

GEORGIA

COUNTRY PROFILE

Global Programme to Prevent Son Preference and the Undervaluing of Girls: Improving the sex ratio at birth in select countries in Asia and the Caucasus

Tbilisi 2018



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ABBREVIATIONS

CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
EU	European Union
GBSS	Gender-biased sex selection
GDI	Gender Development Index
HDI	Human Development Index
SRB	Sex ratio at birth
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ADDRESSING THE HARMFUL PRACTICE OF SON PREFERENCE AND THE UNDERVALUING OF GIRLS

After independence from the Soviet Union, Georgia started experiencing a significant rise in the number of boys born compared with the number of girls, the sex ratio at birth.¹ As of 2004 Georgia had one of the highest sex ratio at birth rates in the world, but by 2016 the ratio was at the biologically normal level. The country's unique position provides valuable knowledge and experience. This country profile offers an updated review of how the practice of son preference and gender-biased sex selection has been evolving in Georgia and explores different aspects influencing the sex ratio at birth behavior. It identifies the root causes, determinants and consequences of the practice of son preference and gender-biased sex selection, as well as policy measures taken to eliminate this harmful practice and its root cause, which is gender inequality and the discrimination of girls.

Implementation of the Global Programme to Prevent Son Preference and the Undervaluing of Girls is closely coordinated with the UN Joint Programme for Gender Equality in Georgia (2016–2020, funded by the Government of Sweden) and implemented by UNFPA together with UNDP and UN Women. The UNFPA component addresses prevention of son preference within the framework of harmful practices' prevention. In addition to supporting the research on GBSS in Georgia, the UN Joint Programme for Gender Equality in Georgia encompasses conducting the communication campaign on son preference and gender-biased sex selection prevention, in collaboration with the World Bank. This communication campaign will be expanded through the support of the Global Programme to Prevent Son Preference and Undervaluing of Girls.

BACKGROUND

GEORGIA AT A GLANCE

Data				Year
General				
Surface	69,700 km ²			
Religion	Orthodox 83.4%, Muslim 10.7%, Armenian-Apostolic 2.9%, Catholic 0.5%, Other 2.5%(b)			2014
Ethnic groups	Georgians 86.83%, Azeri 6.27%, Armenian 4.53%, Russian 0.71%, Ossetian 0.39%, Other 1.27%(b)			2014
Languages	Georgian 87.6%, Azeri 6.2%, Armenian 3.9%, Russian 1.2%, Other 1.1%(b)			2014
Demography and health				
Population	3,729,600(a) with 1,938,100 women and 1,791,600 men			2018
Average annual population growth, %	0.09%(a)			2018
Fertility rate, children per woman	2.2(b)			2014
Birth rate	2.2 children per woman(i)			2014
Sex ratio at birth	108.0(a)			2010–2017
Abortion rate (per 1,000 women)	24.9(a)			2017
Contraceptive prevalence rate, modern method	38%(j) (women aged 15-49)			2017
Maternal mortality ratio (per 100,000 live births)	36(j)			2015
Infant mortality rate (infant deaths per 1,000 live births)	9.6 (male:10.1 ,female: 9.1)(a)			2017
Life expectancy at birth	73.5 years (male: 69.2, female: 77.8)(a)			2017
Health adjusted life expectancy	66.4 years (male: 63.4, female: 69.3)(c)			2015
Economic situation and labor market				
	Female	Male	Total	Year
Unemployment rate, %	12.7%(a)	15%(a)	13.9%(a)	2017
Labor force participation, %	58.2%(a)	74.6%(a)	65.8%(a)	2017
Employment rate, %	50.8%(a)	63.4%(a)	56.7%(a)	2017
Number of unpaid family workers, % of employed	33.7%(a)	14.4%(a)	23.6%(a)	2016
Average monthly nominal salary of employees	770.2 GEL(a)	1,197.4 GEL(a)	999.1 GEL(a)	2017

Sources: National Statistics Office of Georgia (a), 2014 National Census Data (b), World Health Organization (c), Human Development Report (d), Trading Economics (e), Public Registry of Georgia (f), the Annual Report of Public Service (g), Inter-Parliamentary Union (h), UNFPA 2017 (i), UNFPA World Population Dashboard (j).

