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The Study of Women’s Needs and Priorities in High Mountainous Regions of Georgia

Center for Social Sciences

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Summary

The presented research is aimed at studying social and economic needs of population residing in high mountainous regions of Georgia. Quantitative, as well as qualitative research methods were applied for collecting data. 400 people (259 women and 141 men) were interviewed within the quantitative research in the high mountainous regions of Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti, Racha-Lechkhumi-Kvemo Svaneti, Mtskheta-Mtianeti and Adjara. The number of survey participants represent the sample population of the whole population of Georgia's mountainous regions. Taking into consideration the specificity of women's social needs and problems, in the frames of qualitative research, 40 in-depth interviews were conducted with women of different age, marital and employment status, living in the same regions.

The results of quantitative research revealed that employment and low-scale income are the most acute problems for the population of Georgia's high mountainous regions. Only 22% of respondents are employed at paid jobs. As for household income, it is up to 250 GEL for the majority (35%) and pensions and state assistance is named as the major household income (51%). Accordingly, the majority of respondents (34%) name the assistance in finding the job as the number one need. On the background of aforementioned poverty, as the gas supply is the main problem for high mountainous regions, the use of wood which is the source of heating in winter for almost absolute majority of respondents (92%), becomes the additional expenditure for families.

The study of respondents' health has revealed that heart related issues (67%) are the most widespread, together with back/spine related (46%) and eyesight problems (40%).

When assessing the socio-economic conditions it should be emphasized that, compared to male respondents, the number of female respondents who possesses real estate is significantly low (60%/34%), which, in its own, is related to inheritance problem – according to majority of male (50%) as well as female respondents' (39%) opinion, the property should be inherited to son.

Generally, gender stereotypes which determine woman's social role in family, when, paid employment outside household and managing business in significant priority for men, are dominant in mountain population.

I. Introduction

The study of Women's Need and Priorities in High Mountainous Regions of Georgia represents a general assessment of social needs and priorities of the women residing in relatively remote and vulnerable areas in comparison with the other parts of Georgia. The research was conducted from September till December 2013 by the Centre for Social Sciences on the basis of the order of UN Women.

The research covered mountainous areas in four regions in Georgia – Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti, Racha-Lechkhumi-Kvemo Svaneti, Adjara and Mtskheta-Mtianeti. Quantitative [representative survey] and qualitative [in-depth interviews] research methods were applied. 400 people were interviewed based on the semi-structured questionnaire; the descriptive statistics has been applied to analyze the data. Qualitative data were collected through 40 in depth interviews.

The aim of the research was to assess the needs and priorities of high mountainous urban and rural population from the selected regions in the following direction:

- Respondents' economic performance – according to their employment status personal/household income and consumption expenditure;
- Evaluation of households: poverty, consumption levels, living conditions and infrastructure, as well as identification of basic needs and the accessibility to social services;
- Evaluation of health;
- Identification of gender attitudes and stereotypes;

The main tool of quantitative research is represented by semi-structured questionnaire, which was created according to Caucasus Barometer 2012¹, A research 'Economic and Social vulnerability in Georgia' report of 2013², conducted in the framework of UNDP Program and the report of 2003 of the research 'Health and Social Needs'³. The quantitative study population was represented by the full age residents (18+) residing in the selected regions [both, women and men; Total amount: 262,

¹ Caucasus Barometer, 2012 Questionnaire

<http://www.crrcenters.org/store/files/documentation/CB2012%20questionnaire%20Geo%20with%20varnames%2028022013.pdf> [accessed on September 7, 2013]

² Francesca Gasman, et al; Economic and Social vulnerability in Georgia, UNDP, 2013

³ Caerphilly Health & Social Needs Study, Gwent Health Authority Caerphilly County Borough Council, 2003
[http://www2.nphs.wales.nhs.uk:8080/hiatdocs.nsf/1f8687d8da97650980256fa30051b0be/3110f0c1d7fb13268025738b002f977a/\\$FILE/20071105_CaerphillyStage3_DF_MJW_V2a.pdf](http://www2.nphs.wales.nhs.uk:8080/hiatdocs.nsf/1f8687d8da97650980256fa30051b0be/3110f0c1d7fb13268025738b002f977a/$FILE/20071105_CaerphillyStage3_DF_MJW_V2a.pdf) [accessed on September 7, 2013]

914]. The study sample population consisted of 400 respondents: 134 respondent from urban and 266 from rural areas. From the whole of 400 respondents 259 were women and 141 were men. Standard deviation doesn't exceed 4%.

Women belonging to different categories of age, marital, employment and social status had been selected for the participation in qualitative study in order to provide the comprehensive picture of women's living conditions in mountainous areas. Therefore, 40 respondents were classified as follows:

- Married, 1-2 children women, unemployed (5 respondents)
- Married, 1-2 children women, employed (5 respondents)
- Married, women with many children (5 respondents)
- Divorced women with grandchildren (5 respondents)
- Widows (5 respondents)
- Single girls/women of 16-25 years old (5 respondents)
- Single women over 45 (5 respondents)
- Women taking care of the disabled or elderly (5 respondents)

Our research covered the following regions:

- 1) Lentekhi District (villages: Kheledi and Babili)
- 2) Martvili District (village: Gurdzemi)
- 3) Adjara (town Keda, villages: Vaio, Eknara)
- 4) Ambrolauri District (Ambrolauri, villages: Sadmeli, Dziragouli)
- 5) Tsageri District (villages: Orbeli, Lailashi)
- 6) Mestia District
- 7) Tianeti District
- 8) Dusheti District

II. Demographic Variables: Gender and Age

According to the gender distribution, out of 400 surveyed respondents 65% are females and 35% are males. The greatest part of surveyed women [73%] residing in mountainous regions fall under the 55-64 age category, whereas males [45%] dominate in 45-54 age category. Among the survey participants over 55 the number of male respondents is significantly decreased and amounted to

less than 30% of female respondents [Diagram 2.2]. This might be the possible explanation for unequal distribution between the respondents' gender.

Diagram 2.1. Gender of Respondents

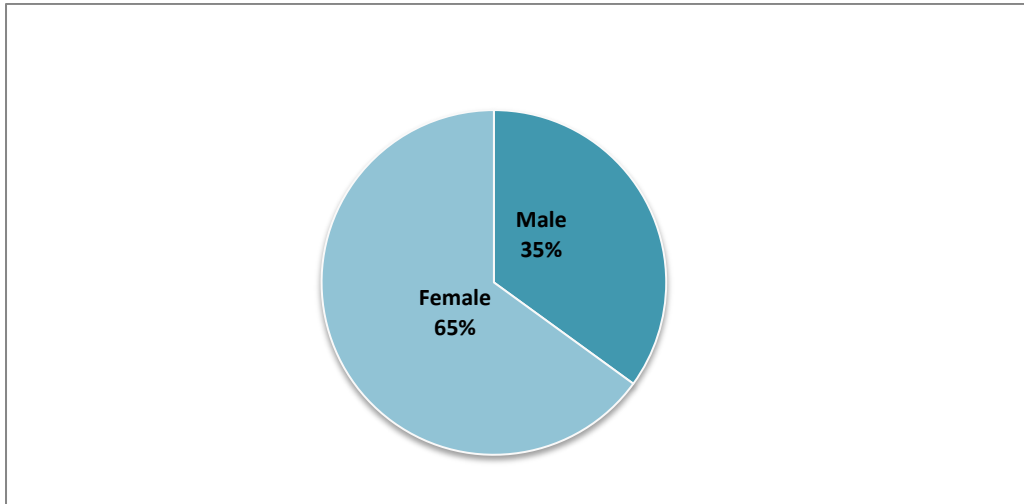
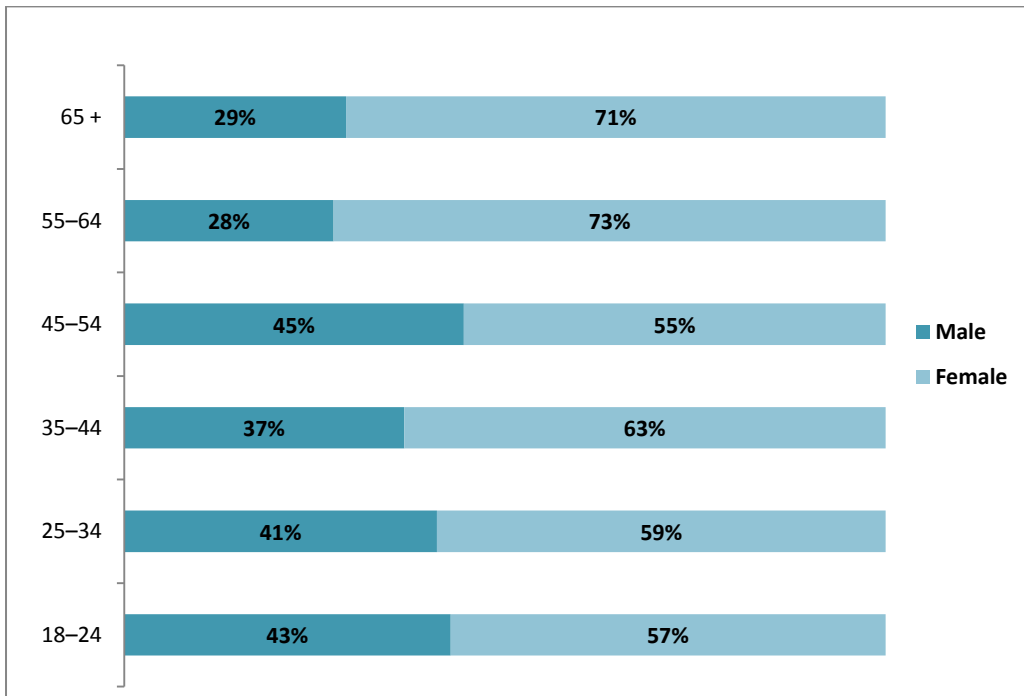


