gender Gap Index 2015 reports Moldova ranking at 26 among 145 countries, with a score of 0.742 (1 being the highest). The overall economic participation score (indicating the female to male gap in economic participation) is 79.7 per cent, well above the entire sample score of 59.2 per cent, and also within the top half of countries in the Europe and Central Asia regional rankings. It should be noted, however, that WEF (2015) reports the political empowerment parity score is 19.9 per cent, lower than the sample average of 23 per cent (WEF, 2015).

A range of barriers to entering employment confront women, including household obligations, lack of support services (e.g. childcare), low levels of self-confidence and persistent patriarchal stereotypes (Cozzarelli, 2011; UN Women website n.d., see below; Turcan and Colesnicova, 2013). Access to finance is noted as particularly challenging for women, who often resort to informal sources of financing. Cozzarelli (2011) found that some men resent the fact that some employment programmes (e.g. donors) target women exclusively, despite that men also suffer the effects of unemployment. The World Bank argues policy measures should be adopted with flexible schemes to increase women’s labour participation rates and provide higher economic opportunities for unemployed women.

Economic empowerment of women and strengthening their financial independence is a key priority for the government (UNECE, 2014). Self-employment rates in Moldova are high compared to other countries in the region (Sattar et al., 2014). Women’s engagement in some form of entrepreneurial activity, reported at 25 per cent, is almost twice as high as the average rate of entrepreneurship among women
in the region (Sattar et al., 2014). However, women in Moldova are less represented in the private sector than men (number of businessmen is 2.6 times higher than businesswomen), tend to have smaller micro-enterprises, hire less employees, earn less revenue and are less likely to engage in export markets (Sattar et al., 2014; Cozzarelli, 2011; World Bank, 2013; UNECE, 2014; Turcan and Colesncova, 2013). Among businesses owned by women, only 5 per cent are large scale (UNECE, 2014). Turcan and Colesncova (2013) describe women’s business in Moldova as “still in its infancy (p. 316)”. Women-owned businesses predominantly operate in retail, food and construction sectors (Sattar et al., 2014). Women confront obstacles in owning enterprises – available data indicates only 27.5 per cent of managers and business owners are women, due in large part to lower education, less prior experience, gender stereotyping, and difficulties in accessing finance as well as accessing information (UN Women website, n.d.; Sattar et al., 2014; Cozzarelli, 2011; UNECE, 2014 – for statistical data). Of note, Cozzarelli (2011) reports that entrepreneurship is also not very attractive as an income source for young people. The business environment is reported as hostile to small and medium enterprises (UNECE, 2014).

Although women have equal inheritance rights, customary practices favour land and property transferal to youngest sons (OECD, 2014). This constrains women’s access to credit and loan services, as they have few assets to serve as collateral (OECD, 2014; UNECE, 2014). OECD (2014) reports data from a World Bank survey in 2011 that 73 per cent of loan applications were in the husband’s name, only 22 per cent were in the wife’s, and 4 per cent had both. OECD (2014) also reports findings from a UNDP 2011 assessment that 76 per cent of the women surveyed had never taken a loan. A main source of funds for women entrepreneurs is informal, from relatives or friends. Reluctance to take out loans has been reported by women, due to mistrust of institutions, costs of credit products and aversion to high risk (UNECE, 2014; Turcan and Colesncova, 2013).

The agricultural sector accounts for about 12 per cent of GDP and 50 per cent of total exports, and is the main income source for the bottom 40 per cent of the population. However, it is characterised by volatility, is highly vulnerable to climate shocks, and uncompetitive (World Bank, 2013). Men are the main decision-makers about irrigation and vineyards, while women tend to grow vegetable crops. Only 5 per cent of women (compared to 88 per cent of men) were reported as members of water associations and women reported they lacked technical knowledge and were less likely to participate in formal trainings than men (Cozzarelli, 2011).

Turcan and Colesncova (2013) offer recommendations to support women’s entrepreneurialism in Moldovia focussing on: training in business management; support to business start-up (e.g. technology transfer, equipment); support to market promotion; enhancing access to information through portals; continuing to pursue legal reforms conducive to business activities; and provision of social support measures. Donors appear well aligned with these recommendations in their promotion of the economic and business sector at large, and support for women’s economic empowerment specifically. For example, UN Women is supporting several initiatives, such as access to information and services for female entrepreneurs, notably in rural areas; advocating for policy/legal reform promoting women entrepreneurs, improving wages and working conditions; supporting advancement of migrant workers; and promoting women and girls’ access to information technology (UN Women, website, n.d., see below). Through a global programme funded by the European Union, UN Women is supporting a project, Women Migrant Workers’ Labour & Human Rights, which aims to raise awareness and response to the concerns of female migrant workers. The project promotes protection of women migrant workers’ rights by engaging with government, parliamentarians and national human rights groups. It also helps build the capacity of women migrant workers’ organisations to strategically engage with national stakeholders and hold them accountable.
UN Women has also been supporting a successful Joint Information and Services Bureaus since 2009. These are one-stop centers for business services and job placement. To date, they have helped over 15,000 people (60 per cent women and 82 per cent from rural areas) access a variety of public services. Indeed, they have worked so well they are now fully funded by the national government and functional in 30 out of 32 districts of the country (UN Women website, n.d., see below; UNECE, 2014). UN Women is also advancing digital literacy of women and girls, especially those from disadvantaged groups, through targeted training, advocacy and engagement in policy dialogues (UN Women website, n.d., see below). UNDP (UNDP website, 2016, see below) is supporting several economic empowerment programmes with either direct targeting of women or with high proportions of female beneficiaries. Examples are setting up networks of five career centres (with an estimated 60 per cent female beneficiaries) that provide assistance to enhance employability and promote entrepreneurship; and the creation of three business schools (with half of the 1,000 participants being female) (UNDP website, 2016, see below).

Another innovative UNDP initiative is the project ‘Supporting Moldova’s National Climate Change Adaptation Planning Process’ under which there is a grant scheme empowering women by encouraging equal participation in resilience-building entrepreneurial activities, including training in climate-resilient farming practices. As part of this effort there is a pilot project ‘Green energy for entrepreneurship activities’ offering consulting and other support to individuals on how to manage resources and fundraise. This has provided consulting to 17 entrepreneurs, including 12 women and five men, with 80 per cent of the women being from vulnerable families. This is a means to gain skills in entrepreneurial development and in climate-proofing businesses. Gender focal points (59 people) from government, the media, etc. have been also been trained on gender and climate change and an overall 800 people have gained skills (UNDP website, 2016, see below).

The World Bank’s Country Partnership Strategy (for Moldova 2014-2017) comprises three pillars: (a) increasing competitiveness to foster a business-enabling environment and governance, financial inclusion, transparency, enhanced private sector firms’ competitiveness and economic openness, and improved public service delivery; (b) enhancing human capital; education, health and social protection and (c) promoting resilience (climate-resilient agriculture, rural livelihoods, etc.). The World Bank intends mainstreaming gender perspectives throughout these programmes, based on a gender assessment. The Bank will also include gender-sensitive indicators in their results matrices (World Bank, 2013). EBRD supports female entrepreneurship throughout its programmes. In one example, a business consultancy programme for women, the Women in Business Programme, provides business advisory services as well as financial access to support companies, reimbursing about 60 per cent of consultancy value (UNECE, 2014; EBRD, 2014). Eligibility requires that the applicant company is owned or managed by women, or has more than 60 per cent of women as employees.

Sociocultural attitudes: gender stereotyping

Attitudes and stereotypes about traditional gender roles are broad-reaching. Expectations about women being the primary care-givers and assuming household responsibilities, and men being the primary bread-winners, are entrenched and further reinforced through education, media and advertising (Cozzarelli, 2011; CEDAW, 2013; UN Women, website, n.d., see below; Sattar et al., 2014). This creates a ‘double burden’ for women who participate in formal employment and even informal employment activities. Moreover, Cozzarelli (2011) found in her gender assessment that informants (especially men) generally did not understand the concept of gender and questioned the benefits of empowering women and promoting equal opportunity. Sattar et al. (2014) provide somewhat contrasting findings showing that women feel a good deal of autonomy, and that men and women believe both should share household
responsibilities and earn incomes, but that women also really prefer having a home with children. The relative absence of a credible and vibrant civil society movement promoting gender equality in the country has also been noted (Cozzarelli, 2011). To combat stereotyping and eliminate discrimination, CEDAW (2013) sets forth a number of recommendations such as: addressing the education sector (e.g. educational materials, teacher training); launching public awareness and training programmes for diverse target groups (e.g. decision-makers, employers); and prohibiting sexist advertising.

Despite near gender parity in educational attainment (0.996) (WEF, 2015), there are concerns about occupational segregation of women and girls into traditional female-dominated fields of study, notably at secondary and tertiary levels, with women’s under-representation in vocational training (32 per cent and 16 per cent for boys and girls respectively), and subjects of engineering, technological areas, etc. This negatively affects opportunities to enter high paying jobs in the labour market and could be improved through measures such as school counselling (CEDAW, 2013; Sattar et al., 2014; World Bank, 2013; UNECE, 2014). At the same time, CEDAW also recommends wage increases in female-dominated sectors (2013). The Ministry of Education is addressing this issue by encouraging less traditional gender-based fields of study and developing gender-sensitive curricula (UNECE, 2014). Early marriages are believed to be rare: the average age of women entering first marriage is 23 years, while for men it is 26 years (OECD, 2014). In rural areas however, 17 per cent of marriages registered include women less than 20 years, as compared to only 6 per cent in urban areas (OECD, 2014).

**Gender based violence**

Domestic violence is a serious problem in Moldova – there is clear consensus in the literature that domestic violence, as well as human trafficking are highly prevalent yet still insufficiently addressed (Cozzarelli, 2011; NBS, 2011; UN Women website, n.d. see below; CEDAW, 2013; OECD, 2014; UNECE, 2014). Preventing and fighting violence against women is identified as a key priority for government (UNECE, 2014). A comprehensive study on violence against women conducted by the NBS (2011) found that 63 per cent of women experienced some form of violence from their partner, 19 per cent of women have suffered sexual violence in their lifetime, and one in 10 experienced economic violence.7 Rural women, the elderly, those less educated, and various categories of single women (separated, divorced or widowed) had the highest rates of violence. It should be noted that, although men are most often perpetrators of violence, there are cases of women as violators (e.g. mothers, mothers-in-law). This affirms that the traditional family model – parents, parents-in-law – have disciplinary roles in society, which results in higher levels of acceptance of force to solve interpersonal conflicts (NBS, 2011). Data drawn from the government (Ministry of Interior) and presented by OECD (2014) gives a sense of the magnitude: in 2011, 369 cases of domestic violence were registered, and 222 protection orders were issued. In addition, 4,688 people were the target of ‘police prevention activities’ in relation to domestic violence (OECD, 2014).