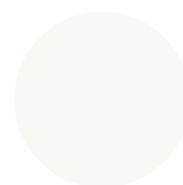
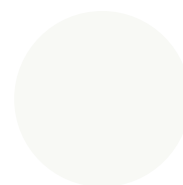
STUDY METHODOLOGY AND LIMITATIONS

This country profile is largely based on two UNFPA studies: “Gender-Biased Sex Selection in Georgia” (2015) and “Trends in the Sex Ratio at Birth in Georgia” (2017). The 2015 study uses data from a set of qualitative research conducted in Georgia in early 2014, as well as original microdata from the National Statistics Office of Georgia. The main sources of quantitative country-level data are birth registration statistics and 2002 census results. The study is cautious in interpreting birth registration statistics for the period of 1990-2005, as it is characterized by several deficiencies and is incomplete, due to under-registration and the poor functioning of statistical departments at that time. Hence, the study also complements this quantitative data with demographic surveys conducted in the country, such as the Reproductive and Health Survey conducted in 1999, 2005 and 2010 and the UNICEF Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey conducted in 2005.



● Youth for Gender Equality
Marneuli, Kvemo Kartli Region, Georgia
Street Artist: Gagosh

Photo: © UNFPA Georgia 2018, Vladimir Valishvili



CHAPTER

1

SON PREFERENCE AND GENDER-BIASED SEX SELECTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Georgian society is characterized by strong preference for sons due its traditionally patriarchal structure. Family membership is derived from and recorded through father's lineage. Moreover, women usually join their husbands' families after marriage while sons are expected to stay with their parents and take care of them in old age which makes sons more valuable than daughters. Men's role as a main contributor to the family subsistence and the major source of support for their aging parents increased further during post-Soviet economic and social hardships. Another consequence of the post-Soviet economic and political turmoil was a sharp decline in the fertility rate. Couples postponed childbirth or even marriage, which shortened the reproductive span. Decreased fertility coupled with the deeply rooted son preference, in combination with the increased availability of sex selection technologies contributed to emerging of gender-biased sex selection; and, consequently, led to gender imbalances at birth in Georgia.

Starting in the 1990s, the proportion of girls born compared with boys began shrinking. The sex ratio at birth peaked at 115.2 male births per 100 female births in 2004. In contrast, it is generally accepted that the biological norm of the ratio is 105 male births per 100 female births (UNFPA 2015). However, the latest research by UNFPA (2017) revealed the emergence of a new reality in Georgia. The sex ratio at birth fell below 110 in 2009 and reached its natural level of 105 male births per 100 female births in 2016. Though it might be too early to definitively state that the current ratio will be sustained in the future, it indicates a positive advancement towards a more gender equa society.

1.2 SEX IMBALANCES AT BIRTH IN GEORGIA

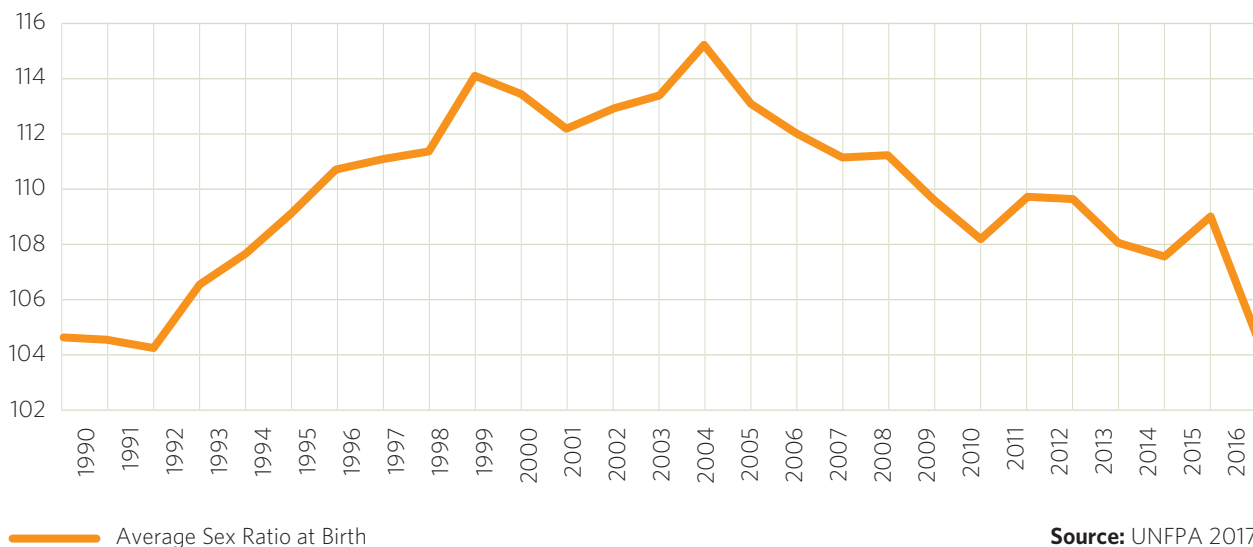
Sex ratios at birth in the Caucasus countries, including Georgia, were very close to normal levels under the Soviet Union despite the fact that abortion was an acceptable method of the family planning. The lack of

