

SOCIAL EXCLUSION AND INCLUSION IN GEORGIA:  
**A Country Social Analysis**



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# Contents

Acronyms and Abbreviations .....	4
Acknowledgements.....	6
I. Introduction .....	7
I.1. Background.....	7
I.2. Defining Concepts: Social Inclusion and Exclusion .....	8
I.3. Methodology and Structure .....	10
II. Exclusion Mapping.....	11
2.1. Perceptions about the drivers of inclusion and exclusion .....	12
2.2. Which groups are excluded: findings from qualitative and quantitative research .....	15
2.3. Policies for Inclusion .....	32
III. Experiences of Exclusion: Case Studies .....	36
3.1. Case Study: Azerbaijani Minority .....	36
3.2. Case Study: Persons with Disabilities.....	46
IV. Conclusions and Recommendations .....	57
V. References.....	60
Annex I: Exclusion Mapping: Matrix.....	62
Annex II: Methodology.....	64
Annex III: Policy and Institutional Overview .....	67

## Acronyms and Abbreviations

AA	Association Agreement
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRRC	Caucasus Resource Research Center
CSA	Country Social Analysis
CWD	Children with Disabilities
DCFTA	Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area
EC	European Commission
ECMI	European Centre for Minority Issues
ESF	European Social Fund
EU	European Union
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FSU	Former Soviet Union
GEOSTAT	National Statistics Office of Georgia
GoG	Government of Georgia
GOC	Georgian Orthodox Church
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IDAHOT	International Day against Homophobia and Transphobia
IDI	In-Depth Interview
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IHS	Integrated Household Survey
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
KII	Key Informant Interview
LEPL	Legal Entity of Public Law

<b>LGBTQI</b>	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, and Intersex
<b>MAC</b>	McLain Association for Children
<b>MHLSA</b>	Ministry of Health, Labor, and Social Affairs
<b>MRA</b>	Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Accommodation and Refugees
<b>NDI</b>	National Democratic Institute
<b>NEET</b>	Not in Education, Employment, or Training
<b>NGO</b>	Nongovernmental Organization
<b>OECD</b>	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>OSCE</b>	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
<b>OSGF</b>	Open Society Georgia Foundation
<b>PARSP</b>	Post-Accession Rural Support Project
<b>PPP</b>	Purchasing Power Parity
<b>PWD</b>	Person with Disability
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goal
<b>TSA</b>	Targeted Social Assistance
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization
<b>WVS</b>	World Values Survey

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# I. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. Background

**Georgia has an impressive record of reforms and is on a steady track of poverty reduction, but ensuring that of its all citizens can equally benefit from and contribute to its development remains a challenge.**

During the first decade of this century, Georgia's economy grew by an average of 5 percent or more per year, but the poorest 40 percent of the population experienced limited and even negative growth (Busolo and Lopez-Calva, 2014). This trend has changed since then, and in the period 2010-2014, the poorest 40 percent registered higher rates of growth than the national average (World Bank 2015). Still, with approximately a third of the population living in poverty—32 percent of citizens live under USD 2.5/per day—Georgia registers one of the highest poverty rates in Europe. Moreover, sixteen percent of its population experiences persistent poverty.

**There are multiple reasons why Georgia should make inclusive growth a priority.** Global research shows that in order to sustain growth, policymakers should strive towards an inclusive process – both political and economic. Societies divided by inequality, ethnic fragmentation, or those whose institutions are otherwise unable to manage conflict are less able to preserve their level of growth and development in the long run (Rodrick, 1999; Acemoglu and Robinson, 2012).<sup>1</sup> Ensuring equal opportunities for all has both an intrinsic value – it is the right thing to do - and an instrumental one in sustaining long-term development goals. Exclusion is also costly. A growing body of evidence reveals that failure to address barriers for groups, who are systematically excluded or marginalized, can have a tangible cost to the economy (De Laat, 2010; World Bank, 2013; Ferrant and Kolev, 2016).<sup>2</sup>

1 Rodrick, Dani. (1999) Where Did All the Growth Go? External Shocks, Social Conflict and Growth Collapses. *Journal of Economic Growth* 4: 385-412; Acemoglu, D. and Robinson (2012) *Why Nations Fail? The Origins of Power, Prosperity and Poverty*. Crown Publishing House, New York, NY.

2 World Bank (2013) *Inclusion Matters: The Foundation for Shared Prosperity*. The World Bank, Washington DC.

Note: Studies estimate that exclusion of Roma minority has cost 887 million euro in lost productivity in Romania and over 320 million euro in Serbia (de Laat, 2010) Lost incomes from excluding people with disabilities from the labor market has been estimated at over USD 1.1 billion in Morocco, over

**This study focuses on one particular aspect of Georgia's path to inclusive growth: social inclusion.** It uses the concepts of *social inclusion* and *exclusion* to help understand why some members of society may be consistently left behind from the development process, and to provide insights into policies that can have a transformational impact on the situation of systematically disadvantaged groups and individuals. Social exclusion, as described in more detail below, implies that certain members of society, due to their social or cultural identity, may face complex barriers and, due to them, have persistently lower outcomes—e.g., access to quality education, health, employment, and income—relative to the rest of society, thus not achieving their full potential.

**The challenge of socially inclusive growth is not unique to Georgia.** Today, over 70 percent of the world's poor live in middle-income countries (World Bank 2015). As countries continue to develop, this poses a new challenge of finding better solutions to ensure that segments of the population are not consistently left behind. Marginalized populations in middle-income countries encompass diverse groups, such as ethnic or religious minorities, migrants, refugees, displaced persons, persons with disabilities, and residents of rural or remote locations, among others. In many high and middle-income countries, women continue to face barriers to fully achieve their potential as citizens and agents of growth.

**In Georgia, social inclusion is an imperative for economic development as well as for peace and stability.** Ethnic and religious diversity, regional economic discrepancies, and mountainous geography make Georgia more susceptible to growing inequalities across social and spatial groups. Evidence of systematic discrepancies in incomes and sources of incomes across different social groups—men and women, minorities, rural and urban, internally displaced persons and the rest of the population—reveals that not all citizens may have the same opportunity to prosper.<sup>3</sup>

USD 3.6 billion in South Africa (Banks, Lena M. and Polack, Sarah. *The Economic Cost of Exclusion and Gains of Inclusion of People with Disabilities: Evidence from Low and Middle-Income Countries*. Ferrant, Gaele and Alexander Kolev. 2016. *The Economic cost of Gender-based Discrimination of Gender Institutions*.

3 For certain social groups, e.g. persons with disabilities and IDPs, social assistance and social transfers have played a particularly large role in sustaining their livelihoods. This implies not only costs to the economy but also to the dignity and independence /empowerment of these groups.

Demographic shifts and a steep population decline as registered in the latest Census<sup>4</sup> are another reason why ensuring equal participation and opportunities is also a smart economic choice. Georgia is also vulnerable to external geo-political factors, including global security concerns such as religious extremism, which necessitate a renewed focus on strengthening social cohesion. Through its international commitments, including those to the SDGs and the EU Association Agreement, Georgia has already demonstrated a commitment to both social economic and social inclusion goals.

**This research adds knowledge on the ways in which social exclusion and inclusion manifest themselves in Georgia.** Looking through the lens of excluded groups and individuals, it sheds light on the ways in which social inclusion and exclusion are understood in Georgia, ways in which they affect socio-economic outcomes for selected groups, as well as some of the underlying causes of exclusion. As such, the report seeks to inform broader efforts by policy-makers, international development partners including the World Bank Group, Georgian citizens, scholars, and civil society towards advancing inclusion and equal opportunities for all.

## 1.2. Defining Concepts: Social Inclusion and Exclusion

**The concept of social inclusion has been evolving over the past two centuries to capture states' aspirations for equitable development.** Originally used in twentieth-century Europe, the notion of social exclusion and inclusion reflected concerns for growing divisions in wealth and opportunities across population groups. The premise of social inclusion goes beyond economics to also include the social, political, and cultural processes that enable all members of society to participate and benefit on equal terms in society. This broader notion of social inclusion has been further reflected in the rise of measures such as multidimensional poverty and human development indices (Atkinson and Marlier 2010.)<sup>5</sup>

4 Between 2002 and 2014 Georgia "lost" about 15 percent of its population: from 4.4 million (Census, 2002) to 3.7 million (Census, 2014).

5 Atkinson, Anthony and Eric Marlier. 2010. *Analysing and Measuring Social Inclusion in a Global Context*, United Nations Publication, New York, NY.

**For the purposes of this research, social inclusion is defined as the process of improving the ability, opportunity, and dignity of people to take part in society.**<sup>6</sup>

Individuals and groups can be disadvantaged based on their identity (ethnic, religious, gender, etc.) as well as other characteristics (their age, place of residence, having a disability, being affected by conflict or displacement, etc.). Social inclusion is a dynamic process. An individual may suffer social exclusion in a specific stage of his/her life due to their age, place of residence, or circumstances such as conflict, displacement, or employment status. Moreover, exclusion is shaped by people's multifaceted identities and disadvantages can be multiplied if various characteristics collide.

**The concept of social inclusion, as introduced in the World Bank's flagship report, *Inclusion Matters*, and discussed in this study, captures a concern for ability, opportunity, and dignity.** Ability is linked to the multiple endowments that individuals receive such as education, healthcare, skills, connectivity to services and infrastructure. Opportunity relates to the notion of providing all individuals with an equal access and quality of essential services, and thereby an equal chance to enhance their well-being. Dignity relates to notions of respect, recognition, and attitude, i.e., the way groups and individuals are treated by others in society. Lack of dignity perpetuates exclusion or self-exclusion of individuals or groups; it may perpetuate their invisibility in statistics and consequently in policies if they are not recognized as citizens in full capacity.<sup>7</sup> **Social exclusion overlaps with, but is not synonymous with, poverty.** Inclusion and exclusion encompass not only notions of poverty, but also the many economic, social, and political relations that bind members of a community together (Silver 2007). Understanding social exclusion deepens our knowledge of multidimensional poverty in a specific country context. The concept of multidimensional poverty affirms that poor people experience deprivation in multiple domains, such as education, employment, health, living conditions, incomes, and disempowerment from voice and participation. The concept of social exclusion examines the underlying historical, social, political, and cultural processes that also play a role in explaining why certain

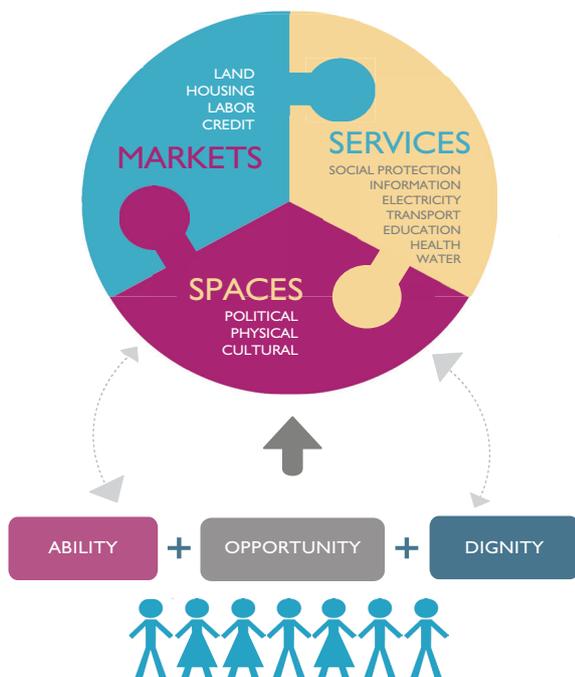
6 This definition and the conceptual framework of this study, focusing on characteristics, domains, and roots of exclusion are based on the World Bank's 2013 flagship report *Inclusion Matters: The Foundations of Shared Prosperity*, The World Bank, Washington DC

7 For example, children or adults with disability may be omitted as household members during household surveys or not registered at birth.

groups continue to face lower endowments. Those who are excluded generally suffer from multiple and interrelated disadvantages that result in both economic and social deprivation.

**A few more features help define the concept of social exclusion as discussed in this report.** Firstly, social exclusion is both a process and an outcome; it encompasses both the knowledge of particular individuals or groups with identities that are prone to exclusion as well as the processes by which they are excluded (stigma, discrimination, social norms or practices, inequitable distribution of resources, political barriers to voice and participation, etc.). Secondly, social exclusion is dynamic and may change over the course of a person's lifetime as a result of either changes in personal circumstances or external policies and practices. Thirdly, the consequences of social exclusion can accumulate and cause barriers that are particularly difficult for specific sub-groups to overcome. For example, an ethnic minority woman in a remote rural area may face barriers on account of her gender, ethnic identity, and location and thus have lower opportunities than a person without – or with only one of – these characteristics. Individuals and groups are affected by exclusion in more than one way through their multiple identities or characteristics: being a woman, being a member of an ethnic or linguistic minority, having a physical disability, living in a remote area, etc.).

Figure 1: A framework for propelling social inclusion



Source: World Bank, 2013. Inclusion Matters: The Foundation for Shared Prosperity

**Social inclusion relates to people's chances to receive a suitable education, find a job, live in adequate housing, build the social capital often needed for obtaining information and good services, and coping during crises.** The extent to which everyone has an equal chance to be included, prosperous, successful, and resilient to adverse circumstances depends partly on how inclusive their society's formal institutions are. But even in societies with well-established and equitable formal institutions, there are often segments of the population who are consistently left out of development processes because of informal norms and practices (World Bank 2013).

**The links between social inclusion and exclusion and poverty in Georgia are relatively underexplored, and often fail to enter the development dialogue.** Certainly tackling social exclusion is not straightforward, because drivers of exclusion are multiple and overlapping. They may be anchored in formal policies and institutions that have led to consistently lower quality of infrastructure or services for certain groups. They can also be rooted in social or cultural differences, attitudes, or biases that discourage people from pursuing certain kinds of education or employment. In some cases, these formal and informal processes reinforce each other such that people internalize assumptions about their own limitations, and appear to exclude themselves.

**Attitudes and perceptions play an important role in defining who is excluded in a particular social context.** Attitudes and perceptions can shed light on the processes through which inclusion or exclusion takes place. For example, prejudices, stereotypes, or misperceptions linked to persons with certain characteristics can affect the quality of services or access to opportunities available to them. Perceptions (including self-perceptions of exclusion) have been linked to lower socio-economic outcomes. For example, negative attitudes towards women's education, access to jobs, or holding leadership positions have been associated with lower outcomes for women (World Bank, 2013).

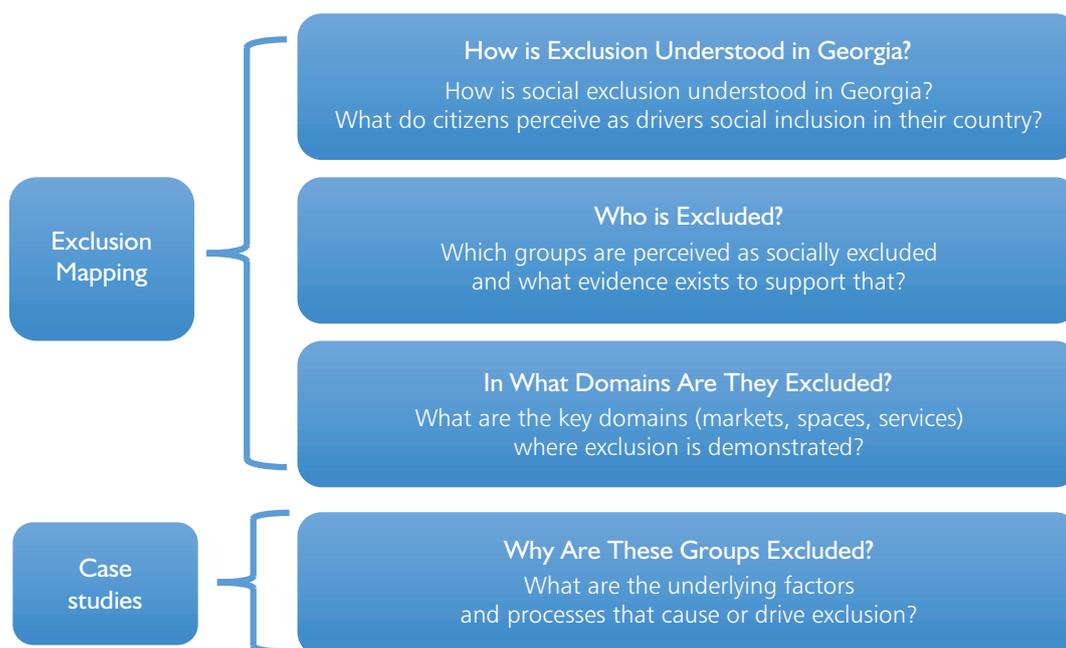
**Exclusion and inclusion manifest themselves both in tangible and intangible ways, differences in socio-economic outcomes as well as less tangible barriers.** The World Bank (2013) report introduces a framework of exclusion and inclusion in three domains: markets, spaces, and services (see Figure 1). These three domains cut across all aspects of an individual's life. Experiences of exclusion, either direct or subtle, are likely to be revealed in one or more of these domains.

### I.3. Methodology and Structure

The present study uses this framework to present the landscape of social exclusion in Georgian society and its implications for development. It seeks to understand how exclusion and inclusion play out in the Georgian context, what characteristics (social, cultural, physical, geographic, etc.) are most commonly associated with being included or excluded, and to what extent the characteristics of exclusion correlate with poverty and other socio-economic outcomes.

Specifically, this study sets out to understand how social exclusion is understood in the context of Georgia, who is perceived as socially excluded, and in what domains are they excluded, based on both perceptions and existing evidence. In addition, for two case study groups, the study uses qualitative research to look deeper into the root causes and processes that drive exclusion of selected groups.

Figure 2: Framework and structure of CSA report



A social inclusion and exclusion lens is also important to highlight the invisibility of groups that face such constraints and need additional attention. In this sense, a social inclusion analysis should not only lead to better targeted policies, but also improvements in data and coordination among existing institutions, programs, and services that serve socially and economically marginalized populations to better assess their needs.

The report draws on a desk review, quantitative and qualitative data, and two roundtable discussions in Tbilisi held at the beginning and at the end of the fieldwork phase.

- *Desk review:* A literature review of Georgian and English language sources pertaining to social ex-

clusion and the situation of specific groups was carried out. This review includes an overview of legislation, policies, and programs designed to reduce disparities for vulnerable groups. It draws on scholarly as well as media sources; government reports; research by international organizations; public opinion surveys; and legislation, policy, and program documents by the Government of Georgia.

- *Quantitative data:* Analysis of Integrated Household Survey data from 2014, collected by the Georgian National Statistics Agency (Geostat). For groups with relatively low representation (e.g., persons with disabilities, 3.8 percent of the IHS sample), aggregated data for a three-year period (2012-2014) was used.

- *Qualitative data:* Two rounds of qualitative research were conducted. One round informed the ‘exclusion mapping’: it consisted of twelve focus group discussions (FGDs) in the capital city, rural, and small town locations, and fourteen key informant interviews (KIIs) with Government, international organizations, NGOs, and academics. A second round of FGDs and KIIs informed the case studies focusing on the Azerbaijani minority and persons with disabilities.
- *Roundtable discussions:* Two roundtable discussions were held in Tbilisi with Government, international organizations, and NGO representatives. One was conducted at the inception stage of the study (November 2015) to guide the scope and research question. A second discussion took place at the conclusion of the fieldwork (June 2016) to present emerging findings and collect feedback to guide policy recommendations.

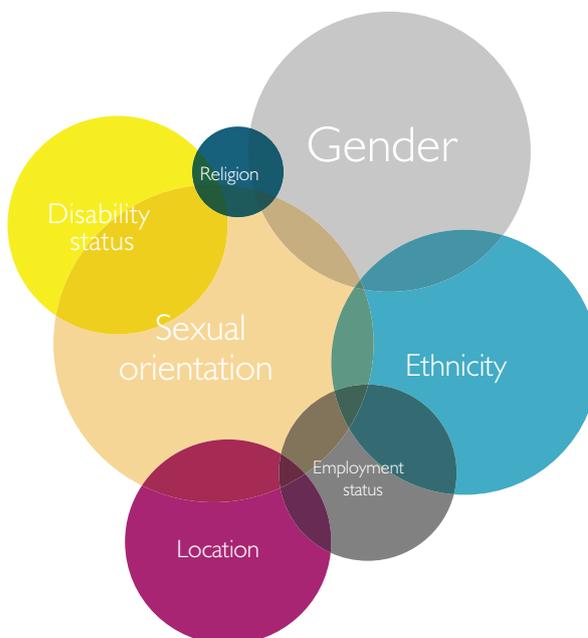
**The report is organized in four chapters:** Chapter I (Introduction) includes the rationale for conducting a social inclusion analysis, a discussion of the conceptual framework for the study, definitions of social inclusion/exclusion, a statement of the objectives and a description of the study’s methodology. Chapter II (Exclusion Mapping) presents a broad country-level ‘exclusion mapping’ to answer the questions: how is social exclusion understood in Georgia; what are the key perceived drivers of social inclusion; who is excluded and in what ways. Chapter III (Experiences of Exclusion) provides an in-depth qualitative examination of root causes, domains and outcomes of social exclusion for two case groups (the Azerbaijani minority and persons with disabilities). Chapter IV (Conclusions and Recommendations) makes recommendations for inclusive policy planning at the country level, as well as specifically for the two case study groups.

## II. EXCLUSION MAPPING

**In every society, there are multiple exclusion stories.** Each person may be affected by exclusion in more than one way through his or her multiple identities (see Figure 3).<sup>8</sup> Exclusion and inclusion are dynamic processes and can change over time and in the course of one’s lifetime.

**This chapter is intended as a broad overview of the social exclusion landscape in Georgia.** It answers the questions: Who are the groups most likely to be excluded and why? In what ways are they excluded, and how does this exclusion affect their welfare? What drives exclusion and what drives inclusion in Georgian society? How do different forms of exclusion overlap and reinforce each other? And how do these drivers of exclusion correlate with poverty?

**Figure 3. Illustration of overlapping identities**



**Source:** World Bank (2013)

**Georgian legislation does not explicitly define what ‘social exclusion’ means in the country’s context.** However, the GoG identifies several vulnerable groups and targets them for social assistance programs.

<sup>8</sup> Source: World Bank (2013). The size of bubbles is arbitrary and not Georgia-specific. It is used here to illustrate the point that each person simultaneously embodies various characteristics. Vulnerabilities, associated with such characteristics, can thus accumulate for the individual.

These groups are IDPs, war veterans,<sup>9</sup> PWDs, victims of political repression of the Soviet regime, the elderly, those living in the most extreme poverty, and minors from impoverished households. Residents of high mountain settlements are eligible for financial privileges. The eligibility of settlements, and the set of benefits were updated through the recent Law on High Mountain Regions approved in December 2015. In addition, the Government offers special programs and services (nonfinancial) to facilitate integration of certain groups, such as ex-convicts.

**Prior country-level studies have attempted to systematize trends and group characteristics that may have contributed to exclusion and reduced socioeconomic outcomes in Georgia.** The European Commission (EC) report in 2011 highlighted national minorities, Roma, eco-migrants, PWDs, IDPs, street children, and children deprived of parental care as most prone to exclusion. At the same time, it identified persons engaged in subsistence agriculture, pensioners, and children more broadly as groups at highest risk of poverty. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2013b) assessed the situation of three specific groups compared to the general population—conflict-affected IDPs, PWDs, and residents of high mountain regions—based on their ability to access and use financial, human, physical, and social resources. The latter study concluded that while characteristics and life events (such as displacement, disability, residence in remote area) contribute to overall vulnerability the outcomes for each individual and household are more nuanced and can vary widely within each group. It also concluded that social exclusion in Georgia is tightly linked to income and livelihood opportunities. The current report builds on this research, and at the same time suggests the persistence of some of the trends that remain a concern for the groups identified.

**The exclusion mapping, presented below, begins with a qualitative exploration of how exclusion is perceived in Georgian society.** Focus group respondents (composed of general public—men and women in rural area, small town, and Tbilisi) and key informants (Government, NGO, academic representatives) iden-

tify a similar set of groups as most prone to exclusion,<sup>10</sup> as shown in Figure 4 and Figure 5 below. The categories listed in these figures reflect references from FGDs and KIIs; they are not mutually exclusive.

**While there are broad similarities between the groups highlighted by citizens and policy experts, there are also a few discrepancies.** These may be due to the level of information that respondents have on the situation of various groups and/or to the degree to which certain groups are entitled to assistance by the state. Ethnic minorities and PWDs are two of the most frequently mentioned groups. Other groups highlighted by the majority of respondents include lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, and intersex (LGBTQI) (or sexual minorities), religious minorities, former prisoners, poor, unemployed and socially vulnerable people, elderly, and IDPs, among others. Focus group respondents are more likely to draw attention to poor, unemployed and 'socially vulnerable' persons, as well as mountain residents. At the same time, a few groups, highlighted by key informants, such as IDPs, the homeless and street children that do not feature prominently in the FGDs.

## 2.1. Perceptions about the drivers of inclusion and exclusion

**The strength of informal networks (family, friends, neighbors, political connections) is perceived to be of utmost importance when it comes to drivers of inclusion and prosperity<sup>11</sup> in Georgia, based on the qualitative research conducted for this study.** Social networks are considered important both for getting access to opportunities such as good quality of education, finding good employment, as well as a means of coping in time of difficulty. Having a job, good education, knowing the Georgian language, and one's location/place of residence are other factors significantly linked with inclusion and ability to realize one's aspirations. Weak social capital, low education, inability to speak the state language, being unemployed, and/or living in a rural or remote area are considered factors that drive exclusion and diminish one's chances of being 'successful' in life.

9 According to the Law on Veterans of War and Military Forces of Georgia (reg. no. 280.070.000.05.001.000.120), the following groups are considered as war veterans: participants of World War II; persons who took part in military actions abroad; participants of military actions for restoring Georgia's territorial integrity, freedom, and independence (this includes veterans of wars in Abkhazia and South Ossetia); and retired military personnel.

10 In the FGD and IDI introduction, moderators first offered a very broad definition of excluded ('consistently left out', 'ignored', or 'bypassed'); they also probed for how respondents themselves understand exclusion and what it means to be 'excluded' or 'included' in Georgia (summarized later in this section)

11 Respondents were asked what are the most important factors for one to be integrated and to be 'successful' or 'prosperous' in life in Georgia.