Significantly, Moldova has one of the highest rates of human trafficking in the region, primarily as a source country. The country’s economic situation and domestic violence are main reasons for the persistent problem of trafficking of women, while men and boys are reported as trafficked for forced labour as well (largely towards Russia) (Sattar et al., 2014; OECD, 2014; World Bank, 2013).

More than half of the women reporting violence according to NBS (2011) said they did not officially report the incidents, because they considered it private, that they could cope, or due to shame. This reflects the social stigma associated with violence and beliefs that victims themselves may be inciting these events

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7 One intimate partner has control over the other partner’s access to economic resources, which diminishes the victim’s capacity to support him/herself and forces him/her to depend on the perpetrator financially.
Acceptance of violence is a result of stereotypic beliefs and remains largely unsanctioned, even though about 80 per cent of the population are aware it is a criminal offence enshrined in the domestic violence law (2008) (NBS, 2011). A further major obstacle is that domestic violence is still viewed very much as a private matter (OECD, 2014). Journalists interviewed said the issue was raised only sporadically in the media, and that too from a sensational perspective, rather than systematically, without analysing the offence to address the problem.

The literature suggests that **inconsistency and weak application of the law concerning violence against women, low service provision**, including support services (e.g. for female victims of human trafficking), and **limited resources** are the main reasons for insufficiently tackling violence against women and girls. Legal investigation is often not carried out in domestic violence cases, except when there has been serious harm. Areas requiring further attention and support include: strengthening enforcement of the law on domestic violence, awareness and training of specialists (e.g. judges, police, social services), and provision of centres for protection (NBS, 2011; Cozzarelli, 2011; CEDAW, 2013; Sattaer et al., 2014; OECD, 2014).

A priority of UN Women’s support in Moldova is **combating violence against women and girls**. This includes: advocacy for increased funding towards improved protection and prevention services; engaging local authorities in combating violence against women; and promoting national campaigns and specific budget allocations. They have also supported the first shelter for female victims (in Transnistria region) (UN Women website, n.d., see below). The government is committed to addressing the issue, and has taken multiple steps to combat the problem, such as capacity building of relevant professionals (e.g. police, judges), promoting the availability of services and centres for victims of violence, and consistently raising awareness and supporting campaigns, for example through the ‘16 Days Campaign’ concerning domestic violence at national and local levels (UNECE, 2014).

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- European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) – Moldova
  http://www.ebrd.com/moldova.html

- United States Agency for International Development (USAID) – Moldova
  https://www.usaid.gov/moldova/governing-justly-and-democratically

- Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) – Social Institution and Gender Index (SIGI) - Moldova
  http://www.genderindex.org/country/moldova

- United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) – Gender
  http://www.unece.org/gender/welcome.html

Suggested citation


About this report

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Priority gender issues in Serbia – with consideration to gender and governance

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10.06.2016

Question

What does the literature indicate as priority gender issues in Serbia? Note links concerning gender and governance topics and any existing programmes in this regard.  

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1. Overview

Serbia’s greatest successes in terms of gender equality have been achieved in the area of power and decision making, showing that the introduction of quotas for women’s political participation has been successful (Babović, 2016, p. 2). However, the gender pay gap is still too high in Serbia compared to other EU countries and women’s and men’s equal access to the labour market needs to be improved (Babović, 2016, p. 20). Serbia is the first country outside the EU to introduce the EU Index of Gender Equality. The gender equality index in the Republic of Serbia is 40.6, compared to the 52.9 average for the EU Member States; not yet half-way to achieving gender equality (Babović, 2016, p. 2, 22). This places it at the 22nd place in Europe. The Index also illustrates regional differences, with Belgrade the best performing

8 Governance topics of high interest include: 1) tax reform and business environment; 2) public financial management reform; 3) liberalisation and modernisation of growth sectors; 4) rule of law, democratic accountability, and police and justice reform; and 5) independent media.

9 http://eca.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2016/02/serbia-adopts-national-strategy-for-gender-equality#sthash.LaW7Suqh.dpuf 08.06.16

10 The Gender Equality Index is a tool for the EU to measure gender equality on a scale of 1 (complete inequality) to 100 (complete equality) in six areas: knowledge, labour, money, health, time, power, and two sub-areas: violence and intersecting inequalities.

11 http://rs.one.un.org/content/unct/serbia/en/home/presscenter/_what-is--not--a-female-job-in-serbia--my-job---my-right-.html 09.06.16
region, South and East Serbia the regions with the lowest scores in domains of work, money, and time, and Vojvodina, the region with lowest score in the domain of health (Babović, 2016, p. 50).

The literature uncovered by this rapid review consists of a mixture of mainly grey literature assessing various aspects of gender equality in Serbia, but not specifically considering gender and governance topics. There tends to be of focus on women rather than gender more widely. The literature is generally more descriptive than analytical. Available data is not always that recent or comparable.

Key findings from the literature include:

- The Serbian legal architecture and policy environment is favourable to gender equality, formalised through various laws and strategies; however, weaknesses in awareness and implementation of the law prevail.
- The new Coordinating Body for Gender Equality coordinates work in relation to gender equality. At the local level there are also mechanisms for gender equality. The administrative capacity on gender equality issues remains weak.
- Stereotypes are prevalent in the media, and communications reinforce traditional roles and fail to address gender equality.
- Support is being provided for the new gender responsive budgeting requirements in the Budget System Law.
- Policing and security are male dominated.
- Women’s political participation is above average as a result of a quota system. However, women are still under represented in powerful positions.
- Gender gaps in women’s employment, pay, and access to economic opportunities are above average. Challenges include gender stereotypes, childcare and family obligations, access to finance, and gender discrimination. Efforts to strengthen women’s entrepreneurship are being promoted.
- While in general, access to education is similar for boys and girls; Roma and disabled girls are less likely to be in education. Female students are concentrated in the areas of social sciences, humanities and arts.
- There are high levels of sexual and gender based violence, although many victims are reluctant to report it. Much more progress needs to be made on supporting victims of violence, including women with disabilities and the LGBTI community.

2. National context

Legal and policy environment

The 2006 constitution of Serbia guarantees equality for men and women before the law, and men and women have equal ownership and inheritance rights to property (World Bank, 2015, p. 2; SIGI, 2014, p. 2). However, in some rural areas women are sometimes expected to waive their inheritance rights to property in favour of male members of the family (SIGI, 2014, p. 2). In addition, in some rural areas women do not have de facto access to land because if women buy or inherit land, tradition obliges them to register it in the name of their husband or another close male relative (SIGI, 2014, p. 7). Equality of opportunity is protected by the legal and institutional framework, although women are underrepresented in senior public positions (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2016, p. 20).
The Law on Gender Equality and the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination were subsequently adopted in 2009 (Babović, 2016, p. 15). However, many legal reforms are still needed as the normative framework is not sufficiently aligned with gender equality norms (Babović, 2016, p. 15). The government intends to adopt a new law on gender equality soon, which would lead to bylaws to increase women’s employment and combat gender-based violence (Babović, 2016, p. 2). The new gender equality law has a special focus on women with disabilities.  

Gender equality policymaking in Serbia is strongly guided by the country’s commitments to the principles enshrined in key international frameworks, such as the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action; Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW); the UN Convention on the Political Rights of Women (1953); the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966); the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966); UN Resolution 1325 ‘Women, Peace and Security’ (2000); The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention); UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and others (Babović, 2016, p. 14).

In 2013, Serbia began EU accession negotiations which resulted in obligations in relation to gender equality. UN Women has provided support in the form of gender mainstreaming training for the ministries and institutions involved in the programming of Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance funds. This training has increased understanding of key gender equality notions, recognition of the various forms of discrimination and why gender equality is not just a women’s issue, the different strategies and prerequisites for achieving gender equality, the knowledge that policies are not ‘gender-neutral’ in their effects, and that programmes and their associated resource allocations are likely to reduce or increase gender inequalities (UN, 2015, p. 4). EU progress reports have helped guide reforms (Babović, 2016, p. 14).

In 2016, the Government of the Republic of Serbia adopted a new National Strategy for Gender Equality for the years 2016-2020 (European PROGRES, 2016, p. 6). The Strategy is the overarching national policy framework for gender equality and highlights key national policies to reduce gender stereotypes and change some harmful cultural norms, as well as focusing on the development of new policies that would promote equal opportunities between women and men, including in political and economic life (Babović, 2016). The National Strategy is aligned with the Beijing Platform for Action, CEDAW, and with other UN and Council of Europe-based documents that refer to gender equality and the empowerment of women. UN Women carried out an evaluation of the previous national strategy and its recommendations to address the needs of discriminated, vulnerable groups of women; including Roma, rural women and women with disabilities; and systematically use gender sensitive language were included in the new one. The strategy was developed by the Coordination Body for Gender Equality, which was supported by UN Women, and
in consultation with civil society (UN, 2015, p. 2). Amongst others, the Strategy intends to introduce a set of measures that will promote greater participation of men in household work and family care; an equal role of men in parenting activities; increased use of parental leave among fathers; provide support to lone mothers and fathers through an alimony fund; provide support to families by introducing more accessible and alternative services for childcare, and care for the elderly, ill, disabled and other persons in need (Babović, 2016, p. 37). There are important measures aiming to support young mothers to continue education and into employment (Babović, 2016, p. 37).

The Ministry of Justice has prepared a law on domestic violence, including protecting women with disabilities. The law should improve mutual coordination among the different sectors on these issues. There will be designated persons in courts with certificates attesting that they have completed specific training on domestic violence. There is a National Strategy for the Prevention and Suppression of Violence against Women and Domestic Violence in Serbia which encourages application of international and domestic legal norms and standards that protect human rights, promote gender equality and prohibit any form of violence against women, including domestic violence (something that mostly affects women) (CRPD, 2014, p. 34). The strategy pays special attention to groups of women that are or may be exposed to multiple discrimination, as well as to vulnerable groups of women including: women with disabilities; Roma women; mothers of children with disabilities or chronic illnesses; rural women; elderly women; refugees; and internally displaced women (CRPD, 2014, p. 34). However, the 2014 EU accession progress report found that measures to tackle domestic violence had yet to yield effective results (Babović, 2016, p. 14; SIGI, 2014, p. 3). Women with disabilities continue to face discrimination in the Criminal Code when it came to sanctions relevant to sexual violence, rape and sexual abuse. The Criminal Code provides a more lenient sentence when the victim of sexual violence is a woman with disability than if the victim is not.