accessibility of prenatal sex determination technology combined with relatively high fertility rates prevented son preference from finding a reflection in skewed sex ratio at birth before the 1990s. However, following Georgia's independence, imbalance in sex ratio at birth showed an increasing trend for almost for 15 years – the so-called “sex ratio transition” process. As Figure 1 shows, the skewed sex ratio at birth rate started rising immediately after independence, reaching 114.1 boys per 100 girls by 1999. In the early 2000s, sex ratio at birth peaked and stabilized between 112 and 115 boys per 100 girls for several years. As Figure 1 shows, after reaching historically high levels in 2004, the ratio started to decline and finally returned to a normal level by 2016.

This is mainly explained by transformation of the social and political system in Georgia during the last 15 years. The country restructured its social security system, which was practically non-existent in 1990. This change, together with the improved general economic situation in the country, have decreased the role of the family as a buffer institution offering protection and stability (notably through sons), and provide more formal alternatives for social security, bank loans, contractual employment, etc. The intergenerational family is no longer perceived as the only strategy for coping with social and financial uncertainty. This trend is expected to be maintained with newly announced reforms as well. However, the development has not been even and disparities along with income and regional divides are still significant.

Furthermore, Georgia joined the Council of Europe (1999), the European Neighbourhood Policy (2004), the Eastern Partnership (2009) and the Black Sea Synergy (2007) and has signed an Association Agreement (2014). New international collaborations lead to increased opportunities for Georgia to implement strategies and plans aimed at advancing human rights and gender equality and supporting sustainable development of the country, which may have contributed to the decrease of the son preference and gender-biased sex-selection practice.

Figure 1. Estimated sex ratio at birth in 1990-2016²



The impact of the skewed sex ratio at birth in Georgia will have negative demographic and socioeconomic implications. First, despite the recent increasing of the fertility rate,³ the annual number of births is forecasted to decline, since the cohort of women of reproductive age has been gradually decreasing. Moreover, due to gender-biased sex-selection practices, the cohort of women of child-bearing age will decline even more in the upcoming years, exacerbating the issue of population decline further (UNFPA 2015).

Second, skewed sex ratios at birth lead to a demographic imbalance between men and women. Furthermore, incentives for men to migrate and to find a spouse abroad may increase (UNFPA 2015), creating additional motivation for migration rather than economic reasons.

Third, pronounced son preference and gender-biased sex selection puts tremendous pressure on women to produce sons, which could have a negative effect on the mental and physical health of women. Giving birth to an unwanted girl might lead to domestic violence, abandonment or divorce.

1.3 THE CAUSES OF SEX SELECTION

This section focuses on the causes of gender-biased sex selection (determinants) and gender inequality and discrimination of women as the root cause of the problem of sex selection. Based on a rational behavior assumption, this section divides the causes of the problem into two broad categories – demand-side and supply-side factors. Demand-side factors examine social, cultural, spiritual and economic determinants

of gender-biased sex selection practice, and explain why it is beneficial and desirable in Georgian society to have boys rather than girls. The section tries to separately capture factors influencing gender-biased sex selection, although they are often strongly intertwined, leading to son preference and gender-biased sex selection. Supply-side factors explain the availability of facilitating technology for performing sex selection and prenatal sex determination as well as the effectiveness, costs and accessibility of available methods, along with the legal environment in this regard.