Figure 4. Excluded groups according to focus group respondents<sup>12</sup>



Source: CRRC based on FGDs in Phase I

Figure 5. Excluded groups according to KIIs<sup>13</sup>



Source: CRRC based on KIIs in Phase I

Figure 6. What drives inclusion: responses from FGDs (left) and KIIs (right)



12 Elaborated by the Caucasus Resource Research Center (CRRC) using NVivo coding of FGD (12 FGDs with 8–10 participants each, conducted in Tbilisi, Samtredia [small town in western Georgia], and Badiauri [rural area in eastern Georgia]). The size of the font indicated frequency with which a group was mentioned. NVivo is a software package for qualitative data analysis.

13 Elaborated by the CRRC using NVivo coding of KIIs (14 KIIs of which 11 in Tbilisi, and one in each of Telavi, Kutaisi, and Batumi). The size of the font indicated frequency with which a group was mentioned.

**Social connections**  
**Education**  
**Employment**  
**Knowing Georgian language**  
**Place of residence**  
**Positive attitudes towards the excluded**  
**Religion**

Source: FGD and IDIs conducted by CRRC-Georgia in Mar-Apr 2015; font size reflects number of references.

Having good social connections is mentioned as an important factor for social inclusion. Families, relatives, and neighbors are also key sources of help for economic survival if a household faces financial or other hardship. Informal networks were also highlighted as the best way to get information in Georgia. In the words of respondents, the strong role of informal networks can be either an advantage or an obstacle. Having relatives from a high social class may increase one's chances of inclusion of getting better employment. But, respondents also mention that having a large social network does not automatically contribute to better opportunities, and may in fact perpetuate social exclusion if one's network is from lower social class or less powerful.

Having a job and income are also mentioned as an important factor for social inclusion. As one key informant noted: "If a person does not have a job and receives social assistance s/he is locked in his/her home and thinks about only what to eat. One cannot talk about integration and social life here. S/he is isolated" (KII 1, male).

Education, along with economic and social status, is seen as a driver of social inclusion. In particular, the role of non-formal education, vocational training, and higher education was highlighted. It was also mentioned that socially excluded groups need to be educated on their rights. The role of education is especially important for ethnic minorities according to key informants, since the language barrier makes it even more

difficult for them to get quality education: “it is proven that ethnic minority representatives who get higher education in Georgia are well integrated in society for a number of reasons: they know the Georgian language better and also they are in close contact with Georgian society” (K11 4, male). This is confirmed by quantitative analysis, showing that insufficient education is one of the strongest contributors to the likelihood of poverty for minority groups.<sup>14</sup>

**The place of residence is related to exclusion mostly through the possibilities for education and certain infrastructure barriers that may prevent access to good quality services.** Institutions providing quality education are mainly located in Tbilisi. However, not everyone in the regions<sup>15</sup> can afford to send their children to Tbilisi to study, because as reported by respondents, living in Tbilisi is more expensive than the tuition fees of universities. A quote from the respondents: “Some kids have to walk five kilometers in order to reach the school because their school does not provide them with a school bus and they cannot do this” (K11 4, female). The place of residence can also be important for ethnic minorities, because according to key informants, ethnic minorities living in urban areas have a better chance to be integrated in Georgian society compared to those who live in rural areas. Another group for which the place of residence might be important, according to respondents, is PWD. They tend to have access to better infrastructure in Tbilisi and therefore have more opportunities to go out than those living in rural areas of Georgia.<sup>16</sup>

**Being ethnically Georgian, and especially knowing the Georgian language, also increases one’s chances of social inclusion according to the respondents.** “Even though this is not formalized, it is informally presumed that ethnic Georgians have higher chances to get employed in the state and private sector” (K11 1, male). This assumption is further confirmed by analysis of quantitative data showing that the share of ethnic minorities working in the public administration sector is very low (5.3 percent compared to 13.2 of

Georgians). These factors are again related to the access to quality education, which is another important factor for social inclusion. Other respondents note national stability, and threats to security, as possible contributors to social isolation of minorities: “Georgia’s multi-ethnic composition is not used as a strength of the country, on the contrary, it is considered as a threat and we are almost afraid of it, which is not right” (K11 14, female).

**Religion and gender—being Orthodox Christian and being a man—are mentioned as other factors of social inclusion.** “There is a list of mainstream characteristics, and religion is among them. If one meets those factors you are more or less integrated in society irrespective of your economic status” (K11 9, female). Respondents are less likely to openly mention gender as a characteristic likely to lead to exclusion. However, as one respondent notes, the ‘invisibility’ of gender as a source of inequality is in itself problematic: “Women are not considered as an excluded group which makes them invisible, they are not recognized. Since we live in a patriarchal society men have better starting positions than women. For example, if an ethnic minority representative is a man, he has better chances of political participation and access of resources than a woman partially also because of the cultural dimensions” (K11 9, female). Similarly, men with disabilities are believed to have better chances of getting married and being integrated in society compared to women with disabilities.

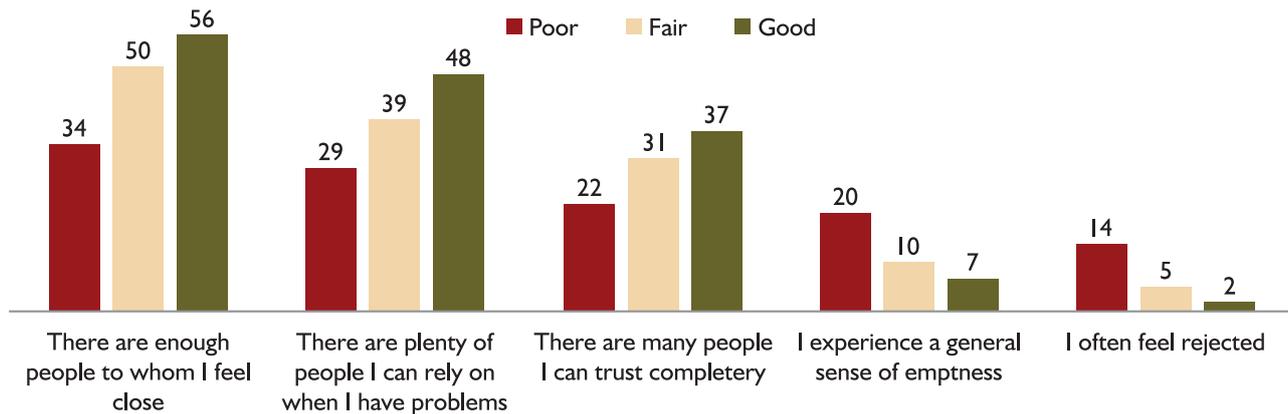
**Poverty and social inclusion, as expressed in the strength of social networks, seem to be closely related as evidenced by recent public opinion research.** An exploration of the relationship between social exclusion, poverty, and psychosocial well-being (Mestvirishvili 2012) based on Caucasus Barometer data, shows that persons who perceive their economic situation as ‘poor’ report much weaker social networks, lower trust in others, and a narrower circle of people on whom they can rely (see Figure 7).

14 Quantitative analysis conducted for this study, based on GEO-STAT IHS data

15 Georgia is administratively divided into autonomous republics, regions, and municipalities.

16 Although some respondents disagree that Tbilisi is a place well adapted to the needs of PWDs, this issue is discussed more in the case study on persons with disability.

Figure 7. Relationship between perception of economic situation (poor, fair, good) and social inclusion



Source: Mestvirishvili 2012, based on Caucasus Barometer data (CRRC 2011).

## II.2. Which groups are excluded: findings from qualitative and quantitative research

Evidence from desk review, qualitative and quantitative analysis points to a consistent set of groups that face greater risk of exclusion. These include ethnic and religious minorities, PWDs, homeless, street children, ex-convicts, persons living in poverty, unemployed and especially long-term unemployed, women, LGBTQI population, residents of remote mountain areas, and of rural areas more broadly. This section summarizes evidence emerging from qualitative and quantitative sources, including original research conducted for this study, to better illustrate the aspects of exclusion based on available evidence for each of these groups. Data on the share of selected vulnerable groups in the total population is presented in Table I.

Two important considerations should be highlighted in this exclusion mapping analysis. First, this mapping is an effort to represent a broad and comprehensive account of population groups and categories that may experience exclusion in Georgian society; however, it cannot claim to represent a complete and full picture of exclusion as experienced by every individual. Second, these forms of vulnerability overlap as they affect outcomes and opportunities of individuals. The case studies presented in Chapter III illustrate experiences of overlapping vulnerabilities as per the accounts of representatives of two selected groups (people with disabilities and Azerbaijani minority).

Table I. Share of selected vulnerable groups in the total population

Excluded Groups	Share in Total Population (%)
Ethnic minorities, 2014 Census	13
Religious minorities, 2014 Census	15
Registered PWDs, 2015	3.3
IDPs, 2015	7
People living in mountainous areas, 2014	9
Unemployed, 2015	12.0 <sup>17</sup>
Poor, 2015 <sup>18</sup>	31.2 <sup>19</sup>
Beneficiaries of subsistence allowance, 2014	11.6

Source: Produced by the CRRC based on data from GEO-STAT, the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Accommodation and Refugees (MRA) of Georgia (IDPs), and the Ministry of Labor, Health and Social Affairs (PWDs).

### II.2.1. Ethnic minorities

The share of ethnic minorities in Georgia has steadily declined since independence; still they comprise over a tenth of the population. According to the most recent census (2014) about 13 percent of the population (489,000) belong to an ethnic minority (see

<sup>17</sup> Of the active labor force.

<sup>18</sup> Absolute poverty based on USD 2.5 per day per person poverty line (2005 PPP).

<sup>19</sup> Share of population under 60 percent of the median consumption (%).

Table 2). This is a decrease from 16.2 percent in the 2002 Census. Indeed, the latest census confirms that ethnic minorities opt for out-migration at a higher rate than ethnic Georgians. While the national out-migration rate was 15 percent between the 2002 and 2014 Census, the Russian minority declined by 61 percent,<sup>20</sup> Armenian by 32 percent, and Azerbaijani by 18 percent (Democracy and Freedom Watch 2016).

**Table 2. Share of ethnic minorities in Georgia**

Ethnicity	Share (%)
Georgian	86.8
Azerbaijani	6.3
Armenian	4.5
Russian	0.7
Yezidi	0.3
Ukrainian	0.2
Kist	0.2
Greek	0.2
Assyrian	0.1
Other	0.4

Source: Census 2014

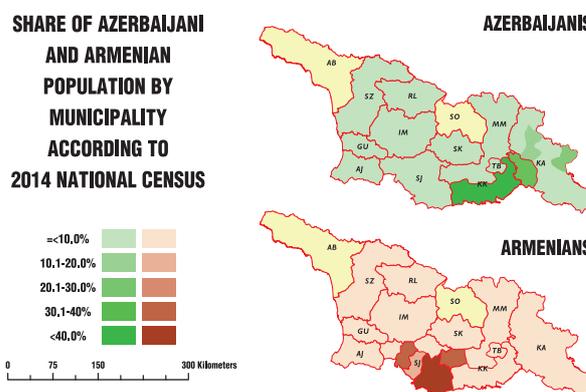
Georgia has adopted relevant legislation to protect the rights of minority groups; however, the definition and status of national minorities and specific entitlements relating to this status need to be advanced. According to Georgian legislation the status of ‘national minority’ is conferred to groups of individuals who: are citizens of Georgia; differ from the majority of the population with regard to language, culture, and ethnic identity; have been living on the territory of Georgia for a long time; and live in compact settlements on the territory of Georgia. In 2005 the Georgian Parliament ratified the European Framework Convention for the protection of National Minorities, and in 2009 the Government adopted the National Concept for Tolerance and Civic Integration. The Concept elaborates national strategic goals in six main areas: rule of law, education and state language, media and access to information, political integration and civic participation, social and regional integration, and culture and

<sup>20</sup> Possibly driven by the conflict in 2008.

preservation of identity. It is based on the principles of providing equal opportunities, while also supporting preservation of minorities’ culture and identity.

**Still ethnic identity seems to play a role in development outcomes and opportunities, at least for some minority groups.** The situation of the two largest minority groups—Armenian and Azerbaijani—is examined in more detail below. The sample of other minorities is insufficient to draw valid results from the national household survey data. Armenian and Azerbaijani groups in Georgia are concentrated mostly in the regions of Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kvemo Kartli, respectively, but fewer numbers also inhabit other parts of the country (see Figure 8).

**Figure 8. Distribution of Azerbaijani and Armenian minority population in Georgia**

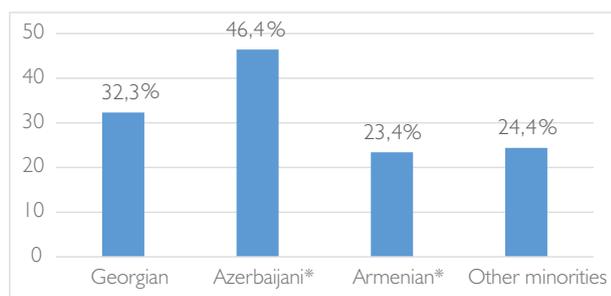


Source: CRRC based on 2014 Census data.

Representatives of the Azerbaijani minority seem to be performing consistently worse compared to other ethnic groups, looking at basic socioeconomic indicators, such as poverty, income level, education, and type of employment, according to the quantitative analysis conducted for this study<sup>21</sup>. Poverty among the Azerbaijani minority exceeds 45 percent, higher relative to the national average of 32 percent (see Figure 9). They are also the only ethnic group to be slightly overrepresented among the poor, relative to their share in the total population (see Figure 9). Ethnic Armenian representatives, on the other hand, are less likely to be poor and are underrepresented among the poor relative to their share in the population.

<sup>21</sup> All of the following analysis (para. 20-25) is based on the Georgia CSA Quantitative Analysis Background Study of GEOSTAT IHS data.

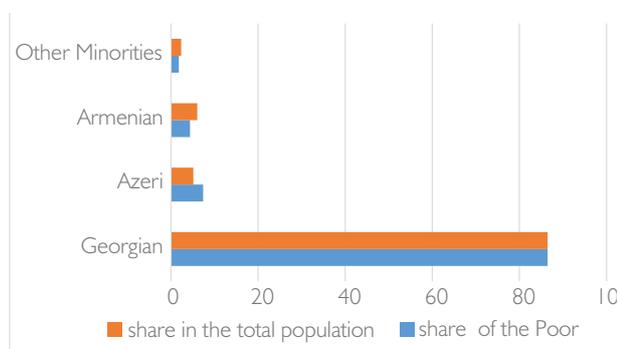
**Figure 9. Poverty levels by ethnic identity**



**Source:** GEOSTAT, IHS, 2014. Ethnicity based on self-declaration of the respondent. Poverty based on USD 2.5 per day (2005 PPP).

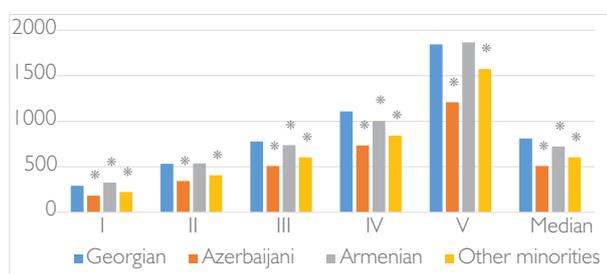
\*Statistically significant differences relative to Georgians

**Figure 10. Representation of different ethnic groups among the poor (%)**



**Source:** GEOSTAT, IHS, 2014. Ethnicity based on self-declaration of the respondent. Poverty based on USD 2.5 per day (2005 PPP).

**Figure 11. Income of ethnic groups by wealth quintile (GEL)**

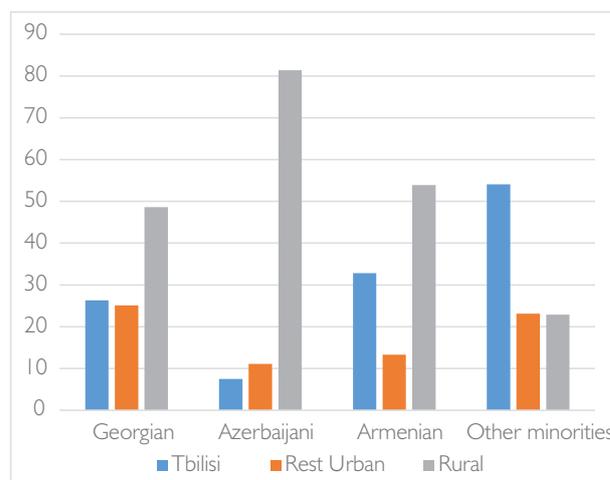


**Source:** GEOSTAT, IHS, 2014. Ethnicity based on self-declaration of the respondent. Income represents total household income (monthly average in GEL).

\*Statistical significance relative to Georgian income levels for each quintile

Incomes of the Azerbaijani population are consistently lower across wealth quintiles and the Azerbaijani population appears to benefit less from remittances, as well as have lower average incomes from self-employment (see Figure 10). To some extent this can be attributed to the fact that the majority, over 80 percent, of the Azerbaijani population in Georgia lives in rural areas (see Figure 12), which is associated with lower quality of services and fewer employment opportunities. It is also notable that the discrepancies in income are larger among the wealthier quintiles.

**Figure 12. Distribution of ethnic groups by location (%)**

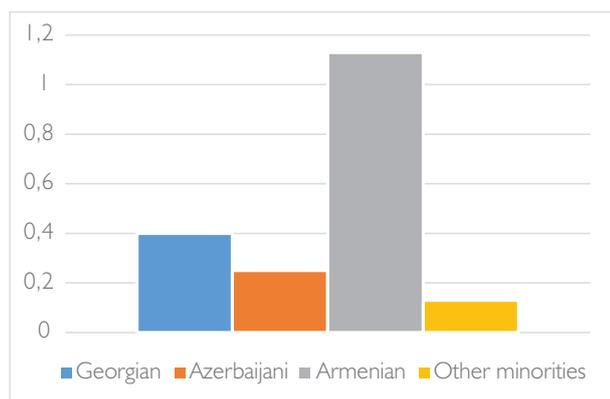


**Source:** GEOSTAT, IHS, 2014. Ethnicity based on self-declaration of the respondent. Residential distribution shown within ethnicity (columns per ethnic group add up to 100%)

Moreover, other factors such as land ownership, education, trade networks, and so on can be at play explaining the difference in incomes. Figure 13 shows that Azerbaijani households tend to have smaller land plots. There are various factors that could be contributing to this, including geographic limitations to land privatizations in border areas imposed between 1992 and 1998 affecting minority populations and the manner of privatization that unfolded after these limitations were lifted.<sup>22</sup> Overall, ethnic minorities in Georgia tend to have higher rates of employment in agriculture which is generally associated with lower earnings (see Figure 14).

<sup>22</sup> Gvaramia 2013; International Crisis Group (2006) reports that after border area limitations on land privatization were lifted, a lot of the lands in Azerbaijani-populated Kvemo Kartli region were already leased to larger landholders, some from outside the region, which caused many local Azerbaijani households to remain landless or rent small plots from Georgians.

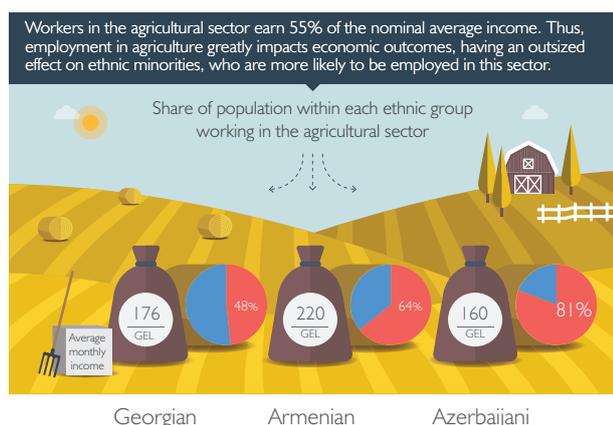
Figure 13. Median size of land plot (in ha)



**Source:** GEOSTAT, IHS, 2014. The land plot represents land worked by the household (rented, leased, or owned); 97 percent of it is owned. **Note:** Size of land plot are significantly different from size plot of Georgians for all ethnicities.

**Differences in sectors of employment can also be observed across ethnic groups.** A higher proportion of Georgians draw their incomes from public administration, real estate, renting property, business activity, health, and social work. A relatively high proportion of employed Armenians work in manufacturing, construction, social, and personal services. Azerbaijani employees work mainly as agricultural employees, in construction, transport, and communication sectors.<sup>23</sup> Azerbaijani employees have lower earnings compared to other ethnic groups in most sectors of employment (see Figure 14).

Figure 14. Employment and earnings in agriculture by ethnic identity



**Source:** GEOSTAT, IHS, 2014.

23 Survey data does not allow for further desegregation to find out what communication sectors Azerbaijanis in particular work in.

Notably, employment and self-employment in agriculture – one of the sectors with lowest earnings - is higher amongst minorities. Out of all employed ethnic minorities, 6.1 percent are employees in agriculture, compared to 2.1 of Georgians (see Figure 14). Approximately 85 percent of self-employed minority citizens are self-employed in agriculture, compared to 79 percent of Georgians.<sup>24</sup> World Bank (2016a) shows that self-employment in agriculture is the most common labor force status among the poor (< USD 2.5/day); 39 percent of the poor are self-employed in agriculture and this rate decreases progressively for moderately poor, vulnerable, and middle class population.

**Education, along with sector of employment, are the two strongest contributing factors for disparities in incomes across ethnic groups.** Data for Georgia show that on average a person whose highest degree achieved is primary school, has a 20 percent higher probability of being poor than a university graduate; and a person with secondary education has a 12 percent higher chance of being poor than a university graduate. Quantitative analysis, using the Oaxaca decomposition method, demonstrates that there is a significant ethnic gap in wages across Georgian and Azerbaijani population - Georgians earning 71.8 percent higher wages than Azerbaijanis where wages are defined as income from hired employment, self-employment, and agricultural production. It also shows that the two greatest contributing factor to the ethnic wage gap are one's sector of employment and education. In other words, improving educational outcomes for minorities encouraging their participation in high-performing sectors, and supporting moves to higher-paid positions can close almost the entire ethnic wage gap (see Figure 15).<sup>25</sup>

24 Georgia CSA Quantitative Analysis Background Study of GEOSTAT IHS data.

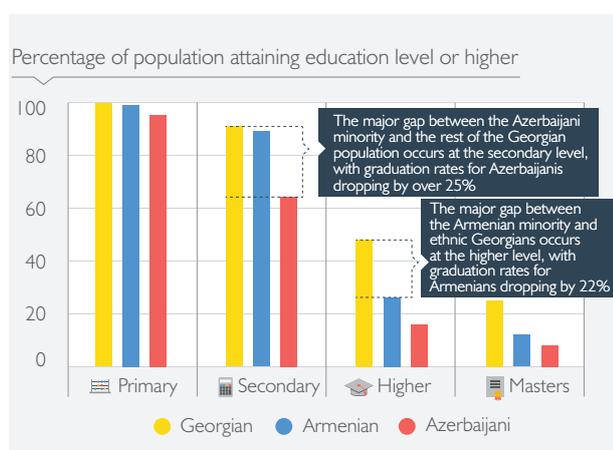
25 Additionally, the returns that Georgians get from the labor market are higher. If Azerbaijanis would get the same returns as Georgians, the gap would be 17 percent smaller.

Figure 15. Closing the minority wage gap: factors that contribute to difference in earnings



**Ethnic identity, specifically for Azerbaijani representatives, is strongly correlated to lower chances of educational achievement.** Among the adult population in Georgia, Azerbaijanis have the highest likelihood of being illiterate (2 percent, whereas this share is almost zero for the rest of the population), as well as of having completed primary education only (see Figure 16). It is notable that the highest drop in completion rates for Azerbaijani minority occurs in secondary education, while for the Armenian population – in the university level.

Figure 16. Educational attainment for Georgians, Azerbaijanis and Armenians (%)



Source: GEOSTAT, IHS, 2014. Ethnicity based on self-declaration of the respondent.

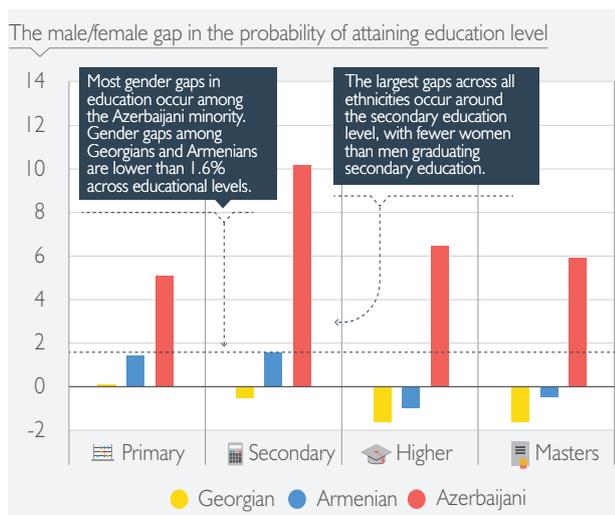
Citizens of Azerbaijani ethnicity tend to have lower educational achievement overall. At the national level, Azerbaijanis have about 20 percent lower chance of completing secondary school, and 35 percent lower chance of completing university compared to an ethnic Georgian. To test the extent, to which ethnic identity as opposed to other characteristics plays a role in outcomes such as education, the study performed a matching characteristics analysis.<sup>26</sup> This analysis compared outcomes for ethnic Georgians and Azerbaijanis with similar socio-demographic characteristics (for example, age, gender, location, employment status, household size, and so on). We see that even when matched with persons from the majority ethnicity with similar characteristics, Azerbaijanis still have lower educational outcomes.

Further, cultural differences and norms across ethnic minority groups account for some disparity in opportunities, particularly for minority women. As Figure 17, below, demonstrates the gender gap in educational achievement for ethnic Georgian and Armenian communities is negligible and in fact shows slightly more favorable outcomes for girls than boys; however, there is a pronounced gender gap among the Azerbaijani minority group with girls being more than 10 percent less likely to complete secondary school, and about 6 percent less likely to complete a university degree. Social norms and practices are likely to account for this difference. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)<sup>27</sup> reports that Georgia has one of the highest rates of child marriages in Europe (17 percent of Georgian women marry before turning 18). This rate is even higher among some minority groups. UN Women study of minority women in Kvemo Kartli notes that a third (32 percent) of married respondents were married before the age of 18 (and 5 percent were married between the ages of 13 and 14).

26 Using a methodology developed by Nopo (2008), cited in Inchauste and Cancho (2010). According to this methodology, Georgians are paired with their closest minority neighbor based on a Propensity Score Matching technique. The characteristics included for matching individuals are: area of residence, region, employment status, age, household size, share of dependents, being a single woman and working in the agricultural sector. Once each Georgian is paired with its minority neighbor, educational outcomes, such as having finished tertiary and secondary education, are compared.