Chart 2.2. Distribution of Gender by Age

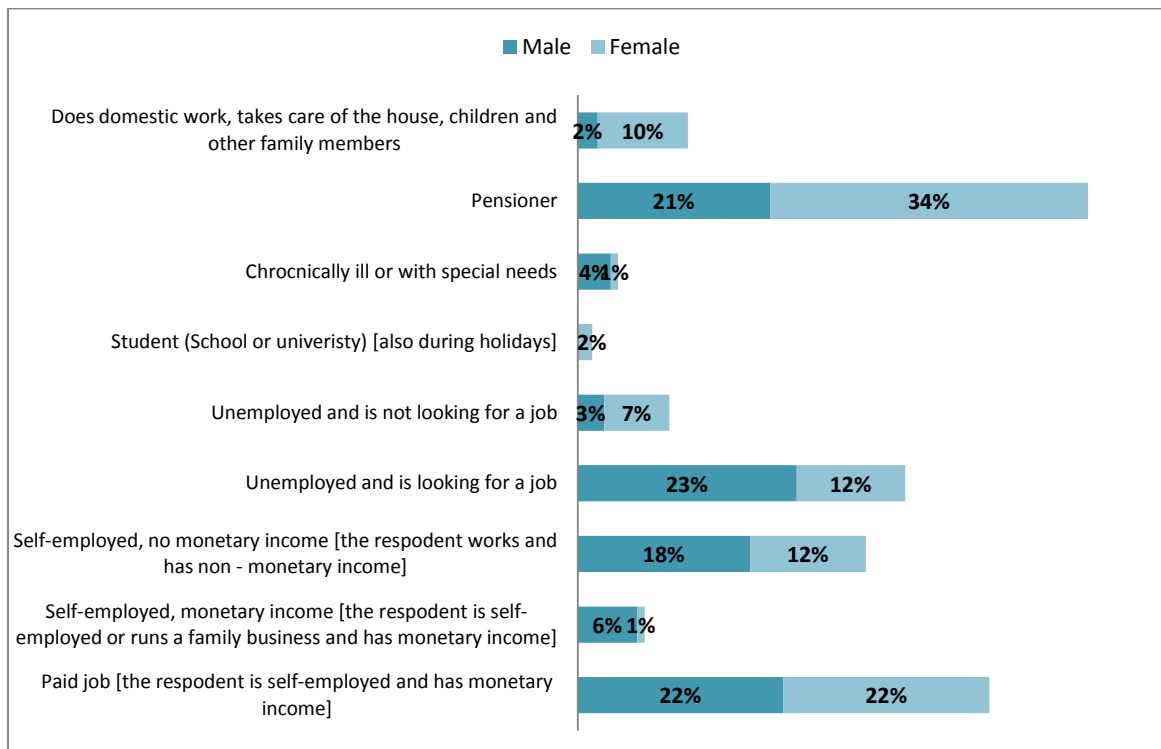


III. Respondents' Economic Performance – according to Their Employment Status Personal/Household Income and Consumption Expenditure

Unemployment and low-scale income turned out to be the most acute problems for the population of high mountainous regions. Roughly the same number of men and women are employed at paid jobs, but more men are economically active and looking for a job in comparison with women.

The greatest part of survey participants [29%] are the pensioners and only 22% reported to be employed at the paid job. 16% of the respondents are unemployed and searching for a job. As for the self-employed respondents, only 3% receives some monetary income whereas 15% have no income at all. These data represent diverse groups of people in relation to the economic performance: those who are employed at paid jobs, self-employed with or without monetary income, unemployed people not looking for a job and those of being still economically active and looking for a job. Hence, it is observed that the total number of interviewees with no monetary income reaches 37%. According to the gender distribution more women [34%] than men [21%] appear to be pensioners. An equal number of surveyed women [22%] and men [22%] are employed at the paid job and among those of self-employed respondents receiving income 6% are males and only 1% are females. More unemployed men are seeking for a job [23%] in compare with women [12%] whereas the most of survey participants performing the unpaid work (taking care for household and other family members, doing the family-work) are women [10%].

Diagram 3.1. Employment Status



150 GEL, which is lower than Georgia’s established minimum living wage (Minimum living wage according to data from November 2013 was 150.80 GEL a month) is a monthly personal income for the majority [40%] of respondents and 28% of the survey population has no personal income at all. (See Chart 3.2.) The household income for 36% of respondents hardly reaches 250 GEL and in case of 34% - 400 GEL. (See Chart 3.3.)

Diagram 3.2. Personal Income

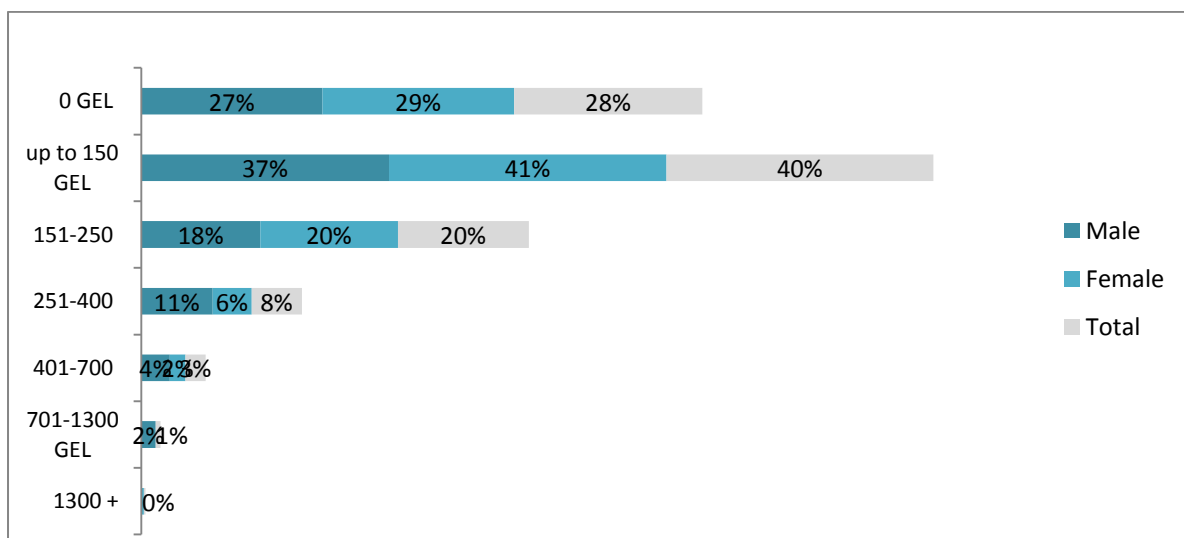
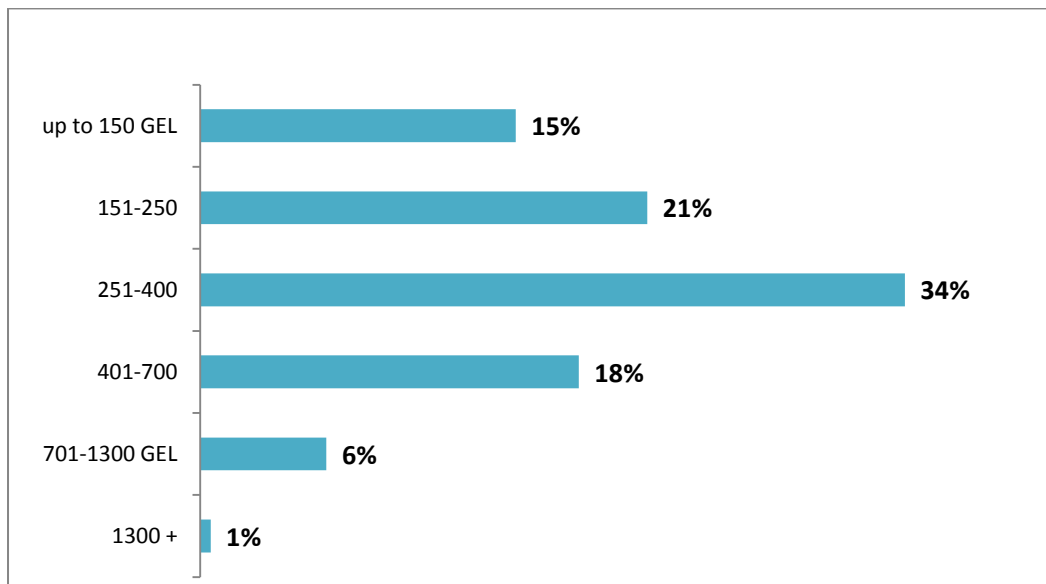
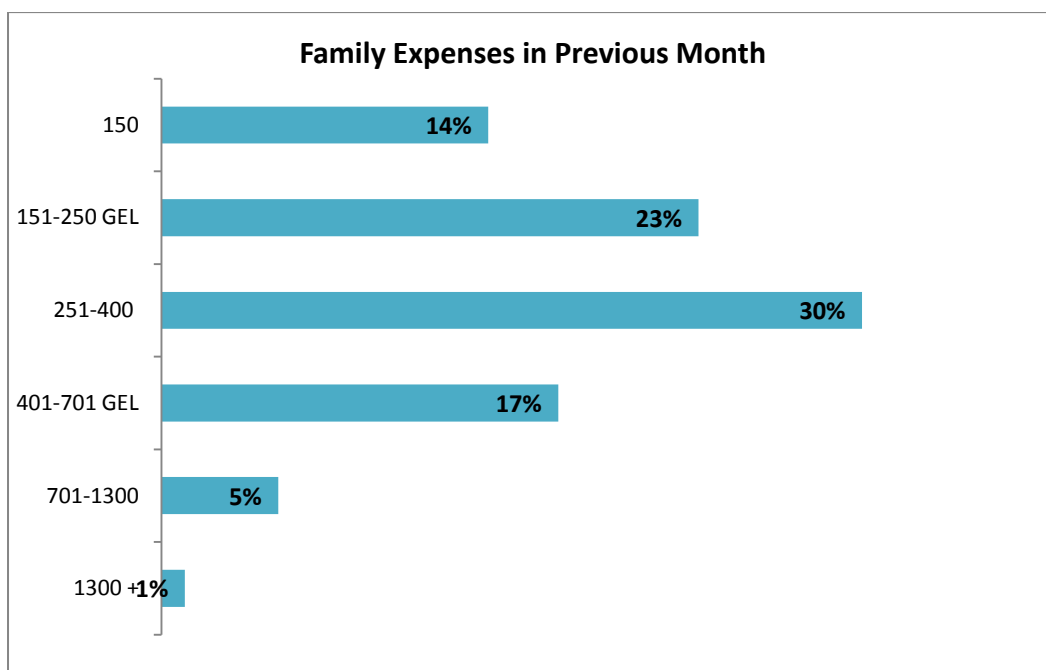