1.3.1 Demand-side factors: Factors increasing demand for gender-biased sex selection

Son Preference

Georgian society is characterized by a strong preference for sons due to its patriarchal structure. Family in Georgia is patrilineal in nature and it is the place where traditions, national values and identities are kept and respected. Patrilineality, also known as the male line, is a common kinship system in which an individual's family membership derives from and is recorded through his or her father's lineage. It generally involves the inheritance of property, rights, names or titles by persons related through male kin. In such systems, males traditionally have been the main contributors to family subsistence, and the major source of support for their aging parents, while women are stereotypically perceived as natural caretakers, whose core responsibilities involve child care and household duties. In 82 per

cent of multigenerational families in Georgia, spouses live with the husband's parents – a current pattern similar to the 2002 figures (UNFPA 2017). The country's patriarchal structure, the importance of the family and the male line, coupled with socioeconomic circumstances, has lowered the value of girls. According to the Caucasus Barometer 2010 survey, in cases where parents had only one child, 46 per cent of respondents preferred a son, 9 per cent preferred a girl, and 45 per cent said it did not matter.

Demographic change/changes in fertility rates

Fertility is a significant factor influencing the practice of gender-biased sex selection in the Georgian context. After independence, Georgia experienced a sharp decline in the fertility rate, as reducing household size was a strategy to cope with severe economic conditions by decreasing pressure on household budgets. With the existing strong son preference, lower fertility meant that families were no longer able to ensure the birth of a son through repeated pregnancies, and with the increasing availability of sex detection technologies, couples might have opted for sex selection to ensure the birth of a son. Evidence shows that couples who already have a daughter are more likely to turn to the sex selection for subsequent births to ensure the birth of a boy.

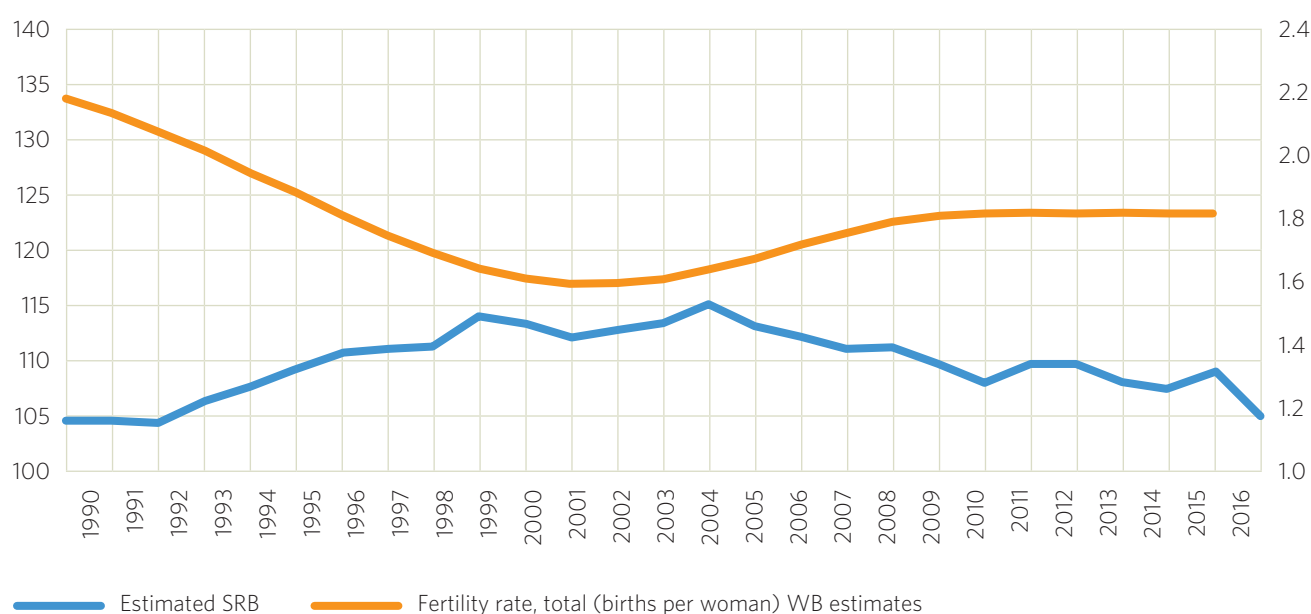
Fertility started to rebound in 2003. As a result of

economic recovery, accompanied by consolidation of social security, pension and other policies launched since 2005, the “squeeze factor” began to vanish with time, removing pressure on sex ratio at birth. Overall, the country seems to be characterized by high negative correlation of sex ratio birth with respect to fertility; and low fertility, in combination with some other root factors, lead to son preference and gender-biased sex selection in Georgia.