27 UNFPA (2012), cited in UNFPA (2014).

Figure 17. Ethnic and gender gaps in educational attainment

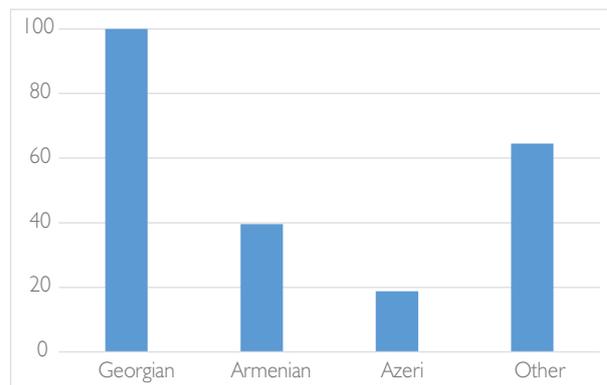


Source: GEOSTAT, IHS, 2014. Ethnicity based on self-declaration of the respondent. Controls for age, area of residence and region included.

Focus group and interview respondents in this study highlight the language barrier as one of the key causes for discrepancies in social inclusion and social and economic opportunities for minorities. In Census (2014) only 19 percent of native Azerbaijani speakers declare proficiency in Georgian (see Figure 18). These levels are higher for native Russian and Armenian speakers (64 percent and 40 percent, respectively). Language proficiency is directly related to the quality of education, ability to pursue higher education in Georgia, ability to access essential services such as health care<sup>28</sup> and other public services, and more broadly to access information from mainstream media channels. There is indication that the language barrier affects women more strongly. In a UN Women (2014b) survey on the needs of women in the Kvemo Kartli region, 65 percent of Azerbaijani and 59 percent of Armenian respondents reported that they could not speak, read, write, or understand Georgian; and only 9 percent and 21 percent of these groups, respectively, stated they are fully literate in Georgian.

28 Physicians are required to be licensed in Georgian, and there is scarcity of minority-speaking licensed physicians. As a result, minority representatives often have to resort to translation services from relatives or neighbors, which reduces the quality of service especially on sensitive medical issues.

Figure 18. Proficiency in Georgian by ethnic group (self-declared), Census 2014)



Source: Authors' elaboration based on 2014 Census data, and self-declaration of mother tongue and proficiency of Georgian. The category 'other' includes persons who declared their mother tongue to be either Abkhazian, Ossetian, Russian, or 'Other'.

Despite the lack of formal barriers for the integration of minorities in social, political, and economic life, ethnic minorities are underrepresented in political systems. At the time of this research, there are three Armenian and two Azerbaijani representatives in the 150-member Parliament. Azerbaijanis are also not as frequently represented in local government<sup>29</sup> in areas where they are a majority. As mentioned above, Azerbaijanis are also less likely than Georgians or Armenians to be employed in the public administration.

According to public opinion surveys, tolerance and public attitudes toward minorities have improved over the decades, but still reveal some barriers. Approximately 70 percent of Georgians report they would not like to have as a neighbor a person from a different race, over 60 percent would not like to be neighbors with people from a different religion (Table 4), and 20 percent would be against having neighbors who speak a different language (Table 3). While many would be willing to do business with persons from a foreign nationality or minority identity, most would not accept them as members of one's family.

29 International Crisis Group (2006) reported that in Kvemo Kartli, where Azerbaijanis are a majority ethnic group, they had no municipal heads and 3–4 deputies.

**Table 3. Percentage of Georgians who would not like to have as neighbors people speaking a different language**

2005–2009	2010–2014
23.1%	20%

Source: World Values Survey (WVS).

**Table 4. Percentage of Georgians who would not like to have people from a different religion as neighbors**

1995–1998	2005–2009	2010–2014
73.5%	64%	63.6%

Source: CRRC based on WVS. The range of years indicates the wave of the WVS. Data for Georgia was gathered in 1996, 2009, and 2012.

To summarize, evidence shows that ethnic identity is associated with development outcomes in Georgia. For some groups, for example Azerbaijani minority, this may be symptomatic of a set of barriers or overlapping disadvantages that together contribute to diminished opportunities for this group. The underlying reasons for this are explored in more detail through qualitative research, presented later in this report (Chapter III, case study on the Azerbaijani minority). It should be highlighted that other smaller minority groups (Roma, Kist, and so on) may also face significant social, economic, or cultural barriers but data for these groups is scarce and inquiry into these barriers would require further dedicated research.<sup>30</sup>

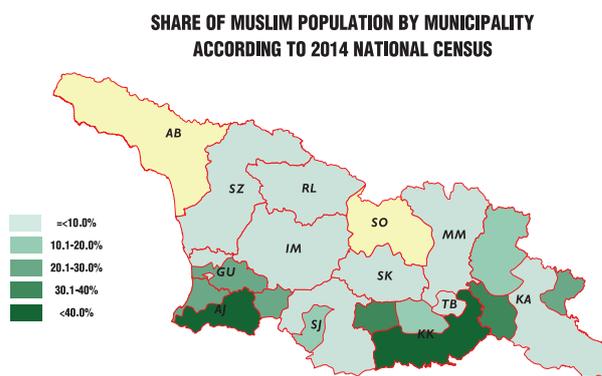
### II.2.2. Religious minorities

**Religious minorities comprise about 15 percent of the population.** Muslims are the biggest religious minority (just over 10 percent of the whole population).

30 For example, key informants in this research mention Roma as a strongly marginalized group, but due to the size of the Roma population there is little empirical evidence on social and economic indicators for this group. The 2002 Census showed there were about 500 Roma living in Georgia. In 2010, the Open Society Georgia Foundation (OSGF) reported that there were approximately 750 Roma and 800 Moldovans living in Georgia, noting that many inhabitants in Roma settlements in Georgia identify themselves as Moldovan. The European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI) reports that approximately 1,500 Roma registered in Georgia as of 2015. This shows that—similar to other countries in eastern Europe—official data on Roma shares in the population may be underestimated. Most of the Roma in Georgia reportedly live in Tbilisi. Many lack official state identification documents and as a result cannot access education or other state services.

Muslims in Georgia include ethnic Georgians (mostly Sunni, in Adjara region and some in Samtskhe-Javakheti), Azerbaijanis (mostly Shia, concentrated in Kvemo Kartli), and Chechen Kist (mainly Sunni, and concentrated in Kakheti region) (see Figure 19). The second largest minority religious group is Apostolic Armenian. It comprises approximately 3 percent of the population and is mostly concentrated in Samtskhe-Javakheti region. Other groups, with under 1 percent, are Catholic, Jehovah's Witness, Yezidi, Protestant, and Jewish. About 2 percent of the population in the latest census does not report affiliation with any religion.

**Figure 19. Share of Muslim population by municipality**



Source: CRRC based on Census 2014

There is no empirical evidence that religious minorities are performing consistently worse on any set of indicators, based on quantitative analysis conducted for this study. Yet, focus group respondents and key informants interviewed in this research point out some areas where religious minorities may face additional obstacles, such as education. Respondents note that the school curriculum continues to be linked with Orthodox Christian traditions and that may perpetuate feelings of exclusion of non-Christian students.<sup>31</sup> In some cases, respondents mention strong negative attitudes from teachers, principals or parent communities toward Muslim students, including anecdotal information of school personnel promoting conversion of students into Orthodox Christianity, or parents blocking children who attend *madrasas* (Islamic instruction schools) from enrolling into mainstream schools.<sup>32</sup>

31 For example, customs of praying before class.

32 The latter story is based on a case of a school in Kobuleti, Adjara region, where a principal's decision to accept students from a madrasah into the public school brought on public opposition from parents and the community.

The extent to which religion is incorporated in the school curriculum has been subject to public debate for over a decade. A constitutional agreement between the state and the Orthodox Church of 2002 introduced a voluntary Orthodox study program in public schools. Because of this, practices may vary across areas and schools in the country. Another set of issues relate to public attitudes toward minority students and may obstruct their integration in mainstream education system.<sup>33</sup>

**Overall, respondents agree that being an Orthodox Christian is an important part of being a Georgian and as a result there may be some mistrust toward other religious groups.** “In order to be a full-fledged Georgian, the Georgian society demands from you... They demand that they are like them, in terms of religion as well because religion was very important for Georgians, during the identity formation.” (Kil 4, male). The latest wave of World Values Survey (WVS) shows that 32.2 percent of Georgians would not like to have a person from a different religion as a neighbor. Focus group participants allude specifically to stereotypes toward more ‘newly converted’ persons to Western religions such as Jehovah’s Witnesses, implying that converts to such ‘non-traditional’ religions are generally of ‘lower social class’ and choose to convert due to material benefits.

**The Georgian Constitution declares “complete freedom of religion” and provides for freedom of expression on the basis of religion, while recognizing the special place of the Georgian Orthodox Church (GOC) in the history of the country (US State Department 2014).** While some stakeholders have criticized the privileged position of the GOC in relation to state policies and funding, public opinion is more divided. Government policies to promote inclusion of religious minorities are seen not only from an angle of social and economic integration, but also as a security issue.

33 A case in Kobuleti (Adjara region) was flagged where the local population opposed children from a local madrasah school joining the local public school. When the school principal accepted them, it resulted in protests from local residents.

### II.2.3. Residents of rural and remote mountain areas<sup>34</sup>

**Residents of rural, and especially remote mountain areas, face barriers from multiple perspectives:** quality of infrastructure and connectivity to markets and services, for example, distance from schools, universities, quality health care centers, and so on. High mountains comprise over 60 percent of Georgia’s territory. Population decline affects mountain regions most strongly. Between 2002 and 2014, the mountainous border regions of Racha-Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti were most affected by out-migration losing 37.4 percent of its population, followed by Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti with 29 percent. Over 150 villages in Georgian mountain regions have been completely deserted, and a similar number are barely inhabited.<sup>35</sup> The scale of migration may be even higher than official figures indicate, as many migrants remain registered in their places of origin.<sup>36</sup>

**Some of the main challenges faced by high mountain villages are infrastructure (roads, electricity), communications, and availability of basic goods and services (schools, health centers, grocery stores).** UNDP (2013b) notes that residents of high mountain areas are less likely to have health insurance or to apply for social assistance. Respondents interviewed for this study mention that “Communication is the biggest issue, in some places they do not have electricity, or telecommunication [telephones] to be in touch... In Kakheti, there are many villages like that where people live but... they have no cell reception, they can’t watch TV...” (FGD, Badiauri, male, 20–39). Roads are another big issue for these villages, as they cannot be reached by car. And as there are no schools in these villages, young people are unable to be educated. Therefore, according to the respondents, there are only a few families left in such villages: “There are villages with only four or five families left. It has not always been like this, but [the families] are left there and no one pays attention

34 These groups are discussed here together due to common and overlapping barriers to their inclusion and opportunities.

35 Depopulation of high mountain areas has been a long-term process, driven by multiple factors: industrialization in the Soviet period starting in the 1960s, recurring natural disasters (earthquakes and landslides), conflict on the South Ossetian border in the 1990s and 2008, as well as general deterioration of infrastructure and services. IWPR (2016).

36 International Organisation for Migration (IOM) cited in IWPR (2016).

to them...Everyone who had a chance, left that village” (FGD, Badiauri, male, 20–39).

**In 2015 the Georgian Government approved a new Law on the Development of Mountainous Regions.**

The law applies to settlements located 1,500 m above sea level, or between 800 and 1,500 m if they meet additional criteria, related to mountain slope inclination, infrastructure, climate and natural environment, lack or scarcity of agricultural lands, demographic situation, rate of out-migration, and so on. According to this law, 1,582 towns and villages were granted status of high mountain areas, and are eligible to receive certain tax and social benefits.<sup>37</sup>

**The law has been in force since January 2016, hence it is too soon to evaluate its social or economic impacts on high mountain areas.** Rural respondents in the current study consider this law a positive initiative though insufficient to address depopulation in high mountain areas: “They [the government] have developed a policy to return people to the mountains, and they raised pensions in high mountain villages, but this is practically nothing. You cannot keep people there if there is no infrastructure...” “...if there is no infrastructure, if a normal school is not built, a clinic is not opened, people will physically not stay” (FGD, Badiauri, male respondents, 20–39).

**In rural areas, more broadly, lack of jobs besides subsistence agriculture and strong dependence on agriculture is another cause of vulnerability.** It is worth noting that, according to World Bank (2016a), persistent poverty<sup>38</sup> is present in both rural and urban areas, and that though some rural areas show growth in employment in nonagricultural sectors (for example, Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti, Guria) most are still highly dependent on agriculture (for instance in Samtskhe-Javakheti, Kakheti and Guria itself agricultural employment represents more than two thirds of total jobs).

37 A 20 percent increase in pension for the elderly; a 20 percent supplement to social assistance of eligible vulnerable households; a bonus for doctors and nurses in the amount of the state pension; a monthly cash assistance for newly born children; and a compensation of 50 percent monthly charges for electricity (not exceeding 100 kWh).

38 Georgia Poverty Assessment (World Bank 2016) shows that about half of the poor in 2013 were persistently poor, and overall roughly half of the population has either left or fallen into poverty.

**There is a perception that being from a rural area may impose some characteristics of exclusion that are hard to shed even after changing one’s location of residence.** Respondents allude to features, such as manner of speech: “It can be said that if someone is a ‘villager’, and uses a smoother ‘L’, this symbolizes a villager, that he/she is disadvantaged compared to a ‘city-dweller’, who does not use such smooth ‘L’...” (KII 5, male). Even in urban areas, people living in the suburbs or periphery of the city have a harder time integrating into the society compared to those living in the center. This is mainly due to their poor economic conditions, and lower connectivity to good quality services. “...If a person lives in the periphery [of an urban area], he/she has a bigger problem integrating compared to those who live in central areas. Consequently, people in peripheries are poorer...and have more problems...” (KII 5, male)

**Some respondents make a connection between inclusion and prosperity in rural areas, and the development of tourism.** They note that the situation may be particularly difficult in towns and villages, in which there is no developing tourism services. Because of less dynamic local economic development, citizens’ participation in local development is also much weaker: “What gives you the feeling of being a citizen? When you have an opinion and participate in processes where your opinion matters...Here the priorities of the village are set and the little money is spent without asking or involving these people...” (KII 9, female).

#### II.2.4. Persons with disabilities

**The share of officially registered PWDs in Georgia is believed to be strongly underestimated.** As of February 2016, the number of persons registered with the Social Service Agency and receiving a disability pension stood at 123,957 persons, or approximately 3.3 percent of the population, while the World Health Organization (WHO) estimates a global prevalence of disability of about 15 percent. Census (2014) reports a higher share if 342,042 PWDs, or 8.7 percent of all Georgian citizens. Causes for underreporting of disability are explored in more detail in Chapter III of this report (case study on PWDs).

**PWDs have higher poverty rates, lower educational achievements, and lower labor force participation, based on the quantitative analysis conducted for this study.** At 42 percent, poverty rates among PWDs are significantly higher than the national average of 32 per-

cent. About 6 percent of PWDs are illiterate, whereas this figure is close to zero for the rest of the population. Slightly less than half (45 percent) of PWDs complete secondary education, about a fifth complete secondary professional programs, and 12 percent complete a Master's or equivalent university degree (compared to 24 percent of the general population).

**Moreover, having a PWD in the household affects incomes and labor market participation of caregivers and the entire household, according to respondents interviewed for this study.** The Government allocates a monthly pension of GEL 160 for PWDs, registered with the Social Service Agency. Caregivers are often dependent on this pension as well, in addition to targeted social assistance (TSA) allowance, if the household qualifies. Respondents (caregivers of PWDs interviewed during FGDs) note that family members are sometimes reluctant to taken on a job, especially informal or temporary job, so as not to lose social assistance coverage. At the same time, additional medical and transportation costs often pose a higher burden to households with a PWD compared to others.

**Exclusion of PWDs is a result of multiple mutually reinforcing barriers.** Interviews and focus group discussions with PWDs, caregivers, and service providers, presented in chapter III of this report illustrate how the interaction of various factors act together to perpetuate low social and economic outcomes. These include barriers to physical access to public spaces and infrastructure, barriers to education, employment, low access to information, and general social stigma. Adaptation of the physical environment and channels of information to be accessible for PWDs is still incipient in Georgia. Availability of state-funded social services, such as specialized day centers for children with disabilities (CWD), medical personnel to provide rehabilitation, special education teachers, and so on are confined to major urban areas. The presumed under-registration of PWDs also constrains state institutions to adequately plan and allocate resources to address their needs.

### II.2.5. Internally Displaced Persons (by conflict and natural disaster)

**Despite its relatively small size, Georgia hosts one of the largest per capita shares of IDPs in the world, about 7 percent of its population or approximately 264,000 (MRA 2014) persons.** Internal displacement has been caused by conflicts in Abkhazia and South

Ossetia in 1990–1993, 1998, and 2008, as well as by ecological disasters in Upper Adjara and Svaneti.

**Table 5. Number of registered IDPs, refugees, and persons with humanitarian status**

	Registered IDPs	Registered Refugees and Persons with Humanitarian Status
Women	141,381	166
Men	122,574	191
<b>Total</b>	<b>263,955</b>	<b>357</b>

*Source:* The CRRC based on data by the MRA, February 2014.

#### (a) IDPs Displaced by Conflict

**IDPs from occupied territories are largely concentrated in areas adjacent to the border zones and in major cities, such as Tbilisi and Batumi.** About 75 percent of these IDPs live in urban area (whereas only 49 percent of the general population lives in urban areas). This is largely due to housing and economic opportunities. Less than 40 percent of IDPs own their homes. About 22 percent live in new buildings and cottage settlements, and 38 percent still inhabit collective centers (hotels or other public buildings where they were given shelter upon resettlement). Though some collective centers have been rehabilitated, living conditions in most of them are substandard and overcrowded. Living conditions are one of the main challenges for IDPs. Apart from preventing social integration by physically isolating IDPs from other residents, poor living conditions contribute to health and psychological problems.

**Beyond reported poverty rates, which appear to be higher compared to the general population, IDPs face a set of distinct disadvantages.** At 43.4 percent, poverty rates among IDPs are higher than the general population,<sup>39</sup> as well as somewhat higher than those of other vulnerable groups (PWDs [41 percent], elderly [40 percent]). But perhaps the largest challenge for

<sup>39</sup> It is worth noting that different surveys indicate different levels of poverty gaps between IDPs and the rest of the population. These are described in more detail in World Bank (2016b). It has been noted by various organizations (EU, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], World Bank) that IDPs in Georgia are a very heterogeneous group: some continue to face a cycle of poverty, unemployment, and substandard housing conditions, while others have integrated well both into society and into the labor market.

IDPs are housing and independent livelihoods (UNDP 2013b; UNHCR 2009; World Bank 2013, 2016b). IDPs are more reliant on remittances and social transfers.<sup>40</sup> All IDPs with income less than GEL 1,250 per month are entitled to a government benefit of GEL 45 per month. Barriers to self-reliance mostly stem from lack of productive assets, collateral, and long-term security. Many IDPs have traditionally had rural livelihoods, but most of them do not own land or livestock after resettlement. Not owning a house prevents long-term planning and also means that they lack collateral and access to finance for entrepreneurial activities.

**While prior qualitative studies (World Bank 2016b) and respondents in this report highlight that IDPs are generally well-accepted and integrated socially in their communities, this acceptance does not translate into strong social networks that support social or economic mobility such as finding a better job.** Discussions with IDPs in four regions in 2015 (World Bank 2016b) reveal that unemployment along with housing are considered priority needs by IDPs. Respondents also point out that women tend to find employment more easily than men; however, this is likely to result in women's willingness to take lower-skilled and lower-paid jobs, for example, as domestic workers or agricultural employees.

**It is worth noting that after more than twenty years from the first wave of displacement, IDPs are a very heterogeneous group.** Prior studies (World Bank, 2013; World Bank 2016b; UNHCR 2015) indicate that IDPs who still live in non-rehabilitated collective centers away from the capital are one of the most marginalized sub-groups. This is due to on the one hand to crowded and sub-standard living conditions that may contribute to lower health outcomes, psycho-social problems, and on the other hand, due to spatial isolation that contributes to weaker social networks, challenges in accessing good quality services, education, and job opportunities. Moreover, IDPs displaced from rural locations in an urban setting with no access to land are often not able to maintain their traditional livelihoods. The same studies point to differences between 1990s and 2008 caseloads of IDPs. Due to better economic situation of the country, those displaced in 2008 were able to get better returns from both housing and social assistance (TSA program was

40 Social transfers (pensions, scholarships, assistantships) comprise 36 percent of IDPs' income, compared to approximately 26 percent for the general population.

not operational during the 1990s but it was in place in 2008). The majority of 2008 case load IDPs received support to purchase private housing, while the IDP collective centers still house mostly families displaced in early 1990s.

**To some extent vulnerabilities of IDPs are intergenerational.** Prior research and qualitative analysis point out that IDP children tend to be disadvantaged in quality of education; however, this tends to be an outcome of lower socioeconomic status than of displacement directly. For conflict-displaced IDPs, the IDP status, and eligibility to the IDP social allowance, is inherited.

**The social and economic integration of IDPs has been actively promoted by the Government, international partners, and NGOs.** Support includes the monthly IDP cash allowance, housing programs to rehabilitate collective centers, construction of new settlements or supporting transition into private housing for IDPs, and a number of livelihood programs, including land leasing pilots for rural IDPs.

#### (b) IDPs Displaced by Natural Disasters ('Eco-Migrants')

**A less-researched group of IDPs are the so-called 'eco-migrants' displaced by natural disasters.** A large number of these IDPs have been displaced from or within Adjara and Svaneti regions by earthquakes, landslides, or floods. As there is no established legal definition of eco-migrants in Georgia, this group has traditionally not been eligible for social allowances, durable housing, or livelihoods assistance.

**While the causes of their vulnerability is largely similar to other internally displaced citizens, attention to the needs of eco-migrants has been weaker.** In 2014 an Eco-Migrants Department was created within the Georgian MRA. Still, financial constraints and the lack of legal status of 'eco-migrants' confine addressing their needs to sporadic assistance rather than comprehensive policy. Since 2004, 3,000 families have filed applications for resettlement, of which 1,182 were approved. Over the last decade, over 570 households have received state support in the form of new house and small land plot, but thousands more are either displaced and in waiting, or are at risk of displacement by pending disasters (Lyle 2012). In 2015, 140 families were relocated, a huge increase from the 36 families resettled in 2013 and 2014 combined (IWPR 2016).

## II.2.6. Elderly

### Population ageing is taking place rapidly in Georgia.

In 2010, out of its 4.4 million people more than 14 percent were 65 years and older and about one-third were 50 years old and above; by 2030 these shares are expected to grow to 21 percent and 40 percent, respectively. Life expectancy at birth, which in 2010 was 78 years for Georgian women and 71 years for Georgian men, is predicted to rise to 80 years for women and 73 years for men in 2030. While this is welcome news, older people suffer from high levels of poverty, unemployment, and underemployment (UNECE 2015).

Quantitative data collected for this study show that income levels for the elderly are significantly lower than those for the rest of the population. At 40.2 percent, poverty rates among the elderly are substantially higher than the national average though comparable to those of other vulnerable groups (42 percent among PWDs; 43 percent among IDPs). Among the elderly, women are at a disadvantage with overall lower median income levels (see Table 6). Elderly seem to be living in smaller households, both in urban and rural areas, and 26 percent live in a house with only two people. The percentage of elderly living with no adults of working age in the house is also considerably high – almost a third of urban and rural elderly do not have any working age adult in the house (Table 7).

**Table 6. Median incomes of elderly by location and gender**

Median Monthly Income by Quantile (in GEL)					
	Elderly	Elderly Urban	Elderly Rural	Female Elder	Male Elde
Median Income	661.5	686.6	643.0	628.0	711.43

**Note:** For elderly individuals, their average total household income has been reported. Total household income includes wages, earnings from self-employment, income from selling agricultural production, property income, pensions, scholarships, assistances, remittances from abroad, money received as gifts and non-cash income.

**Table 7. Household size and number of working adults in households with elderly**

HH size	Elderly - Urban	Elderly - Rural
1	14.21	14.08
2	26.07	26.17
3	17.26	13.32
4	13.79	11.12
5	12.53	11.67
6+	16.14	23.64
Number of adults		
0	30.52	31.81
1	22.87	18.21
2	26.71	25.81
3	11.19	13.95
4	8.71	10.22

**Source:** Integrated Household Survey, 2014

**When talking about problems and barriers of the elderly, respondents of FGDs and KIIs mention ageism, employment, and violence.** Informants say that opportunities for the elderly are limited, including for finding jobs: “Generally ageism exists in Georgia... there are closed some spaces for people elder than 40 years old, for example, political space... but this does not happen in regions...” (KII 5, man). Focus group participants highlighted that it is very hard for people older than 40 to find employment in Georgia. Respondents mentioned anecdotal evidence of when they were rejected for positions because of their age, noting that this made them feel excluded. According to respondents, employers prefer to employ young people because it is easier to manage them: “The jobs are limited for people who are older than 40 and are unemployed. Nowadays our generation is excluded. Nobody needs you. You have experience and nobody looks at your professionalism. Often they [employees] want a young person who is more manageable. She/he will do anything you ask.”

**This also related to other areas of life, beyond employment:** “The elderly have some barriers linked with finding jobs, participating in political processes, social and cultural processes, because it is considered that when one retires he/she must be away from everything.” (KII 8, woman). With regard to violence, respondents mention the elderly as victims of psychological and physical violence within their own families, such as their children and relatives.

**Low incomes and financial dependence on children are another area of concern.** Respondents say that the elderly are not able to improve their situation and the state does not provide them with necessary services to help them. The pensions provided are not enough: “...*The income that pensioners have does not meet all their needs, and the state does not offer them services that will be sufficient for them...*” (KII 3, man). According to one informant, the state has some programs for the elderly, including day centers and homes for the elderly, which are run by NGOs and government agencies and function like boarding houses. However, these programs are not enough to meet the needs of the elderly.

### II.2.7. Homeless persons and street children

**Homelessness among adults and children is largely an urban phenomenon.** Most of the recorded homeless live in Tbilisi. There is no consistent data on the prevalence of homelessness. Yet there is consensus among respondents in the study that this group is among the most marginalized in society.

**The 2002 Census reported that there were approximately 2,500 homeless persons in Georgia, about two-thirds of whom are men and a fifth of whom are elderly.** The root causes of the homelessness are considered to be poverty, migration to the cities, problems in housing market, drug or alcohol addiction, problems related to huge health expenditures, and domestic violence, the latter mostly affecting women and the elderly.