Diagram 3.3. Household Income



The overall consumption expenditures amounted to 250 GEL for 37% of households and around 400 GEL for 30% in the last month. (See Chart 3.4)

Diagram 3.4. Family Expenses in Previous Month



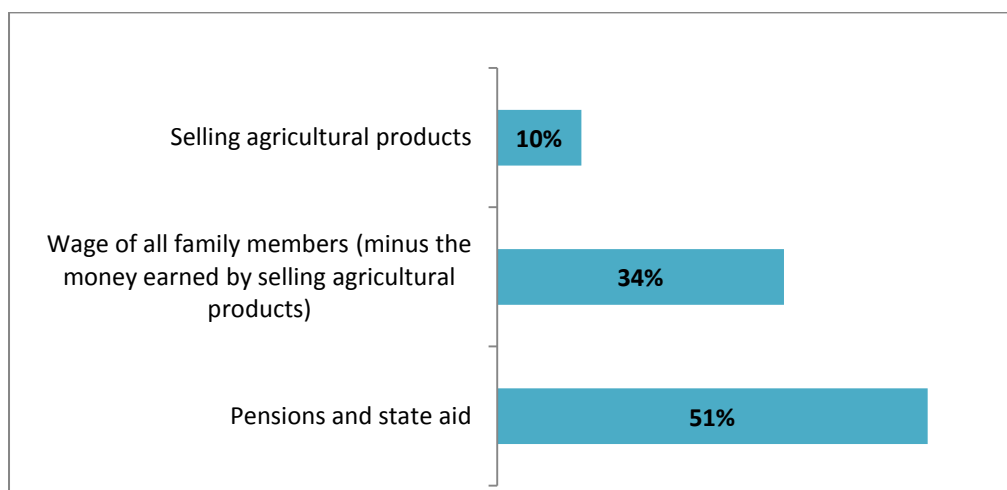
For 51% of respondents the main income includes pensions and government financial aids. 34% of respondents mentioned, that their main income is sum of all family members wages excluding the sum earning from selling agricultural products. Only 10% of survey population earns money from selling agricultural products. (See Chart 3.5). The qualitative research has showed that if family has

monthly income other than pension (small business, social assistance or public sector salary) than pensioner spends this amount on his/her personal needs (medicaments, things of personal use). But in the families, where pension is the only income, it is spent on most important products (flour, salt, sugar):

“Grandpa shares his pension himself and he doesn’t interfere in taxes. Mum’s income is nearly 150 GEL, mine is 135 Gel, Data’s pension increased to 100 GEL. Mzia (my mum) and I spend money together...”/Women, widow, employed, aged 42/.

“It would be better to employ people. Some people work, at least one member from each family, but some people live only on pension and social assistance, others don’t even have social assistance and live only on pension. What can pension be enough for? Students aren’t given social assistance. Who needs it more, me – sitting home – or student?” / Women, single, pupil, aged 16/.

Diagram 3.5. Household Main Income Sources



When it comes to credits 44% of male and 53% of female respondents report that they currently do not have and even never had used bank loan service. According to 43% of male and 43% female respondents they never had the problems with bank debt repayments. As the survey results show 5% of male and 2% of female respondents are not able to pay the bank loan; 7% of male and 2% of female respondents were not able to cover the loan on time.

Qualitative study findings highlight that, women’s economic status in the high mountainous regions depends on several factors:

- Social assistance, pension;
- Employment of women with the public sector/ private sector;

- Incomes delivered from selling the products;
- Remittances from family member migrants;
- Employment of the family members with the public sector/ private sector;
- Financial assets or other assistance provided by the relatives for woman or her family;
- Short-term credits;

The largest part of the interviewed women have no strategic properties. They live in the houses of their fathers or husbands and are not considered as the owners. They do not distinguish such categories as “family income” and “woman’s income”; “family property” and “woman’s property”. Most women spend their personal incomes not for their own needs but rather for the needs of the other family members. For the married women their children’s wellbeing (education, marriage, and comfort at home and in the society) is the number one concern. The major purpose of single girls’ and women’s economic activities is to deal with the problems, and needs of the other family members (parents, brother’s family, and siblings) and ensuring their welfare.

Most women give negative evaluation to their economic status and classify themselves as the poor or having lower than average income, as their average monthly income varies from GEL 100 to no more than GEL 300-400. This amount is spent on satisfaction of the basic needs of the family members, payment of the interests on bank loans, so that making at least small savings is beyond their reach. Women, whose monthly income is GEL 1000 and more, spend it primarily for support of their children, their education and family business (trade, tourism) development. These women use bank credits more frequently, are credible debtors and have some savings.

Most families have the experience of using the short-term credits. Due to low monthly incomes, mostly women take the short-term credits (for procurement of the wheat flour and firewood) and long-term loans for their children’s needs (launching of business, marriage, purchase of a car or apartment) and repay these loans for multiple years. Attitudes towards economic future are less clear for most women. They do not expect that there will be the significant improvements in this regard. They believe that nothing will change and common family income will not grow. In the long run, women hope that their children will get employed. They associate their personal well-being, emotional stability and satisfaction with their children’s success. The hopes of single women are linked to other family members’ and relatives’ financial wellbeing.

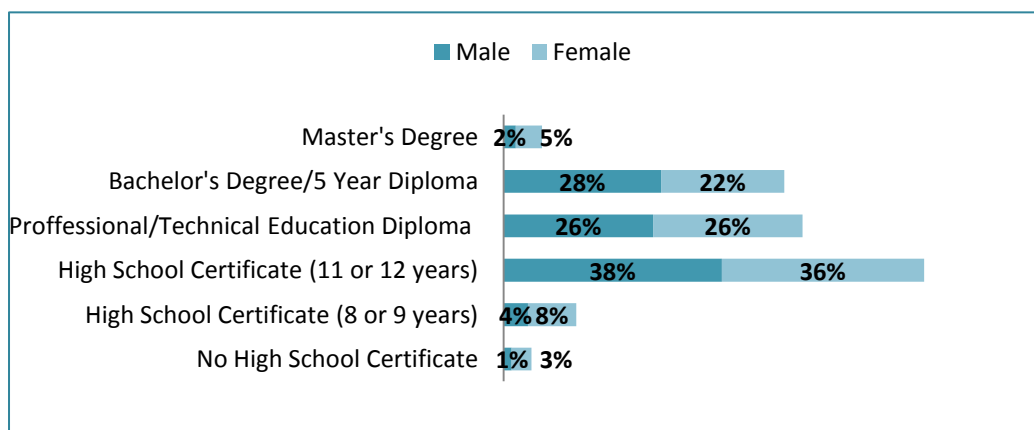
Women/girls regard that the state should be the main guarantor of economic stability and development of the regions, families and sustainability of the citizens. The state should elaborate the strategy for employment and regional development; offer it to the population, including women

who ensured survival of their families, in the post-soviet period. The interviewed women outline that they are able and they truly desire to contribute to the advancement of local economy, development of tourism, business, and generally, they consider the process of women’s socio-economic and political strengthening as important.