The National Strategy for Preventing and Combating Violence against Women in the Family and in Intimate Relationships 2011-2015 was the main framework to combat violence against women during that period (Babović, 2016, p. 48). The USD 1.2 million UN Country Team project ‘Integrated Response to Violence against Women in Serbia’ which ran at the same time is judged to have significantly improved the institutional and organisational framework, and increased the capacities of relevant stakeholders and professionals to combat violence against women, as well as increased awareness of this problem (Babović, 2016, p. 48).

A specific law on sexual harassment (Law on the Prevention of Harassment in the Workplace) was introduced in 2010, and it is also addressed under the Labour Code (Article 18) and the Law on Gender Equality, while the Criminal Code includes a clause covering abuse of power to coerce someone into a sexual act (Article 181) (SIGI, 2014, p. 5).

A total of 38 municipalities have signed the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life (Babović, 2016, p. 16). UN Women is supporting municipalities to establish an institutional and strategic framework for gender equality at the local level, under the European PROGRES Programme, funded by the EU and the Government of Switzerland and implemented by UNOPS (UN, 2015, p. 6).

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22 http://rs.one.un.org/content/unct/serbia/en/home/presscenter/signing-of-the-european-charter-for-equality-of-women-and-men-in.html 09.06.16
23 http://rs.one.un.org/content/unct/serbia/en/home/presscenter/signing-of-the-european-charter-for-equality-of-women-and-men-in.html 09.06.16
Women also developed a proposal for the Municipal Decision of Gender Sensitive Statistics, which once adopted will contribute to good governance in municipalities and to operationalise Gender Equality Law provisions which stipulate responsibilities of all public authorities to collect sex disaggregated data (UN, 2015, p. 6).

There are also sector-specific policies advancing gender equality in different areas: employment, social protection, education, electoral laws, health and others (Babović, 2016, p. 15). For example, the National Employment Strategy includes measures for equal opportunities (Babović, 2016, p. 26). In Vojvodina, the Provincial Secretariat for Economy, Employment and Gender Equality (PSEEGE) awards extra points to women when reviewing requests and business plans, while single parents, the majority of whom are women, have been defined as a priority group in programmes focusing on self-employment and the employment of unemployed persons (Babović, 2016, p. 26). Women are entitled to 135 calendar days of maternity leave with 108 per cent of wages paid, and both parents are entitled to an additional 230 days of parental leave with 100 per cent of wages paid (World Bank, 2015, p. 2). The law guarantees pregnant and nursing women workplace protections from dismissal; however, it does not guarantee placement in an equivalent position when they return from maternity leave or rights to a flexible schedule (World Bank, 2015, p. 2). The law stipulates public provision of childcare for children under the age of primary education, although few poor and disadvantaged households participate (World Bank, 2015, p. 2; World Bank Group, 2015, p. 66). The 2014 EU accession progress report noted that labour legislation has yet to be fully implemented, particularly regarding the dismissal of pregnant women and women on maternity leave as well as sexual harassment and inequality in promotion and salaries (Babović, 2016, p. 15). Gender is not mainstreamed in the Strategy for Development of Education in Serbia until 2020 (Babović, 2016, p. 33).

Policy initiatives in relation to gender equality in the domain of power have been more intensively implemented than in other areas (Babović, 2016, p. 40). There are legal quotas requiring no less than 30 per cent female politicians (Law on Election of MPs); a system of reserved seats in the local election list, again requiring for 30 per cent women (Law on local elections). The Law on Civil Servants enforced the equal opportunity policy, monitoring and reporting obligations, gender sensitive terminology and sex-disaggregated data on staff (Babović, 2016, p. 40).

Both men and women have the right to initiate divorce proceedings (SIGI, 2014, p. 2). Parental authority is shared between the father and mother during marriage under the Family Code, and women and men continue to have equal decision making authority over the child following a divorce (SIGI, 2014, p. 2). However, in some regions, tradition dictates that in cases of divorce, child custody is awarded to the father or the father’s family, regardless of the best interests of the child (SIGI, 2014, p. 2).

Institutional environment

In 2015, the government founded the Coordinating Body for Gender Equality, which considers all the issues and coordinates the work of state administration in relation to gender equality in Serbia (replacing the closed Gender Equality Directorate) (Muric, 2015, p. 7; Babović, 2016, p. 15).24 Serbia’s Deputy Prime

24 The Gender Equality Directorate was the central institution working towards strengthening gender equality and was disestablished in April 2014 with the new Law on Government and Law on Ministries (Babović, 2016, p. 15). The decision was justified as a result of austerity, complaints about lack of efficiency and transparency, concerns that it served the interests of a small circle of people and civil society organisations, and the suggestion that there are more urgent issues to be solved in Serbia than women’s rights (http://labris.org.rs/en/2014/04/). At the time the government did not indicate how it would continue to deal with gender equality going forward (http://labris.org.rs/en/2014/04/).
Minister is its President while other board members include ministers and senior government officials (Babović, 2016, p. 15). The Body submits proposals, opinions and expert explanations on gender equality to government, ministries, special organisations, and other authorities (Babović, 2016, p. 16).

The Gender Equality Council was founded in 2004 as a Council on Equality of Sexes, and in 2009 it evolved into the Gender Equality Council (Muric, 2015, p. 7). Comprising representatives of the government, ministries and experts/activists, it works to improve gender equality by: proposing measures in the field of gender equality; reviewing compliance of domestic legislation with the EU framework on women’s rights; evaluating the effects of gender equality measures; and monitoring the representation of women in elected and appointed positions, education, and other domains of life (Muric, 2015, p. 7).

The Committee for Human and Minority Rights and Gender Equality of the National Assembly was formed in 2003 as a permanent working body (Muric, 2015, p. 7). The Committee considers proposals for laws and other regulations from the perspective of gender equality and monitors the implementation of laws and other regulations pertaining to gender equality (Muric, 2015, p. 7).

Other important institutions for gender equality include the Ombudsman, who acts as general protector of citizen’s rights, and the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality, established in 2010, to prevent all forms, types and cases of discrimination, including those based on gender (Babović, 2016, p. 16).

At sub-national level, the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina has a Provincial Secretariat for Economy, Employment, and Gender Equality, the Provincial Institute for Gender Equality, the Committee for Gender Equality of the Assembly of Vojvodina and a deputy responsible for gender equality of the Ombudsperson of AP Vojvodina (Babović, 2016, p. 16). At the level of local government, 129 local self-governments have established mechanisms for gender equality (Babović, 2016, p. 16). The European PROGRES Programme aims to support local gender equality mechanisms after the 2016 local elections and reaffirm their role in the implementation of activities envisaged by the Local Gender Equality Action Plans, which would enhance gender-related issues in local communities (European PROGRES, 2016, p. 18).

The EU progress report in 2014 on Serbian accession emphasised that administrative capacity on gender equality issues remains weak (Babović, 2016, p. 14). The institutional infrastructure for gender equality has had variable success in the past decade (Babović, 2016, p. 15). Serbia’s institutions for gender equality do not have a mandate to make binding decisions, and consequently their role in the decision-making process is marginal (Višnjić, 2015, p. 99). The country’s severe financial and economic crisis has heavily affected the national budget, resulting in reductions in the allocation of resources for gender equality institutions (Babović, 2016, p. 16). Many of these institutions have limited human and financial resources and therefore have weak capacities to produce, coordinate and implement effective and efficient gender equality policies (Babović, 2016, p. 16).

The media

The media’s representation of gender in Serbia has been recognised as problematic. There is a trend of undesirable representations of women, particularly in commercial media, which often objectifies women and depicts them in a highly sensational manner (WACC and FPN, 2015, p. 4). In addition, there is a deep rooted tendency to represent women in ways that reinforce traditional roles and spread stereotypes about them (WACC and FPN, 2015, p. 4).

Women are generally underrepresented in the news media and attract coverage either as political officials or entertainers (WACC and FPN, 2015, p. 5). In 2015 women made up 22 per cent of the people heard, read
about or seen in newspapers, television and radio news (compared to a European average of 25 per cent (WACC and FPN, 2015, p. 5). Older women, members of minority, national and religious groups, women with different sexual orientation, disabled women, rural women, etc. are often invisible in the media (WACC and FPN, 2015, p. 4). Gender equality is directly raised in only 3 per cent of stories (WACC and FPN, 2015, p. 5). Women are presented as experts only 7 per cent of the time (WACC and FPN, 2015, p. 6). Women feature predominately in stories about celebrity, arts, media and sports (WACC and FPN, 2015, p. 6). Similar trends are seen in online media (WACC and FPN, 2015, p. 21).

At the same time women constitute the vast majority in the media workforce (76 per cent in radio, 69 per cent in television and 67 per cent in print), although most top media managers or editors-in-chief and media owners are men (WACC and FPN, 2015, p. 5-6, 15).

The 2009-2015 National Strategy for Improving Position of Women and Empowering Gender Equality recognised the media as one of six priority areas in achieving a gender just society (WACC and FPN, 2015, p. 4). Planned activities included affirmation of gender sensitive actions in the media, actions removing gender based stereotypes and misogyny, inclusion of women who are discriminated on multiple grounds, increase in women participation in decision making in the media as well as systematisation of relevant research, documentation and statistical data (WACC and FPN, 2015, p. 4).

**Public financial management: gender-responsive budgeting (GRB)**

As part of the reform of the budgetary system in Serbia, UN Women supported the Ministry of Finance and the Coordination Body for Gender Equality to organise awareness raising sessions on gender responsive budgeting. UN Women also provides technical support to line ministries and Provincial Secretariats to strengthen gender equality considerations in the budgetary process (UN, 2015, p. 3). The Ministry of Finance has introduced gender responsive budgeting in the Budget System Law and in Budgetary Instructions for 2016, which requires introducing a gender perspective in at least one programme and programme activity of 2016 budget submissions (UN, 2015, p. 2; Babović, 2016, p. 2).

Support for introduction of gender responsive budgeting (GRB) by European PROGRES led to nine municipalities allocating over 4.5 million Dinars for gender equality and economic empowerment of women in their budgets for 2016 (European PROGRES, 2016, p. 13).