**Homelessness among children is considered particularly worrisome because of its long-term consequences for children who miss education and other basic human development opportunities.** In 2005 and 2008, surveys commissioned by the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and Save the Children (2007),<sup>41</sup> respectively, reported that there were 1,000–1,200 children living in the streets of Tbilisi. In 2015, the Ministry of Health, Labor, and Social Affairs (MHLSA) had a record of approximately 400 children

41 Save the Children (2007) Assessment of Urban Street Children and Children Living in Government Institutions in Georgia: Development and Testing of a Locally-Adapted Psychosocial Assessment Instrument.

living on the streets of Tbilisi, but these records are recognized as incomplete. Local researchers report that in most cases, street children either belong to homeless families, or have a home but are regularly on the streets due to poverty, conflict in the family, or issues of physical, emotional, or sexual violence in their household. Among street children, the number of boys is slightly higher than that of girls. Key informants consider this to be result of the fact that, in conditions of poverty, boys are more driven to leave school and look for work.

**Some services to address the needs of street children are provided by the Government or NGO-run day centers through vouchers allocated by the state.** As there are no consistent statistics on the number and background of street children these services are likely insufficient to address the full needs or tackle root causes of the problem. In the words of some respondents: “*to eat, drink and [provide] hygiene does not really mean that these children will be integrated [in the society]*” (KII 6, female). Similar services are provided by international NGOs, such as World Vision. In addition, the Center for Crime Prevention and Innovative Programs of the Ministry of Justice targets street children and at-risk from an angle of juvenile crime prevention. Its programs mostly aim to raise awareness among young people on repercussions of committing a crime.

**Focus group and interview respondents in the current study tend to describe symptoms or outcomes of vulnerability among street children, such as their extremely poor hygiene.** These characteristics further perpetuate their exclusion and create immediate barriers to access services such as integration in schools. “*Children who do not know how to wash their hands, how to brush their teeth, to shower, and to change their clothes. There were cases, when classmates did not accept a child, because of he/she wouldn’t wash and had a specific scent, because of sleeping on the street and not taking care of him/herself.*” (KII 10, female). At the same time, there is low awareness among citizens, as well as key informants, on the root causes of homelessness among children. Further research and awareness efforts are needed to understand and address preventatively their exclusion either through preventative or remedial programs.

## II.2.8. Ex-convicts

**The ex-convict population in Georgia is particularly large and faces constraints in social integration and employment due to specific historical circumstances.** In the first decade of the 2000s, fast-paced reforms to improve the rule of law, business environment, and so on were also accompanied by a steep increase in convictions. Between 2003 and 2010 Georgia's prison population grew by 300 percent, making it the country with fourth largest rate of incarceration per capita in the world. Following the approval of an Amnesty Law in 2013, approximately half of the prison population was released. There is no official published statistic on the scale of the former prison population; approximately 25,000 persons were released only in the year after the adoption of the Amnesty Law (OSGF, 2014).

**Exclusion of former prisoners was mentioned in about a quarter of interviews and FGDs.** The group of former prisoners is fairly heterogeneous. The opportunities for ex-convicts to integrate in socioeconomic life are seen as dependent on their age, gender, education, and type of crime committed. Still, this group faces some common obstacles such as psychological difficulties and trauma, social stigma, and weaker social network that affects their ability to find a job.

**Women are especially vulnerable to negative attitudes from society and inadequate economic opportunities.** Women, who have gone to prison, are more likely to lose their immediate social or family network.

*"We found out that when a woman is going to a jail, her social circle ... is narrowed... the society does not forgive her for committing a crime... this is one issue, and the second is that husbands usually leave their wives if they are jailed..." (K11 9, woman)*

**Qualitative studies by UN Women and the Georgian Ministry of Justice with former prisoner women highlight a number issues and problems affecting their daily life.** Two key issues are employment and poverty. Former prisoners have limited chances for employment due to their criminal records. Some of them had been refused a job on these grounds. The stigma and distrust toward former prisoners exists in both the public and private sectors. A zero-tolerance policy toward criminal sanctions has affected the prop-

erties and assets of these individuals and households. Participants in this study reported they had lost all of their financial means and many of them were dependent on their parents' pensions and donations of close relatives. Most of the surveyed ex-prisoner women considered their sentences to be unlawful and disproportionate with respect to the offences committed. Many of them were victims of violence during prosecution and investigation.

**Young people, between ages 20 and 30, who have been imprisoned also face the challenge of missed opportunities in higher education.** The Government offers professional courses to ex-convicts which award certificates and are popular and well-received. However, participants still face obstacles to compete in the labor market due to stigma, physical and mental health issues, and reduced social network.

## II.2.9. LGBTQI Population

**Data on sexual minorities is scarce in Georgia.** Studies conducted by Heinrich Boll Foundation, local NGO 'Identoba', Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, as well as of the Georgia Ombudsman, show that hate speech is commonly used against LGBTQI people. It is assumed that only a small part of the LGBTQI population are open about their sexual identity due to likely discrimination in education, employment, among other areas, negative attitudes from family and society, and safety concerns.<sup>42</sup>

*"In Georgia, because of the homophobic attitude, these people can have problems at work. Most of them are not 'coming out', they are not telling anyone that they are LGBT representatives, so they are socially and psychologically oppressed." (K11 9, female)*

*"A friend of my child saw two men kissing on the street in Tbilisi and there was a construction site nearby, so he took a brick and killed one of them. Now he has to go to jail for this... This is how much hate there is towards [sexual minorities]." (FGD, rural area, female, 40+)*

42 For example, in 2014, police was not able to guarantee safety of participants in the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia (IDAHOT) celebrations, and due to the high risk of violence, the LGBTQI community in Georgia decided not to hold any public event to mark this day. The GOC has declared a day of family and parents on the same day to celebrate as an alternative.

Public opinion surveys show that society is still largely intolerant toward LGBTQI population, though this has slightly changed over time. Half or more of Georgians would not like to have homosexuals as neighbors, and do not believe that rights of sexual minorities should be respected (Table 8; Table 9).

**Table 8. Would you like to have a homosexual as a neighbor? (WVS 1995–2014)**

	1995–1998 (%)	2005–2009 (%)	2010–2014 (%)
Yes	26.5	36	36.4
No	73.5	64	63.6

**Table 9. How often should a good citizen do the following?**

	Never (%)	Sometimes (%)	Often (%)	Always (%)
Obey laws	0	5	24	71
Respect rights of ethnic minorities	1	12	21	64
Respect rights of religious minorities	6	9	19	63
Respect rights of sexual minorities	49	18	11	16
Defend traditions	0	8	19	72
Be critical toward government	4	22	25	46

Source: Caucasus Barometer, CRRC, 2013.

The majority of respondents in this research spontaneously highlighted LGBTQI population as an ‘excluded’ group. Respondents named intolerance and aggression toward sexual minorities, discrimination in the work place, and issues related to health service providers, and to obtaining identity documents for transgender persons as the main barriers for this group. A key issue with negative attitudes is the tolerance for hate speech, and the fact that is seen as competing with traditional values. “For Christian people this is unacceptable.” (FGD, rural area, male, 20–39)

Some respondents mention that social and economic standing can reduce exclusion, for example, pointing out that wealthier, famous, or better-connected LGBTQI representatives are not as likely to encounter barriers or discrimination.

“We know that popular people that we see on the main TV channels do not have traditional sexual orientation and these people are not excluded from society. It happens in the villages that such people are excluded... who are financially not strong...” (FGD, Samtredia, female, 40+)

Some gender and age differences are also mentioned. According to interviewees there is greater aggression toward homosexual men, whereas for women this issue is less visible and their sexual orientation is not taken seriously. There are also generational differences with younger LGBTQI persons more likely to be open about their identity. Support programs for LGBTQI population are mostly sponsored by bilateral organizations and foreign embassies in Georgia.

### II.2.10. Poor and unemployed

Respondents of FGDs and KIs define socially vulnerable people as those living under the poverty line and receiving government assistance. Respondents think that socially vulnerable people are excluded by society, but not by the state, as the state helps them financially. Socially vulnerable people do not have many opportunities to be part of society (such as social or cultural activities) as their time is spent on activities that will allow them to afford basic necessities for their survival. Others hold differing views, especially with regard to reliance on social assistance: “...They are sitting at home and waiting for social assistance. They do nothing. We live in a region and we have such people in the villages...They don’t do even elementary things for earning money...” (FGD, Samtredia, male, 20–39).

Adding to their exclusion is the lack of access to quality education mentioned by respondents. The system of education does not provide special programs for these children that take into account the different hardships the children face. As respondents mention, getting education is often linked to financial resources and socially vulnerable people do not even have money to pay for the transportation to go to university, let alone the tuition fees. Despite the fact that the national exams provide equal conditions, socially vulnerable people are not able to pass the test with high enough scores to be accepted into prestigious colleges.

According to respondents, it is very hard for socially vulnerable people to fulfill their potential. A person

whose main concern is how to feed a child is unable to think about anything else. Therefore, the person becomes segregated from society. "...he/she is thinking what to eat tomorrow or how to feed kids, he/she can't think about self-realization in society or things like that. He/she just doesn't have time to think about this" (FGD, respondent, exclusion mapping). In addition, self-isolation was also named as a problem of socially vulnerable people. Respondents noted that not having money has a bad effect on person's aspirations and people start to exclude themselves from majority. However, respondents highlight that self-isolation is not characteristic of all socially vulnerable people and it depends on the individual.

**Respondents highlight in particular the long-term effects of exclusion due to poverty and unemployment.** Protracted poverty or unemployment may contribute to psychological problems, and also limit educational opportunities for children. Thus, social exclusion may be passed across generations. Respondents mention unemployment and poverty might be temporary but if it lasts too long it may cause some psychological problems for family members. As one respondent said: "Of course, they [socially vulnerable people] do not have any kind of opportunity... these people exist for staying alive from month to month... Despite the fact that children of these families get education, they do not have opportunities... The possibility of social mobilization for the socially vulnerable classes and their children's chance to climb the social ladder is minimal..." (KII 1, male).

**Respondents express doubt that the financial assistance by the state is sufficient or effective in helping families get out of poverty.** "They [a socially vulnerable family] don't have any financial income. His sister has minimal income. When a child was born, the room had been repaired... She bought a small TV for the baby. After one month they [government] stopped to give them social assistance."<sup>43</sup> (FGD, respondent, exclusion mapping).

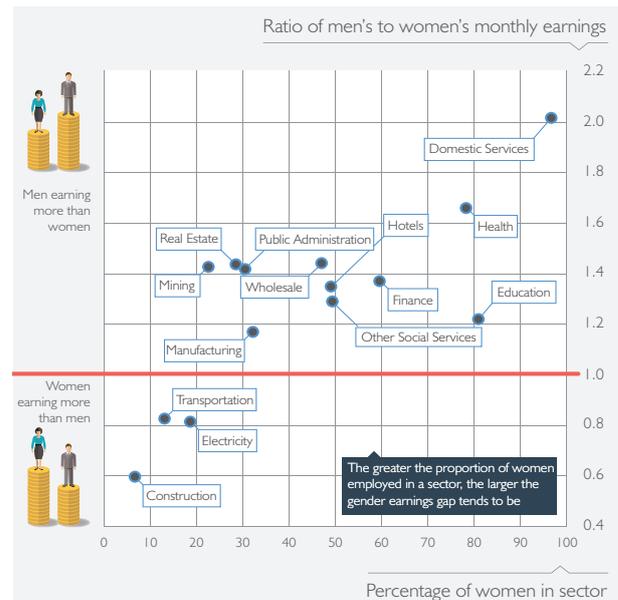
### II.2.11. Women

**Women in Georgia face significant obstacles with regard to good quality employment, political participation, and inclusion into social life.** According to the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap index, Georgia ranked 82nd worldwide, among 145 nations. National gender statistics clearly indicate the lower lev-

43 Social assistance for socially vulnerable people is dependent on point system, which determines who should be helped financially.

el of women's economic activities in Georgia. In 2014, only 32 percent of recently registered firms in 2014 were owned by women, and less than a third of all private sector managers were women. The gender wage gap is especially pronounced in sectors where women are prevalent as employees (see Figure 20). In 2015, the average monthly salary of male employees was GEL 1226.6 and GEL 759.7 for female employees.<sup>44</sup>

**Figure 20. Gender wage gap and gender prevalence by sector of employment (vertical axis shows ratio of men's to women's monthly income; horizontal axis shows percentage of women in the sector)**



Source: Author's own based on GEOSTAT, IHS, 2014.

**Women in agriculture are a particularly vulnerable group.** Even though a slightly higher percentage of women are employed in agriculture (48 percent), compared to men (44 percent), female heads of household earn 70% of the wages for male heads of household in the sector: 136 GEL/month compared to 192 GEL/month for men.<sup>45</sup>

**Women are similarly underrepresented in political and senior public service positions.** Only 17 out of 150 members of Parliament are women. This ranks Georgia 147 out of 193 countries worldwide according to Inter-Parliamentary Union's ranking.<sup>46</sup> The same trend is evident in local government. Among

44 National average of 15 sectors including public administration. GEOSTAT - [http://geostat.ge/index.php?action=page&p\\_id=149&lang=eng](http://geostat.ge/index.php?action=page&p_id=149&lang=eng).

45 Quantitative analysis background report.

46 <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm>.

9 regional governors, 12 city mayors, and 69 municipalities heads there is only one acting female municipality head. Public opinion polls show a trend that is increasingly supportive of greater female representation in politics. In a 2014 National Democratic Institute (NDI) poll, 70 percent of respondents think that number of women in Parliament should be at least 30 percent.

**Female-headed households are more likely to be poor than those headed by men, which may be due to gender wage gaps, gaps in asset ownership, and sectors of employment.**<sup>47</sup> Women-headed households are less likely to own land compared to male-headed households. Overall, and especially in rural areas, households headed by women with children are particularly vulnerable to poverty. A recent study on IDPs (World Bank 2016) suggests that female IDPs have fewer obstacles to find employment compared to male IDPs, but this is largely due to their greater willingness to take on jobs that are below their level of qualification, insecure or lower-paying jobs, for example as wage workers in agriculture.

**Persistent gender inequalities can also be attributed to social norms and beliefs.** Public opinion surveys show women are generally perceived as homemakers and are supposed to take care of children, while men are supposed to be breadwinners and make decisions at home. A study commissioned by the UNFPA<sup>48</sup> shows that women are the primary caregivers of children and sick family members (UNDP 2013a). Lack of widely available early childcare options further excludes women from advanced education or employment opportunities (Dudwick 2015).

**Expectations of decision-making roles, as well as of social behaviors, still vary widely for men and women.** While a moderate majority of people consider it acceptable for females to give orders at work, only 1 percent of Georgians think that a woman should be the one who makes decisions at home. Almost two-thirds of Georgians say this is a man's role, while only one-third thinks that decisions should be made equally (CRRRC 2011). A majority of Georgians believe it is unacceptable at any age for a woman to smoke tobacco, to live separately from parents before marriage, to drink strong alcohol, to have sexual relations before marriage, or to cohabit with a man before marriage,

while fewer respondents consider these unacceptable for a man. Rural populations, older people, and those with lower educational attainment are significantly more likely to answer 'unacceptable at any age'. These views are clearly manifested in gender-selective abortions (Dudwick 2015; UNFPA 2015), which are biased toward boys thus contributing to gender imbalance.

**Ethnic minority women in Georgian face 'double burden' (Peinhopf 2014) with regard to inclusion and opportunities.** They are less likely to have complete secondary education, know state language, and be employed in a formal job than ethnic minority men (UN Women 2014b). They are also excluded from almost all decision-making bodies, formal or informal. A UN Women (2014b) study finds significant discrepancies in education, employment, and overall empowerment of minority women in the Kvemo Kartli region. Of the female respondents, 7 percent stated they are illiterate and 33 had incomplete secondary education; 63 percent reported they cannot read, write or understand Georgian, and only 14 percent of women considered themselves to be employed. About a third of the married respondents stated they got married before the age of 18. The majority of women (74 percent) agreed with the statement that having a family and children is of primary importance for a woman, whereas a career and making money are of prime importance for men.

**Norms that may enable gender-based violence also appear to be more widely spread among minority populations.** A study by the ECMI notes that 16.5 percent of female Azerbaijani respondents in Kvemo Kartli fully agreed with the statement that "if the husband uses physical violence against the wife (physical punishment), it means the wife has deserved it," compared to 10 percent of Armenians and 8.3 percent of ethnic Georgians (UN Women 2014a; Peinhopf 2014). In the national Reproductive Health Survey, 84.9 percent of Azerbaijani women agreed with the statement that "a good wife obeys her husband" compared to the national average of 42.5 percent. Only 52.6 percent of Azerbaijani respondents regarded it as legitimate for a woman to refuse intercourse if her husband has a sexually transmitted infection (compared to the national average is 76.5 percent).

**The exclusion mapping also identified groups who, owing to their smaller size and less availability of information, were not discussed in detail above.** These groups also did not feature prominently either in discussions with citizens or KILs, as being most prone to

47 GEOSTAT's gender report.

48 "Public Perceptions on Gender Equality in Politics and Business"

exclusion. Such groups include people living in suburbs or outskirts from urban area, drug addicts, alcohol addicts, HIV-infected persons, racial minorities, refugees, returned migrants, people excluded due to political beliefs, people in heavy working conditions, sex workers, young people who are not in employment, education, or training (NEET), and so on. These groups are listed in the exclusion mapping matrix in Annex I.

### II.3. Policies for Inclusion

The section above has presented a broad-based account of how exclusion and inclusion are understood in the context of Georgia. It has also presented some evidence on groups that are likely to face systematic disadvantages. While this cannot be a conclusive account of all forms of exclusion in Georgian society, the present research does demonstrate the multifaceted nature of exclusion and the fact that accumulating disadvantages can also find expression in lower socioeconomic outcomes. Groups, who are most commonly recognized as excluded, tend to face obstacles across a number of sectors and services. At the same time, drivers of inclusion, in the case of Georgia are commonly identified as strong social networks, good education, a certain ethnic, linguistic, religious, and gender identity, and so on. This reveals that the necessary 'ingredients' of success and prosperity are seen as a function of both equitable policy outcomes (for example, in education) as well as of entrenched norms and the interactions between the two.

The comprehensive mapping of exclusion also reveals that state and non-state programs and services only partially address the multiple barriers faced by disadvantaged groups. As noted earlier in this report, government programs offer financial assistance for persons of certain status (IDPs displaced by conflict, war veterans, PWDs, and so on), as well as targeted means-tested assistance to households.<sup>49</sup> The Government also offers additional services aimed to reduce disparities for selected groups, such as day centers for children with special needs, inclusive education services in schools, bilingual education options for students of minority ethnic groups, housing assistance for IDPs, a nationwide reintegration program with training and employment assistance for ex-convicts, financial support and privileges for residents of high mountain regions, among others.<sup>50</sup>

49 TSA Program.

50 More details on existing programs and services are available in

These policies and programs, along with services provided by non-state institutions—NGOs and other development organizations—provide a necessary but rather fragmented and incomplete network of support to individuals and families who experience multiple and overlapping disadvantages. Moreover, existing services are concentrated on target groups for whom better data exist (and vice versa, more data exist for groups that are recipients of assistance), whereas others consistently may fall out of policy attention.

#### *So what does all of this evidence mean for policy?*

Three observations can be made: (a) *The need for more regular and robust evidence on groups (large and small) that tend to be consistently overrepresented among the poor, as well as monitoring of their progress across relevant indicators.* To collect better data, the implementation of some laws and policies needs to be advanced. For example, reaching clearer legal definitions on groups, such as eco-migrants and national minorities, would enable better tracking of the situation of these groups. (b) *The need for stronger institutional coordination and a comprehensive approach to social policy.* Persons and households, belonging to many of the groups discussed above, face multiple deprivations: physical, financial, social and cultural, and so on. Consequently, better outcomes for these groups would depend on a wide set of improvements in their life and welfare. Yet assistance programs and services for such groups are often fragmented across multiple programs and institutions. (c) *The need for locally appropriate solutions.* In a country, as geographically and ethnically diverse as Georgia, inclusive policies and programs would be most effective if targeted to the local context, and implemented with the feedback and participation of beneficiary populations. In the framework of its decentralization reform, Georgia already envisages a stronger role for local government in targeting resources for local development. As discussed below, some of the best international practices on inclusion have been centered around locally driven programs to integrate and expand opportunities for vulnerable populations.

- (a) Need for evidence-based monitoring and improved data systems

**There is need for more consistent data on who is left behind.** The situation of specific vulnerable groups (for example, IDPs displaced by conflict) is consistently

Annex I and Annex III.

documented. Yet other groups are further from policy maker's attention, or the full scale of their needs is unknown. Some groups, such as Roma, homeless children, may face severe marginalization, including lack of identity documents that place them outside the scope of state assistance. Addressing the needs of this population would be impossible without better documentation on their numbers, characteristics, and needs. Even the needs of groups, for whom dedicated programs and services exist, such as CWD are also likely to be underestimated if a proportion of this group remains unregistered (more details on causes for under-registration of PWDs are discussed in Chapter III). Improved data systems and coordination and sharing of data, as well as referral mechanisms across different programs, could lead to more targeted outreach so that vulnerable persons and households are better served by existing policies.

**Monitoring and evaluation of socioeconomic progress for vulnerable groups is equally important.** Policies and programs that aim to reduce disparities for selected groups need to be continuously adapted and evaluated for impact. Rather than evaluating success or failure, the purpose of continued monitoring should aim at incremental improvements so that programs can in the long run tackle a wider set of barriers that may obstruct the optimal intended outcomes of the program. For example, tracking of literacy and school completion for girls in minority communities may imply that public awareness measures should be incorporated more strongly to promote incentives for families and schools to keep girls in education, or that language barriers for parents need to be addressed so that they can better support girls in education pursuits, and so on. Monitoring of inclusive education for children with special needs may demonstrate that unlocking important barriers on physical or digital access through state-wide policy and regulation, is necessary so that existing programs and services can fully reach and have greater impact for their intended beneficiaries.

- (b) Stronger institutional coordination (a comprehensive approach)

**Committing additional resources to the needs of a wide range of marginalized groups may be unrealistic and unsustainable, but better policy coordination can go a long way to ensure that existing services amount to better outcomes for excluded groups.** As described above, excluded individuals or households

often require assistance in more than one area (for example, education, employment, housing, health, financial assistance, and so on); yet, services that are targeted at these groups are often partial or fall under the purview of fragmented programs and institutions. A holistic approach is necessary to ensure that support is available equally to citizens through the lifecycle including health, education, infrastructure, career guidance, etc. to support transition to school, and to the labor force.

**The two groups, discussed as case studies in this report (Chapter III) offer a good example.** Improving opportunities for Azerbaijani minority in Georgia is contingent on progress in a variety of areas: a strong education system that takes into account language disparities, public awareness and cultural shift in norms promoting girls' education and labor force participation for women, availability of linguistically/culturally appropriate health care services, among others. Similarly, PWDs and their households are potential recipients of various programs and services. But the extent to which these amount to better opportunities for them is inconsistent. On the one hand, available services, for example, admission to a day center or receipt of a wheelchair, are not guaranteed. They are sometimes inaccessible or require a long waiting period during which the beneficiary may miss important opportunities. On the other hand, overarching barriers such as weak adaptation of infrastructure rendering it inaccessible for PWDs may prevent them from accessing otherwise available services. Without a comprehensive approach that is centered on the needs of the particular individual or household, resources allocated to a variety of services are not likely to reach their optimal outcome. A similar case can be made for the needs of vulnerable IDPs, for whom financial assistance, housing, livelihood support, psychosocial services, and so on are all highly important to ensure their overall integration.

**The challenge of addressing the mounting needs of small pockets of groups left behind are common to many developed and middle-income countries.** To address this issue, many countries have developed specific coordination mechanisms or adopted a comprehensive lens of social protection policies. Two good examples of a move toward better policy coordination are the experience of the European Social Fund (ESF) (see Box 1), and approaches of some South American states such as Chile's Solidarity program (*Chile Solidario*) and Uruguay's Plan for Social Equity (see Box 2).

### Box 1. The European experience with local social inclusion interventions

The European Social Fund (ESF) is Europe's main tool for promoting employment and social inclusion. It is used by member states to implement programs and promote the integration of disadvantaged people into society, and ensure fairer life opportunities for all. ESF is available for programs in four main areas: (a) Strengthening employment and mobility (opening pathways to work, creating chances for youth, boosting business, caring for careers); (b) Better education; (c) Giving a chance to all (fighting marginalization, promoting social enterprise, and so on); and (d) Better public services. Local governments and existing local organizations are the main applicants to and beneficiaries from the ESF.

The ESF offers diverse experiences as each member state has tailored its programs to priority needs. For example, Germany has used ESF funding to build skills of youth and of the elderly, promoting 'active ageing', expand the workforce and facilitate participation of persons with immigrant background, persons with disabilities, and low-skilled workers in higher-earning jobs, and support transition from school to work for youth. Poland and Hungary have promoted local social enterprises for persons and communities with fewer economic opportunities. For example, cities in Poland have used funds to create self-help associations among populations such as the homeless, and ex-convicts. Other local governments have organized supplementary training courses in soft skills for disadvantaged job-seekers. Even though the ESF is a large fund administered EU-wide, examples of small-scale implementation that it has enabled at the local level, are relevant to contexts beyond EU member states.

The European Commission has encouraged integrated social and infrastructure interventions to ensure that funds contribute to addressing a comprehensive set of challenges for disadvantaged groups, for example, improving roads, housing, and small infrastructure along with improving quality of educations, providing livelihood support, awareness-raising activities, etc.

**Sources:** European Commission (<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=325>); World Bank (2014).

### Box 2. Examples from South America: Chile Solidario and Uruguay's Social Equity Plan

#### Chile Solidario

Chile Solidario is a component of the Chilean social protection system in charge of serving vulnerable individuals, families, and regions. It was founded in 2002 as the Government's strategy toward tackling complex roots of poverty. Later, as the country consolidated its institutional network to better support social integration, Chile Solidario was able to expand its support to other groups and created initiatives to support persons in different situations of vulnerability. These included the Bridge Program, aimed at families in extreme poverty; the Bind Program aimed at elderly citizens living alone; the Street Program, working with the homeless; and the Opening Pathways Program, targeting children in situations of forced separation. The programs are implemented by municipalities and NGOs. The programs provide a comprehensive set of services, including psychosocial support, advice, linking beneficiaries to relevant services and institutions with the ultimate goal to enable them to participate independently in social and economic life.

**Source:** Ministry of Social Development, Chile ([http://www.chilesolidario.gob.cl/en/chs\\_en.php](http://www.chilesolidario.gob.cl/en/chs_en.php)).