For the most women/girls education is of immense importance. Parents, irrespective of economic situation in the family, attempt to provide their children with higher and/or vocational education. For this purpose they collect the family incomes and prepare their children for the national examinations. Though there are many cases of termination of education by young people as the family to pay the education fees. This is less applicable to the students who have gained 50%, 70% or 100% of state financing. In such cases, the parents ensure completion of their children’s education though the bank credits and products’ sale.

Quantitative data represent that the majority of population in mountainous region [56% of men and 53% of women] have the higher or professional education. Men slightly outpace women in post-secondary education. Overall, no significant differences between the education level of surveyed women and men are observed.

Diagram 3.6. Education Level



However, in qualitative study it was mentioned that it is difficult to get employed in accordance with education level and field. Girls, who return to their families after the university studies in the big cities, usually get involved into the household activities. They rarely find employment in the trade, catering entities located in district centers and the rarest among them is the public service: village school, kindergarten, culture center, village council, administration.

Nothing is done in respect to the permanent education and re-training of the women whose professions became insufficient at the labor market as it is not the priority issue for the state

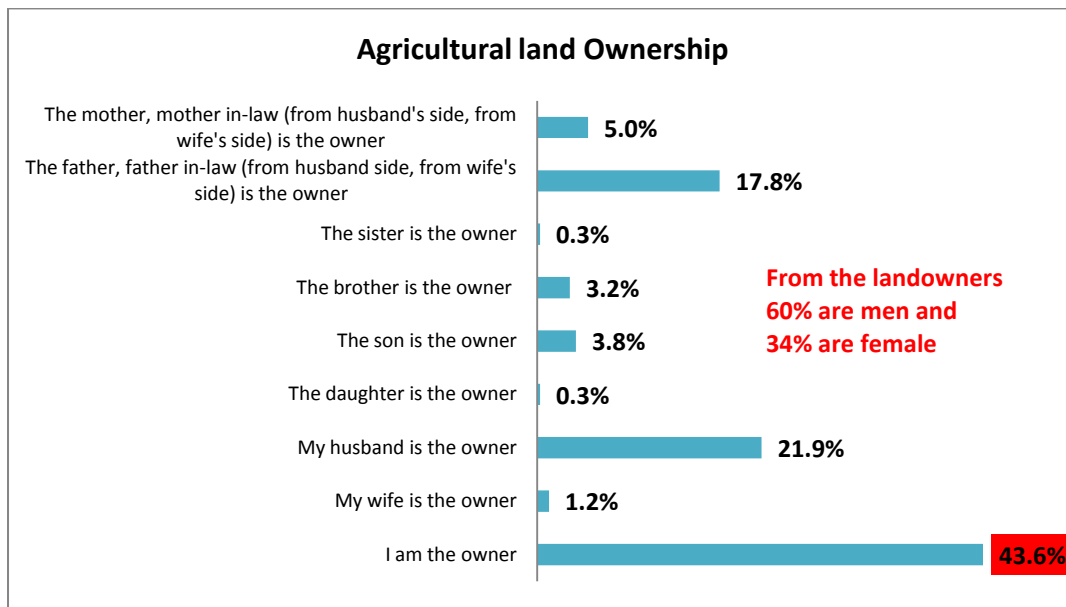
policies. Relatively prosperous women and girls from the financially secure families are able to improve their qualifications or acquire the professions ensuring good employment opportunities. For example, the accounting, computer technologies, English language, business-related skills, formation of NGOs and projects development. Most of the interviewed women and girls would welcome implementation of the projects and programs intended for providing them with competitive and professional knowledge and assist them in employment in high mountainous regions. Trainings, education programs, re-training courses arranged by the international organizations are not available for most of them and therefore, they regard that such activities should be arranged at broader scale and within longer terms.

IV. Evaluation of Household Economies, Poverty, Consumption, Living Conditions and Infrastructure, Accessibility to Social Services and Basic Needs

The employment and income rates show that the majority of population residing in high mountainous regions have economic problems and live in poverty. This picture is provided by both, quantitative and qualitative study data.

86% of respondents report that they own agricultural land. The majority of respondents [44%] name themselves as landowner - 60% are male and 34% are female. Moreover, 60% of the survey population takes care of the cattle [cows, buffalo, bulls] and 58% have the poultry [chickens, turkeys, etc.] in their farms also.

Diagram 4.1. Agricultural Land Ownership



The Chart below shows that 40% of survey population has enough money only for buying food products, while 44% do not have enough money even for food (See Chart 4.2). Moreover, 26% of this population has to borrow money for food every month and 7% - every day (See Chart 4.3). According to the qualitative study data, the most part of the family incomes usually are spent for the food products, medicines, education and procurement of the household appliances, arrangement of the family ties and religious/traditional rituals (funerals, weddings, celebrations, etc.).

Diagram4.2. Household Economic Conditions

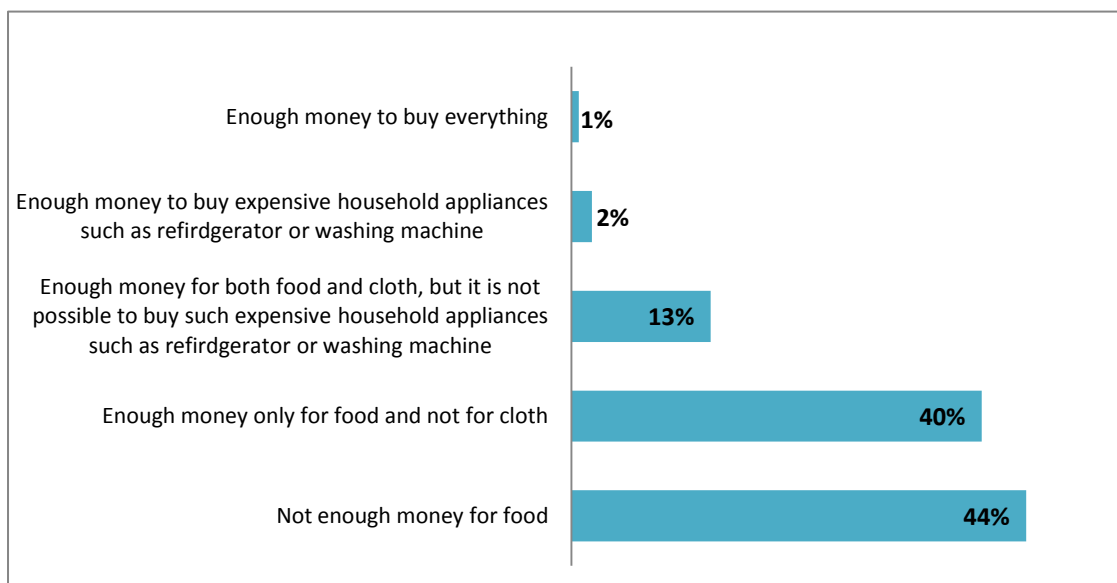
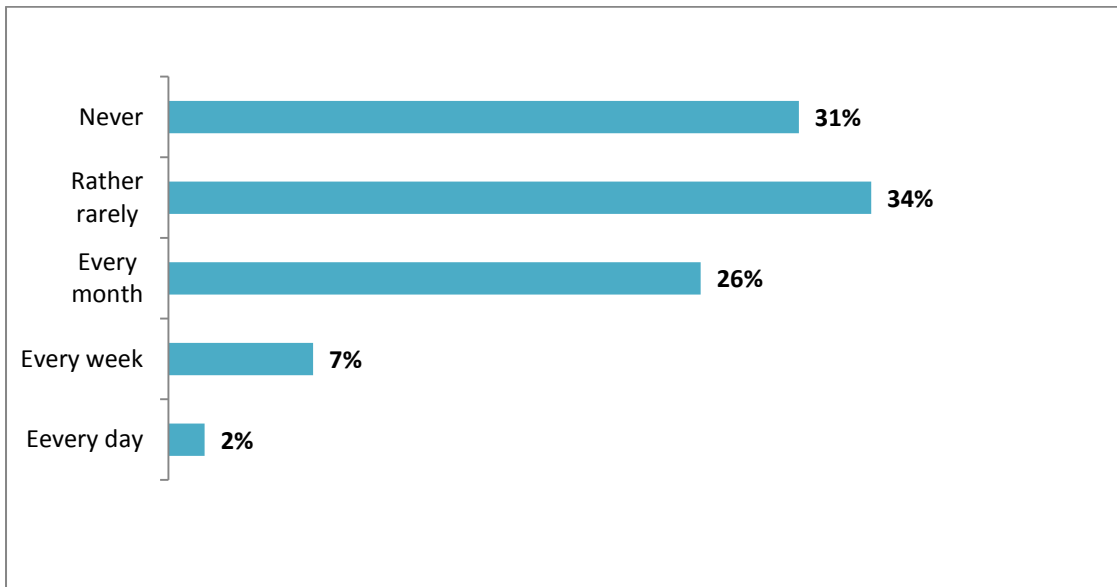
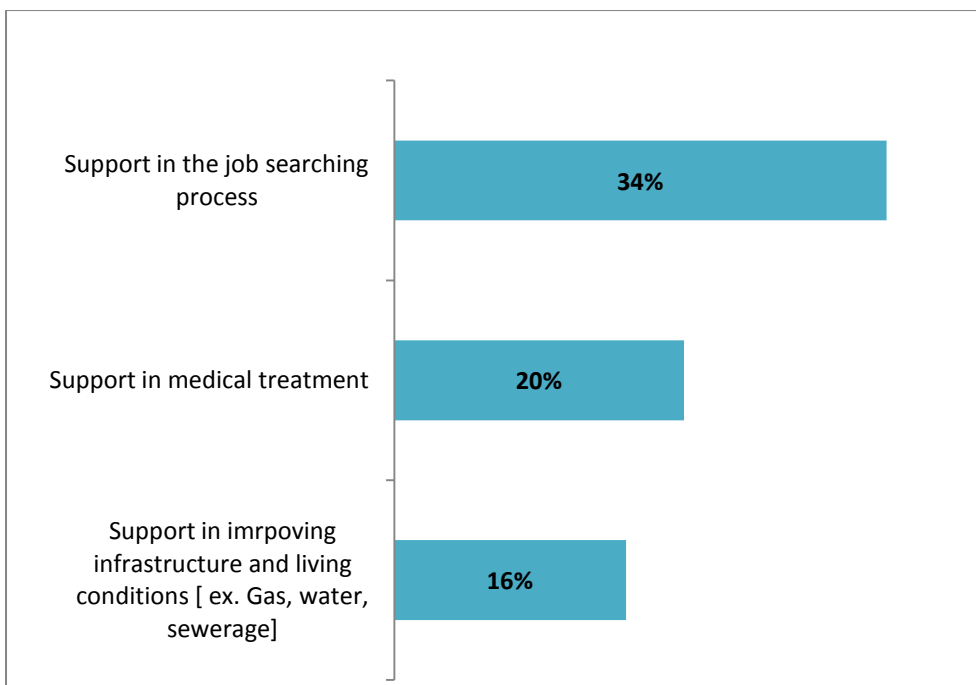