Availability of modern sex selection technology

The availability of technologies for the early determination of sex is not the root cause of gender-biased sex selection, yet it serves as a straightforward supply factor. Without the relevant technology, even if parents have a pronounced preference for boys, they would not be able to resort to sex selection without prenatal diagnostics and the accessibility of abortion. Following independence, new reproductive technologies started to spread across Georgia. Opening borders made it possible to import new ultrasound machines and replace old Soviet ones. Currently, Georgia offers high-tech reproductive health services that are easily accessible across the country for a low cost. Therefore, prenatal diagnostics are highly available and extremely common during pregnancies, and as such, presents an easily approachable means of performing gender-biased sex selection.

Figure 2. Estimated sex ratio at birth and fertility rate in Georgia, 1990–2016



Source: World Bank. World Development Indicators.
Last Updated: 08/02/2017; UNFPA 2017.

Table 1. Sex ratio at birth by parity and gender composition, 2010–2014

Gender composition	Birth order			Total	Source
	1	2	3+		
At least one previous son	-	104.1	106.9	105.1	Census-based estimates
No previous son	107.2	108.1	173.8	110.9	Census-based estimates

Source: UNFPA 2017.

1.4 VARIATIONS IN SON PREFERENCE

Georgian families make different reproductive decisions based on the sex of already existing children, and their major objective is to have at least one son. In particular, it can be inferred that if son preference exists, parents with no sons will display higher fertility rates compared with parents who already have a son. The existence of son preference manifested only in altered fertility behavior may not translate to gender-biased sex selection. One has to look at sex ratio at birth disentangled by different birth orders. Table 1 presents sex ratio at birth by birth orders for the period 2010–2014. While sex ratio at birth is almost normal for the first two births, it increases by more than 15 percentage points for higher-order births. As expected, sex ratio at birth skewed towards sons is mostly manifested among families without previous male births (table 1). In the case of at least one previous son, at third and higher birth orders, SRB only marginally exceeds the normal biological norm. However, it reaches dramatically high SRB (173.8) when the family does not have any previous son at third and higher birth orders.

1.5 REGIONAL DIFFERENCES

Georgia has a high degree of regional diversification in terms of cultural values, traditions and ethnicity. Therefore, it is not surprising that there is a significant regional variation in sex ratio at birth across the country. In a broader sense, this variation begins with the rural and urban areas. The sex ratio at birth in 2010–14 reached a high of 111.8 boys per 100 girls in rural areas, while the same measure was only moderately skewed, with 107.1 boys per girls (close to the natural level) in urban districts.⁴ The capital and the largest city in the country, Tbilisi, is characterized by one of the lowest SRB (105) in 2010–2014. The other regions that have lower-than-average sex ratio at birth (close to the normal level) are Guria, Imereti and Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti (located in West Georgia). In contrast, three southeastern regions – namely

Kakheti, Kvemo Kartli and Samtskhe Javakheti – have significantly higher SRB than the Georgian average. Furthermore, these three regions account for 57 per cent of all sex imbalances in newborns; Kvemo Kartli is the first contributor among them⁵ (UNFPA 2017). It is worth mentioning that these southeastern regions share borders with either Azerbaijan or Armenia, or both, and both have ethnic minority populations which, as discussed below, is a factor often associated with son preference.

Table 2. Sex ratio at birth by region, 2010–2014 and 2010–2016

Regions	2010–2014*	2010–2016**
Tbilisi	105.2	105.3
Adjara	108.5	107.9
Guria	104.5	106.3
Imereti	108.0	107.1
Kakheti	114.2	113.2
Mtskheta-Mtianeti	111.6	108.6
Racha-Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti	114.0	107.1
Samegrelo - Zemo Svaneti	105.4	105.9
Samtskhe-Javakheti	112.9	111.5
Kvemo Kartli	113.8	113.2
Shida Kartli	108.9	107.6
Georgia	108.4	108

Source: UNFPA 2017.