**Policing and security**

Policing is one of the most male dominated occupations in Serbia, although more women are starting to enter the force (Djan, 2016). Women make up only 22.7 per cent of the Ministry of Interior’s employees and men occupy most of the top management levels (Djan, 2016). Of a total of 27 regional police departments, only one in Užice has a female head (Djan, 2016). The lowest number of women in the police can be found in special units such as the Gendarmerie, including in administrative roles (2 per cent), while the special Anti-Terrorist Unit counts no women whatsoever (Djan, 2016). Many women within the Serbian police service work predominantly in the units which have a lower rank with fewer opportunities for the advancement (Djan, 2016). Family responsibilities and gender stereotypes prevent women from advancing and taking on operational roles (Djan, 2016). Implementation of the National Action Plan (NAP) on UNSC...
Resolution 1325 has been the only serious consideration of gender equality policies by the Ministry of Interior (Djan, 2016). The integration of gender equality principles seems confined to undertaking different project activities which are financed by foreign donations with no real ownership of gender equality issues within the Ministry (Djan, 2016). Adoption of the new Law on Police resulted in a reorganisation with a new opening for an Equal Opportunities Coordinator, although there is concern that the position is too low in the police hierarchy to have much influence (Djan, 2016).

Serbia has taken major steps in implementing UNSCR 1325 and integrating a gender perspective in its Armed Forces at the policy level in last few years (__, 2015, p. 1). UNDP SEESAC has provided support to the Ministry of Defence and the Serbian Armed Forces to improve knowledge of gender identities and gender discrimination (UN, 2015, p. 12-13). However, there is still a need to integrate gender perspectives at the operational level, allocate earmarked funding for the implementation of the National Action Plan, streamline the implementation and monitoring and evaluation structure, and enable meaningful civil society participation (__, 2015, p. 1).

3. Priority issues towards women’s empowerment

Political empowerment

In early 2015 Serbia ranked 23rd in the world for the number of female MPs with 84 female MPs out of a total of 250 MPs (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2016, p. 11). After the 2011 introduction of the 30 per cent quota for women on party lists, the proportion of women in parliament increased from about 20 per cent in previous elections to 32.4 per cent in the 2012 elections. As a result Serbia is ranked higher than half of the EU Member States in the domain of power in the Gender Equality Index (Babović, 2016, p. 38).

Eight parliamentary committees are chaired by female MPs (Babović, 2016, p. 40). The establishment of the Women’s Parliamentary Network (WPN) has contributed to the increased synergy of female MPs in raising and advocating for gender issues in legislative processes, such as in the case of ratification of the Istanbul Convention (Babović, 2016, p. 40).

However, women are still underrepresented in executive and legislative power at central and regional level; underrepresented in the boards of the largest companies; and underrepresented in the Central Bank, though Serbia fares comparatively better in this respect than the EU average (Babović, 2016, p. 41).

Women’s groups have been actively involved in politics in Serbia since the beginning of the 1990s and have had influence, although this has not always translated into political power (Višnjić, 2015).

Economic empowerment

In 2014, Serbia was ranked 54th out of 142 countries, with a score of 0.7086 in the Global Gender Gap Index from the World Economic Forum (World Bank, 2015, p. 1). In 2013, 54 per cent of working age women were in employment, compared to 69 per cent of men (and 63 per cent of women in Europe and Central Asia more generally) (World Bank, 2015, p. 2). Labour force participation rates drop for women in childbearing years, and only 13 per cent of children under the age of three in Serbia were enrolled in childcare centres between 2010 and 2011 (World Bank Group, 2015, p. 8). Unemployment levels for women dropped between 2013 and 2014 (Babović, 2016, p. 14).

27 http://kvinnatillkvinna.se/en/country/serbia/womens-situation/ 09.06.16
In the Gender Equality Index for the domain of work, Serbia scored the lowest of the European countries measured, with 38.2 compared to an EU average of 61.9 (Babović, 2016, p. 23). Since the fall of socialism, gender gaps in employment have widened and gender specific obstacles to employment, particularly quality employment, have emerged (Babović, 2016, p. 25). For men, this led to cuts in manufacturing jobs due to the strong de-industrialisation and privatisation processes, while for women it meant a decrease in their previously high levels of labour participation and, for many, withdrawal to the sphere of family care (Babović, 2016, p. 25). The 2008 economic crisis and subsequent restructuring and austerity measures narrowed the gender employment gap as it hit the sectors with a significant share of the male labour force the most (Babović, 2016, p. 25). However, recent restructuring of the public administration sector is expected to impact most on the female labour force because of their concentration in this sector, which could once again widen the gender gap in employment (Babović, 2016, p. 25). Women are less frequently employed in full time positions than men and their total working life is on average five years shorter than men’s (Babović, 2016, p. 23).

More women are employed in the social sectors of the economy (education, health, and social protection) than men, and women tend to have less flexible working hours than men (Babović, 2016, p. 25). More women work in poorly paid occupations such as service and administrative activities, or in declining industries such as textiles (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2016, p. 20). Women remain underrepresented in public companies, supervisory and management boards. Only 26 per cent of firms have female top managers (World Bank, 2016, p. 2).

Gender stereotypes and expectations of women to provide family care, as well as support their families economically, place women at a disadvantage in employment, career development, use of leisure time and level of earnings. Women are disproportionately responsible for care activities in the household and the family; their share of household work is more than double that of men (Babović, 2016, p. 36). This means women have less time available for sport, culture and leisure activities (Babović, 2016, p. 36). Improving access to and quality of Early Childhood Education would have a positive impact on female labour market participation, especially for women in single female headed households (World Bank Group, 2015, p. 66). Various studies are being carried out to understand the barriers to female labour force participation to help influence future policy (World Bank Group, 2015, p. 8).

The gender pay gap in average monthly earnings was 12 per cent (women earning less than men) in 2013 (World Bank, 2015, p. 2). For low skilled workers it is more than 20 per cent (World Bank Group, 2015, p. 8). Women with a tertiary education earn on average EUR 200 less than their male counterparts (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2016, p. 20). However, other studies found no prominent gender pay gap in the public sector and a modest one in the private sector (Babović, 2016, p. 30).

In 2011, Roma women and men were less likely to be in employment than non-Roma women and men (women: 13 compared to 31 per cent; men: 40 compared to 55 per cent respectively) (World Bank, 2015, p. 2). The weak, almost non-existent flow of information between institutions and the local Roma community, especially women, was assessed as one of the key barriers to the employment of Roma women (UN, 2015, p. 5). The use of bureaucratic language and ways of informing Roma women of employment opportunities also hinder their labour participation (UN, 2015, p. 5). Furthermore, the mobility of Roma women – and thus their ability to participate in employment and training activities – is limited as a result

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28 http://rs.one.un.org/content/unct/serbia/en/home/presscenter/_what-is--not--a-female-job-in-serbia--my-job---my-right-.html 09.06.16

29 http://rs.one.un.org/content/unct/serbia/en/home/presscenter/_what-is--not--a-female-job-in-serbia--my-job---my-right-.html 09.06.16
of the spatial exclusion of Roma settlements, traditional gender roles, and lack of childcare services (UN, 2015, p. 5). The EU for instance, has funded projects to increase employability of Roma men and women through innovative approaches such as awarding grants for self-employment, vocational training and subsidised employment of those who are informally engaged in waste collection: these have provided employment opportunities for 77 women (UN, 2015, p. 9).

Serbian law guarantees equal access to bank loans for men and women (SIGI, 2014, p. 7). However, access to financial resources is challenging for women, reflected in Serbia’s score of 26.6 for this in the Gender Equality Index (Babović, 2016, p. 27). Property and land is generally registered to males, making it extremely difficult for female entrepreneurs to access credit (World Bank Group, 215, p. 60; SIGI, 2014, p. 7). Women account for 30-40 per cent of recipients of loans awarded by the state-run Development Fund (which provides credit to start businesses), a figure which has been increasing year on year (SIGI, 2014, p. 7).

In 2014, around only 26 per cent of small and medium enterprises were owned by women (Kalinić et al, 2014, p. 53). A survey of student attitudes towards entrepreneurship found that women still prefer well-paid jobs to their own businesses, a key motive of women for setting up their own business is a desire for independence, and their major constraint is a lack of material resources (Kalinić et al, 2014, p. 53).

The EUR 17.46 million European PROGRES Programme aims to improve coordination between national and local authorities, create a more favourable environment for employability, business and infrastructure growth, and enhance good governance and social inclusion (European PROGRES, 2016, p. 1). It includes a number of gender equality activities and has invested in 48 women’s entrepreneurship projects, which make up the majority of the gender equality projects it supports (48 out of 55) (European PROGRES, no date). European PROGRES has provided grants to help with the start-up of female entrepreneurs’ businesses (UN, 2015, p. 7). Alongside this it raised awareness of the process of awarding grants and conducted training on drafting business plans (UN, 2015, p. 7-8). One of its grant programmes focused on the economic empowerment of vulnerable women, Roma, and people with disabilities (UN, 2015, p. 8).

Education

Primary enrolment rates were the same for boys and girls when measured in 2012 (93 per cent) (World Bank, 2015, p. 2). Enrolment rates for females in secondary (93 compared to 91 per cent) and tertiary education (60 compared to 45 per cent) are slightly higher than for males. However, gender segregation in educational fields remains high, with many more female students concentrated in the areas of social sciences, humanities and arts (Babović, 2016, p. 33).

A total of 80 per cent of the 165,000 people who were unable to read and write in 2012 were women (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2016, p. 22). Research carried out in 2011 indicates that Roma women are less likely to be literate than non-Roma women (79 per cent compared to 97 per cent) (World Bank, 2015, p. 2). Roma girls and boys are much less likely to be enrolled in upper-secondary schooling than non Roma girls and boys (girls: 23 per cent versus 64 per cent; boys 27 per cent versus 78 per cent) (World Bank, 2015, p. 2). Roma girls are often removed from school at an early age, to protect their virginity, help out at home, and prepare for marriage (SIGI, 2014, p. 8).

Fewer girls with disabilities are in education than boys with disabilities and the rate of participation by female with disabilities decreases in more advanced levels of education (MDRI-S, 2013, p. 8).
Sociocultural attitudes: gender stereotyping

Existing gender stereotypes and discrimination help to preserve a structural gender gap in economic, political and social areas (EC, 2014, p. 5). Gender roles in Serbia are traditionally set whereby women are expected to be responsible for childcare and the home (UNFPA, 2015, p. 3). Early marriage is common in Roma and Vlach communities (SIGI, 2014, p. 1). In 2012, the mean age of women at childbirth was 28.9 years (Babović, 2016, p. 13).

Gender-biased prejudices and stereotypes are widespread among young men and boys to the extent that many consider violence against women and gender inequalities justifiable (UNFPA, 2015, p. 3). For example, 17 per cent of boys thought that sexual violence was the result of women’s ‘inappropriate’ behaviour (SIGI, 2014, p. 5). UNFPA has worked with men and boys on encouraging them to abandon harmful stereotypes, embrace respectful, healthy relationships, and support the human rights of all people, everywhere (UN, 2015, p. 10).