#### Uruguay Social Equity Plan

Uruguay is one of the countries with both greatest political stability and strongest welfare traditions in Latin America. It has maintained one of the lowest inequality rates in the region, as well as one of the highest rates of social cohesion, as measured by the number of citizens who perceive a high degree of solidarity in society. By 2009, Latinobarómetro survey (<http://www.latinobarometro.org/lat.jsp>) also showed that Uruguayans had the highest percentage of citizens in the region who expressed trust in the way government resources were spent.

In the early 1900s Uruguay made significant progress with regard to labor rights. By the late 1990s it had developed a comprehensive social protection system, accessible to all formal employees. Nevertheless, various trends—globalization, rise in informal employment, rising fertility rates in the lower-income segments of the population—called for a new approach to social policy. By 2005, the Government had extended its family allowances program to all families living in poverty (beyond formal employees) and established the National Social Emergency Program (PANES) which included: a community outreach program to identify households at risk; an employment program; a 'poverty-exit' program (Rutas de Salida); food, education, and health assistance components for families at risk. As the program ended in 2007, it was expanded as a national Social Equity Plan. This Plan was based on the model and lessons learned from PANES, and focused on making these programs more sustainable strengthening the coordination role of the Ministry of Social Development.

**Sources:** Filgueira et al. (2009); Reuben et al. (2008).

**It is essential to incorporate feedback and participation of beneficiaries in policies that are aimed at them.**

The section above has highlighted the importance of better data, evidence, and continuous monitoring and improvement of programs. Consistent feedback from beneficiaries themselves is especially important to be able to continuously improve services. This can be done through regular consultations with beneficiaries and/or groups that represent their needs (caregivers, NGOs, local service providers, and so on), through interactive platforms for public communication as well as by ensuring that information and communication about programs and services is delivered in an accessible way, for example providing information in minority languages for programs serving minority communities, and so on. Beneficiary surveys such as report cards can also contribute greatly to improve policy makers' understanding of desired improvements in a service or program.

(c) Identifying locally appropriate solutions

**A policy approach to inclusion would also entail better tailoring of policies to the local context, building capacity of, and stronger reliance on, local institutions.**

Global experiences have shown that some of the most effective programs to combat exclusion and increase opportunities for vulnerable citizens and households have come from implementing successful local strategies to development. As Georgia advances in its efforts toward decentralization, it would be important to integrate concrete targets of inclusion so that local development and growth do not exacerbate but help level inequities for citizens and households who face complex disadvantages (see example of Poland Post-Accession Rural Support Project, Box 3).

**Locally driven and locally implemented programs have multiple benefits.** They allow for better use of local knowledge, tailoring interventions to make them accessible and acceptable to citizens in different geographic, economic, cultural contexts within a country. Many high- and middle-income countries have emphasized the role of local, community-based solutions to tackle problems of persistent poverty and exclusion.<sup>51</sup>

51 See Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) LEED Programme (<http://www.oecd.org/cfe/leed/>, [http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/archive/innovation/innovating/pacts/pdf/leed\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/archive/innovation/innovating/pacts/pdf/leed_en.pdf)); Hungary Social Inclusion Strategy 2020 (<http://romagov.kormany.hu/download/5/58/20000/Strategy%20-%20HU%20-%20EN.PDF>); and Indonesia Nationwide Community Program (PNPM), among others.

### Box 3. Poland: Post-Accession Rural Support Project

Between 2006 and 2011 Poland implemented the Post-Accession Rural Support Project (PARSP) targeting the most excluded groups in 500 poor rural communities (gminas). The project operated on the principles of community-driven development. Local residents participated in creating a local social inclusion strategy for their gmina. These were tailored to reach specific excluded groups in the community. Some local strategies focused on building skills for children outside of schools, others on meeting the needs of marginalized elderly; other communities prioritized benefits for single parents, persons with disability, among others. At its closing the project was estimated to have reached approximately 230,000 children and youth, 74,000 elderly people, 42,000 persons with disability, 25,000 victims of violence, and 59,000 homemakers. A second component of the project aimed to modernize the efficiency of social insurance for farmers. Project outcomes included: a) substantial increase in the proportion of the excluded population who received relevant services (from 11.3% in 2006 to 40% in 2012); b) improved awareness and monitoring of social inclusion strategies for solving social problems in all 500 targeted gminas (which were then adopted in 492 gminas by project closure); c) high satisfaction: 87% of respondents to the 2010 beneficiary assessment felt the quality of social services had improved; 72% reported the needs of the elderly, and 73% reported the needs of single parent families, were better addressed.

One of the values of the project was the focus on a comprehensive set of services to improve the situation of specific vulnerable groups. For example, services tailored to persons with disabilities included a strong public awareness component to increase their self-esteem but also influence attitudes of the broader community toward this group. Another important outcome of the project was to improve preparedness of local policy makers to leverage funding by European Structural Funds. The project raised the capacity of participating municipalities to plan, implement, and monitor local strategies and programs, and to manage resources.

**Source:** Plonka (2013); World Bank (2013); World Bank (2010).

### III. EXPERIENCES OF EXCLUSION:

#### CASE STUDIES

##### 3. 1. Case Study: Azerbaijani Minority

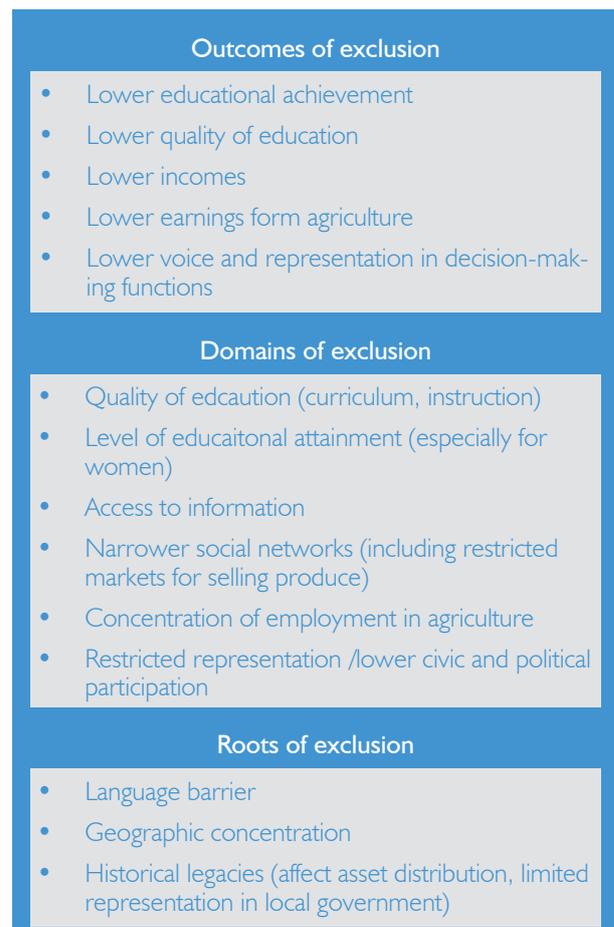
Although Azerbaijanis have been living in Georgia for hundreds of years, they have maintained their linguistic and religious distinctiveness. During the early period of post-Soviet independence, a large number migrated to Azerbaijan, Russia, and elsewhere, but as the interviews cited below suggest, many of those remaining strongly identify as Georgian citizens. Nevertheless, they are considerably poorer on average than Georgians and Armenians (Georgia's largest ethnic minority), have lower educational attainment, and cluster lower paying sectors such as agriculture. As a group, their exclusion results from a combination of factors: failure to master the state language of Georgian, which in turn excludes them from all public sector and some private sector employment, impedes their access to information and contributes to their very low representation in national and even local government bodies (see Figure 21).

Evidence presented in chapter II suggests that representatives of the Azerbaijani minority in Georgia concentrate characteristics that contribute to lower incomes; the contribution of education to this income gap is particularly strong. Data also shows that discrepancies in income between Georgians and Azerbaijanis are lower in more integrated regions, such as Kakheti, compared to the national average which may suggest that certain benefits derive from greater interaction between ethnicities.<sup>52</sup> These could include likelihood that Azerbaijanis have learned Georgian language because they need it to function in the community, and/or better quality of services because the region prepares and attracts more skilled providers. Historical legacies also play a role in explaining lower welfare outcomes over time; for example, trends that have led to Azerbaijani population having more fragmented land plots or weaker representation in local governance.

52 Oaxaca decomposition of monthly wages comparing Georgian and Azerbaijani incomes at the national level, and for Kakheti region. The 'ethnic gap' at the national level is 71.7 percent, meaning that predicted incomes of Azerbaijanis are 71.7 percent lower than those of Georgians, controlling by gender, education, experience, sector of employment and region. For Kakheti region this gap is lower, 19.6 percent. In both the national and Kakheti region data, the gap is mostly explained by education and sectors of employment.

This research suggests that the presence of persistently lower outcomes for Azerbaijani minority are largely influenced by underlying factors of social exclusion. They cannot be fully explained, for example, with universal shortcomings of the national education system, labor market, or regional development policies. Consequently, broad reforms in education, labor, or local economic development may not automatically reduce the gaps between this group and the rest of the population unless more fundamental 'roots of exclusion' are addressed. These include a large and possibly widening language barrier, geographic concentration and mostly rural residence, as well as historical legacies such as distribution of assets and participation in governance and decision-making. Cultural and religious differences are also likely to act as drivers of exclusion. The country can strive to bridge the cultural divide through improved access to information and public awareness, e.g., on the importance of girls' education, and opening space for voice and participation in local decision-making.

Figure 21. Roots, domains, and outcomes of exclusion for Azerbaijani minority in Georgia

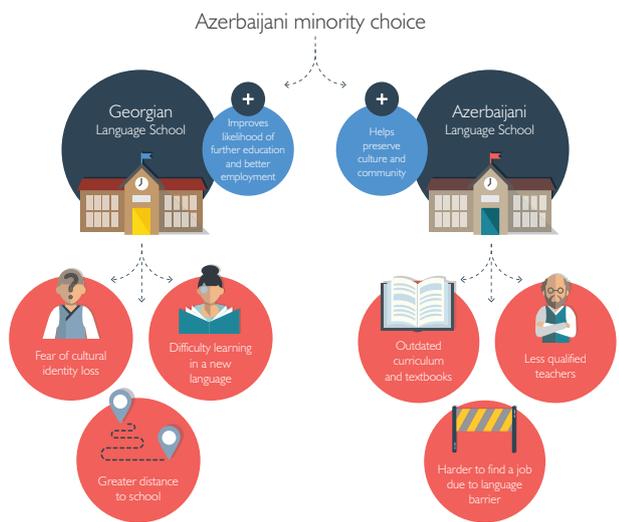


Source: Author's elaboration based on qualitative research

The qualitative data presented in this case study collects voices and perspectives from Azerbaijani residents of Kvemo Kartli on their aspirations, perceived barriers to prosper in society, and priorities for overcoming these barriers. Consistent with the findings from quantitative data analysis, language and quality of education, are amongst the most poignant topics of concern for these respondents. They recognize that the quality of basic education lags behind that of the general public school system—curriculum and textbooks are not updated at the same rate, the qualifications of teachers are outdated, and there is a low influx of new teachers.

The issue of language of instruction is particularly controversial. Opinions on this issue in the FGDs generate debate and competing concerns over quality of schooling versus preservation of culture and identity. Most respondents embrace the view that one should know the Georgian language to prosper in their country; yet, others cite losing their identity and language as one of their biggest worries (see Figure 22). Regardless of views on language, all agree that education opportunities for Azerbaijani children and youth are currently substandard and pose one of the greatest barriers to achieving their goals in life.

Figure 22. Azerbaijani communities face a difficult educational choice between the Georgian and bilingual school system



Source: Authors' elaboration based on FGDs and KIIs

The language barrier affects all aspects of life: the ability to receive information, follow media, compete for public jobs, access public services, among

others. Azerbaijanis are often detached from mainstream news and media, living in what some describe as an 'information vacuum'. The language barrier is especially high for women. UN Women (2014b) reports that 63.4 percent of women in Kvemo Kartli cannot read, write, or understand Georgian. Some of the older female respondents in this study share that they value knowledge of Georgian even more than an education degree because it allows them to navigate services, help others, and be "a respected person in the community," which is an important aspiration.

Social and cultural norms additionally contribute to isolation, and in particular perpetuate exclusion of women in Azerbaijani communities. Early marriages, early curtailment of education, lower proficiency in Georgian, and inactivity in the labor market affect Azerbaijani women more strongly.

The remainder of this section shares the voice and perspectives of Azerbaijani men and women in Kvemo Kartli. The presented views focus specifically on their sense of belonging in the country, region, and community; views on what it means to be included, to be successful; aspirations for themselves and future generations, as well as the main challenges they perceive in realizing these aspirations (focusing on education, incomes and employment, voice and participation). Gender differences are discussed within each category.

### Sense of belonging

All respondents in this study, from the Kvemo Kartli region, feel a strong sense of belonging and attachment to living in Georgia. The majority were all born in their communities and have not considered migration, nor would they like for their children to leave the country. Safety from crime and violence, a well-functioning justice system, and low levels of corruption are some of the main perceived positives of living in Georgia.

*"The place where you were born is your motherland. I was born here and grew up here. My ancestors were also born here... I want my children to live here, get good education and a good job. Georgia is a democratic country and I'm satisfied with my country."* (Woman, 61, employed, rural area)

Both rural and urban respondents are also generally satisfied with living conditions in their community.

They highlight improvements in electricity, water gas supply, reconstruction of roads, and improvements in medical services, in particular financial help from the Government with surgery costs.

*"I'm satisfied with our village. We have all conditions for living: electricity, water, and gas supply." (Woman, 30, employed, rural area)*

*"Despite all difficulties, we have normal conditions for living: water, electricity, gas. Roads are reconstructed, covered with asphalt even in villages. Government is doing a lot for us, supporting us. Medical support is good. Government covers a major part of surgery costs." (Man, 45, unemployed, urban area)*

**However, participants also acknowledge there are difficulties and the top ones for them are the quality of education in their region and employment opportunities.** Regarding education, language comes up as a controversial issue (attending school in Georgian versus Azerbaijani language), but it is related to a broader issue of gaining good quality of schooling. Lack of opportunities for youth development—libraries, clubs, and cultural centers are also seen as a potential draw for young people and families to leave the region.

*"I do not want to live in the village all my life. I want my children to get good education. We have difficulties with children's education." (Woman, 30, housewife, rural area)*

*"I'm satisfied, but our people are making a big mistake by sending their children to Georgian schools. They are facing big difficulties and cannot get good education there." (Woman, 62, employed, rural area)*

**Unemployment and financial difficulties are the other strong challenges.** This includes unavailability of jobs and also lack of access to affordable finance due to very high bank rates. It is mentioned that many people in the community have trouble with repayment of bank loans (for example, taken for agricultural supplies).

*"The main problem for us is unemployment. If this problem is resolved it would have been great for us and our children." (Male, unemployed, 39 years old, 2 children)*

*"We are always thinking, what to do to feed our families. If we would have working places here, we would be more confident." (Man, 56, business-owner, rural area)*

**Lastly, urban men note that a discrepancy in attitudes and preference for ethnic Georgians in the labor market also exists.** This is attributed to a combination of language barriers, cultural difference, and historical legacies, for example, obstacles for older Azerbaijani population who were educated in the Soviet Union to adapt their language skills. Some express regret that Azerbaijani-speaking specialists are not sufficiently used even in their region where Azerbaijani population is the majority.

*"We have a lot of professional electricians in our community. But they hire a Georgian electrician, who comes here from Tbilisi every day." (Man, 63, unemployed, urban area)*

### *Understanding prosperity and success*

**The understanding of prosperity and success for Azerbaijani men and women is summarized in two characteristics: having a good education and 'being respected' in the community.** Financial independence is seen as traditionally associated with 'being a respected man' but many male respondents contested this statement as they find that nowadays financial security is not fully in one's control and one can be a respected member of society without financial success. For women, having a 'happy family' is of great importance and is often underscored by maintaining a good relationship with her husband and relatives.

**On the part of men, there is resistance to adhere to traditional views on success being mostly measured in financial terms.** The majority of male respondents observe that the traditional norms for men, associating prosperity with being financially stable, are no longer valid (though they do not explicitly deny men's role as breadwinners in the family). Men do acknowledge that such traditional values, which equate success with money, are still popular in their communities. This is evidenced in conversations with women, who emphasize that,

*"Opinions about success vary in our community. Some people consider having money and a well-paid job. Others think that a successful man is a well-educated and established person. I think that to be successful, means to be well educated. If you have good education, you have opportunity to become a prosperous man." (Man, 20, unemployed, [rural/urban])*

*"To be a 'successful man' means to have a job. Majority of men in our community are unemployed. They spend their time sitting in teahouses. Imagine that our women have to work at the bazaar and their husbands could not find any job."* (Woman, 54, employed)

**Respondents offer various interpretations of what it means for a man to 'be respected' in the community.** Mostly, this is associated with the characteristics listed above: having a good education, being a good specialist in one's profession (regardless of one's actual job), being able to help others, having honesty and integrity in business.

*"I think, that a good specialist in his profession is a successful man. For example, a good, professional doctor. We have such people in our community."* (Man, 47, employed, urban area)

*"I think, it [a successful man] means respected person, educated person, to whom you may turn for an advice."* (Man, 63, unemployed)

**Prosperity and success for women are similarly associated with education and respect from the community, but also with the well-being of her family.** For women being a 'respected' member of society is more closely linked with having a 'happy family', having children, supporting her husband, helping others in the community. Financial well-being as an element of success is mentioned only briefly in the discussion with urban women. Moreover, some women emphasize that achieving education, having a successful career in itself depends on support by one's family which is why having a 'happy family' is paramount to other forms of success.

*"I think 'a successful woman' means a happy, educated woman and respected in the community"* (Woman, 30, employed, rural)

*"A 'successful woman' has a happy family, values her family and children, supports her spouse in all aspects – socially and also in religious aspects."* (Woman, 30, housewife, rural)

*"For me, education is not so important. You may have no education, but still be 'a successful woman'. Being a respected woman in the community is more important [than to be an educated woman]."* (Woman, 65, employed, rural)

*"If a woman wants to make a career, she needs support from her family. And this is only possible in a good, happy family."* (Woman, 44, employed, urban)

**Opinions among men on women's aspirations demonstrate an ongoing transformation in attitudes that for some leads to embracing more conservative values, whereas for others, accepting greater gender equality.** For example, some of the urban male discussants emphasize that Islamic values still have a strong hold in their society. These values determine expectations that, they believe, still hold true in their communities, for example that women are responsible for maintaining peace and good relations in the family even if it means foregoing professional opportunities. Others maintain that these norms are no longer true and that, nowadays, being 'a good professional' and striving for economic prosperity such as owning a business is equally important for women as for men.

*"It is very important for women to have happy families. They are responsible for bringing up their children and taking care of their families."* (Man, 39, unemployed, rural)

*"Some attributes of Islamic society have an influence on peoples' opinions in our society. It is accepted that a woman has to obey her husband, not to be in public places, to stay at home and raise children, to have good relations with spouse... Even if a woman has a good position, earns more, than her husband, she should not demonstrate her superiority. It could lead to the divorce."* (Man, 54, employed, urban)

*"I disagree with such attitude. A woman should go to public places, be active in social life. A successful woman means that she has a happy family, good relations with her husband, happy children."* (Man, 52, employed, urban)

*"I also disagree. A lot of young girls from our community are getting higher education now. Women have their own business nowadays. In the past it was not common, when a woman was driving a car either. Now this is normal."* (Man, 47, employed, urban)

## Education

### **Good education is at once a coveted aspiration and a source of frustration for Azerbaijani communities.**

Respondents voice their particular concerns with (a) the quality of teachers and overall schooling in Azerbaijani schools, (b) the controversial choice between Azerbaijani or Georgian schools faced by families and the implication of these choices for the future of Azerbaijani language and culture in Georgia, and (c) the cost of education that prevents families to make the most out of opportunities available.

### **Participants share that the quality of teaching and qualifications of teachers are very low and obsolete in Azerbaijani schools.**

Teachers are old, they do not know modern teaching techniques and children prefer to go to schools in the nearby villages. These perceptions are confirmed by current research that the quality of general education is a persistent challenge in minority communities in Georgia (Bobghiasvili, Kharatyan, and Srmanidze 2016). Responses are mostly positive about the opportunities provided by the higher education '4+1' program, which allows minority language students to enter university taking entrance exams in their mother tongue and spend the first year of university studying Georgian. But basic education (primary and secondary) is where most obstacles are concentrated.

*"There is one Azerbaijani school in our village. It is in a very bad condition and has not been repaired for ages. The level of education is very low, teachers are old, and cannot teach anything new to our children. They were educated during Soviet times and have not learned anything after that. Children do not want to study there and have to go to Russian or Georgian schools in the neighboring villages. (Man, 20, unemployed, rural)*

**The issue of education quality is complicated by the scarcity of educated young professionals** who either speak the Azerbaijani language or, if of Azerbaijani origin, are willing to return to their communities to teach.

**Given the state of schooling in Azerbaijani schools, respondents report a growing trend for their children to attend Georgian school; this is a difficult and controversial choice.** On the one hand, the need to learn Georgian language is recognized by all to partake

in Georgian society and economy. Another draw is better quality of textbooks, more modern curriculum, and qualified teachers.

*"We are living in Georgia and have to know Georgian language. It is not possible to get any job without knowing Georgian." (Man, 55, unemployed, rural)*

*"When we studied, it was not necessary to know the [Georgian] language. And for us it is difficult to start learning now. But our children learn the language easily." (Man, 39, unemployed, rural).*

*"Nowadays 70 percent of families send their children to Georgian schools. These children cannot understand anything and have difficulties studying in Georgian. This discourages the children from continuing their education." (Man, 56, business-owner, rural).*

### **On the other hand, children have difficulties adapting to a Georgian language environment.**

As many of their parents do not speak Georgian they need additional help. Families, who can afford it, opt to supplement this education with private tutors. Some worry about bad attitude of teachers in Georgian schools. In addition, Georgian schools are not always available in the proximity of rural Azerbaijani-populated areas. Some families share that they would rather opt for a private Turkish school available in the area; however it is unaffordable for the majority.

*"I'm against Azerbaijani parents sending their children to Georgian schools. Children become half educated, face big difficulties while learning. If no one in the family speaks Georgian, it is not good for children to go to a Georgian school." (Woman, 62, employed, rural)*

*"Children become half educated, face big difficulties. Some textbooks are in Azerbaijani, some in Georgian. Children cannot learn history, physics, chemistry, biology and other science. I think teachers in Georgian schools in Azerbaijani community should speak Azerbaijani as well." (Woman, 61, employed, rural)*

**The preservation of the Azerbaijani language and culture is a preoccupation for many; about half of the respondents mention it as one of the issues they**

**worry most about.** In particular, they are concerned that if the number of children in Azerbaijani schools declines quickly, Azerbaijani schools may close, Azerbaijani language would be even more unpopular ('oppressed') in Georgia, and it would be even harder for Azerbaijani speakers to compete for jobs. Instead of opting for Georgian schools some suggest that maintenance and quality of teaching in Azerbaijani schools should be improved along with teaching of the Georgian language from early childhood (kindergarten) and making space for greater interaction between ethnic Georgian and Azerbaijani children and youth.

*"Azerbaijani language is oppressed in Georgia. This is something to worry about. Our young generation does not know history of Azerbaijan, does not know our literature and culture. They do not know any Azerbaijan well-known writers, musicians. Yes, we are living in Georgia, but should keep our mentality. I see the problem in our people. They prefer to send children to Georgian schools. Parents should understand the importance of learning in Azerbaijani schools. They have all opportunities to learn Georgian language there."* (Woman, 54, employed, urban area)

*"Azerbaijani schools need more care and support. It is very important for Azerbaijani people to have the opportunity to study in our language."* (Man, 20, unemployed, rural)

*"In Georgian schools, teachers do not pay special attention to Azerbaijani children. It is good if the teacher of Georgian language is Azerbaijani. It is good to start learning Georgian from kindergarten, go to summer camps with Georgian children, have more communication, have competitions between schools, etc."* (Woman, 61, employed, rural)

**Some respondents emphasize that there should be more interaction across communities beyond the school system.** This is particularly a challenge for children and adults in rural areas where the population is predominantly Azerbaijani. Overall, respondents agree that it is important to give Azerbaijani children a real chance to learn both languages, as well as Russian and English.

*"Our children should know both - Azerbaijani and Georgian. To give equal opportunity to both languages."* (Woman, 54, employed, urban)

*"It is very important to know other languages: English and Russian. Even when you go to the doctor, the second language of the prescription is English."* (Woman, 30, employed, rural)

**Another set of challenges relates to motivation and incentives to continue one's education.** Younger people in the community are mostly worried about getting a job after finishing secondary school, rather than going to universities. The current high rates of unemployment and inactivity across the region and the difficulties and cost associated with getting a good education are seen as a big demotivating factor. Also, some participants doubt that investing effort in 'better general education' by going to a Georgian school necessarily brings better returns.

*"It is not common to continue the education in our community. 10 out of 100 children continue their education. Half of them are girls."* (Man, 56, business-owner, rural)

*"Young people do not want to continue education after finishing school. They have no motivation to study, as it is very difficult to find a job later. There are no industries, factories, plantations, where they could find a job."* (Woman, 32, unemployed, urban)

*"We usually talk about the language barrier. But finishing Georgian schools does not mean that children continue their education. Sometimes they finish Georgian schools only for learning the language and then work at the market. And you know, usually children who continue their studies and go to universities are Azerbaijani school graduates. There are some Azerbaijani young men, who finished Azerbaijani schools and now are working in banks."* (Woman, 44, employed, urban)

**NGO experts voice a concern that in the absence of viable education options for Azerbaijani communities, more young people turn to religious education alternatives.** One expert notes that religious Muslim organizations are quite active in Kvemo Kartli. They facilitate education abroad for young men, who later return to teach in Islamic madrasah schools in Georgia. Such organizations are also proactively opposing girls' education and training programs that seek to end early marriage and advocate for women's rights. ECMI (2012) reports that religious organizations in Kvemo

Kartli, run by local ethnic Azerbaijanis with foreign sponsors have begun founding mosques and madrasah schools since the 1990s. A small number of young men from Kvemo Kartli travel for their education, mostly to Iran, and the majority of them return to their region. The same report notes the small but growing appearance of Salafism (radical Islamic movement) in Georgian Muslim communities including Kvemo Kartli.

## Language and Access to Services

**The problems of language, education, and the scarcity of bilingual professionals in Azerbaijani communities (teachers, doctors, and so on) affects all areas of life beyond the school system.** Even though Azerbaijanis may be the prevalent population in urban and rural areas in Kvemo Kartli, their interaction with the local government, key state services, even health care in some cases often depends on speaking and understanding Georgian. In fact, among middle-aged or elderly female participants in this study, speaking the Georgian language is of higher importance than having achieved a secondary school diploma or university degree education degree. It allows them to access necessary services as well as help others.