Diagram 4.3. Insufficient Money for Food



For 34% of respondents the most desirable support is to help them to get employed. For 20% of respondents it is important to receive some health care policies. And 16% is in need of infrastructure improvements.

Diagram 4.4. The First Choice for a Possible Support



Regarding infrastructural issues, majority of respondents (81%) report that they have natural gas supply problems. Accordingly, 92% of respondents use wood as the source of heating in winter, which is additional expenditure for families. Only 6% of respondents use gas heater and 1% uses

electronic heater. 74% of respondents are dissatisfied with the location of their houses, for they have limited access to employment or to employment possibilities.

Unfortunately, 38% of respondents still are not receiving any financial aids for socially unprotected families and they are in need of this kind of social support. 5% of respondents report that they do not receive pensions that belong to them. According to the date 13% of respondents are not involved in the public health insurance program though they have a need for it.

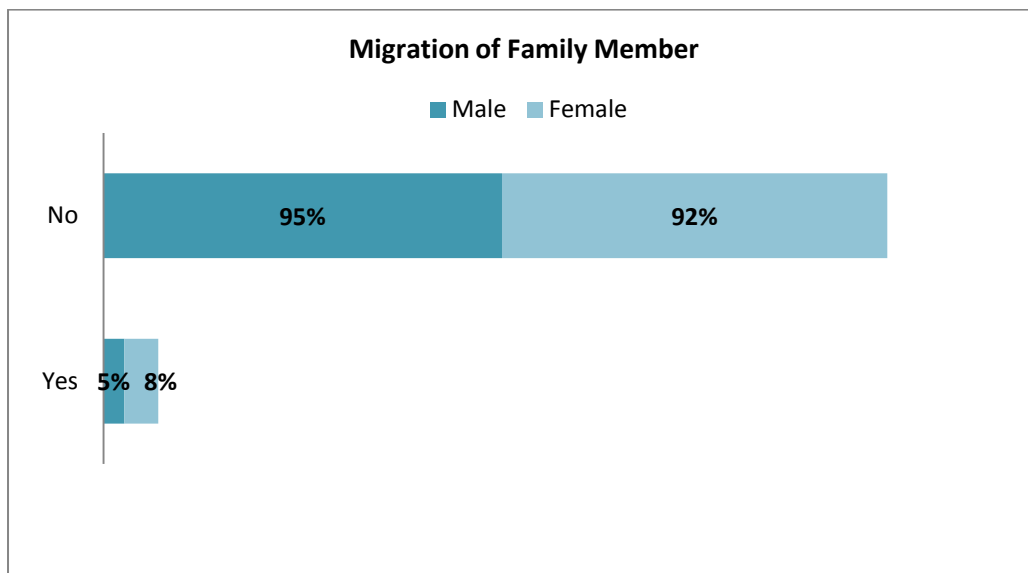
Table 4.1. Social Services and Financial Aid

Social Services and Financial Aid		
Financial services for socially unprotected families	I use	22%
	I do not use, but I need	38%
	I do not need	41%
Pension	I use	48%
	I do not use, but I need	5%
	I do not need	47%
Public Health Insurance Policies	I use	80%
	I do not use, but I need	13%
	I do not need	7%
Social services for people with disabilities and people with special skills	I use	1%
	I do not use, but I need	8%
	I do not need	91%
Support from social worker while family conflicts or social problems	I use	%
	I do not use, but I need	2%
	I do not need	98%
Kinder garden for your children or grandchildren	I use	6%
	I do not use, but I need	3%

	need	
	I do not need	91%

It should be mentioned, that from 91% of respondents, who report that they have no need of kindergarten, only 16% have kid younger than 6 years old. When assessing the need of kindergartens, several factors should be taken into consideration: in rural settlements, in contrast to urban settlements, kindergartens are not the only mean of socialization – this function is born by the families of neighbours and relatives. Besides, in the majority of villages, children get involved in household work from early ages. This does not necessarily imply a hard, physical work, but is at least a minor part of household activities: taking livestock to fields, feeding domestic birds, bringing spring water, taking food to parents gone to work, sitting with elder, going to relatives or neighbours for some business, etc., The issue of kindergarten infrastructure, which is very problematic in these regions, is also worth considering, This arguments can explain the probable unawareness of respondents on the need of kindergarten.

Diagram 4.5. Migration of Family Member



The most part of women participating in qualitative study appraised women’s migration negatively as they consider it to be the basis for family brake down, psychological/emotional problems of the children left at home, depression of the migrant women and demoralization of their family members (particularly husbands). Women migrate abroad for the long terms and do not return home even when they have significantly invested into the future of their children as now they have to support

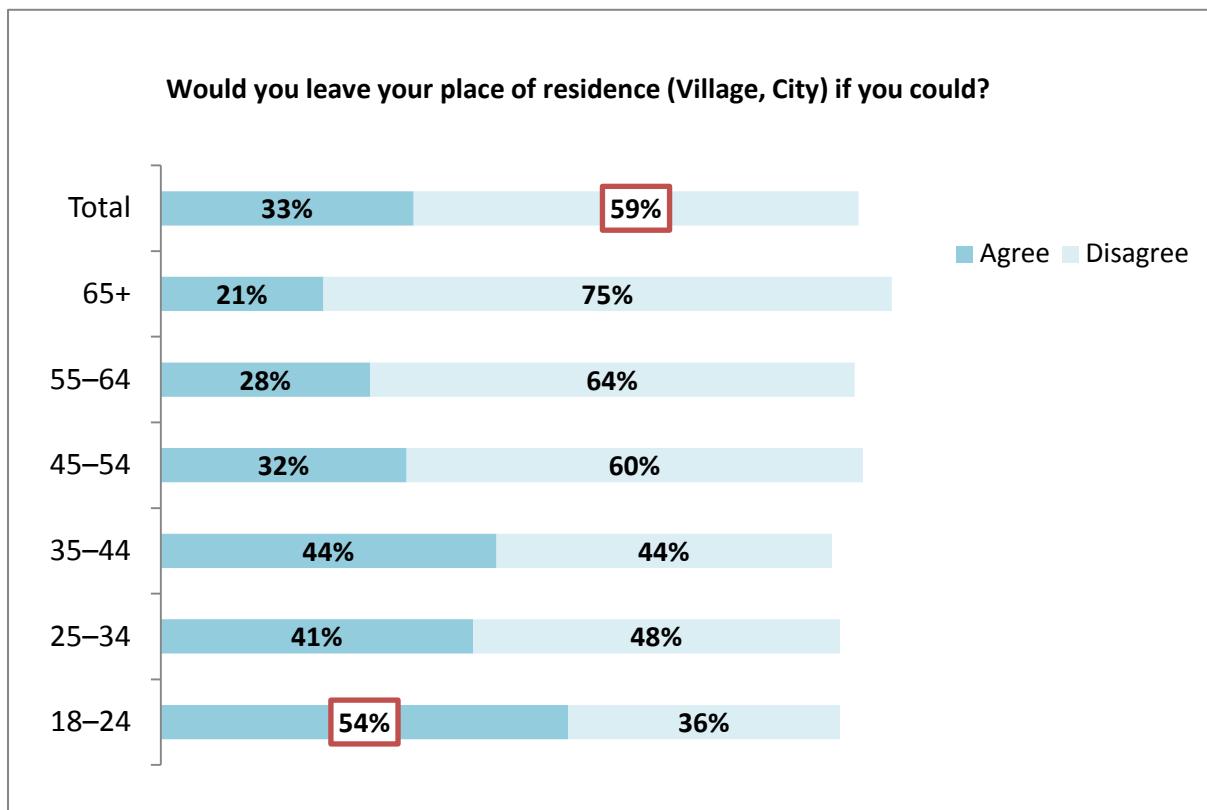
their grand children's wellbeing. It is also possible that the migrant women gain some emotional satisfaction and advance their self-esteem through the role of economic donors of the families and guarantors of financial stability of their children. . This might be the reason they prefer to stay in the host countries and continue earning money instead of coming back and stay without opportunities and at unpaid, unappreciated work in their own countries.