* This statistical information is based on the recent census (2014).

** This statistical information is based on the birth registration data 2010–2016.

Ethnicity and cultural variations is likely to contribute to explaining the variations in sex ratio at birth. According to the most recent census (2014), a majority (86.83 per cent) of the country's population is Georgian, and the sex ratio at birth for this dominant group is 107.3, slightly lower than the national average. However, the sex ratio at birth among ethnic minorities is considerably more skewed towards boys. For example, sex ratio at birth for the mixed group combining various nationalities, except Georgians, reaches 115 boys per 100 girls, while this indicator is even higher among ethnically Armenian and Azeri populations (117 and 125 respectively). This pattern is maintained for other cultural variables such as religion and language. Among religious groups, the Armenian-Apostolic and Muslim population (which mainly represents Azeri ethnic minorities and smaller share of Georgians) have high sex ratios at birth – 116.5 and 120, respectively. It is notable that sex ratio at birth for the Muslim population is relatively lower than the same measure for the ethnic Azeri group. Therefore, Azeri Muslims report higher birth masculinity than Georgian Muslims (UNFPA 2017). Azeri and Armenian native speakers have the same level (much higher than normal) of sex ratio at birth as the corresponding ethnic groups.

CHAPTER



PUBLIC AWARENESS OF SON PREFERENCE

In order to assess the degree of public awareness on son preference and gender-biased sex selection in Georgia, as well as the factors contributing to gender bias and family attitudes towards sons and daughters, UNFPA, in collaboration with the World Bank, conducted a qualitative research in 2014. The research included in-depth interviews with prominent women, local and national experts and focus groups discussions with women and men across four different regions of the country. The research produced several key findings, amongst those:

- A significant number of respondents said that they had never heard of the existence of sex-selective abortions, and most of these respondents were men;
- Even when presented with recent sex ratio at birth statistics, respondents seemed not to believe in the existence of the problem. Mistrust towards reliability of the sex ratio at birth statistics was widespread; the intensity of son preference was ignored or denied;
- Respondents who had at least some idea of the occurrence of sex-selective abortions stated clearly that they were morally against this practice and attributed it to prevailing “Georgian customs”;

- These findings show that the
- level of public awareness on
- the issue of son preference
- and gender-biased sex
- selection is limited in
- Georgia. In a country with
- such a high sex ratio at birth
- over many years, this is an
- unexpected finding that may
- partially be explained by
- the respondents’ difficulty
- in assessing demographic
- trends. This would however
- need further research before
- it’s possible to conclude.

CHAPTER



THE RULE OF LAW AND HUMAN RIGHTS

3.1 INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENTS

States have an obligation under human rights laws to respect, protect and fulfil the human rights of girls and women. Georgia ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1994. CEDAW clearly defines discrimination and identifies the obligations of state parties to create more balanced individual and civil rights for society. The convention contains articles related to combating stereotypes, the role of women in political and public life, and their access to education, employment, health services, and different social and economic advantages. Under the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), signed in 1994 by more than 179 states, including Georgia, the states agreed to eliminate all forms of discrimination against the girl child and the harmful practice of son preference.

3.2 NATIONAL LEGISLATION AND FRAMEWORKS

Georgia identifies the principal of gender equality at the level of the Constitution. However, Georgian laws are mainly sex-neutral, and their impact on discrimination still remains unclear. According to a Gender Assessment Report (2010) prepared during the period of the most aggressive reforms, a great many new laws were passed, but only very few of them were subject to gender analysis. In March of 2010, Georgia passed the Law on Gender Equality. The main purpose of this legislative initiative was to ensure that there is no discrimination in any aspect of public life. In 2006, Georgian Parliament has adopted and since then several times amended and refined the Law of Georgia on Domestic Violence, which currently covers the Violence against Women as well. In 2014, the Georgian parliament passed the Law of Georgia on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination (Antidiscrimination Law). The law intends to eliminate all forms of discrimination and ensure equal rights for every person. The Antidiscrimination Law defines notions of direct and indirect discrimination and determines the scope of regulation. However, laws are not always fully enforced. For example, even though according to the Civic Code of Georgia, heirs have equal rights to inherit the property of a descendant,

there is a widely recognized custom that gives priority to sons.