Groups of women at risk of multiple discrimination are: Roma women, women older than 60, young women, rural women, pregnant women and women with dependent children, women with different sexual orientation, women victims of domestic violence, women with disabilities, single mothers, women from ethnic minority groups, and unemployed and unskilled women (Babović, 2016, p. 45). For instance, as a result of generally being perceived as not being able to fulfil their gender assigned roles in a patriarchal society, women with disabilities are often seen as valueless (MDRI-S, 2013, p. 5). This has resulted in the custody of children usually given to a violent husband rather than to a wife with disabilities, because she is considered ‘not physically capable to take care of children’ after divorce (MDRI-S, 2013, p. 5-6).

Gender based violence

Several surveys on domestic violence against women have been conducted in Serbia during the last 15 years, with a survey in 2010 in Central Serbia finding 54.2 per cent of women were exposed to some form of domestic violence since they were 15 (Babović, 2016, p. 46). The most frequent form of violence is psychological, followed by physical and economical, and then sexual violence (only the most extreme manifestations of sexual violence relating to forced sexual intercourse were recorded) (Babović, 2016, p. 47). It was found that 50.6 per cent of economic, 58 per cent of psychological and 71.7 per cent of physical violence is committed by husbands and partners (Babović, 2016, p. 47).

The 2014 EU accession progress report noted that the number of women killed by their partners has increased (Babović, 2016, p. 15). In 2015, 34 women were killed as a result of gender based violence, compared to 27 in 2014. The high number of weapons in circulation as a result of the Balkans conflict contributes to the high levels of femicide (SIGI, 2014, p. 6). As of 2014 emergency protection orders were not issued promptly, the number of shelters was insufficient and there was no state-run centre for victims of sexual violence and no national women’s helpline – all highlighting the need for improvements (Babović, 2016, p. 15).

It is hard to monitor violence against women in Serbia due to the lack of national level standardised methodology with indicators and surveys to collect data for these indicators (Babović, 2016, p. 46). Women also do not routinely report domestic violence out of fear of the consequences, fear that they

30 http://rs.one.un.org/content/unct/serbia/en/home/presscenter/international-day-for-the-elimination-of-violence-against-women.html 09.06.16
31 There are plans to improve evidence by including Serbia in forthcoming EU wide surveys on violence against women (FRA survey) (Babović, 2016, p. 46).
might lose their children, embarrassment or shame, belief that violence is normal and not serious, and a perception that police will not investigate unless the abuse is fatal (SIGI, 2014, p. 4). The response by the police and other service providers has been criticised for lack of sensitivity and failure to treat the matter seriously, reinforcing the idea that it is a ‘private’ matter (SIGI, 2014, p. 4). Rural women were less likely than urban women to report violence (SIGI, 2014, p. 4).

**Women with disabilities** have been subject to mental, physical and sexual violence in institutions; are often denied reproductive and parental rights; and are often at risk of sex trafficking, especially upon leaving orphanages or institutions (MDRI-S, 2013, p. 3). People with intellectual and mental disabilities, especially women, are at higher risk of abuse and violence from staff and other residents (including violation of privacy, acts of restraint, undressing, isolation, rape, forcible abortion or sterilisation) (MDRI-S, 2013). An organisation working to promote and support the rights of persons with disabilities collected the only available statistics on domestic violence against women with disabilities (CRPD, 2014, p. 34). Of 5520 calls to the organisation, 28 per cent reported verbal abuse, 24 per cent economic abuse, 11 per cent physical abuse, 22 per cent forced isolation, and 6 per cent sexual violence (CRPD, 2014, p. 34). The most vulnerable women were those with intellectual disabilities (48 per cent), cerebral palsy (32 per cent), muscular dystrophy and neuromuscular disease (15 per cent) and women with combined disabilities (5 per cent) (CRPD, 2015, p. 34-35).

**Homophobia**, discrimination and hate crimes on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity are present in Serbia (EC, 2014, p. 18). Serbia has taken steps to strengthen the protection of the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) persons, but a stronger culture of respect for LGBTI persons is still needed (Babović, 2016, p. 15). Following a series of violent attacks on the community the authorities protected a Gay Pride parade in September 2014, demonstrating their willingness to protect minority rights (Giebel and Röhrborn, 2015, p. 8). However, homophobic attitudes are still deeply entrenched in Serbian society (Giebel and Röhrborn, 2015, p. 8).

Various programmes have been implemented to combat gender based violence. In 2015 the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women, managed by UN Women, awarded funds amounting to USD 1.2 million to organisations in Serbia working towards preventing gender based violence. UN Women are supporting the Provincial Secretariat for Economy, Employment and Gender Equality in Vojvodina to improve the capacity of institutions working to effectively implement measures defined in the programme for protection of women from domestic and intimate partner violence (UN, 2015, p. 4). UNDP has been working on interventions which focus on the perpetrators of violence, which in some cases have managed to prevent a recurrence of domestic violence during the intervention, and in the six months after (85 cases of the 228 perpetrators in the programme) (UN, 2015, p. 11). UNICEF is supporting the MoESTD to integrate gender based violence into regular violence prevention programmes in schools and helping the development of a new National Strategy for Prevention and Protection of Children from Violence (UN, 2015, p. 15).

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32 In 2011, there were 6,176 people with disabilities in institutions (3,258 male and 2,918 female) (MDRI-S, 2013, p. 4).

33 [http://rs.one.un.org/content/unct/serbia/en/home/presscenter/international-day-for-the-elimination-of-violence-against-women-.html](http://rs.one.un.org/content/unct/serbia/en/home/presscenter/international-day-for-the-elimination-of-violence-against-women-.html) 09.06.16
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**Suggested citation**


**About this report**

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Priority gender issues in Ukraine – with consideration to gender and governance

Brigitte Rohwerder

17.06.2016

Question

What does the literature indicate as priority gender issues in Ukraine? Note links concerning gender and governance topics and any existing programmes in this regard.  

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1. Overview

Ukraine has made some progress towards gender equality and is above average when it comes to women in education, healthcare, and the labour market, but lagging far behind in women’s political representation, while gender stereotypes and discrimination remain. The EuroMaidan protests and conflict in Eastern Ukraine have impacted on progress towards gender equality both negatively and positively.

The literature uncovered by this rapid review consists of a mixture of mainly grey literature assessing various aspects of gender equality in Ukraine, but not specifically considering gender and governance topics. There tends to be of focus on women rather than gender more widely. The literature is generally more descriptive than analytical. Available data is not always that recent or comparable.

34 Governance topics of high interest include: 1) tax reform and business environment; 2) public financial management reform; 3) liberalisation and modernisation of growth sectors; 4) rule of law, democratic accountability, and police and justice reform; and 5) independent media.

35 A wave of demonstrations and civil unrest in Ukraine, which began on the night of 21 November 2013 with very large public protests demanding closer European integration.
Priority gender issues in Ukraine

Key findings from the literature include:

- Ukrainian legal and policy architecture is favourable to gender equality, formalised under the Law on Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities of Women and Men, although it does not promote the levelling of women in areas where they are being discriminated against. There are problems with implementation of the law and there is a lack of political will to advance gender equality.

- The Ministry of Social Policy is the central executive body authorised to promote equal rights and opportunities of women and men through its Department for the Family, Gender Policy and Counter Human Trafficking, but lacks the capacity needed to implement the gender policy. The national gender mechanisms were weakened by reforms in 2010.

- The stereotypes prevalent in the media are a major challenge to achieving gender equality.

- There are efforts to introduce gender responsive budgeting at the national and local level.

- Gender-responsive security sector reform appears to be limited in Ukraine.

- Women’s political participation is limited and there are no effective mechanisms for improving women’s access to power and decision making. Women are better represented at lower levels than nationally. Women have been actively engaged with civic activism since the EuroMaidan protests and the outbreak of civil conflict, although their representation in official peacebuilding efforts is still low.

- Women have lower participation in the labour market and a gender pay gap exists. There are fewer female entrepreneurs. Challenges include access to finance, childcare and family responsibilities, poor infrastructure and lack of childcare, gender discrimination, lack of access to business and trade networks, lack of knowledge and training, the inadequate enabling environment for business development, and corruption.

- While in general, access to education is similar for boys and girls; Roma girls are less likely to be in education.

- Every third household with children is living below the poverty line; and single mothers with young children, unemployed women, women in rural areas, and women over 75 experience higher levels of poverty.

- There are high levels of sexual and gender based violence, although many victims are reluctant to report it. Certain groups are particularly vulnerable. The effects of the conflict in eastern Ukraine increase the risk of violence. Support exists but could be improved.

2. National context

Legal and policy environment

The constitution of Ukraine guarantees equality for men and women before the law (World Bank, 2015, p. 2). In 2005, the Law on Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities of Women and Men was adopted, which became the key regulatory act to achieve the eradication of sex-based discrimination and parity in the status of women and men in all spheres of society (Klatzer and Ivania, 2015, p. 6). It took eight attempts to pass the law; that too only after any provision for positive action was taken from the out (Koriukalov, 2014, p. 6). Since then other laws have been amended to bring them in line with the gender equality law and
more state programmes on gender equality have been developed, although not all amendments have been adopted (Koriukalov, 2014, p. 6, 11).

Ukraine has ratified a number of international legal instruments on ensuring equality of women and men, including the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Declaration and the Beijing Platform of Action (Klatzer and Ivania, 2015, p. 7). Ukraine does not have a national policy on ensuring the rights of women with disabilities and their inclusion into the life of the society, although it has ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Koriukalov, 2014, p. 39). It is in the process of ratifying the Istanbul Convention, the most comprehensive global legal framework covering violence against women and domestic violence (Hanssen, 2016, p. 59). The Council of Europe is supporting the Ministry of Social Policy to ratify and implement the Istanbul Convention, with a EUR 1.3 million project, funded by Sweden (Hanssen, 2016, p. 59). This has been part of a longer term separate EUR 6.6 million Council of Europe Action Plan for Ukraine, also aimed at capacity development and reviewing Ukrainian legislation to provide advice on possible amendments to ensure compliance between the Ukrainian legislative framework and the Istanbul Convention (Hannsen, 2016, p. 59).