Men leave their areas for seasonal works and return home in few months. Most of them use the earned money for their own needs and rarely spend it for the needs of their other family members.

According to qualitative data, respondents concerns with the issues of internal migration are mostly related to children and other family members. The major aim of internal and external migration is employment, but there can be another reason as well, education for example. Population of high mountainous regions leave for cities mostly for this reason.

The concerns of middle aged women/mothers is related to this issues. They fear that children migrated to cities to work or study won't come back. "My main concern is family and children of course, but I'm concerned with common situation as well. What I want most is that we were socially secured, so that my children wouldn't be willing to run from here... so that they will desire to stay here with us... I wish the region would develop, something would be done for my village, I could sacrifice my private wellbeing to stand for it. Nothing makes sense if common situation doesn't improve". / Lentekhi District, Kheledi, mother of two children.

Diagram 4.6. Satisfaction with the place of residence



The will of youth to migrate has been revealed as a result of quantitative research as well. The majority of respondents aged 18-24 state that they would leave their place of residence in case of opportunity. Among respondents older than 24, the will of migration is significantly lower.

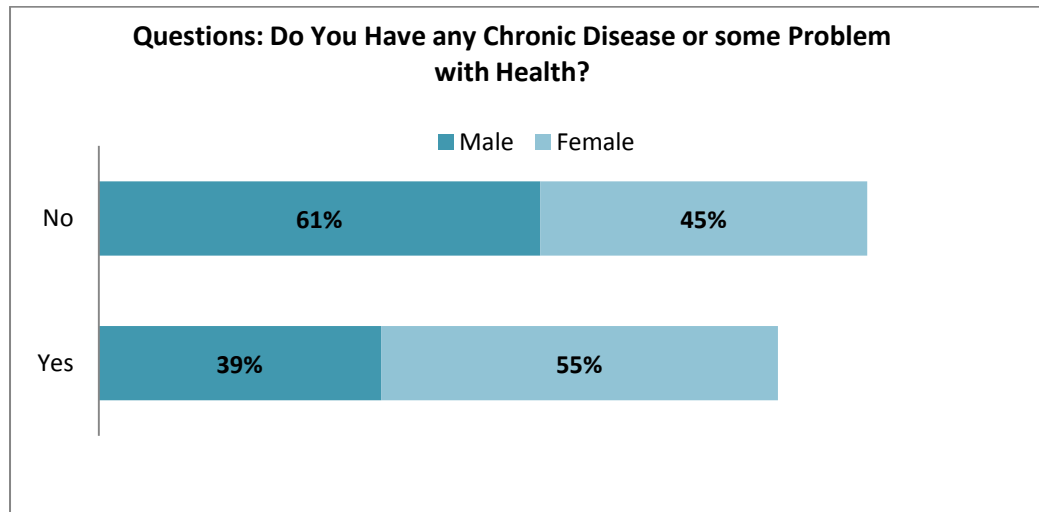
Most girls see their future out of the region. They believe that they need education and employment. Though, in their opinion, this could be achieved only in Tbilisi and other large cities as there are no municipal or public programs of entertainment, gaining and improvement of education at all. Hence, most of them do not plan to return to their families and contribute to development of the region. However, there are some of them who do not want to leave and wish to establish the trade, catering or entertainment companies for children, young people and women.

“There’s no cafes or entertaining centers where you could go with friends. There’s no educational centers either, at least English courses. It’s very hard to find English teacher. We have some of them here, but they are not educated. I don’t know... if this place would develop a bit, if only it would resemble city a bit...I don’t know, that’s what I think of...” / Lechkhumi District, Tsageri, single women, aged 16.

V. Health Care

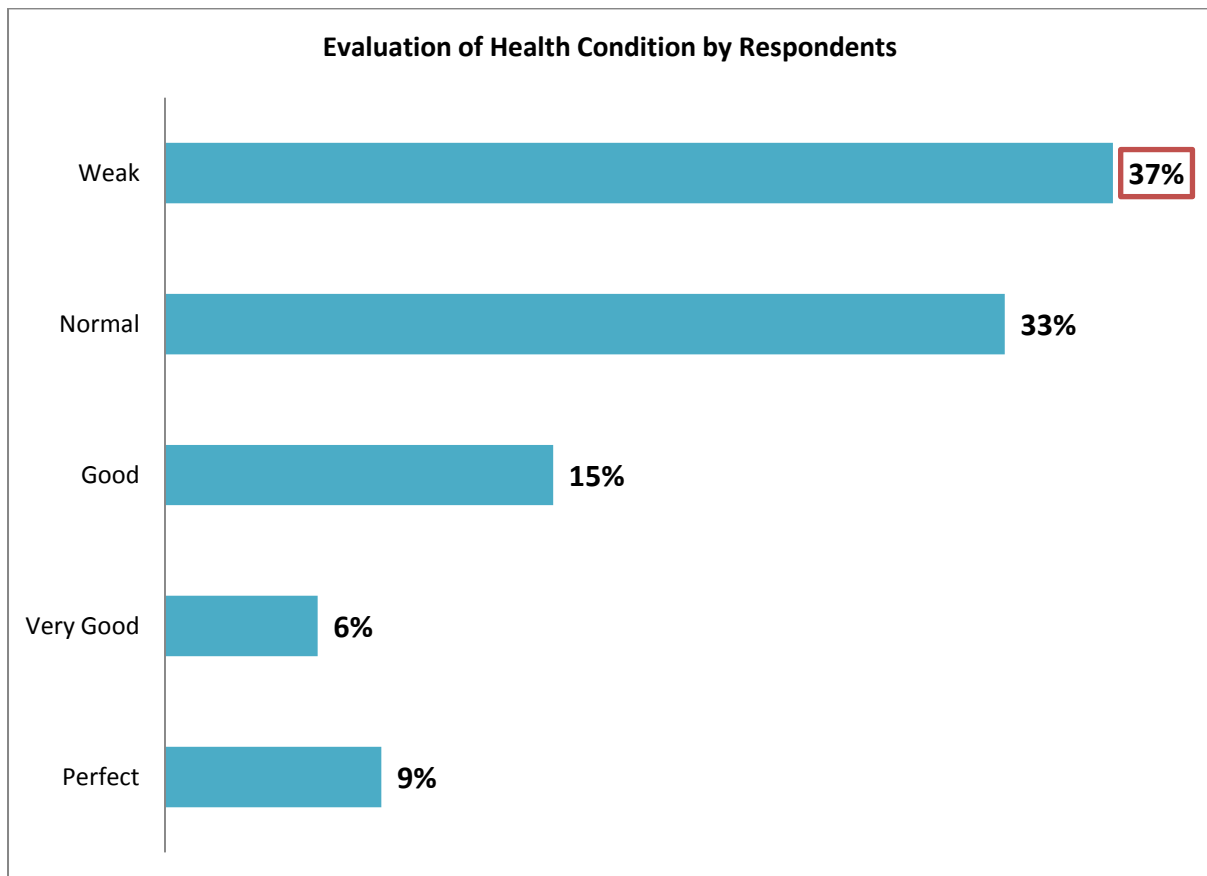
More male respondents [61%] than female ones [45%] say, that they do not have chronic diseases and problems regarding health. More females [55%] compared to men [39%] report, that they have some health problems/chronic diseases (see diagram 5.1).