The government has adopted in the 2014-2020 Human Rights Strategy and the periodic Action Plans for its implementation - the key policy documents of Georgia involving diverse areas of human rights and a variety of stakeholders. Several periodic National Action Plans on Gender Equality and Combatting Domestic Violence have been adopted and implemented by the government. The newly established (2017) Inter-Agency Commission on Gender Equality, Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence is now mandated to elaborate the periodic three-year National Action Plans. The Action Plan for the period 2018-2020 was developed through a participatory process with United Nations support and adopted by the Government in 2018. The Gender Equality Council of the Parliament of Georgia has developed its Action Plan for 2017 that sets four major tasks with required activities, indicators, responsible administrative units and consecutive deadlines: a) facilitation of the definition of main directions of the state policy in the gender sphere and supporting the adoption of the new concept by the Parliament of Georgia; b) facilitation of the creation of legislative base in the sphere of gender and assist its provision, development and harmonization with international agreements; c) monitoring the measures implemented for the provision of gender equality and developing recommendations; and d) participation in the events supporting the raising of awareness on gender equality and strengthening of women.

No separate law regulates sex selective abortions, only orders and protocols. The main legislative act that addresses this issue is the Law of Georgia on Healthcare. According to the 139th Article of this law, women are allowed to have a legal abortion only if the duration of pregnancy does not exceed 12 weeks. The permissible period for an abortion can be extended to 22 weeks only by a special medical or social indication, as determined by the Minister of Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia by special order concerning the approval of the rules regulating to artificial termination of pregnancy; terminating pregnancy on the ground of the fetus's sex is prohibited.

CONCLUSION: CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Georgian society has always had pronounced son preference, as confirmed by extensive analysis for this country profile. Son preference is grounded on patriarchal arrangement of society and families, perceived roles of men as breadwinners and women as care takers, perceived superiority of male offspring and lower value of girls in the society. After independence, followed by deteriorated social and economic conditions, decreased fertility and improved access to reproductive technologies created conditions for the emergence of the harmful practice of son preference. It can be said that Georgia's sex ratio at birth transition was an integral part of the overall transformation process of the country since the Soviet breakdown was immediately followed by gradual increase in sex ratio at birth levels. Reduction of household size (a decrease in the number of desired children) was the strategy chosen by Georgian families to cope with economic turmoil, leading to decreased fertility rates. Despite the persistent son preference in the country, the sex ratio at birth has declined since 2004 and as of 2016 it has returned to its natural level.

It is difficult and too early to conclusively state that the transition period is over and that Georgia is back to normal sex ratio at birth levels. The skewed sex ratio at birth towards boys still remains at a high level for third order births, as the most of the couples are reluctant to have more than three children, and giving birth to a third child is the last chance for families to have a boy. Furthermore, sex ratio at birth is skewed among people with low economic income, in rural populations and among ethnic minorities, as these groups are the least-affected by the factors decreasing demand for gender-biased sex selection.

Challenges

Regardless of the fact that Georgia has managed to stabilize its sex ratio at birth close to the biological norm, there are challenges that should be addressed to fully prevent the practice of son preference and gender-biased sex selection:

- Gender inequality and practices of gender discrimination are often attributed to Georgian/local traditions and are often perceived as normal, or part of the culture, which makes tackling gender-biased sex selection even more challenging;
- Son preference and the importance of male lineage remain significant characteristics of Georgian society. The strong patrilineal arrangement of families enforces the greater value of sons over daughters, leading to gender discriminatory behavior and attitudes.
- National legislation and policies provide a framework of priorities aligned with international commitments, yet the challenge of full implementation of legislation and policies still exists due to the lack of resources and capacities;
- Low awareness of son preference and gender-biased sex selection among public and government officials presents as another challenge. The practice is not perceived as a discriminatory attitude towards girls and awareness of its harmful socio-demographic impact is still very low.
- It is important to close the gap in the urban-rural divide in sex ratio at birth, given that that in certain rural areas sex ratio at birth is extremely skewed compared with urban areas;