*"I do not see any difference in getting higher or secondary education. Being useful for people around is more important. I do not have higher education, but I know Georgian language and I'm helping everyone in our village." (Woman, 62, employed, rural)*

*"I told that education is not so important, but knowing the [Georgian] language is very important. I know Georgian and people in our community ask me to accompany them, when going to the doctor, I also help them to write official letters, read documents and give them legal advice..." (Woman, 65, employed, rural)*

**Health services are another example where the language gap and training of bilingual service providers causes discrepancies.** Prior to the adoption of the adoption of the State Universal Healthcare Program, practicing physicians in Azerbaijani communities were able to produce any documentation in Azerbaijani or Russian. Currently doctors need to use a Georgian-language system; moreover, license to practice as a physician is contingent on speaking Georgian. This may cause daily inconvenience to the users of these

services and provide substandard services. For example, an NGO respondent notes cases of young Azerbaijani women having to be accompanied to the gynecologist by their fathers-in-law because they cannot understand Georgian and are not allowed to leave the house on their own.

*"Can you imagine a woman going to the gynecologist in the company of her father-in-law? How can she talk to the doctor in his presence?" (KII, NGO representative)*

## Gender norms

**Traditional gender norms, leading to practices of early marriage and discontinuing secondary education have been highlighted by various studies on Azerbaijani minority.** The problem of girls below the legal age of marriage, some as young as 11, living in unregistered marriages is reportedly widespread among Azerbaijani minority communities and in Adjara among Georgian Muslim communities. In such situations girls lose the opportunity to complete their education are also vulnerable to domestic violence (Dudwick 2015).

**Most participants in this case study emphasize that gender norms are changing and more girls and women are pursuing education and jobs outside the home.** According to respondents, the incidence of early marriage is lower now, a trend that was especially promoted by a legislative amendment of November 2015, that specifically bans marriage under 16 and allows it only with court decision (as opposed to parental consent as was previously the case) between the ages of 16 and 18. Legislative changes that curb early marriage are also expected to have an effect on the rate of school completion.

*"The number of girls who get higher education has increased in our community." (Man, 43, employed)*

*"In the past we had the situation that girls from some families in the villages did not finish secondary education and got married very early, before they turned 18 years old. But now this does not happen often anymore. I think that education for girls is important in order to be secure in the future." (Woman, 61, teacher, rural area)*

**Despite this positive trend, changes in culture and mentality are likely to take effect only in the long term.** An effort must be made to sustain the focus on increasing school completion for Azerbaijani girls, encouraging their participation in public and social spaces and in the labor market. NGO representatives with experience in implementing programs for women in Azerbaijani communities recount that they still face difficulty mobilizing the participation of women. Experts also warn that the practice of early marriages may continue informally with marriages being conducted by religious institutions.<sup>53</sup> A UN Women survey (2016) reports that 51 percent of married women in Kvemo Kartli were married before the age of 19, and 42 percent had their first child by the same age. The same survey reveals that illiteracy rates among minority women in Kvemo Kartli (7 percent) are 23 times higher than the average illiteracy rate for women in Georgia.

#### *Employment and income-generating opportunities*

**Employment and low incomes are among the most frequently mentioned concern among Azerbaijani respondents, along with fears of losing the Azerbaijani language.** Lack of job spaces and language barriers are again highlighted as the main problems with unemployment or underemployment. Middle-aged and elderly respondents note that skills acquired during their youth may be irrelevant and their chances of finding a job are slim without mastering Georgian language, which is difficult at their age.

*“...I’ve finished medical college and am a nurse. But could not find a job here.” (Woman, 24, unemployed, urban)*

*“Without knowing the Georgian language, you will not be able to find a job now. My husband graduated from the Law School in Russia and was working for many years. Now he cannot find any job, because of not knowing Georgian language. I’m a teacher and received education in Russian language. I cannot work at a school now, because I could not pass the language exam. It is very difficult for me to start learning Georgian language now.” (Woman, 54, employed, urban)*

53 <https://iwpr.net/global-voices/georgia-tightens-early-marriage>.

*“I’ve got good education and worked at school for over 27 years. Now we have to pass an exam to continue working, we need training to pass these exams.” (Woman, 61, employed, rural area)*

**The most desirable professions are economic and finance professions and accounting for men, and teachers and doctors for women.** Respondents mention that there are a lot of banks in the region and graduates may have more chances to find a job in finance. Another profession mentioned as a potential aspiration for young people is lawyer; in particular, rural women note there is need for more female lawyers in their communities. Some lament that young people have to look at going abroad to get a job.

**In addition to lack of jobs and language barriers, affordable access to finance owing to high bank interest rates are mentioned as a big problem.** Many Azerbaijanis work in agriculture, which comes with a lot of uncertainties (demand and price for produce, climate, and so on); in addition, as shown earlier in this report, land ownership—an important asset in agriculture—tends to be more fragmented than for other population groups. Due to this, a number of Azerbaijani farmers may find themselves in debt to financial institutions.

*“First priority should be creating jobs in the region. Second, controlling loan rates. People here are in a big trouble with covering bank rates. And third, one of the most important is to improve the level of education in secondary schools.” (Man, 20, unemployed, rural area)*

*“My parents are engaged in agriculture. They took a loan from the bank to buy some supplies. Now they cannot earn enough to cover bank commissions.” (Woman, 32, unemployed, urban area)*

*“We have a farm and we are selling the milk, prices are very low in our region. It would have been great if dairy plants are opened in the region. People could work there and we could deliver milk from our farms by fixed price.” (Man, 41, unemployed, rural area)*

**Increasing pensions is also mentioned as a high priority.** It is notable that increasing pensions is mentioned by younger and middle-aged participants. This

could reflect overall dependence of the household on incomes of the elderly as a secure source of income, feeling financial uncertainty for the future, or observations on vulnerability of elderly in their families and communities as being financially dependent on younger generations.

### *Voice and participation*

**The ability to participate in local decision-making is perceived very differently by urban and rural respondents in Kvemo Kartli.** In rural areas, both men and women are overwhelmingly positive about the opportunity to raise issues and concerns to the attention of local authorities. They are aware of channels to use within the community to bring forward problems and believe that authorities generally listen and take action to address problems. Overall rural residents feel more connected to their local decision-making authorities than urban ones.

*“We have the village council, elected from our villagers. They discuss the village problems and make decisions. Ordinary people, including young people of the village, are participating in discussions. The council always listen to our opinions. For example, young people from our village proposed to the council to renovate the village stadium. Elder people had other priorities. The council took our proposal into consideration and repaired the stadium.”* (Man, 20, unemployed, rural area)

**Rural women, especially older women, feel that they are involved in making important decisions in their village either directly or through their families.** Some state that they have the opportunities to influence decisions by writing letters to authorities or meeting with officials. However, others prefer to be active in their families and communicate through other members of the family. Being active in the community is a matter of pride.

*“I myself could not participate, but we make decisions in our family and my husband’s parents then could communicate our family’s suggestions.”* (Woman, 30, employed, rural area)

*“My neighbors had no plumbing in their house. I wrote an official complaint in Georgian and sent it. We got an answer soon and now they have*

*water. Another time, we managed to repair the road”.* (Woman, 63, employed, rural)

*“I’m very active, especially during elections. Yesterday people from our community asked me to help them to write an official letter regarding pasture. And I helped.”* (Woman, 65, employed, rural)

*“We usually have community meetings, where we discuss our problems. Both women and men participate and express their thoughts. We are very active in our community’s everyday life.”* (Woman, 62, employed, rural)

**Urban residents mention that ordinary people are not involved in the decision-making process.** Some say that the reason is that decisions are implemented in a top-down manner and there are few consultations with residents. Others add an element of fear and reluctance to argue with authorities. Urban men also emphasize weak access to information and media that would allow them to be better informed about on national reforms and policies, and better seek their rights. Some express frustration that even for locally implemented programs, information is not distributed in Azerbaijani or Russian language which prevents the local population from engaging and benefitting.

*“Decisions are not discussed, but implemented directly. Officials do not ask peoples’ opinion. Ordinary people cannot influence any decisions. No one wants to argue with the officials or the authorities. They are afraid. People still have a syndrome of fear here in the community. People do not want to interfere in others’ work. Perhaps they will get rid of that fear, when they will have more confidence in their rights.”* (Man, 54, employed, urban)

*“Government is doing reforms, but they do not reach us. People have no information on these reforms. There is a center here, which gives loans for agricultural activities in the region. This process lasts during two years, but people are not aware of it. If people knew, they would apply. Staff in that center do not speak Azerbaijani or Russian. But they could release bulletins in Azerbaijani and distribute among the villagers. People would be more informed in that case...”* (Man, 54, employed, urban)

“We are not aware of 80 percent of what is happening in the parliament, because of the language. It will be good to give people the opportunity to receive information in their language.” (Man, 47, employed, urban area)

**Various factors could explain the difference in opinions across urban and rural respondents.** This discrepancy could partially reflect the importance and strength of local and informal networks in rural communities that are not available in urban areas. It could also reflect lower expectations on the part of rural residents, and rural women in particular, toward opportunities to participate in decision-making. It could also speak of reluctance on the parts of participants, especially in a small community, to share views that may be perceived as politically sensitive.

### Pathways to inclusion

**This case study reveals that inclusive policy interventions can make a difference to reduce disparities for the Azerbaijani population.** There is a strong sense of belonging and mostly positive outlook of Azerbaijani minority regarding their future in Georgia. However, building a strong and inclusive civic identity would require an effort to ensure that policies work equitably to their benefit. Priorities, as voiced by participants in this case study are summarized in Table 10. They include job creation, improving quality of education, support for farmers (in land, access to finance, improving demand for agricultural produce) as well as a call for better to access to information and opportunities for young people to develop their skills beyond formal education.

**What would an inclusive policy lens look like?** It is notable that many of the concerns of the Azerbaijani population in Kvemo Kartli are also applicable to other parts of the population in Georgia—job creation, quality and cost of education, better finance and market opportunities for farmers. Still, the narratives of respondents suggest that the accumulation of language barriers, limited access to information and representation in local government may pose structural barriers that could prevent the Azerbaijani population from benefitting from future reforms without a deliberate policy effort.

**Table 10. Priorities for inclusion of Azerbaijani minority according to focus group participants in Kvemo Kartli**

Rural Men		Rural Women	
1.	Create jobs.	1.	Create jobs.
2.	Improve the level of education in secondary schools.	2.	Improve education system in Azerbaijani communities.
3.	Decrease the cost of education in universities.	3.	Teach Georgian language in Azerbaijani schools.
4.	Control and reduce high bank rates.	4.	Train Azerbaijani teachers in Georgian language and support Azerbaijani schools.
5.	Support farmers (for example, open dairy plants with the fixed price on milk).	5.	Increase pensions.
6.	Reduce taxes.		
Urban Men		Urban Women	
1.	Increase pensions.	1.	Create jobs.
2.	Create jobs.	2.	Improve people's housing conditions.
3.	Distribute land to peasants fairly.	3.	Support Azerbaijani schools.
4.	Provide people with information on reforms.	4.	Open colleges, youth centers, and libraries in the region.

**Reducing disparities in education and language are paramount to the integration of Azerbaijani minority.** With regard to language, efforts should be directed both toward enhancing proficiency in Georgian for the local population, as well as toward making essential information and services available in Azerbaijani language. One priority is diminishing the ‘information vacuum’ for Azerbaijani minority through language training but also making the information available in the local language. Efforts toward building of a stronger civic identity and enforcing equal opportunity should also be directed at the ethnic majority to minimize negative attitudes. In addition, proficiency and literacy in Azerbaijani language can be an asset for trade relations with Turkey and Azerbaijan.

**When it comes to creating skills and jobs, an inclusive policy would imply effort interventions in multiple sectors.** Efforts to diversify income opportunities away from agriculture, as well as to enable better returns from agriculture, would require raising results

in education for this group but also reducing barriers to assets such as land and finance, reducing barriers to information and communications, building a better cohort of local professionals to improve basic services and consequently human capital, with a goal to facilitate access of this population's entry in the national rather than restricted local markets.

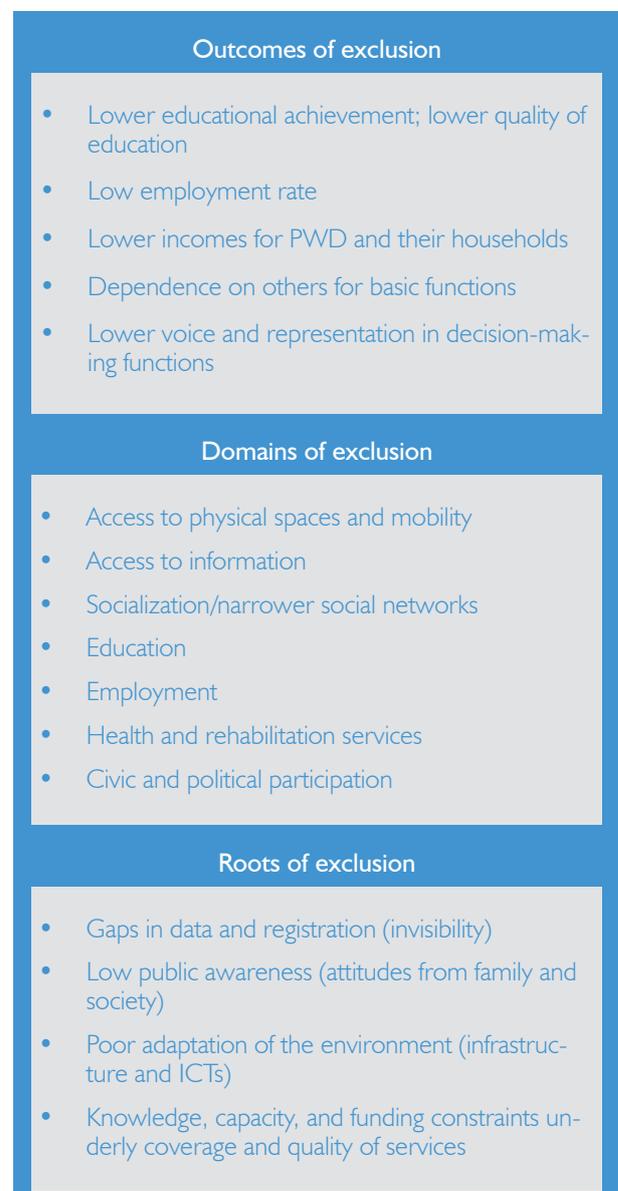
**Lastly, better outcomes for Azerbaijani minority are also likely to depend on evolving cultural norms, such as stronger integration of girls and women in education and labor markets.** This is a long-term process, toward which state policies can build the right incentives. Explicit awareness efforts at gender inclusion and enforcing completion of basic education can help alleviate the double burden of Azerbaijani women and girls. As most respondents in this case study have noted, some progress and positive trends can be observed such as reducing incidence of early marriage and families promoting girls' education. However, key informants also warn of possible countertrend, where lagging policy attention to inclusion of minorities in the areas listed above—viable education, employment, economic opportunity, reducing information gaps—can also produce a shift toward greater cultural isolation, seeking alternative services away from state institutions and even create a risk of enabling radicalization.

### III.2. Case Study: Persons with Disabilities

**PWDs are a diverse and heterogeneous group.** Respondents in this case study included people (or their caregivers) with various degrees of mobility impairments, impairments of sight and hearing, and caregivers of children and young people with intellectual disabilities. The sample was too small to allow comparison or contrast across groups or to explore in detail the kinds and degrees of support needed. However, the very challenge, experienced by the research team in organizing discussions and interviews among PWDs and their caretakers, attests to the significant barriers PWDs face in Georgia, and to their relative invisibility in Georgian society. In many cases, the invisibility is more a barrier to inclusion than the actual physical or mental disability, which in other environments might have been only a minor impediment to full integration in society. It should also be noted that due to this challenge, the PWDs that participated themselves in this research represent a relatively better-integrated sample than the average.

**PWDs face multiple barriers that reinforce each other as individuals move through their life cycles.** These range from physical barriers to negative attitudes from family and society that can also be internalized resulting in self-exclusion. For persons, who are born with a disability, disadvantages begin to accumulate early in life and are incremental. Lack of socialization as a child impedes performance in school and work later in life; exclusion from mainstream education prevents development of skills to realize one's full potential; lower educational achievement, consequently, creates obstacles to optimal employment and earnings.

**Figure 23. Roots, domains, and outcomes of exclusion for PWDs in Georgia**



**Source:** Author's elaboration based on qualitative research

PWDs, caregivers (most often mothers or grandmothers), and key informants identify a similar set of constraints, summarized in Figure 23. Factors listed as *root causes* are ones that were identified by all respondents to be at the core of exclusion, creating or perpetuating barriers for PWDs. Policy efforts, focused on these issues, can have a transformational impact on opportunities for this group. *Domains of exclusion* illustrate key spaces and services, where exclusion takes place, and affects opportunities for PWDs in a tangible way. The *Outcomes* category reveals the most visible expressions of exclusion.

**Root causes, outcomes, and domains of exclusion are interrelated and mutually reinforcing.** Because *exclusion* and *inclusion* are both processes and outcomes, they cannot be confined to a simple line of cause and effect or clearly distinguished causes and results. Nevertheless, a social exclusion lens of analysis, as summarized in the figure above, demonstrates that merely concentrating on discrepancies in socio-economic indicators (summarized as ‘outcomes’ above) solutions risks to overlook essential underlying barriers (summarized as ‘root causes’ above), without attention to which policy solutions for these groups would not be effective. This case study analyzes some of the key roots to exclusion as identified by respondents.

**PWDs—in contrast to service providers and caregivers—highlight the ability to be independent, and to be seen by others as independent individuals, as a highest priority.** This perception is aligned with the definition of *inclusion* used in this study (“improving the ability, opportunity, and *dignity* of individuals to take part in society”). It is from this perspective, that the discussion of pathways of inclusion and policy recommendations should be understood and advanced.

### *Gaps in Data and Registration (Invisibility)*

As discussed in Chapter II, evidence suggests that the share of Georgia’s population affected by any type of disability is likely to be underestimated. This fact is important, on the one hand, because it affects the ability of the state to allocate resources, provide sufficient services, and monitor outcomes for PWDs. It is also significant because this *invisibility* indicates there may be broader causes of exclusion, affecting this group.<sup>54</sup>

54 The definition of disability in Georgia is more limited and confined to medical diagnosis whereas a better accepted

Most respondents in this study share the perception that there is under-registration of PWDs in Georgia. One of the most commonly mentioned reasons is the choice of the family not to openly acknowledge a child’s special needs due to shame, social stigma, or being overly protective from the attitudes of others.

*“I have heard many cases that some families have PWDs closed in rooms and do not show them to anyone. I have heard a story of one young woman, who was tied to the bed and even did not have an ID. Now this woman is in Zestaponi (city) in a special center and is feeling better.”* (IDI, man, 57, [Tbilisi])

**Some adults with disability themselves make a choice not to register due to a fear that a formal ‘disability’ status may hurt their chances for integration.** These respondents avoid speaking directly about this issue but their responses suggest that they do not wish having a disability to be part of their identity.

*“I am a person with special needs, but I have never been registered and I do not want to. So, I agree that there are more disabled people in Georgia than officially registered.”* (Female, 27, employed)

**Another reason for not registering disabled children is lack of incentives for families, or lack of information.** Many are not aware of benefits or services that the state or NGOs can offer. Some do not trust that anything will change by proactively seeking support, or in fact believe that being proactive may contribute to psychological trauma if the support is temporary or inconsistent. In remote and rural areas many households simply lack the knowledge that there are available services, especially if there are no active NGOs/service providers in the area.

*“...there is no support, you have to go through difficulties, there is no support from the government.”* (Middle-aged woman, caregiver, small town)

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international definition includes the 2006 UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Art. 1), which states that “Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.”

*“The advantage [of registering] is that if you need a wheelchair, they may give you one. Most probably but not for sure.”* (Young woman with disability, small town)

*“One day they are on TV helping them [PWDs] and on the other day they forget about them. This of course has negative impact on people’s psychology.”* (Young man with disability, rural area)

**It is also recognized that the trend of under-registration is slowly changing especially in bigger cities.** In those locations there is more visibility of other PWDs, and better information on services, so that families can see the immediate advantages of seeking support. Caregivers in Tbilisi share that nowadays most families would register so that they can at least receive the minimum cash allowance (disability pension) from the state.

**Additionally, respondents share that the practice for identifying and extending support to PWDs is overly reliant on the families being proactive and PWDs themselves.** Hence, those who are more proactive reap the benefits of formal support services. They believe that outreach should be strengthened on the part of NGOs and service providers.

*“I know that there are 3,000 PWDs in [my town] and I’m sure they won’t register all of them. I don’t know the reason... They [NGOs] don’t search for them, are not interested in finding them. You have to go and integrate yourself.”* (Young woman with disability, small town)

**Registering for services is implicitly associated with being more active and visible in the public space.** Younger participants note that one of the greatest advantages of higher registration rates is not as much receiving support, but rather improving awareness and visibility that can in turn contribute to changing attitudes.

*“People will know that we exist, and there is no difference between us except of physical limitations.”* (Young man with disability, rural area)

#### *Public awareness (attitudes of family and society)*

*“I know one thing: if people with special needs won’t be your classmates, your colleagues, your*

*business partners and you won’t meet them every day in the streets, not much will be changed in this regard.”* (Male, 44, employed, social entrepreneur, married, one child)

**Attitudes from the broader public are seen as one of the main causes for isolation and exclusion from services and spaces.** These attitudes are internalized by PWDs, and make them more prone to self-exclusion. Young respondents in particular emphasize that the main obstacle for them is feeling pitied by their peers or not considered as an equal.

*“It is irritating for us when they look at us like this. They feel sorry for us and it shouldn’t be like this.”* (IDI, young woman with disability, small town)

*“The worst thing is when you see that other people pity you. But on the other hand if you, for example, have an argument with the same person they look at you like: who are you to argue with me?”* (IDI, young man with disability, rural area)

*“Some of them need psychological help to come out and even psychologist cannot help them to deal with this.”* (FGD, caregivers, Tbilisi)

**Public awareness efforts are considered essential to reduce stigma, and even to eliminate some myths and stereotypes, for example that certain forms of disability are contagious.** Expectations to champion public outreach are primarily directed at NGOs and media. Awareness campaigns and inclusion in schools at an early age are considered especially important.

*“Children will not stare in the street at the disabled people, because they will know, they will have met them, they will be friends with CWD and it won’t be new for them.”* (Young woman, small town)

*“They should understand that this is not tuberculosis or HIV/AIDS or any other communicable disease, these are normal people. Even our children who have severe [mental] disability feel whether people’s attitudes towards them are positive or negative. They are very loving persons. Nobody can love like them”* (FGD, caregivers, Tbilisi)

**Attitudes of family members and relatives play a big role.** Some participants even state that parents of CWD are primarily responsible for the fact that their children are not better integrated. This may be due to lack of information or protective instincts, but can be especially harmful for CWD causing them to miss opportunities (gaining education, professional skills, having a social network) with lifelong consequences.

*“Parents lock up their children, because they have no support and no information.”* (Female, 38, housewife, partially employed, married, 4 children)

*“If a person has an accident when he over 30 and cannot walk he already has an education and opportunity to have a job. But when a person is born with a disability family treats them differently.”* (IDI, young man with disability, rural area)

**While public awareness is important, it is insufficient to provide inclusion into markets and services that are essential for improving welfare, such as schools and jobs.** Caregivers of children and young PWDs note that there are often double standards in society. People express empathy in general, but in practice would not like to be associated with this group.

*“If you ask them, they all will say that it is necessary to include disabled people into the society, but for example, if my grandchild has to go to the kindergarten, there might be a problem that the parents of other children are aggressive if their child is in the same group...”* (FGD, middle-aged woman, caregiver, small town)

*“Separately everyone is kind but as soon as it comes to concrete things, for example, employment, everyone stands aside.”* (FGD, middle-aged woman, caregiver, Tbilisi)

### *Adaptation of the environment*

**Accessible buildings, transportation, and public spaces are key to all aspects of inclusion and participation.** Many respondents note that there are improvements in this regard in urban areas, such as the addition of ramps, and that, as a result, one can now see more people in wheelchairs in public spaces than in the past. Still, adaptation is rather an exception than

the rule, and is far from comprehensive. An inaccessible environment impedes the completion of most basic functions, such as going to the bank, the grocery store, a school or university, places of employment, cultural buildings, and so on. There is also a feeling that adaptation is sometimes conditional on acceptance of others. For example, a caregiver noted that her neighbor protested the installation of a ramp at the entrance of her disabled grandchild's building.

*“For me the infrastructure is the biggest problem. The public transport is not adapted and you cannot do anything with it. I need to pay more and use cabs. ....I am used to the attitude of society towards me and I have learned how to overcome it. But I cannot do anything with the infrastructure and the environment around.”* (IDI, young woman, blind, Tbilisi)

*“We have the same needs as any other people - food, shops, supermarkets - and it would great if we could actually go there.”* (IDI, young woman with mobility impairment, small town)

*“[My priority is] an adapted city. I cannot go to the store. When I'm with my mother she goes inside and I stay outside. It is not pleasant for me. Maybe I also want to go inside and pick things by myself. I cannot go shopping. Nobody cares and nobody thinks about it. Also I have to receive my pension in [...] Bank. There is a ramp but it is so bad I cannot use it.”* (IDI, young woman with cerebral palsy, small town)

### **Accessibility of public transport is still incipient.**

Transport is an important constraint, on the one hand, because it imposes an extra cost, having to rely on taxis, and on the other hand, because of uncertainty and attitudes of drivers. The majority of caregivers interviewed in Tbilisi invoke examples of taxi drivers refusing to serve them. Considering that taxis are the only transport they can use this is a serious problem for them. Some believe that this attitude stems from an unexplained fear or protection instinct of not harming a disabled child.

*“One driver told me: even if you pay me 800 lari<sup>55</sup> I won't take this kid with my car” [normal fare in the city is about 5 lari]* (FGD, caregivers, Tbilisi)

55 Georgian Lari (national currency, 1 GEL = 0.43 USD)

*"In most cases, there are no ramps at the bus stops and if you call a cab, you can't get on that cab either..." (Male, 35, unemployed, married, 3 children)*

**Younger respondents with disabilities stress the importance of adapted environment for autonomy and independence.** They emphasize that the state should have mandatory regulations for spaces to be accessible, and provide them with an opportunity to perform essential tasks without needing additional help.