Diagram 5.1. Reported Health Problems and Chronic Diseases



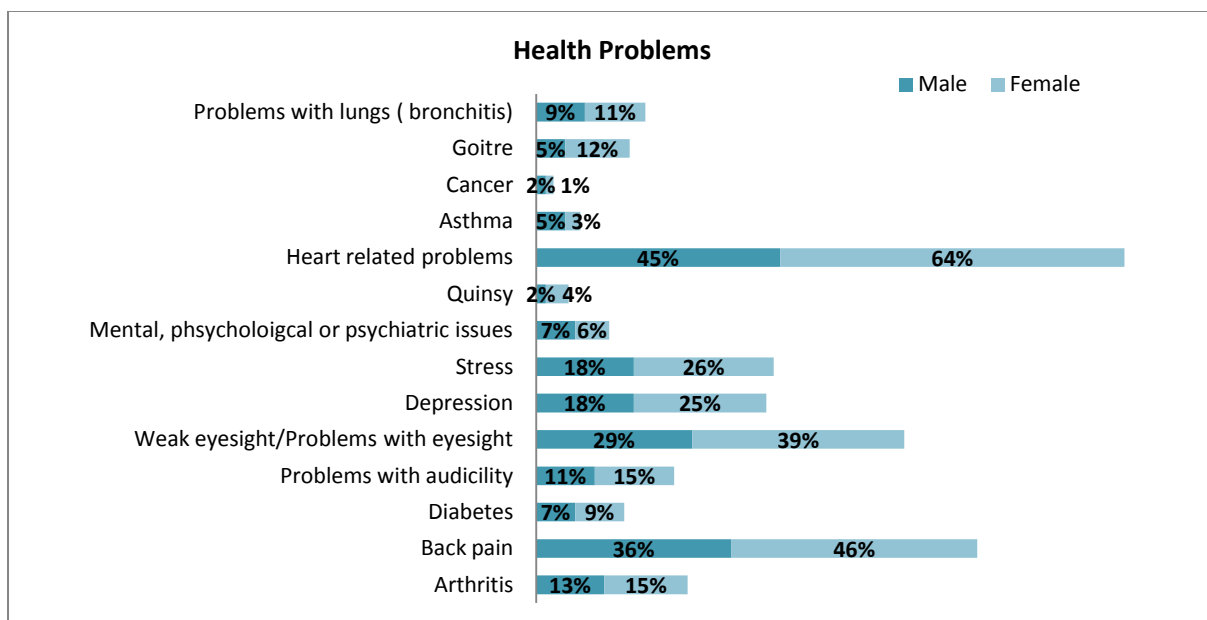
Only 13% of respondents reported the date when they last time visited a doctor. The majority (39%) visited doctor in the period of April-October 2013, which coincides with the enactment of Universal Health Care Program since March 1, 2013. Majority of respondents (37%) evaluate their general condition of health negatively and only 29% evaluate it positively.

5.2. Evaluating Health Condition



Among the respondents with the poor health, the most widespread problems are those related to heart (67%), back/spin (46%) and eyesight (40%).

Diagram 5.3. Health Problems



The results show that the most widespread health problems among the respondents are heart related issues [64% of females and 45% of males], back/ spine problems [46% females and 36% males], and eyesight problems [39% of females and 29% of males]. Also 26% of women and 18% of men respondents mentioned, that they have anxiety/stress; also 26% of women and 18% of men report depression. It is noteworthy, that generally more women suffer from heart diseases, depression, back and eyesight problems than male respondents.

The qualitative research findings highlight that the most women residing in the high mountainous regions, particularly over 40, have significant health problems. Irrespective of such problems, they rarely visit the doctors and never apply for the preventive screening. High prices of medical services and heavy economic conditions are the main reasons for not going through the medical examinations.

The female beneficiaries of the state health insurance mostly visiting the clinics are as follows: 1. women of the pension age; 2. women with serious health problems requiring surgical operations or other emergency measures; 3 women taking care of the disabled children or other sick family members (mother, father, mother in law, father in law). Hospitals located in the regional centers mostly offer the minimal preventive diagnostic and examinations. For more accurate examinations and diagnostics women have to visit the medical centers in Tbilisi or other large cities. Most doctors working at the village ambulatories are locals but because of absence of the medical equipment and medicines, no guarantees of high quality medical assistance could be provided. Though, the most village doctors are seriously helpful in urgent and first aid cases. Married women usually visit the doctors regarding the reproductive issues – in case of pregnancy or reproduction problems. Therefore, the middle age women recall their last visit to doctor by the age of their children. For the most women discussing abortion is unpleasant and typically they give short and unclear answers: “I don’t know”, “earlier it happened frequently”, “I have not subjected to and I have not heard from the others”. Cardiovascular diseases and pathologies of joints and musculoskeletal system are also widespread among women. Pathologies of thyroid glands, as well as mammary and uterus tumors in high mountain regions are associated with iodine deficit, high frequency of abortions and absence of culture of preventive screening among women.⁴ This is further aggravated by heavy work and stresses caused by unstable situations.

Most women state that they are aware of the modern contraception means though they are practically used by young mothers only women use mostly [birth control pills and IUD-the intra

⁴ Interview done by Lela Gaprindashvili with the medical health professionals in 2010

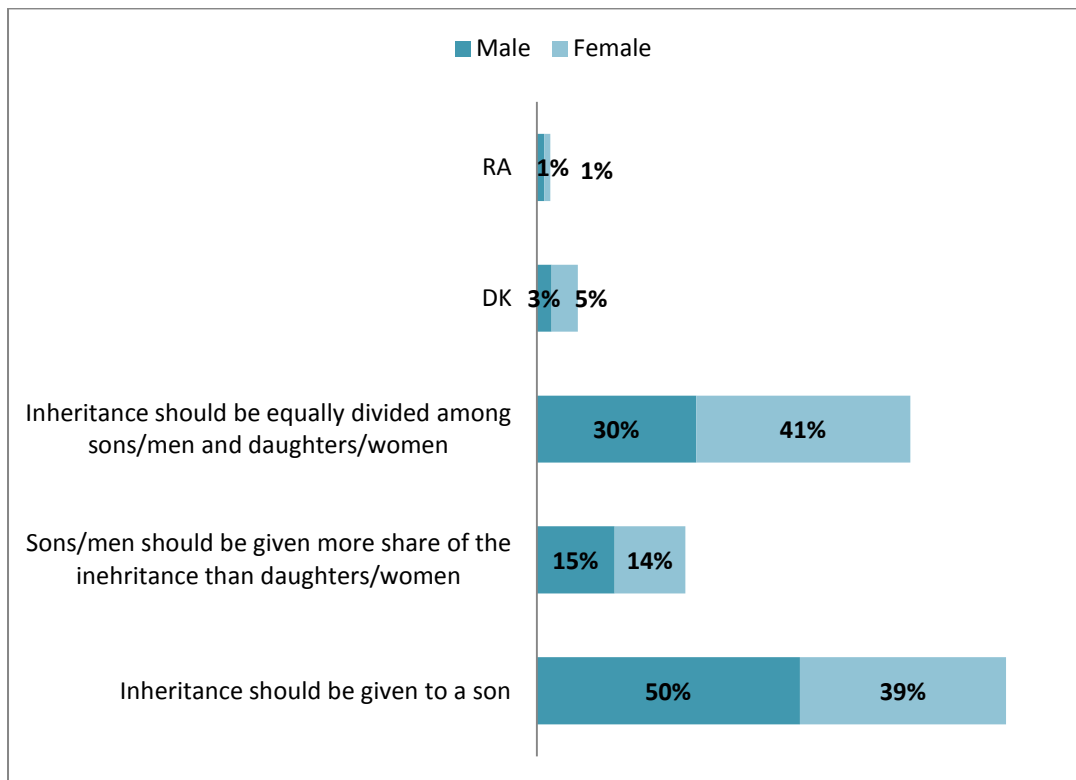
uterine device]. Middle age women rarely use the contraception. In the most high-mountainous areas the demographic aging takes place as the process of urbanization still prevail. Hence, the problems of the aged women could be regarded as one of the main problems. Most of them, particularly those, living in rural areas, heavily rely upon the state assistance and ambulance services. It was mentioned that the ambulance usually though most of them stated that the ambulances arrive with such delays that in emergency cases they still rely upon the village doctors and paramedical staff.

Situation of women with serious health problems is particularly heavy. The state provides them with two types of assistance: 1. pension for people with sharply expressed disabilities is GEL 125 and 2. assistance for the persons with significant disabilities reaches GEL 100. These amounts are absolutely insufficient for the women taking care of their disabled children, elderly or other family members. Most surveyed women stated that even these assistances are paid unfairly as frequently people are included into the category of socially vulnerable not according to their real needs but rather by their political preferences .

VI. Gender Attitudes, Traditional Norms, Family Conflicts, Violence against Women and Emotional Condition of Women

Both, quantitative and qualitative data show that the traditional gender attitudes and views prevail in Georgian high mountainous regions hindering women's economic advancement, their property possession and women-headed resource management. Consequently, it is reflected on family power relationships and women's psychological state.