Domestic violence is addressed under the Law on the Prevention of Violence in the Family (SIGI, 2014, p. 2). In 2009, the law was amended after criticism by women’s rights activists of a clause allowing police to issue warnings to victims for ‘provoking’ violence (SIGI, 2014, p. 2). Capacity building activities were delivered to over 9000 law enforcement officers and judges on combating domestic violence (Koriukalov, 2014, p. 7). However, there are issues with implementing the legislation, especially as a result of gaps in identification and lack of qualified help for the victims (Koriukalov, 2014, p. 23). Implementation of legal provisions has been criticised as not being consistent (SIGI, 2014, p. 2). In 2013, a new bill “On Preventing and Combating Domestic Violence” was submitted to the Parliament (Koriukalov, 2014, p. 24). However, in the same year the Criminal Procedure Code was amended and it is now prohibited to remove the offender from the family for more than three hours, which makes it harder to provide safety for the victims of domestic violence (Koriukalov, 2014, p. 25).

There is no specific legislation addressing sexual harassment, although it is narrowly covered by the Law on Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities of Women and Men (SIGI, 2014, p. 4). In addition, the Criminal Code includes clauses prohibiting people from exploiting a victim’s dependence or vulnerability to coerce them into unwanted sexual contact (SIGI, 2014, p. 4).

Men and women have equal ownership and inheritance rights to property (World Bank, 2015, p. 2). Traditionally Ukrainian customary inheritance practices do not discriminate against women, with sons and daughters inheriting property equally and widows being the principal heir to their deceased husband’s estate (SIGI, 2014, p. 1). However, there are laws which restrict women from working in mining, construction, metalworking, factories, jobs requiring lifting weights above a threshold, and jobs deemed hazardous or arduous (World Bank, 2015, p. 2; Koriukalov, 2014, p. 9). Women are entitled to 126 calendar days of maternity leave with 100 per cent of wages paid (World Bank, 2015, p. 2). Both parents are entitled to an additional 969 days of partially paid paternal leave (World Bank, 2015, p. 2). The law guarantees pregnant and nursing women workplace protection from dismissal, placement in an equivalent position when they return from maternity leave, and rights to a flexible schedule (World Bank, 2015, p. 2). The law also stipulates public provision of childcare for children under the age of primary education (World Bank, 2015, p. 2).

In 2012 the minimum age of marriage for women was raised to 18, up from 17, while for men it remained at 18 (SIGI, 2014, p. 1). In exceptional circumstances, courts may allow marriage at the age of 16 (SIGI,
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2014, p. 1). Parental authority is shared between the father and mother, and under the Family Code, women and men continue to have equal decision making authority over the child following a divorce (SIGI, 2014, p. 1). In 2008, children remained with their mothers following divorce in the majority of cases (SIGI, 2014, p. 1). Both men and women have the right to initiate divorce proceedings (SIGI, 2014, p. 2).

Due to limited capacity of the gender equality mechanisms, Ukraine was unable to implement a National Action Plan for ensuring gender equality between 2011 and September 2013 – an unprecedented delay (Koriukalov, 2014, p. 10). In September 2013, the State Programme on Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities of Women and Men up to 2016 was finally adopted, and it received its first funding in 2014 (Koriukalov, 2014, p. 10).

The main problems with ensuring gender equality concern the implementation of national legislation rather than its provisions (Koriukalov, 2014, p. 11). In addition, despite most legislation being gender neutral, it does not promote the levelling of women in areas where they are being discriminated against (Koriukalov, 2014, p. 38). At the level of heads of legislative, executive authorities, and local bodies, there is a lack of political will to advance gender transformations (Koriukalov, 2014, p. 8; MoSP and UNFPA, 2014, p. 9). Parliament has not managed to approve any positive action necessary to balance the position of men and women in the society, especially at the level of decision making (Koriukalov, 2014, p. 8). Numerous projects by CSOs and international organisations on gender problems, financed by external donors, are the driving force for gender transformation in Ukraine.

Institutional environment

National gender mechanisms involve the legislative and central executive authorities, local self-government bodies, Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights, and gender advisors, as well as cooperation with NGOs (Koriukalov, 2014, p. 6, 13). During 2006-2007, gender working groups and coordination councils were set up in the central executive authorities and state oblast administrations (SOA) (Koriukalov, 2014, p. 6). Gender advisors were appointed for Ministers and heads of SOAs (Koriukalov, 2014, p. 6).

The Inter-Agency Council on Family, Gender Equality, Demographic Development, Prevention of Domestic Violence and Combating Human Trafficking was established in the Cabinet of Minister of Ukraine, although it has not met regularly since 2010 (Koriukalov, 2014, p. 6, 36). The Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine ensures the implementation of coordinated national gender policy, develops and implements state targeted programmes on the promotion of equal rights and opportunities of men and women, and directs and coordinates the activities of executive bodies on ensuring gender equality (Koriukalov, 2014, p. 36). The Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights is responsible for monitoring the observance of the rights and opportunities of women and men (Koriukalov, 2014, p. 35). The Secretariat of the Commissioner has the Department for Observance of the Rights of Child, Non-discrimination and Gender Equality (Koriukalov, 2014, p. 35-36). In 2010 the Expert Council to Consider Claims with regard to Gender Discrimination was set up in the Ministry of Family, Youth and Sports; however in late 2010 this ministry was merged with another, and responsibility was shifted to the Ministry of Social Policy (Koriukalov, 2014, p. 6).

This shift led to a slowdown of gender policy and suspended the activities of the most significant national gender mechanism (Koriukalov, 2014, p. 8; MoSP and UNFPA, 2014, p. 9). The weakening of the national mechanism for ensuring equal rights and opportunities was also attributed to efforts by some to overturn gender policy due to its association with the Pro-European ideology of Ukraine (MoSP and UNFPA, 2014,
Since the 2010 reforms, gender working groups in the Ministries have been lost, the meetings of Inter-Agency Council on Family, Gender Equality, Demographic Development, Prevention of Domestic Violence and Combating Human Trafficking are irregular, the Ministries do not have advisors on gender issues, and the institution of advisors to the Heads of SOAs is not effective in most regions (Koriukalov, 2014, p. 36; MoSP and UNFPA, 2014, p. 9).

The Ministry of Social Policy is now the central executive body authorised to promote equal rights and opportunities for women and men through its Department for the Family, Gender Policy and Counter Human Trafficking (Koriukalov, 2014, p. 36; MoSP and UNFPA, 2014, p. 8). As of 2014 the government was collecting 113 gender-sensitive indicators (Koriukalov, 2014, p. 6). However, the Ministry of Social Policy lacks authority, human and material resources, and stability needed for the implementation of the gender policy (MoSP and UNFPA, 2014, p. 9). Numerous actions have been taken to build capacity of public officials and members of councils of all levels with regard to development, implementation and monitoring of gender policy, gender statistics, gender budgeting, gender knowledge and sensitivity (Koriukalov, 2014, p. 7). Over 30,000 public officials and members of councils were covered under such initiatives between 2006 and 2014, although these activities decreased from 2010 onwards as a result of administrative reform of the government (Koriukalov, 2014, p. 7). In late 2011, renewed efforts were made to develop the national gender mechanism, but it was still not fully functional between 2010 and 2013 (Koriukalov, 2014, p. 7).

Revival of the national gender mechanisms came about as a result of NGO advocacy and government cooperation with NGOs and international agencies (Koriukalov, 2014, p. 10). The promotion of gender equality in Ukraine particularly benefits from cooperation within the framework of international organisations – UN, Council of Europe and OSCE – and from cooperation with the EU and bilateral partnerships (Koriukalov, 2014, p. 13). The EU has provided the largest amount of development aid for ensuring gender equality in Ukraine: in 2008-2011, it provided EUR 14 million to UNDP, ILO, UNICEF and CoE to implement projects aimed at promoting gender equality, and children’s and women’s rights in all areas of life, which contributed significantly to strengthening the national gender mechanism (Koriukalov, 2014, p.14).

At the regional level, tasks for promoting equal rights and opportunities for women and men are implemented by departments of family, youth and sports, departments of education and science, departments of women, disabled and war veterans and veterans of labour, or departments of social protection, rather than in a unified structure (Koriukalov, 2014, p. 36). There are also interagency boards for the family policy issues, ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women and men, preventing domestic violence, and human trafficking at the local level (MoSP and UNFPA, 2014, p. 9).

The media

The Ukrainian media has been criticised for reinforcing gender stereotypes (SIGI, 2014, p. 7). Women are mainly represented as homemakers or sexualised objects (SIGI, 2014, p. 7; MoSP and UNFPA, 2014, p. 28). In 2013, women only featured in the mass media in 20 per cent of stories; they made up only 18 per cent of experts consulted; and only featured in 24 per cent of pictures (MoSP and UNFPA, 2014, p. 28). Where they were featured, it was mainly in relation to gossip, family life, health, culture and law (MoSP and UNFPA, 2014, p. 28). Experts suggest that discrimination, stereotypes and limited access of women to express their opinions through the media are the main challenges to achieving gender equality in Ukraine (Koriukalov, 2014, p. 40). Most journalists are not properly acquainted with the notion of gender and cannot present information on gender issues and gender policy in an interesting and professional manner (Koriukalov, 2014, p. 41).
Ukrainian media legislation does not place any limitations on men or women (Koriukalov, 2014, p. 40). The law on advertising prohibits the use of statements that are discriminatory in nature on gender and other grounds (Koriukalov, 2014, p. 40). However, these laws do not include any measures aimed at improving women’s access to express their opinions in the media and bringing about the balanced portrayal of women (Koriukalov, 2014, p. 40). The lack of clearly defined sanctions to be applied in cases of gender discrimination makes the legislation ineffective (Koriukalov, 2014, p. 40).

Some national and international NGOs, such as the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine and the National Democratic Institute, have produced information materials and organised workshops, contests, round tables and other events for media representatives on the balanced portrayal of women and men in the media (Koriukalov, 2014, p. 41). While efforts have been made to create standards of non-discriminatory advertising by women’s organisations and the Ukrainian Association of Marketing, there is no system for regular monitoring and there has not been a substantial decrease in the number of complaints about adverts (Koriukalov, 2014, p. 41).

Public financial management: gender-responsive budgeting (GRB)

While Ukrainian legislation does not directly mention gender responsive budgeting, its legal and strategic framework contains sufficient elements to form a sound legal basis for work in this direction (Klatzer and Ivania, 2015, p. 7). Moreover, the international legal commitments entered by Ukraine include a legal obligation and basis for GRB (Klatzer and Ivania, 2015, p. 7). Sweden is contributing EUR 5.3 million in 2013-2019 to work together with the Ministry of Finance to introduce gender responsive budgeting (Hannsen, 2016, p. 59). In addition, the European Union provided EUR 0.6 million between 2011-2015 to help the ILO and UN Women implement gender mainstreaming in the budget (Hannsen, 2016, p. 60). The 2013-2016 state programme on gender equality is financed as follows: UAH 1,268,510 from the state budget, UAH 1,787,130 from local budgets and UAH 2,841,500 from other sources (development aid, grants, etc.) (Koriukalov, 2014, p. 12).