*"They [in the bank] told to one person once: be at home and we will bring it [pension] to you. Maybe I don't want to stay home, maybe I want to go to the bank as the other people do."*

*"It would be better if the city was better adapted and we didn't need other people help." (IDI, young woman with cerebral palsy, small town)*

*"Also, laws are not designed for people like us. When I go to the bank and need to sign a contract I need to have a person with me who will sign it on my behalf. This is very inconvenient." (IDI, young woman, blind, Tbilisi)*

The **quality** of adaptation is also raised as an issue:

*"[In our town] there is no infrastructure for disabled children. For example, if a building has a ramp, there is no way to use it independently, they are in disastrous conditions." (FGD, middle-aged women, caregiver, small town)*

*"There are no ramps. And if there are any, they and not built properly and in horrible conditions" (FGD, middle-aged women, caregiver)*

**Impacts from lack of accessibility include not only barriers to basic services, but also to socialization and opportunities to build or maintain social networks.** This issue is prominent in discussions with adults who have become disabled due to illness or accidents later in their life. And as noted earlier in this study, informal networks and social capital are seen as a top prerequisite for being integrated and prosperous in Georgian society.

*"My brother, who died several months ago, was living in the same village but a bit far from my house, about 500-600 meters. I went to him*

*only once or twice, because it very difficult for me to cover long distances... I know a lot of people in Kutaisi and I'd love to meet with them again, but it is so hard for me to leave the house to get there. I have not seen them for ages. I cannot even go to visit my daughters in Tbilisi." (IDI, elderly man, rural area)*

*"I have friends and acquaintances who desire to go out, go to a concert but cannot go. When my friend who is in the wheelchair wants to go to Meskhishvili theatre she cannot go there. Because she cannot go inside." (Young woman, small town)*

Additionally, participants believe that an adapted environment will help improve visibility and reduce stigma, as well provide incentives for families to encourage CWD to be more active.

### *Coverage and quality of programs and services*

**Another set of factors underlying exclusion is the coverage and quality of available support services.** Most respondents in urban areas, and ones with CWD, were aware of disability pensions and day centers for children with special needs. However, rural respondents and ones who have encountered a disability condition later in life are often not aware even of these services.

*"I haven't thought about this. I don't use any service and cannot imagine what service I could use." (Young man rural area, spinal cord disease)*

*"We [my family] don't use any service. I only have a pension." (Young woman, Kutaisi, cerebral palsy)*

**The first issue regarding services and programs is that there is no guarantee of access.** Receiving a wheelchair, white stick, or other aids, or attending a day center usually requires a waiting list. For children, this might mean missing months or years of attending special education. Depending on one's location, the cost of transportation to a service center can be prohibitive.

**The low availability of specialized services is perceived to be due to scarcity of qualified specialists, knowledge and capacity constraints to plan**

**programs for PWDs, as well as restricted funding.** Young respondents think that the country can adapt experiences from European countries:

*“Georgian government should learn from them, adjust it to the country and make it work. ... [in Europe] there are special groups for that. If a person is in a wheelchair they visit and help them go out, even on holidays. In our country talking about it is ridiculous.”* (Young man, rural area, spinal cord disease)

**Where specialized day center services for children are available most parents recognize their value.**

Day centers are seen not only as building the skills and confidence of children, but also as an important space for information, support, and socialization of caregivers. However, these centers are not widely available across the country and even in places where they are, they usually operate with long waiting lists.

*“My child was three, when I found out about this organization and brought him/her here... And I am very happy with the result... Me personally, I get psychological support for my child and assistance from a speech therapist, I am very happy with the psychologist...my child was crazy about him...My child had moved forward, I am very, very content.”* (Female 55, employed, takes care of her grandchildren).

**A challenge for children and young adults is the fact that day center services are only available up to age of 18.** There is no opportunity to continue building skills, socialize, or get specialized rehabilitation services in a similar environment for young adults. This gap is potentially detrimental in the transition to adulthood because the needs of the beneficiary are growing. Moreover, this age comes with an expectation for greater independence for those who are able to pursue education and employment.

*“I never agree with the state when they have programs for people up to 18 years. What should that person after 18 years do? When he has no education or job? And his needs are growing?”* (Young woman, urban area)

**Some caregivers also share some mistrust toward NGO service providers.** The fact that one has to register in various NGOs, and subsequently wait a long time, makes some caregivers doubt the motivations of

NGOs. These caregivers suspect that some NGOs are only interested in collecting registrations to raise funds from the state and donors rather than actually providing services (*“they are making business out of these children”*). A young woman with disability shares that inclusion programs, run by NGOs, sometimes sound like self-promotion campaigns but do not put enough attention on reaching out to beneficiaries. Outreach, as well as the provision transportation, is seen as essential for NGOs to really cater to the needs of PWDs.

*“You have to remind them [institutions] of yourself. Fill the forms and be active. But the result won't be necessarily positive. Negative results are more frequent than positive.”* (IDI, young woman with disability, small town)

**Respondents wish for greater flexibility of available services to better address their needs.** For example, the possibility of vouchers for rehabilitation camps toward other services, or of using funding allocated for a wheelchair or a white stick to purchase a better quality one if the beneficiary wants to contribute to the cost.

*“The government buys these sticks every year, but most of them are useless. What are they doing with these sticks nobody knows?”* (Female, 27, employed, married, 1 child)

**All of the factors, described above, congregate to create barriers to the inclusion and prosperity for PWDs.** These barriers are revealed in various domains: education, health, employment and income-generating activities, civic and political participation, access to information, strength of social networks (the ability to build or maintain social networks), and so on. These are elaborated in more detail below.

### Education

**Respondents share that educational institutions are generally not ready to accept CWD.** Even if they are required to by law (except in cases of severe disability) rejection of students with special needs may occur due to inaccessible infrastructure of the school, lack of qualified teachers, or general attitude of teachers or parents. Adaptation of one educational institution can be a determining choice for the professional orientation of students with special needs.

*“It is rather frustrating that when you are sending a child with special needs to the school and*

they cannot admit him/her, because they are not ready to have a student with special needs.” (FGD, caregivers, small town)

“My child used to go to the kindergarten, but he/she sometimes screams unexpectedly, and they made us leave the kindergarten...they said that it is disturbing them and that they don’t want such child in the group and that we should take care of him/her somewhere else.” (FGD, caregivers)

“I’m very thankful that they started adapting trade school. It is a good opportunity of disabled people to have a profession.” (IDI, young woman, small town)

**While experts recommend that children attend regular school and go to a day center after school hours, in practice many parents prefer to send their children only to a day center or keep them at home.** This is linked to fear of negative attitudes, but also to convenience and cost. Getting basic education requires a higher investment with need of additional transportation, materials, or specialized services. In addition, most special education professionals are available in cities; hence some families choose to move to a nearest town or the capital to secure proper education for a special needs child. Having school personnel be sensitized to the needs of students with special needs can also make the difference in their education.

“Often parents do not do anything to take their children to schools. Day centers are more convenient for them, because they are here from 9 am to 4 pm and have breakfast and dinner.” (KII, NGO representative)

“I remember when I moved to Kutaisi from the village, in 1<sup>st</sup> grade, I was afraid how would the society react, how will they perceive me. And I remember my principal saying to me: I believe in you! This was very important and I still remember those words and it gives me strength up to now. I don’t know what person I would be if not for those words.” (IDI, young woman, small town)

### Health care

**Similar to other programs and services, challenges related to health care are related to low coverage**

**of services, and low levels of information among persons who are entitled to certain medical support.** This is attributed to funding constraints and possibly lack of knowledge or capacity to assess real needs of beneficiaries relative to the assistance that is provided. Medicines and medical supplies pose a big financial burden for families. Most respondents question the adequacy of health insurance, and some misinformation persists as far as the coverage they are entitled to versus the coverage they receive. One-time assistance from state programs or private donors is appreciated but insufficient to support recurring expenses. Similarly, caregivers mention that state funding allocated for rehabilitation services covers only a small proportion of the needs, does not include transportation which is not important to access the services, and is not of optimal quality. This is attributed mostly to lack of funds and relevant infrastructure, for example, swimming pools.

“We bring invoice for one month and if you need 500 lari they give you 100. I am very dissatisfied, because the invoice says clearly how many medicine my child needs daily and they should count it but they give you medicine which is enough only for 10 days instead of one month” (FGD, caregivers, Tbilisi)

“In the insurance we have right now nothing is included that we need. Encephalogram which sometimes is needed every day is not included in our insurance not to talk about tomography or medicines. Another great problem is dentist’s service for these children. There are only a few dentists in Tbilisi that serve these children often for free.” (FGD, caregivers, Tbilisi)

“We need to fight for every medicine, diaper, we need money for taxi to get our children to rehabilitation center.” (FGD, caregivers, Tbilisi)

**Overall, respondents in the study call for a more individualized approach to the medical needs of PWDs.** It is also emphasized that support should be timely, as long waiting times contribute to isolation.

“There is no individual approach to people with special needs. For example, I have heard of a case, when a person, who is in wheel chair, had appendicitis. The doctors were examining him/her like other patients, but actually there is a different way to check appendix in people who

are in wheelchairs. This poor person was suffering several days until they found out what was wrong with him/her.” (IDI, male, 42, employed, founder of the NGO ‘Accessible Environment for Everyone’, single)

**As with education, location also plays a role in access to health services.** Many of the rehabilitation services are available only in urban areas or only in Tbilisi. Residents in remote locations are further disadvantaged by lack of information and knowing their entitlements as far as health services.

“There is an NGO named ‘For independent life’. They were here and told us that we could go to any clinic or healthcare facility and have 100 percent free service. But in reality in the clinics where we asked about this the answer was no, we don’t have such service... We’ve called in Human rights center and they told us that these organizations only work in Tbilisi.” (IDI, young man with spine trauma, rural area)

### Income and Employment

**Lower educational achievement, inaccessible spaces, as well as social stigma and narrower social networks, all together present significant obstacles for employment of PWDs.** Cases of some, who are successfully employed, are rare and often in the non-profit sector or at the own initiative of the person him/herself. The majority of the employed respondents with disability were in Tbilisi and were employed in the NGO sector.

“This is very rare... I have seen it only on TV. There is one [PWD] who is a cohost of the TV program ‘Shuadge’.” (Woman, 38, housewife)

“I personally don’t know anyone. There was one actor, maybe you know also, on the discovery channel. In Georgia people only know those who are in the media.” (Young man, 31, spinal cord disease, rural)

“There are many who are active. Many my friends have jobs, writing articles, are active but this number is very low compared to the whole number [of PWDs.]” (Young woman, Kutaisi, mobility problem)

“For me it is very hard. I try to have a job, send

CVs but nothing. The environment is also not adapted for us to physically go to work.” (IDI, young man with spine trauma, rural area)

“I have an acquaintance who is a PWD but has an education. He/she sent his/her CV to a bank but they refused to employ him/her. They told him/her that having a PWD who walks with a crutch as an employee might be a problem for the clients.” (Young woman, Kutaisi, accountant)

**Most respondents stress the value of employment not only as an income-generating activity but also for social integration.** They believe that the employment of disabled persons in the private sector should be more proactively encouraged. A distinction is made based on the type of disability. Caregivers of children with mental disability are less optimistic about employment prospects for them and are more likely to stress the need for continued financial assistance by the state. These households also emphasize the emotional burden on the family and fear for the future and for the continuity of care.

“While we are alive we will take care of our children. I thank god that my kid has two sisters but you know what? I am sure they will take care after him/her too but nobody can care on him/her like I do. I know already from his/her eye movement what s/he wants and whether s/he is happy or not. I don’t know what happens with him/her afterwards” (FGD, caregivers, Tbilisi)

**Family members of PWDs, who are caregivers, also face diminished chances of employment.** At the same time, the disability pension that the household receives, GEL 160, is deemed insufficient for living and especially for covering additional medical or transportation costs. Some households supplement this income with social assistance, which makes them additionally reluctant to take on additional employment (in particular if it is temporary or informal) for fear of losing social assistance benefits.

“Can I use my child’s money? What is GEL 160 per month? The child needs medicines, clothing, diapers, hygiene products. And the parents also need something.” (FGD, caregivers, Tbilisi)

“We all have a record that our child needs constant care, which means that they are depen-

*dent on us. We, parents, are disabled, because we cannot work. Don't we need anything?"* (FGD, caregivers, Tbilisi)

*"I need to use taxi almost every day to go to college and 160 lari is not enough at all."* (IDI, young woman with disability, small town)

**Parents of CWD also note a discrepancy in state support to foster parents versus caregivers who are biological parents.** Foster parents, who adopt CWD, are provided GEL 600, a higher allowance than biological parents, which some construe as an incentive by the state to give away CWD to foster care.

*"We want to serve to our children with dignity... Don't urge us to give away our children".* (FGD, caregivers, Tbilisi)

**A gender discrepancy in the burden of caregivers was emphasized.** It was stressed that in most families, where child with disability is born, mothers usually adopt the role of caregivers. Moreover, it is not uncommon for fathers to leave the family. Even in families where husband is present, women are primarily responsible to manage care, and are seen as emotionally stronger and more resilient.

*"Men are cowards. My son-in-law ran away. He ran away from his child. I cannot say that he does not help us. Moreover he is a doctor, imagine. But the fact is that he destroyed his family."* (FGD, caregivers, Tbilisi)

### *Participation and Access to Information*

**PWDs note that the inability to perform tasks independently also affects their initiative to be proactive as citizens.** While participation in decision-making, civic and political life is mentioned as an obstacles by various disadvantaged groups, physical and informational constraints account for even greater obstacles for PWDs. These have to do with inaccessible infrastructure and, for some, inability to access media and internet due to lack of adapted digital technologies.

*"We cannot independently enter the electoral district. Somebody has to lift me like a bag, and I do not want this. I prefer not to participate in elections at all."* (Male, 42, employed, founder of the NGO 'Accessible Environment for Everyone', single)

*"I was invited to the meeting, as they said the city has to have a plan how to improve the environment for PWDs. They argued a lot and I didn't go there for the second time."* (Young woman, Kutaisi)

*"There are no websites in Georgia that can be accessed by people who have problems with eyesight."*

*"People need to get information in order to get integrated in the society. I remember that when there was a war in 2008 how 200 people with hearing problems have gathered at Mushtaidi park and tried to get information from each other about ongoing war."* (Male, 42, employed, founder of the NGO 'Accessible Environment for Everyone', single)

**Caregivers in small towns and rural areas also point out that access to information should be facilitated for the households of PWDs, on the various sources of support they can access.** That way they can better help family members with disabilities to be more active in social life.

### *Pathways to inclusion*

**Despite the accumulation of obstacles, many PWDs, especially younger participants, are optimistic about recent trends.** They believe that inclusion is possible with continuous efforts to address root causes highlighted above: raising public awareness, adaptation of infrastructure and channels of information, raising knowledge and capacity in, and coverage of, programs and services.

**Public awareness and adaptation of the physical environment have to advance together to promote more visibility and opportunities for this group.** In addition, respondents believe that greater visibility helps to promote more public acceptance that can help reduce barriers in education, employment, participation, and so on.

*"When I think of 90s, when I damaged my spine the situation was absolutely different. First of all, the country was in poverty and no one was thinking about PWDs. Second, such people were not seen at all, they were sitting in the houses and were not involved in anything. Now it is different, you can see more PWDs studying, working or*

*moving in the streets.*" (Male, 57, employed, entrepreneur, married, two children and two grandchildren)

*"I remember that when I was a child, children like us were locked in houses. When I was coming out in the street people were gazing at me like I was an animal in the zoo. But now, when there are some NGOs working on this issue, a lot of trainings are done and I think, that young people have changed their attitude. We should persuade the society to accept us as we are."* (Female, 27, employed, administrator in a famous magazine, single)

**In the current context of Georgia, personal initiative is one of the strongest factors for inclusion.** A high proportion of the respondents in this study are, by their own account, successfully integrated in society. They assess being proactive and family support as some of the strongest drivers in their integration. To younger respondents, in particular, an enabling environment to succeed means one in which they can accept who they are and be independent. One participant involved in NGO work ('Accessible Environment for Everyone') shares that when he was injured and began using a wheelchair, he thought the only way to be accepted in society was to get up and walk. But he no longer thinks that is the case, and believes that if people with special needs work hard they can also achieve almost everything and be independent. Another respondent states that if she does not have the opportunity to be independent, no amount of state support can change her situation.

*"The most important thing is to be a full member of the society and be independent. If you feel this, it does not matter whether you can move your fingers or not. You can achieve everything."* (Male, 44, employed, social entrepreneur, married, one child)

*"...if the state gives me 1 million it doesn't matter now because I won't have skills and abilities to use it."* (Young woman, accounting degree, small town)

**Education and employment are seen as drivers as much as outcomes of inclusion.** In this regard, respondents believe that having more proactive programs encouraging employment or entrepreneurship

for PWDs and facilitating inclusion of children with special needs in mainstream education should be implemented. These can in itself contribute to changing attitudes and confidence.

*"It is crucial to have a job. Having friends, going out, being socially active is connected to having a job. When one is at home all the time and has no job, he also doesn't have friends."* (Young woman/man, rural area, spine trauma)

*"I have a friend in Tbilisi. He is also in the wheelchair and has his own NGO, 'Coalition for independent life'. He is very integrated, has a wife and a family."* (Young woman/man, rural area, spine trauma)

**Location is another factor seen as tightly linked with inclusion; this points to the need to work toward reducing regional discrepancies.** Being in the capital is seen as best for CWD due to the availability of more specialized day centers. There is a perception that mobility (public transportation, streets, buildings) are better adapted in Tbilisi and large cities, though Tbilisi respondents do not share this view. Some consider being in the city also better for socialization and employment opportunities. Information about programs and services is higher in urban areas. Most rural respondents were not aware that they were entitled to any support such as wheelchair, rehabilitation services, or a disability pension. At the same time, rural respondents more so than urban ones, share that their environment and community is very supportive.

*"Not a single organization in the villages would work on these issues. Nothing for the disabled people who need wheelchairs. No ramps or rehabilitation centers....Yes, of course I think that in the [city] I could do more."* (Young man, rural area, spine trauma)

*"The chances [to have a job] are much higher when you live in Tbilisi. I know many PWDs who are employed in Tbilisi. In [my town] there is no such thing. ...I have a friend in Tbilisi who works in a call-center. In [my town] I don't know anyone."* (IDI, young woman with cerebral palsy, accounting education, small town)

*"Transportation is very hard, there is no adapted public transport here. Only in Tbilisi and Batumi."* (Young man, rural area, spine trauma)

**To summarize, PWDs face complex and mutually reinforcing barriers that contribute to their consistent exclusion and diminished opportunities to enhance their welfare.** As presented earlier in this report, PWDs and their households have higher poverty rates, lower labor force participation and employment, and are more strongly dependent on social benefits. This case study, based on conversations with disabled persons, caregivers, and service providers, was aimed to understand better the specific domains in which exclusion occurs and the key contributing factors or root causes to this exclusion. Understanding the underlying reasons for exclusion, in turn, helps to direct policy efforts toward areas that would have greatest transformational impact on opportunities for this group.

**Root causes for exclusion can be summarized in four areas:** (a) persistent invisibility of PWDs and gaps in registration; (b) low public awareness, stigma among family and society at large; (c) poor adaptation of the environment impeding access to information and physical spaces; and (d) low coverage and quality of services that can be traced to knowledge, capacity, and financial constraints. Together these four sets of issues contribute to suboptimal participation of PWDs in social, economic, and civic life and contribute to their reaping lower benefits from education, labor markets, and decision-making processes.

**Addressing each of these issues through more inclusive policy interventions requires dedicated research and knowledge.** PWDs are a heterogeneous group and their specific needs and the services required

cannot be generalized. While they may be common barriers that all PWD encounter, policy interventions from health and education to labor market, livelihood and social assistance should be tailored more specifically to the needs of different subgroups.

**In addition, policy interventions in any of the above need to take a cross-sectoral approach given that improvements in each area may fall under the purview of multiple institutions.** For example, improving access to and quality of education for children and youth with special needs requires strong collaboration with transport and infrastructure institutions to ensure an inclusive environment, with labor market institutions to better tailor skills programs for special needs youth and adults, with technology and information and communication technology (ICT) experts to ensure that inclusive digital tools are used to support learning for such groups, with youth and sports authorities to ensure development of soft skills and socialization, and so on.

**The majority of PWDs, especially the younger ones, emphasize that inclusion to them signifies an enabling environment where they can pursue opportunities independently.** Cases of successful integration reveal that personal initiative and being proactive seem to play a key role in successful integration and outcomes such as educational achievement, employment, and an expanded social network. This supports the conclusion that, to the extent possible, effective policy interventions should be geared to ensure greater autonomy and choice for PWDs and their caregivers.

## IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**This study explores the expressions and drivers of social exclusion and inclusion in Georgia to explore more inclusive policy options.** The study is based on the premise that social inclusion is paramount to achieving shared prosperity; in particular, that understanding the roots of exclusion and inclusion can give insight into why certain segments of the population continue to face persistent poverty and fail to benefit from development policy and growth.

**Following this objective, this research has drawn a broad-based mapping of:** how are exclusion and inclusion understood in Georgia; who is excluded and in what ways; do characteristics of socially excluded individuals or groups correlate in any way with poverty or other socioeconomic outcomes; what processes are perceived as key drivers of inclusion in Georgian society. For two selected categories—representatives of ethnic Azerbaijani minority in Georgia, and PWDs—the study has explored more in-depth causes of exclusion and overlapping vulnerabilities through qualitative research.

**Georgia has a positive track record of growth, reforms, and poverty reduction but as other middle-income countries it harbors pockets of, potentially persistent, poverty. Promoting policies that enhance social inclusion makes economic sense in the long run.** For example, it can help encourage greater participation in the labor market, and inclusion in higher-skilled and higher-paying jobs for groups that have traditionally lacked such access; it can contribute to reducing regional disparities and spurring growth of lagging regions, given that some excluded groups tend to be regionally concentrated; as well as help to reduce dependence on the state and encourage greater social and economic independence, for example for groups such as IDPs or PWDs that are currently highly dependent on social transfers. Inclusive policies are also fundamental to cohesion and stability. Development research is increasingly looking into the roots of radicalization as a product of substandard opportunities, youth disillusionment, inactivity or unemployment, and/or as a result of prolonged conflict, displacement, and border instability, all of which affect Georgia directly. Lastly, inclusive policy targets and actions are an essential part of national and international legal commitments in Georgia's development path such as agreements with EU, SDGs, and Georgia's own national development strategy.

**There are multiple exclusion stories in every society.** This study has defined inclusion as both a process and outcome for improving the terms on which individuals and groups can actively participate in society, have a voice in decisions which affect their lives, and enjoy equal access to markets, services, and political, social, and physical spaces (World Bank 2013). Social exclusion overlaps with but is not synonymous with poverty. Those who are excluded generally suffer from multiple and interrelated disadvantages that result in both economic and social deprivation<sup>56</sup> as well as a lack of voice.

**Discussions with citizens and quantitative evidence identifies a set of characteristics and groups that may be facing systematic barriers to inclusion and prosperity.** This study looks into some of the most prominent ones, recognizing that multiple characteristics associated with exclusion may affect each individual, household or community. These include ethnic and religious minorities, PWDs, IDPs by conflict or natural disaster, homeless persons and street children, residents in rural, remote, and high mountain areas, elderly and unemployed, former prisoners, women, LGBTQI population, among others. The overlap of these characteristics can amount to substantial barriers to individuals or groups to effectively benefit from and participate in the country's development.

**The research indicates that individuals and groups with such characteristics not only face tangible barriers in services, markets, and spaces, such as education and the labor market, but are also subject to different extents to negative social attitudes and stigma, and that the two processes—social stigma and socioeconomic outcomes—are mutually reinforcing.** For example, one of the strongest barriers faced by some categories of PWDs is the lack of enabling social environment, attitudes, and awareness of others (teachers, principals, employers, service providers, general public), attitudes that may express themselves in curtailed access to essential services or opportunities.

**This research also explores drivers of inclusion or what it means to be 'included,' 'successful' or 'prosperous in life'.** In this study the examination of pathways to inclusion is limited to qualitative data. Pathways of inclusion for specific groups and subgroups merit further in-depth research (for example, why some minority groups have achieved better outcomes than

<sup>56</sup> Silver n.d., cited in World Bank (2014).

others; what are important drivers of success for youth in rural or remote areas, for religious minority youth, and so on). The most important perceived determinant for inclusion, based on the current research, is the ability to rely on a strong social network. Other factors such as having a job, having good education, living in an urban area or in Tbilisi, are also perceived as strong determinants of inclusion and prosperity. Prior public opinion research in Georgia also shows a correlation between poverty and strength of social networks whereas lower-income Georgians report much weaker trust in others and narrower social network on which they can rely for support.

**Knowing that social exclusion and inclusion may affect socioeconomic outcomes and potentially perpetuate pockets of poverty, what would a more inclusive policy approach entail in practice? Three elements stand out in the Georgia context:** first, the need to improve data and evidence on vulnerable groups who face systematic disadvantages. This study shows that while some categories of the population are well defined and protected through respective programs and services, others may consistently fall out of the attention of state and NGO programs. If their situation and challenges are relatively invisible, this in turn, constrains the ability of the Government or non-state organizations to better address their needs. Monitoring of outcomes for vulnerable groups should also be strengthened to track progress of related policies. Second, a comprehensive approach to services and stronger institutional coordination should be encouraged. While legislation, policies and services exist to address the needs of vulnerable populations, these services operate in a fragmented manner and may be insufficient to overcome complex and cumulative barriers (physical, social, economic, and so on) such as the ones faced by many of the groups discussed in this report. Third, capacity building and strengthening of locally tailored policies and programs may be considered so that inclusion policies are effective in the unique geographic or cultural environment of the region to which they are applied.

**Understanding exclusion and drivers of inclusive policy is also important for international partners working in Georgia.** Development organizations such as the World Bank can be a more effective partner in the goals described above, ensuring that policy advice and investments in its portfolio are sensitive toward and tailored to the needs of vulnerable groups; that they help to lower rather than perpetuate barriers for disadvantaged groups. This may include, for example,

supporting advancement of universal access for PWDs in country policy and in infrastructure investments projects; helping transfer of new technology and knowledge to expand access to information for persons with hearing or visual impairments; ensuring that project information is available in the relevant language for ethnic minority population. Development organizations can also help explore innovative ways to support pathways to employment, skills, and livelihoods for groups who face more complex barriers such as PWDs, IDPs, rural and minority youth, youth in remote, border and high mountain areas, and so on.