Opportunities and Recommendations

Expanding the knowledge base

- Conduct national socio-economic policy impact analysis on son preference and gender equality;
- Conduct comprehensive analyses of cultural and traditional aspects of gender inequality, for identifying those factors and addressing them with the concrete policy measures;
- Support socio-economic, demographic and ethnographic research on understanding family dynamics in Georgia, patrilineal structure and son preference;
- Conduct comprehensive analysis identifying needs of ethnic minorities in Georgia, as well as analysis of the aspects that hinder their socio-economic integration, including assessing their access to information, public health care, social and legal services;
- Support research aimed at understanding women's level of awareness on their rights;
- Build partnerships and exchange of knowledge and experience between the countries of the South Caucasus that face the same problem of the gender-biased sex selection;
- Build partnerships with international organizations and think tanks for joint research and generating new knowledge products to strengthen evidence-based policy formulation;
- Strengthen efforts for adequate monitoring of the sex ratio at birth, including through consolidating the quality of the birth registration system.

Legislative and policy measures

- Strengthen enforcement of existing laws and address factors hindering women's full enjoyment of their rights, especially in rural parts of the country;
- Implement socio-economic policy measures that aim to advance gender equality and eliminate various forms of gender stereotypes and discrimination in the country; specifically target rural women and those belonging to ethnic minorities, most notably, in relation to property registration, gender-based violence, marriage and reproductive choices and inheritance;

- Strengthen policies and strategies and their implementation to reduce isolation of ethnic minority population and increase their access to information and resources;
- Enact social and economic policies and programmes to address cultural stereotypes that position girls as less valuable or less beneficial for a family compared to a son, as such stereotypes perpetuate gender discriminatory attitudes and practices;
- Ensure girls' and women's universal access to information, education and services on sexual and reproductive health and rights;
- Support reconciling traditional family values with gender equity and challenge the traditional male as breadwinner, women as caretaker roles through initiatives aimed at increasing men's engagement and participation, including through introducing paternal and parental leave for fathers, in order to increase women's economic and social participation;
- Implement policy measures that support elimination of gender stereotypes in employment and professions.

Advocacy, communication and community mobilization measures

- Increase awareness of policy makers and planners, as well as civil society on gender equality and sustainable development;
- Integrate the curricula on gender equality issues and sexual and reproductive health in the formal education system;
- Implement communication campaigns aimed at strengthening awareness of women's rights among women and the general population to trigger gender transformation; special campaigns shall be developed to target ethnic minority population;
- Showcase success stories about girls and women who provide positive role models and challenge the existing stereotypes;
- Advocate the ethical use of sex detection technologies through engaging relevant medical professional associations, and support elaboration of respective guidelines and recommendations.

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FOOTNOTES

- ¹ Sex ratio at birth refers to the number of boys born alive per 100 girls born alive. Source: Handbook of Vital Statistics Systems and Methods, Volume 1. Legal, Organizational and Technical Aspects, United Nations Studies in Methods, Glossary, Series F, No. 35, United Nations, New York 1991.
- ² Note: Sex ratio at birth is estimated based on PSDA, observed and estimated birth registration, 2002 and 2014 population census, and school enrollment statistics. All these sources are compared with each other and by statistical triangulation the most probable sex ratio at birth level is deducted.
- ³ According to UNFPA Population Dashboard (<http://www.unfpa.org/data/GE>) the total fertility rate, per woman, for 2010-2015 was 2.0.
- ⁴ National Statistics Office, 2014 Census.
- ⁵ Ibid.

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Acknowledgments

This country profile was developed by the United Nations Population Fund in Georgia as part of the UNFPA Global Programme to Prevent Son Preference and the Undervaluing of Girls: Improving the sex ratio at birth in select countries in Asia and the Caucasus. The programme is funded by the EU and implemented by UNFPA in partnership with the governments, civil society and academia in six countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Georgia, Nepal and Viet Nam. This is the first global programme of its kind, it works with partners to gather information about the root causes of this harmful practice and to raise up the value of girls and women. The programme is managed by the Gender, Human Rights and Culture Branch of the Technical Division of UNFPA Headquarters in cooperation with the UNFPA Regional Offices of Asia Pacific and Eastern Europe & Central Asia.

We would like to convey our gratitude to the EU for supporting the programme for 2017–2019, in which Georgia is one of the partner countries. The programme is highly valued for tackling the persistent causes of gender-biased sex selection, joining efforts with the Government of Georgia in addressing the issues with an evidence-based approach.

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