Since 2008, UNDP, EU, UN Women, UNFPA, SIDA, Friedrich Ebert Foundation and other international donor agencies and NGOs have provided training, and developed and disseminated toolkits on gender budgeting among state officials and members of local councils (Koriukalov, 2014, p. 12). Over 1,000 officials and members of councils benefited from these trainings in recent years; despite this, gender budgeting knowledge and skills are not widely used when planning development programmes and gender equality programmes at the national and local level (Koriukalov, 2014, p. 12).

With the support of UN Women and the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, Ukraine implemented a number of GRB initiatives at the local level from 2012-2014 (Ivanina et al., 2016, p. 37). These resulted in local authorities implementing measures such as setting up training centres where the target audience is women, an increase in health funding for women, as well as awareness raising of the need to prevent iodine deficiencies in pregnant women, consider male reproductive health, and invest more in funding sports activities for women and girls (Ivanina et al., 2016, p. 37-56).

Security

Gender-responsive security sector reform appears to be limited in Ukraine (Hannsen, 2016, p. 18). There are a few projects that are led or financed by the Council of Europe and OSCE-PCU which have a focus on gender equality, but a majority of the security sector reform-related projects lack any reference to gender equality and disaggregated data (Hannsen, 2016, p. 18).
In 2013, there were over 47,000 women serving and working in the Armed Forces of Ukraine, making up 13.5 per cent (Koriukalov, 2014, p. 27). Women in the officer corps increased from 0.7 per cent in 2001 to 2.9 per cent in 2010 (Koriukalov, 2014, p. 27). In addition, women’s participation in the self-defence groups set up in 2013-2014 was around 20 to 25 per cent, although this was mainly in support positions rather than combat roles (OSCE, 2015, p. 12).

3. Priority issues towards women’s empowerment

Political empowerment

Female representation in social and public life is low, which means women have limited opportunities to influence the decisions that concern their lives, their communities and the entire country (Koriukalov, 2014, p. 8; NDI, 2016, p. 2). The government has not yet created effective mechanisms for improving women’s access to power and decision making and efforts to improve this situation have not had tangible effects so far (Koriukalov, 2014, p. 8, 33). There are complaints that political parties do not adequately address key gender-equality issues in their programmes and make insufficient efforts to engage women in their organisational structure and programmes (OSCE, 2015, p. 8).

Only 12 per cent of seats in the national parliament are held by women, a slight increase from the 10 per cent in the previous parliament (World Bank, 2015, p. 2; OSCE, 2015, p. 8). This means Ukraine ranks 127th out of 190 countries with regard to the number of women MPs (Martsenyuk, 2015, p. 74). The proportion of women in ministerial level positions is 14 per cent (World Bank, 2015, p. 2). However, women have traditionally been better represented in lower level bodies (Koriukalov, 2014, p. 33). The share of women among members of municipal councils or other local area governing bodies was 76 in 2012 (World Bank, 2015, p. 2). In 2010, women made up 51 per cent of elected officials at village level, 46 per cent on town councils, and 28 per cent on city councils (SIGI, 2014, p. 7). In 2013 women made up 76.8 per cent of civil servants, yet only 13.5 per cent of those responsible for making decisions of national importance were women (Koriukalov, 2014, p. 33).

The notion that politics is a dirty business strengthens patriarchal notions which keep women out of the political space (Martsenyuk, 2015, p. 74). Prominent politicians, including the President of Ukraine and the Prime Minister of Ukraine, have made discriminatory remarks about women, especially about their capabilities to take part in public life (Koriukalov, 2014, p. 34; NDI, 2016, p. 2). However, at least one party has introduced an internal gender quota of 20 per cent (Koriukalov, 2014, p. 34).

Since the outbreak of violence in 2013 in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the 2013-2014 EuroMaidan protests, female civic leaders, culture and art celebrity figures, journalists and other Ukrainian women have taken part in civic activism, including non-violent resistance and promotion of national unity (Koriukalov, 2014, p. 28; Martsenyuk, 2015, p. 73; OSCE, 2015, p. 7). Both men and women have participated in demonstrations advocating for reforms and against corruption, while men dominate in protests headed by right-wing forces (OSCE, 2015, p. 7). Women’s organisations interviewed by OSCE were particularly interested in engaging in dialogue processes between people from western and eastern Ukraine and in re-establishing relations with women’s groups in the Russian Federation, including soldiers’ mothers (OSCE, 2015, p. 8). Women in these regions have been active participants in mediation and reconciliation efforts (OSCE, 2015, p. 16). Women have also been active in responding to the needs of the victims of the conflict (Koriukalov, 2014, p. 29). However, their active participation in the EuroMaidan for instance, received scant recognition and they were often treated in a sexist way (Martsenyuk, 2015, p. 76,
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In addition, women’s inclusion in reconciliation processes at the regional level has not been matched at the national level (OSCE, 2015, p. 16). Some projects have tried to support women, especially internally displaced and rural women, to be equal partners in peacebuilding activities in Ukraine (Hannsen, 2016, p. 59).

Economic empowerment

In 2013, the labour participation rate was higher for men (73 per cent) than for women (63 per cent) (World Bank, 2015, p. 2). However, slightly more young men (18.9 per cent) were unemployed than young women (16.4 per cent) (World Bank, 2015, p. 2). In 2014, female participation in the labour market was 53.2 per cent compared to 66.9 per cent for men (UNDP, 2015, p. 6). This is higher than the global average of 50 per cent (Spear et al, 2016, p. 23). In 2014, Ukraine was ranked 56th out of 142 countries, with a score of 0.7056 in the Global Gender Gap Index from the World Economic Forum (World Bank, 2015, p. 1). It is also above average when it comes to women in education, healthcare, and the labour market but, as noted, lagging far behind in women’s political representation (Martsenyuk, 2015, p. 74).

67 per cent of employed women and 45 per cent of employed men work in the service sector, which made up 55 per cent of total employment in 2013 (Spear et al, 2016, p. 57). Women are well-represented particularly in social services (health, education, welfare), public service, commerce (wholesale/retail), beauty salons, design/tailoring, cleaning, hospitality, catering, tourism, translation, accounting and bookkeeping, consulting, and real estate (Spear et al, 2016, p. 56). 19 per cent of employed women and 21 per cent of employed men worked in the agricultural sector in 2013 (Spear et al, 2016, p. 56). Women make up 47 per cent of agricultural employment and work mainly in horticulture and dairy (Spear et al, 2016, p. 56). Women make up 37 per cent of manufacturing employees and are most numerous in textiles and clothing (76 per cent of permanent full-time employees), and food (64 per cent) (Spear et al, 2016, p. 56). One fifth of manufacturing firms have women in senior management (Spear et al, 2016, p. 56).

In 2013 the average economy wide gender wage gap was 23 per cent (Spear et al, 2016, p. 56). Wages gaps in health and social work were 9 and 10 per cent respectively; 15 per cent in hospitality; 33 per cent in financial services; 38 per cent in arts, entertainment and recreation; 12 per cent in agriculture; and 25 per cent in manufacturing (Spear et al, 2016, p. 56-57). The gender wage gap can be partly explained by the concentration of women in low paid sectors, and that men tend to occupy higher positions than women (Spear et al, 2016, p. 55). In addition, the traditional division of domestic responsibilities makes career development more challenging for women (Spear et al, 2016, p. 55).

In 2014, nearly three million people where in informal employment, of whom 42 per cent were women (Spear et al, 2016, p. 55). In the informal economy, women face more discrimination and exploitation and they do not have access to social protection packages such as maternity leave (Spear et al, 2014, p. 55). The gender pay gap is higher in the informal sector (Koriukalov, 2014, p. 31).

Female entrepreneurs are most present in the services sector, especially in tourism, hospitality, retail trade, real estate, tailoring, beauty/hairdressing, education and arts translation, consulting, accounting, research, child-and-elderly care services, housecleaning, and international donor/NGO projects (Spear et al, 2016, p. 57). Only 31 per cent of firms had female participation in ownership, up from 22 per cent in 2014 (World Bank, 2015, p. 2; Spear et al, 2016, p. 56; Koriukalov, 2014, p. 32).

Women mostly became entrepreneurs because they were more challenged by the unemployment that arose when the research and educational institutions, state enterprises, collective farms, public service sectors collapsed in the 1990s (Spear et al, 2016, p. 57). Women initially registered as entrepreneurs for
social security and insurance purposes (registration is important for pensions) but later, their motivation changed to a desire for independent employment and ‘escape’ from discrimination based on age, family status, etc. (Spear et al, 206, p. 57). Women also start small businesses because they need to balance work and family responsibilities (they are still expected to do most of the house and family duties) (Spear et al, 2016, p. 57). Poor basic infrastructure in many areas means women may have to spend extra time getting water and energy supplies, and particularly in rural areas with poor social infrastructure, including small towns and villages, take on additional schooling and caring responsibilities (Spear et al, 2016, p. 60).

Women’s businesses tend to be smaller than those run by men, though in time they often steadily turn into more sustainable small and medium-size businesses (Spear et al, 2016, p. 57). Female entrepreneurs face many of the same limitations as male entrepreneurs: an inadequate enabling environment for small business development (including insufficient basic and quality infrastructure), the ‘frozen’ credit system, heavy business taxation, unsupportive regulatory environment, and inconsistent enforcement of laws relating to small businesses (Spear et al, 2016, p. 59). The business enabling environment is challenging in Ukraine and it ranks 83rd out of 189 countries in the World Bank ‘Doing Business’ index, 76th out of 144 countries in the World Economic Forum’s Competitiveness indices in 2014, and 142nd out of 175 in the Transparency International Corruption Perception index (Spear et al, 2016, p. 64). Corruption is the biggest issue it faces (Spear et al, 2016, p. 64). In addition, women may struggle to access business and trade networks, as well as knowledge, training and further education (Spear et al, 2016, p. 60). With the new regulations required by the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) agreement with the EC, female entrepreneurs may face more challenges coping with the increased costs of complying with stricter food hygiene and other product standards, especially as they have less leverage in terms of access to finance, technology, infrastructure, expertise etc. (Spear et al, 2016, p. 61). Ukraine does not have a comprehensive programme to support female entrepreneurs (Koriukalov, 2014, p. 32).