Diagram 6.1. Division of Family Inheritance

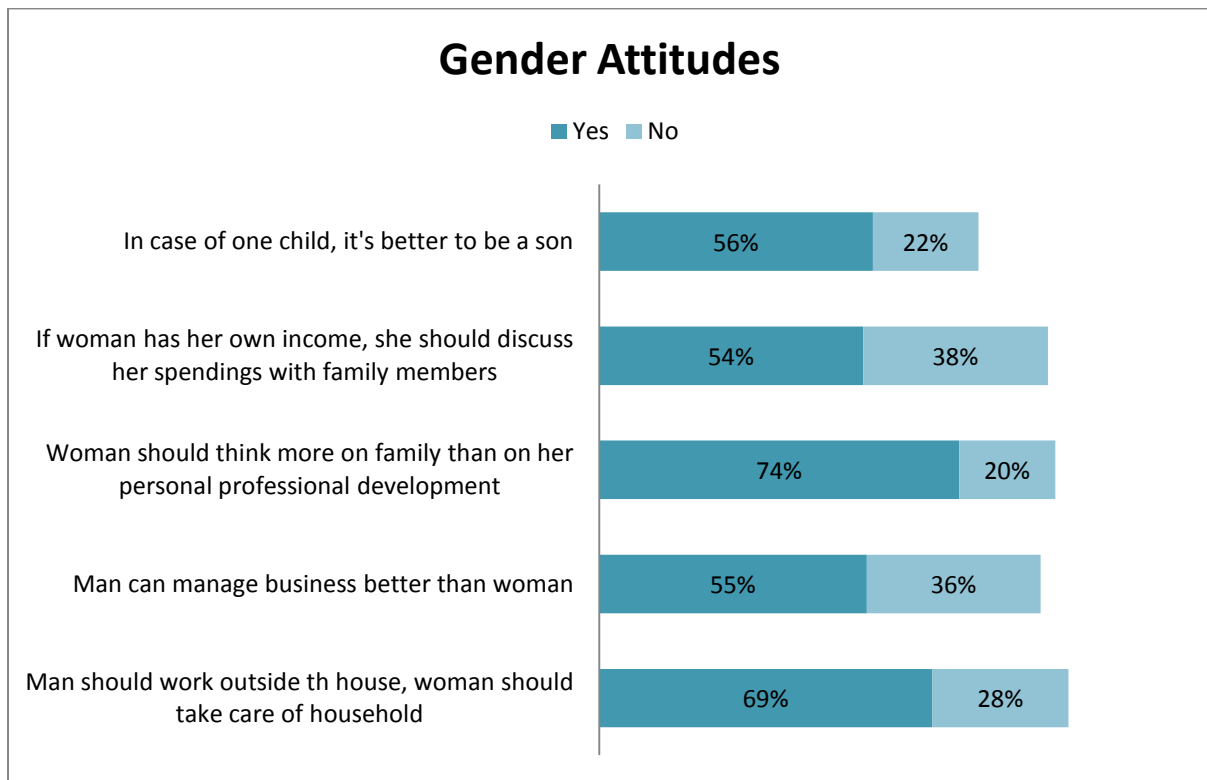


According to survey, the majority of respondents state that family inheritance should be delivered to a son, hereby, more female than male respondents state, that inheritance should be equally distributed among heirs (see Diagram 6.1.). The qualitative research showed that most families in high mountainous regions consist of two generations. Women and girls mostly live in the houses of their father or of husband's parents. Sons are regarded as the heirs of their fathers' houses/property who would maintain the family while the girls are getting ready to get married and move to their husbands' families.

"I have one brother and I love him more than anyone. It is right that girl should get married and leave. If girl builds a career and won't get married, she can live with brother, that's acceptable as well". / Women, single, aged 16/

"If I could leave, I would have done so, how could I go to my father's house with my children?! I couldn't put the fate and future of my brother at risk. Who wants returned sister-in-law with her children?! If I had my own house, it wouldn't been a problem, I wouldn't let anyone play on my nerves, but what can you do when you don't have one..." / Women, married, unemployed/

Diagram 6.2. Gender Attitudes



The results of Quantitative research reveals that the distribution of functions in or outside family and the autonomy of individuals is strictly determined on gender basis in the high mountainous regions of Georgia (see Diagram 6.2.). The majority of respondents (69%) support the traditional views that men should be working outside family and women should lead the household. The opinion that men can manage business better than women (55%) and that even if women has personal income she shouldn't be spending it independently (56%), is dominant within respondents. In addition, it should be mentioned that gender hierarchy, where men has an unequivocal priority, is revealed in majority of survey participants (56%), which, at the same time, prefer son rather than daughter in case of one child.

In the frames of Qualitative research women spoke about the issues of marriage as well. Most of the interviewed women named love as the main motivation for marriage though many elderly and middle age women stated that their marriages were based on the family arrangement or bride kidnapping. Divorce is culturally unacceptable and takes place only in the extreme cases (violence against women, adultery from the husband's side). Women have to withstand permanent conflicts, humiliation and for the sake of their children's wellbeing as the absence of father are considered to be a serious problem. They rarely discuss lower social status of the divorced women, impossibility of returning to their fathers' families.

“Divorce was not much accepted in Svaneti...I was thinking all the time that I would live in a day or two...he turned out to be very careless and irresponsible, I thought he’d change but the years went by...” / Women, divorced, aged 34/

“The cases of divorce are not frequent, but there’s a lot of unstable, almost ruined families, it’s better to divorce than have a family like this”/ Women, unemployed, single, aged 28/

Women and girls are reluctant in discussing marriages based on bride kidnapping, as it is understood like as backwardness and wildness. The respondents prefer to outline that this kind of marriage practice was more widespread in the past and now the main motivation is love. Though, in conversations it turned out that though the cases decreased, the bride kidnapping practice is widespread in the mountain regions and is regulated by cultural norms (deals and agreements between the relatives). Women and girls have no power against this practice as they are economically fully dependent upon their parents and emotionally, they cannot dare to contradict to this discriminative practice.

Though in the post-soviet period most of the women living in the district centers and rural areas took the role of the family main breadwinner on their own shoulders still consider men as economic providers and do not perceive women’s domination in economic performance as a normal way of living. But, at the same time they mention about women’s economic empowerment that also highly required in contemporary Georgia - the social demands consistently grow and therefore, women’s contribution to the household economies is strongly needed. Women and girls give positive evaluation to women’s political participation as they regard that women are more prudent, careful and diplomatic as well as more socially sensitive and therefore, their involvement in the political processes would make politics more fair and human.

Women are reluctant in discussing family conflicts and family violence as they regard that by uncovering of their problem they would “feed the rumors” and they rarely hope to receive sincere sympathy and support. Though, most of them believe that “sharing” is fundamental human requirement and if not friends and colleagues, with whom they are able to express their worries, their lives would be unbearable. Women share their secrets mostly with their female friends or daughters. Very few women named their spouses as emotional supporters and advisors. To share their problems and express the emotional distress the girls mostly communicate with their close friends and rarely with the family members. As the causes of family conflicts the interviewed women outline the economic hardships and irresponsible attitudes of their husbands to the shared family or

children-related problems. The same is told in respect to the key factor resulting women's labor migration.

Most women avoid discussions on the experienced violence, though their stress and nervousness at the moment of conversation provides sufficient basis to suppose that they might have experienced significant psychological and emotional traumas in the past and can be subjected to the discrimination and oppression even now.

Main characters of the conflicts between the generations are daughters and mothers in law, sons and fathers and sisters in law; rarely mothers and daughters or grandchildren and grandparents. Conflicts between the brothers and sisters are also rare as for the most of sisters their brothers' wellbeing is of immense importance. Sisters in law usually avoid conflicts between each other and "entrust" dealing with the disputable issues to their spouses. If there are two daughters in law in the father's house, the families make efforts to split up as in many cases they cannot live together.

The majority of interviewed women, irrespective of their marriage or social status, outline that they do not feel happy as they are permanently are stressed because of their children: if the children study and are far from their mothers physically, they feel uncomfortable with this situation and if they live together with children, mothers continuously worry about their children's future and lack of opportunities. Most parents/mothers are sure that children, who left for the cities and succeeded there, would never return back and they will stay alone in the need of care.

Most of the girls think that there is nothing in the districts and villages what would stimulate them to return back (education centers, entertainment or institutions required for development). In addition, girls feel strictness of cultural norms for girls only. Therefore, they perceive leaving their parents' families and villages as a high level of freedom and the enter point for new, interesting opportunities for personal development.

The majority of women in the high mountainous regions are not aware of the key directions of the state policies, relevant programs and strategic views, oriented towards dealing with the problems of the mountainous regions and its development. This concerns both, local self-governments and legislative and executive authorities. Women respondents are not informed about their rights to know or request information about the policies, programs and region's budget. Moreover, the local government has the obligation to deliver such information to them.

VII. Recommendations

a) Recommendations for advancing women's socioeconomic status

- Provision of supplemental education programs for local women in small and medium - sized business planning, management and administration;
- Allocating the mini-grant programs for promoting the establishment of women-headed initiative groups/organizations aiming at women's advocacy for policy change to the local municipality;
- Offering the mini-grant programs to support women's business activities in agricultural production, developing the local industry and their cultural initiatives;
- Stimulating business loans instead of consumer loans. This issue is especially important for women, for presented research has shown that owners of real estate are mostly men. Hence, women have less chances to use real estate as a guarantor of business loan;
- Developing the youth-oriented educational/social centers;
- Awareness rising of public health insurance to increase an access to the state health programs: the research has shown, that despite existing health problems, only small share of respondents (13%) reports about their visits at doctor's recently. Besides, transport infrastructure and location is an important impedance for transportation. In such conditions, the access to qualified medical consultation in district centers and villages of mountainous regions will be a promotional factor for improving population's health condition;
- Solving energy supply problems – according to quantitative research, 92% of population uses wood as a source of heating; only 6% uses gas heaters. In such conditions, increasing the access to natural gas or implementing energy efficient technologies to ensure energy provision, is very important.

b) Recommendations for elimination gender based discrimination practices

- Provision of special education programs for local women regarding violence against women;
- Funding the local women-headed initiative groups for gender awareness raising and reducing gender discrimination practices in regional centers and villages;
- Support the organizations working on women's issues in sharing the local and international experience in combating the violence against women with women residing in mountain areas;

- Allocate the funding for the local women to establish permanent education centers and to get enrolled in current educational networks and coalitions;
- Supporting women’s political advancement – developing skills to increase the local women’s political participation and their involvement in local government elections. Stimulating political parties to increase women’s political participation.

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