Although under the Economic Code and the Banks and Banking Act, women have equal rights to access bank loans, and a woman does not need consent from her husband or another male relative to apply for credit, in practice women experience difficulties accessing credit (SIGI, 2014, p. 6). Earning less than men, women are less likely to be offered a loan (SIGI, 2014, p. 6; Koriukalov, 2014, p. 16). In addition, because women are less likely to own property and assets to act as collateral, when they do secure credit, it is often at a very high rate of interest and for a short period (SIGI, 2014, p. 6). The gender gaps which exist in women’s real access to and control over economic resources is due in large part to traditional mindsets and norms (Spear et al, 2016, p. 59). This make it much harder for women to start a business (Spear et al, 2016, p. 59). Many women in rural areas established credit unions following the 2001 agrarian reform to improve their access to credit (SIGI, 2014, p. 6). Female farmers also received support under the ‘Rural Women’ programme of the Ministry of Agrarian Policy (SIGI, 2014, p. 6). According to the Microfinance Information Exchange, women made up 65.85 per cent of recipients of micro-credit in 2012 (SIGI, 2014, p. 6).

The conflict in eastern and southern Ukraine has produced 1.5 million internally displaced persons; of these approximately 66 per cent from eastern Ukraine are women and 23 per cent are of working age who are struggling to access employment (Spear et al, 2016, p. 7, 21). Women and men have lost their homes, jobs, businesses and pensions as they were forced to move as a result of the conflict (Spear et al, 2016, p. 22; OSCE, 2015, p. 10). Many young men have left the country to escape conscription (Spear et al, 2016, p. 22). Social costs and inequalities are intensifying as a result of the conflicts with Russia, and the competitive and compliance pressure of the DCFTA (Spear et al, 2016, p. 58).
Education
In 2012 primary and pre-primary enrolment was over 100 per cent for both boys and girls (World Bank, 2015, p. 2). Slightly more boys than girls were enrolled in secondary education (99 per cent of boys compared to 97 per cent of girls), although a lot more females than males were enrolled in tertiary education (85 per cent female, 74 per cent male) (World Bank, 2015, p. 2). The adult literacy is 100 per cent for both males and females (World Bank, 2015, p. 2). Between 2002 and 2012, 7.9 per cent of boys and 6.7 per cent of girls were engaged in child labour (SIGI, 2014, p. 5).

The rate of Roma girls who go to school is lower than average and the rate of Roma girls who drop out is significantly higher as a result of Roma traditions and lack of a proactive position of the government towards Roma people (Koriukalov, 2014, p. 18). Early marriage occurs within the Roma community and is a primary reason for girls dropping out of school (SIGI, 2014, p. 1).

Efforts by the state, NGOs and international organisations to mainstream gender into the educational system include the programme “Empowering Education”, publishing of “Equality ABC” and the handbook “We are different – We are equal”, teaching classes on gender equality, workshops for education professionals, gender expert assessment of textbooks and study materials and the review of teaching methodology from a gender perspective (Koriukalov, 2014, p. 43).

Poverty
Prior to the war the number of people living in poverty had been decreasing; and for most age groups, poverty indicators for men were higher than for women (Spear et al, 2016, p. 60). However, every third household with children were living below the poverty line; single mothers with young children, unemployed women, women in rural areas, and women over 75 experiencing higher levels of poverty (Spear et al, 2016, p. 60). The differences in pay between men and women results in differences in pension size latter on in life (Koriukalov, 2014, p.16).

Many female headed households depend on remittances from abroad, over half of which used to come from Ukrainians working in Russia (Spear et al, 2016, p. 60). This means the regional conflict and Russian sanctions against Ukraine, plus the weak Russian economy and rouble, will affect women-headed households more acutely (Spear et al, 2016, p. 60).

Sociocultural attitudes: gender stereotyping
According to gender stereotypes, Ukrainian women are primarily supposed to fulfil two roles – ‘to be beautiful and to be mothers’ – which makes it hard for them to take on other roles (Martsenyuk, 2015, p. 74). A significant problem for women’s representation is the viability of stereotypes about the roles of men and women in the family and society which are disseminated via the powerful channels of education and mass media (Koriukalov, 2014, p. 8). Gender policies and interventions in all sectors have faced rejection both at the level of those who should perform them and of the beneficiaries: some women are not ready to resist gender discrimination (Koriukalov, 2014, p. 9). This is partly as a result of lack of awareness of their equal rights, while some may underestimate their professional, civic and leadership abilities (Koriukalov, 2014, p. 9; Martsenyuk, 2015, p. 74). Despite efforts to target educational professionals with increased gender knowledge and sensitivity, schools are still an environment where

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36 Gross enrolment ratios can exceed 100 per cent due to the inclusion of over-aged and under-aged students because of early or late school entrance and grade repetition.
gender stereotypes are disseminated (Koriukalov, 2014, p. 7). In general, the work for counteracting stereotypes reproducing gender inequality is unsystematic (MoSP and UNFPA, 2014, p. 27).

A recent survey found that most people associate women more than men with family life (NDI, 2016, p. 11). In addition, most people do not associate women with political life, although this does not prevent them from voting for a woman candidate (NDI, 2016, p. 11). Nonetheless, there are reports that women candidates were not elected in some regions as a result of the perceptions that men are in a better position to solve the conflict (OSCE, 2015, p. 8). Overall respondents wanted a more equal distribution of gender roles in family, professional and political life (NDI, 2016, p. 11).

A 2007 survey found that 4 per cent of women agree that a husband is justified in hitting or beating his wife, compared to 11 per cent of men (World Bank, 2015, p. 2). This decreased slightly in 2012 with 9.4 per cent of men compared to 2.9 per cent of women agreeing with one of the reasons to justify beating a wife/partner (Gerasymenko, 2015, p. 146). A lot of people in the country still believe it is the survivors of violence who are responsible for what happened to them (Gerasymenko, 2015, p. 146).

Roma women, women with disabilities, internally displaced women, women from rural areas, and older women face higher levels of discrimination, vulnerability and poverty (Spear et al, 2016, p. 24; MoSP and UNFPA, 2014, p. 23-24). Other women who are vulnerable include lesbian women, transgender women, HIV-positive women, women in prison settings, and women who use drugs (Koriukalov, 2014, p. 39; MoSP and UNFPA, 2014, p. 23-25).

**Gender based violence**

In 2010, 91,913 cases of domestic violence were registered with the police according to the Women Against Violence Europe (WAVE) network (SIGI, 2014, p. 3). Levels of reported violence increase by about 10,000 every year, indicating an ‘increased level of awareness and visibility of the issue, and readiness of the police to respond to such cases’ (SIGI, 2014, p. 3; see also Koriukalov, 2014, p. 8; Gerasymenko, 2015, p. 145). A 2014 survey on violence against women found that 19.4 per cent aged 19–49 suffered from physical violence, while another 7.9 per cent of women suffered from sexual violence (Gerasymenko, 2015, p. 140). Husbands and male partners are often the main perpetrators of sexual violence against women (SIGI, 2014, p. 4; Gerasymenko, 2015, p. 144). This type of violence is particularly stigmatised in Ukraine meaning female victims are reluctant to report it (Gerasymenko, 2015, p. 144). The same survey found the share of survivors of non-family violence (perpetrators mostly male acquaintances or strangers) had increased since a similar survey in 2007 (Gerasymenko, 2015, p. 145).

However, despite increases in reporting, domestic violence largely still remains a hidden problem in Ukraine and is considered to be a private family matter. As this view is still shared by many law enforcement officials and others in authority, it is difficult for women to seek help (SIGI, 2014, p. 3). Incidents of rape often go unreported as victims are ashamed, distrust the police, do not believe that bringing charges will result in justice, or fear reprisals from the assailant (SIGI, 2014, p. 4; Gerasymenko, 2015, p. 144). Sexual harassment appears to be a widespread but little understood problem in Ukraine; indeed in many sectors it is so widespread as to be considered normal (SIGI, 2014, p. 4).

Violence against Roma women is a particular problem in Ukraine, including domestic violence and street violence at the hands of non-Roma (SIGI, 2014, p. 3). Roma women are reluctant to report violence to the police as a result of mistrust and previous bad experiences at the hands of the police (SIGI, 2014, p. 3).
Neo-Nazi violence and intimidation affects the free access to public space of women from some minority groups, including Roma, Crimean Tartars, other ethnic minorities, and the LGBTI community (SIGI, 2014, p. 7). In 2013, a law preventing ‘homosexuality propaganda’ was introduced which enabled prosecution if necessary to ensure public order and morality in Ukrainian society (law on “amendments to some legislative acts (to protect the right of children to a safe information environment”) (SIGI, 2014, p. 7). Violence against LGBTI persons remains unstudied (Koriukalov, 2014, p. 26).

There are reports of rape and sexualised violence in the conflict-affected regions of Eastern Ukraine (Gerasymenko, 2015, p. 146). OSCE (2015, p. 11) has received reports of gender based violence and violence against children in families of dismissed riot police and demobilised soldiers, as well as in the context of the worsening socio-economic situation and increased alcohol abuse. Trafficking of women for sexual exploitation has increased since the beginning of 2015, a reversal of trends of previous years where the majority of victims were men trafficked for labour exploitation (OSCE, 2015, p. 12). De-mobilised soldiers are reported to suffer from numerous issues, including: post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD); depression; anxiety; problems related to loss of status, self-identification, and raised levels of aggression; obsessive compulsive disorder; sexual disorders; and sleeping disorders (OSCE, 2015, p. 14). The absence of services to treat these issues is likely to have direct and indirect effects on women and children, who may bear the consequences of the effects of PTSD and increased alcoholism and violence in the family unit (OSCE, 2014, p. 15).

**Knowledge of women’s rights to protection** from violence is available and widely disseminated in Ukraine, including through education campaigns such as the five year ‘Stop Violence’ national campaign launched in 2010 (SIGI, 2014, p. 2; Koriukalov, 2014, p. 24). The police receive training on violence against women, although their response has been criticised for being inadequate (SIGI, 2014, p. 2, 3). There is a national ‘Stop Violence’ helpline that victims can call, which is available nation-wide and is toll-free (SIGI, 2014, p. 2). It is run by the NGO La Strada-Ukraine and calls have increased every year since it began in 2003 (SIGI, 2014, p. 2). In 2013 a helpline for child victims of violence was opened (Koriukalov, 2014, p. 45). The shelters for domestic violence which do exist lack financial support from the Ukrainian government and local authorities, and there are not enough of them (SIGI, 2014, p. 2; Koriukalov, 2014, p. 24).

4. References


Suggested citation
About this report

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