**Inclusive policy can be expressed in additional benefits and services for selected groups, but it is often more than that.** Good practices in inclusive social policies emphasize empowerment, reducing dependence on state support, and sustainability. Policies targeted at certain groups or regions need to emphasize longer-term and sustainable goals. For example, policies aiming to address trends of rapid depopulation in high-mountain regions need to emphasize opportunities for youth, both education and livelihood related. On the other hand, service providers working with ethnic minorities should ensure continuous quality of service by future qualified professionals who are able to communicate (in the respective ethnic languages) with the population they are serving.

The two case studies illustrate some more concrete priorities for a more inclusive policy direction.

### *Persons with Disabilities*

**Root causes for exclusion of PWDs can be summarized in four areas:** (a) persistent invisibility of PWDs and gaps in registration; (b) low public awareness, stigma among family and society at large; (c) poor adaptation of the environment impeding access to information and physical spaces; and (d) low coverage and quality of services. These challenges call for a set of interrelated efforts:

- (a) A push toward improvement in data, registration for this population. This would entail, on the one hand, improving incentives for PWDs and parents of CWD to seek support, and on the other hand improved outreach by state and NGO organizations toward identifying PWD and CWD who can benefit from such support.
- (b) Strengthening public awareness efforts to reduce stigma in society and consequently

among families of PWDs, and improve their visibility in the public space. The impacts of greater visibility are likely to be multifold: diminishing stigma and restrictions imposed by attitude of others, but also strengthening confidence and initiative by PWDs themselves thus preventing further self-exclusion.

- (c) Legal, regulatory, and technical advancements to expand accessibility of the physical environment, as well as of digital and information media for persons who due to specific condition cannot access information or physical spaces on an equal basis.
- (d) A move toward more comprehensive and better coordinated services, along with building capacity of specialized personnel. These may include greater attention to early childhood education for children with special needs, as well as transition services for young adults with special needs (over 18 years of age); increasing the cohort of trained inclusive education and rehabilitation specialists; continually improving programs that provide specialized aids and health care to PWDs to incorporate the feedback and needs of beneficiaries, and so on.
- (e) Continued efforts to strengthen legislation and empower independence of PWDs. Georgia has made a lot of progress in the legal arena to support the right to independent living; still gaps remain toward ensuring voice and participation of PWDs in decisions that affect their lives.

### *Azerbaijani minority*

**Representatives of the Azerbaijani minority display persistently lower incomes and higher poverty rates, which quantitative analysis suggests can be explained largely by gaps in education and sector of employment.** Disparities in education and employment are in turn influenced by factors such as: (a) a persisting language barrier that has become an even more significant determinant of social and economic integration following the country's independence; (b) quality of services and service providers in communities where Azerbaijani population is concentrated; (c) access to productive assets such as land, and affordable finance; (d) cultural norms that may exacerbate barriers for subgroups such as minority women; (e) barriers to information and participation.

A comprehensive effort to enhance inclusion and opportunities for Azerbaijani minority would therefore need to take into account all of the following aspects:

- (a) Improving the quality of basic education. This entails both raising quality of teaching, modernizing curriculum, and so on in Azerbaijani-language schools parallel to improvements taking place in the general education system, but also increasing confidence among communities in the quality of bilingual education options.
- (b) Reducing the language gap and promoting better access to information. A parallel effort to improve the quality of Georgian language instruction in Azerbaijani communities, as well as to ensure that essential information reaches these communities in their mother tongue. For the elderly and middle-aged population, the ability to access information, services, and participate in Azerbaijani language will remain a necessity, while younger generations can be encouraged to develop skills in both languages.
- (c) Improving quality and access to basic public services (reducing dependence on intermediaries). This entails promoting a stronger cohort of educated—including local and bilingual professionals (teachers, doctors, public officials, and so on)—who can serve in Azerbaijani communities.
- (d) Support to diversifying sources of income and livelihoods. This includes building of incentives, skills, opportunities for young people to move away from agriculture, but also efforts to improve returns from agriculture, for example, through access to land, affordable finance, better markets for agricultural produce, and so on.
- (e) Encouraging greater cultural interaction especially for youth. Educational outcomes and incomes tend to be better for minorities living in more integrated environments; moreover, experts point to a risk of deepening cultural isolation and its impacts particularly on young women. Facilitating greater interaction for youth across ethnic communities, beyond that in integrated schools, can help barriers for young people growing up in predominantly minority communities.

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## Annex I: Exclusion Mapping: Matrix

Group (and % share of total population, if applicable)	Geographic concentration (if applicable)	Aspects of exclusion (based on qualitative and quantitative research and analysis; and desk review)	Government policies/programs
<b>Ethnic minorities</b> (13% of total population)	Kvemo Kartli, Samtskhe-Javakheti, Kakheti	Language issues; Access to information and state services; Political participation; Access to employment; Income; Access to education and educational achievement; Health care; Risk of poverty; Land property gap; Public attitudes toward minorities; Limited political and social engagement; Cultural norms (for example, early marriage); Subjective barriers and self-exclusion	Ethnic minorities are mentioned in: the Constitution; the Criminal Code; the Law on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination; Labor Code of Georgia Key program: National Concept for Tolerance and Civil Integration and Action Plan Other governmental programs to make education accessible for ethnic minorities (including right to receive education in minority languages; free textbooks and quota access to higher education/"bridge program")
<b>Religious minorities</b> (15% of total population)	Adjara, Kvemo Kartli, Kakheti, Tbilisi, Samtskhe-Javakheti	Cultural differences; Influence of Orthodox Christian traditions on education, school curriculum, and public life; Influence of major religion on identity formation	Guaranteed freedom of religion in the Constitution National Strategy for the Protection of Human Rights (2014–2020) fosters religious tolerance Absence of legislation to ensure the rights of religious communities other than Orthodox Christians; State Agency on Religious Affairs
<b>Women</b>	n.a.	Political participation; Underrepresentation in elected offices, senior public service, and managerial positions; Wage gap; Female-headed households at risk of poverty; "Double burden" for minority women; Preference for sons; Intolerant community	Gender equality/prohibition of discrimination on gender grounds are mentioned in: the Constitution; the Criminal Code; the Law on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination; Labor Code of Georgia Key policy: The Law of Georgia on Gender Equality (2010) Action plans: Gender Equality National Action Plan for 2014–2016; National Action Plan on the implementation of the 2006 Law on Domestic Violence; coordinated by Gender Equality Council within the Parliament of Georgia
<b>LGBTQI community</b>	n.a.	Employment opportunities/discrimination in workplace; Intolerant political parties; Negative public attitude (especially toward homosexual men); Unable to get married; Problems related to identity documents for transgender people; Vulnerability to physical and verbal abuse; Hate crimes; Prejudice by health care providers	Discrimination based on sexual orientation is mentioned in the Criminal Code of Georgia, the Law on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination, and Labor Code of Georgia
<b>Disabled people</b> (3.3% registered PWDs of total population; <sup>57</sup> 2014 Census reports that 8.7% of total population are PWDs)	n.a.	Access to social and state services; Public attitudes (stigma and discrimination); Access to education; Lower labor participation; Family members' attitude; Bullying; Self-isolation and lack of social engagement; Infrastructure and physical barriers; Public spaces, including public transport, not adapted; Barriers to marriage; Low coverage by health care; Limited political participation	Discrimination because of disability is mentioned in: the Law on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination; and Labor Code of Georgia Key policy: the Law on Social Protection of Persons with Disabilities Other policies that cover assistance to PWDs: the Law on Social Assistance of Georgia; the National Program of Social Rehabilitation and Childcare; Law of Georgia on Secondary Education and the National Education Plan (inclusive education) State programs supporting employment of PWDs; Community Organization Program for PWDs; and Early Child Development Program
<b>Eco-migrants</b> <sup>58</sup>	Adjara, Svaneti	Housing problems; Lack of resettlement procedures; No legal status for 'eco-migrants'	The Eco-migrants Division within the Department for Migration, Repatriation and Refugees (within MRA) manages the assessment and resettlement processes; there is no comprehensive policy or long-term strategy for eco-migrants

57 This number reflects only registered persons with disabilities.

58 It is believed that tens of thousands of people were displaced by natural disasters in Georgia over the past 30 years; there are no official numbers for eco-migrants (Lyle 2012).

Group (and % share of total population, if applicable)	Geographic concentration (if applicable)	Aspects of exclusion (based on qualitative and quantitative research and analysis; and desk review)	Government policies/programs
<b>Former prisoners (ex-convicts)</b>	Countrywide	Lack of employment opportunities and limited access to skills training; Refused jobs because of criminal record; Psychological stress; Negative public attitudes (especially for women ex-convicts); Stigma; Restrictions from public service	The Rehabilitation and Resocialization Program for former prisoners
<b>Homeless people</b> <sup>59</sup>	Mostly in large cities/Tbilisi	Access to information and social services; Bad living conditions; Lack of political participation and social engagement	Municipal-level programs (with limited budget)
<b>IDPs</b> (7% of total population)	Tbilisi and other major cities <sup>60</sup>	Access to land; Lack of access to permanent housing problems; Bad/inadequate living conditions; Lack of employment opportunities and low income	State Strategy for Internally Displaced Persons and Action Plans; Law on Social Assistance of Georgia
<b>Pensioners and elderly people</b> (14% of total population is 65 years or older [2010])	n.a.	Limited political and social participation; Employment discrimination (favoring younger workers); Violence by family members	There are very few programs for the elderly, including day centers and homes for the elderly, which are run by NGOs and government agencies
<b>Socially vulnerable (including unemployed and living below poverty line)</b> (Unemployed - 12.4%; Poor - 21.4%; Social assistance beneficiaries - 11.6%)	n.a.	Lack of access to quality education; Inability to fulfill their potential; Self-isolation and sense of shame	The Law on Social Assistance of Georgia
<b>Residents of rural and remote mountain areas</b> (9% of total population lives in mountainous areas; high mountains comprise over 60% of Georgia's territory)	n.a.	Income to services, state programs, and information, Education, Employment, and Income.	The Law on the development of mountainous regions (2015); Regional Development Program of Georgia;
<b>Refugees</b> <sup>61</sup>	n.a.	Access to services; Employment; Equal opportunities and support; Language	The Law on Refugee and Humanitarian Status of Georgia (2012)
<b>Street children</b> <sup>62</sup>	n.a.	Appearance and bad hygiene; Limited educational opportunities; Lack of future employment prospects	The National Program of Social Rehabilitation and Childcare; Day centers for street children program by the Ministry of Labor, Health and Social Affairs
<b>Returned migrants</b>	n.a.	Access to information and social services; Lack of employment opportunities; Lack of social networks	The State Migration Strategy and Action Plan
<b>Sex workers</b>	n.a.	Access to social services; Violence	—

59 No official data is available on the scale of homelessness in Georgia. In 2014, data shared by the ombudsman indicated 401 buildings in Tbilisi where homeless people live.

60 75 percent of IDPs live in urban areas.

61 As of January 2015, Georgia hosted 265,750 persons of concern to UNHCR, comprising 903 refugees and humanitarian status holders (including 467 Syrians in Abkhazia); 1,792 asylum-seekers; 262,285 IDPs, including persons in an IDP-like situation; and 770 stateless persons (<http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/5638630f4.pdf>). The main countries of origin of refugees and asylum-seekers in Georgia are Iraq, Ukraine, and the Syrian Arab Republic.

62 The 2005 and 2008 surveys commissioned by UNICEF and Save the Children, respectively, reported that there were between 1,000–1,200 children living on the streets of Tbilisi. In 2015, the MHLSA had a record of approximately 400 children living on the streets of Tbilisi, but these records are recognized as incomplete.

## Annex II: Methodology

- 1. The data and evidence gathered for this study were obtained through a desk review of secondary sources, analysis of quantitative data, and original qualitative research** (see Table 2.1 for overview and timetable). The study was conducted in two phases: (a) a broad country-level exclusion mapping and (b) two case studies that examined the situation of selected groups facing exclusion. The exclusion mapping is based on qualitative and quantitative data and literature/desk review. It represents a comprehensive look at who is excluded, in what ways and why, drawing upon perceptions of experts and the general public and empirical data as available for the identified groups. The case studies were selected following the exclusion mapping. The main criteria for case selection was the value added, that is, focusing on groups whose situation is either under-researched or the relationship of exclusion and economic opportunity/shared prosperity has not been examined in depth. A local research firm, CRRC-Georgia, conducted the desk review and qualitative field research. An international consultant conducted the quantitative analysis of the GEOSTAT IHS data.
- 2. Desk review.** A review of English and Georgian language literature was conducted pertaining to social exclusion or the situation of specific groups. The review draws on scholarly as well as media sources; government reports; research by international organizations; public opinion surveys; legislation, policy, and program documents by the GoG that relate to addressing disparities and specific needs of groups that are considered vulnerable; as well as program documents or evaluations conducted by local or international organizations that are aimed at the needs of excluded or disadvantaged groups.
- 3. Quantitative analysis of the IHS by the National Statistics Office of Georgia (GEOSTAT).**<sup>63</sup> Analysis included key welfare indica-

tors for selected groups: ethnic minorities,<sup>64</sup> IDPs,<sup>65</sup> and PWDs<sup>66</sup> with crosscutting focus on youth and gender, using GEOSTAT household survey data. The quantitative analysis for the Country Social Analysis (CSA) began in 2015, using data from 2014. For variables where the sample was smaller (for example, for PWDs), aggregated data from three years (2012–2014) was used. In addition, the quantitative analysis included a 'matching characteristics' component to analyze more precisely the differences between members of the Azerbaijani minority and Georgians living in the same communities. This analysis compared the likelihood of being poor and of achieving secondary and tertiary education for Azerbaijanis and Georgians who otherwise live in similar circumstances and/or share similar characteristics, that is, live in an urban or rural location, are the same age, are the same household size, and so on.<sup>67</sup>

63 The IHS of the National Statistics Office of Georgia (GEOSTAT) is nationally representative, with data collected on a quarterly basis. The survey collects information for 39,526 individuals in 11,165 households.

64 The IHS collects information on 33,586 Georgians, 2,404 Azerbaijanis, 2,706 Armenians, and 831 other minorities, which include Abkhazian, Greek, Ossetian, Russian, Ukrainian, and others.

65 The IHS identifies IDPs at the individual level. For each individual in the household, a question is asked on whether each person has a special status of IDP, though there is no further information on whether the person was displaced during the 1992–93, 1998, or 2008 conflicts. In each household, there can be IDP and non-IDP members. Quantitative analysis produced data at the individual level, but there are few cases in which the information was reported at the household level. In these cases, the IDP categorization is determined based on the household head's status.

66 The IHS identifies PWDs as the ones who suffer any of the three degrees of assessed disability: severe disability (Type I), significant disability (Type II), or moderate disability (Type III). The joint data bases for years 2012, 2013, and 2014 produced information for 4,816 persons with disability, which represent the 3.85 percent of the total number of individuals for those three years.

67 Using the methodology presented in developed by Nopo (2008), cited in Inchauste and Cancho (2010). Georgians are paired with their closest Azerbaijani neighbor based on a Propensity Score Matching Methodology. The characteristics considered for the matching analysis include: area of residence, region, employment status, age, hh size, share of dependents, being a single woman and working in the agricultural sector. For different outcome variables are compared for each pair of Georgian and Azerbaijani individuals: the likelihood of being poor, the likelihood of being unemployed, and the likelihood of having finished secondary and tertiary education.

4. **Qualitative research and analysis.** Qualitative data was used in two different phases of the research. All FGDs were video recorded and transcribed and data were analyzed in NVivo (qualitative data analysis software for researchers).

- **Broad country-level exclusion mapping.** Phase I was used to assess how ordinary (non-expert) people define or conceptualize ‘exclusion’ and ‘inclusion’ and what it means in the context of Georgia, in addition to gathering perceptions about what drives exclusion and inclusion and who is considered ‘excluded’. In this phase, 12 FGDs were conducted, 4 each in Tbilisi, Samtredia (small town in western Georgia), and Badauri village (Kakheti region, Eastern Georgia). Separate FGDs were held with men and women, and these were further divided by age;<sup>68</sup> selection of participants was conducted through ‘random selection’ method. The FGD guides also included questions about perceptions of the Government’s programs and policies that help groups and individuals who are excluded within the community. In addition, 14 KIIs with representatives of the Government, NGOs, and international organizations were conducted to elicit opinions on the expressions and drivers of exclusion and inclusion in Georgia (see Table 2.2). The collected data complimented desk review and quantitative analysis and were used as an input to the ‘exclusion mapping’ stage of the study. A separate analysis of the Government’s policies and programs that addresses exclusion was also conducted.

- **Two case studies.** Phase II of qualitative research was the main source of data for the case studies (on Azerbaijani minority and PWDs) (see Table 2.3, Table 2.4, Table 2.5). For the Azerbaijani minority case study, FGDs with Azerbaijani men and women, additional IDIs with Azerbaijani women, and KIIs were conducted with relevant NGOs in the town of Marneuli and different rural locations in

Kvemo Kartli region, where a large proportion of Georgia’s Azerbaijani minority lives. For the case study on PWDs, FGDs and IDIs were conducted with PWDs and caregivers and KIIs with relevant NGOs in Tbilisi, Kutaisi, and rural locations in the Imereti region of Georgia. This phase of qualitative research contributed to understanding of sources of exclusion, specific barriers, and positive or successful examples of integration, including recommendations for measures to improve opportunities for inclusion, as perceived by representatives of the case study groups.

5. **Two roundtable/brainstorming events with stakeholders in Georgia.** These events were held in the World Bank office in Tbilisi in November 2015 and June 2016. The November roundtable helped shape the initial concept, while the June roundtable helped nuance and validate the emerging findings and policy recommendations.

**Table 2.1. Methods used in the Georgia CSA and timetable**

Component	Research Tools	Time Frame
Exclusion mapping	Desk review	February–May 2016 <sup>69</sup>
	Quantitative analysis	December 2015–May 2016
	Qualitative research (14 KIIs; 12 FGDs)	March–May 2016
Case study: Azerbaijani minority	Desk review and quantitative data	Same as above
	Qualitative research (4 FGDs; 4 IDIs; 2 KIIs)	June 2016
Case study: Persons with disabilities	Desk review and quantitative data	Same as above
	Qualitative research (4 FGDs; 5 IDIs; 2 KIIs)	June 2016

68 In each location, four FGDs were held with male participants ages 20–39; male participants ages 40 and older; female participants ages 20–39; and female participants ages 40 and older.

69 The quantitative analysis of IHS data was conducted by an international consultant and began in December 2015; it was finalized in parallel with the rest of the exclusion mapping research in the country through May 2016.

Table 2.2. KIIs, Phase I

#	Gender	Location	Agency
1	Female	Tbilisi	Ministry of Education
2	Female	Tbilisi	
3	Male	Tbilisi	Ombudsman's office
4	Male	Tbilisi	MRA
5	Female	Tbilisi	Center for Human Rights Education and Monitoring (EMC)
6	Male	Tbilisi	Center for Civil Integration and Inter-ethnic Relations
7	Female	Tbilisi	UNFPA
8	Male	Tbilisi	UNDP
9	Female	Tbilisi	Independent gender expert
10	Female	Tbilisi	UNICEF
11	Male	Tbilisi	ECMI
12	Female	Telavi	World Vision Georgia
13	Female	Kutaisi	World Vision Georgia
14	Female	Batumi	Step Forward

Table 2.3. KIIs, Phase II

#	Gender	Location	Agency/Position
1	Female	Tbilisi	Neuropsychologist at the McLain Association for Children (MAC), people with special needs
2	Female	Kutaisi	Day center coordinator and special teacher, Bridge for Social Inclusion, people with special needs
3	Female	Tbilisi	Facilitator and trainer at Journalists Network for Gender Equality
4	Female	Marneuli	Chairperson of the NGO the Union of Azerbaijan Women in Georgia

Table 2.4. FDGs, Phase II

#	Age	Location	Focus Area	# of Participants
1	20–30	Tbilisi	People with special needs (limited eyesight/blind)	3
2	25–60	Tbilisi	People with special needs (limited or no mobility)	5
3	34–55	Kutaisi	Caregivers of CWD	8
4	38–63	Tbilisi	Caregivers of CWD	10
5	20–56	Marneuli (rural)	Azerbaijani men from rural area	7
6	30–65	Marneuli (rural)	Azerbaijani women from rural area	7
7	45–63	Marneuli (city)	Azerbaijani men from urban area	6
8	24–54	Marneuli (city)	Azerbaijani women from urban area	6

Table 2.5. IDIs, Phase II

#	Age	Location	Focus Area	Gender
1	31	Gelati	PWD (no mobility)	Male
2	67	Godogani	PWD (limited mobility)	Male
3	26	Kutaisi	PWD (limited mobility)	Female
4	26	Kutaisi	PWD (no mobility/neurological disorder)	Female
5	27	Simoneti	PWD (no mobility)	Male
6	34	Marneuli	Azerbaijani-speaking woman with disabled child	Female
7	52	Gizil Ajilo village	Unemployed Azerbaijani-speaking woman	Female
8	24	Gizil Ajilo village	Unemployed Azerbaijani-speaking woman	Female
9	24	Marneuli	Employed Azerbaijani-speaking woman	Female

## Annex III: Policy and Institutional Overview

### How do current governmental policies and programs address exclusion?

#### Existing policies

**The Georgian Government has made important efforts to respond to the challenges facing disadvantaged, vulnerable, and excluded groups.** Those who are identified as primary targets for assistance are the elderly, the poor, IDPs, PWDs, children from needy households, war veterans, victims of political repression, and people living in high mountainous areas. However, legal and institutional frameworks also exist for inclusion of ethnic minorities and tackling gender discrimination.

**The social, political, and economic integration and protection of socially excluded or vulnerable groups is directly or indirectly regulated by national legislation, ratification of international frameworks and conventions, and other normative acts.** Georgia is a member of the Council of Europe and party to the European Convention on Human Rights and has ratified the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). As a member of the Council of Europe, Georgia ratified the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities in 2005 and the European Social Charter in 2005. Georgia is also committed to sign and ratify the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages and to adopt a law on minorities, but it has yet to do so. In 2013, Georgia ratified the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**. These developments signify that Georgia has taken on important international commitments with reference to the inclusion of vulnerable groups and protection of their rights.

**At the national level, the Constitution of Georgia contains provisions on equality and nondiscrimination of minority groups.** The Constitution also guarantees the rights to freedom of expression, thought, conscience, belief, and religion. Georgian legislation also sets the preventive norms of violation of rights of any minorities and implies the punishment for any type of violence. For example, the Criminal Code of

Georgia punishes the violation of equality of humans (Art. 142) due to their race, color of skin, language, sex, religious belonging or profession, political or other opinion, national, ethnic, social, gender, sexual orientation, rank or public association belonging, origin, place of residence, or material condition that has substantially prejudiced human rights.

**The Georgian Parliament also adopted the Law on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination and supporting amendments in other laws.** The law, adopted in 2014, intends to eliminate all forms of discrimination and ensure equal rights of every natural or legal person under the legislation of Georgia, despite race, skin color, language, sex, age, citizenship, origin, place of birth or residence, property or social status, religion or belief, national, ethnic or social origin, profession, marital status, health, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression of political or other opinions. The Labor Code of Georgia also prohibits any and all discrimination in labor and/or pre-contractual relations due to race, skin color, language, ethnic or social belonging, nationality, origin, material status or title, place of residence, age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, handicap, religious, social, political or other affiliation, including affiliation to trade unions, political or other opinions.

**Georgian legislation does not set up any obvious barriers for ethnic minorities to participate in the public or political life of the country.** At the same time, legislation does not develop special schemes with respect to electoral quotas, proportional representation of ethnic groups in public service, or the promotion of careers of minority representatives. The Law on Political Unions of Citizens (October 31, 1997) forbids the establishment of political parties on a regional or territorial basis to prevent secessionist movements in regions which are densely populated by minorities.

**Minority issues are regulated by provisions scattered in various legal and policy documents, but Georgia does not possess any special legislative act on national minorities.** This shortfall may be explained by the lack of consensus, but also, to a certain extent, by the lack of clear awareness about importance of national minority rights in the society, political class, and public institutions. Georgia has also taken steps to protect and integrate its national minorities by developing the National Concept for Tolerance and Civil

Integration and Action Plan<sup>70</sup> and establishing, in 2009, the State Ministry for Reintegration (renamed the State Ministry for Reconciliation and Civic Equality in 2014). The implementation of the action plan has been a challenge due to low levels of awareness of the action plan among minorities, despite implementation of various projects and regular monitoring.<sup>71</sup>

**Since the Rose Revolution of November 2003, the Government has taken measures to integrate non-Georgian populations into Georgian public life.** These include greater emphasis on teaching Georgian in schools where national minorities are concentrated, often with the assistance of international donors such as the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE); efforts to improve the basic infrastructure in areas where national minorities are concentrated; the establishment of a school of public administration aimed at recruiting members of national minorities to work in the civil service; and the establishment of youth camps called 'patriot camps' aimed at bringing together young people from different ethnic backgrounds.

**Although Georgian is now the only official state language and proficiency is required of all civil servants, Georgian legislation protects the right to receive education in minority languages.** For university entrants, however, a new 'bridge program' has been introduced that will allow students to spend their first year studying Georgian. Thus far, however, efforts to educate minorities in Georgian have not been fully successful, given underfunding of education and the outflow of qualified teachers.<sup>72</sup>

**Georgia has created a strong legal and policy framework to support the welfare of IDPs.** Over 200 legislative acts with provisions concerning IDPs have been adopted since 1992, demonstrating active policy concern for the well-being of IDPs (UNHCR 2009). Georgia sets out the rights of IDPs and responsibilities of the GoG toward them. Adopted in 1996, the Law on Internally Displaced Persons – Persecuted from the

Occupied Territories of Georgia (the *Law on IDPs*)<sup>73</sup> amended four times, most recently in 2014, entitles IDPs to a monthly allowance, adequate housing, free primary and secondary education, medical coverage under existing state programs, and assistance in finding temporary employment in accordance with their profession and qualifications.<sup>74</sup>

**Since 2009, the Government has shifted its focus from providing temporary assistance to creating greater opportunities for integration.** A new State Strategy for Internally Displaced Persons-Persecuted and Action Plan focuses on creating conditions for the dignified and safe return of IDPs and supporting decent living conditions for the displaced population as well as their participation and socioeconomic integration in society. Subsequent action plans (2009–2012 and 2012–2014) have addressed the problem of a long-term resolution of IDP housing problems, a primary challenge for their integration.

**The Georgian Constitution and legislation provide important bases for tackling gender discrimination, although implementation has significantly lagged.** The Constitution (Art. 14), states that "Everyone is born free and is equal before the law, regardless of race, skin color, language, sex, religion, political and other beliefs, national, ethnic and social origin, property and title of nobility or place of residence." The Law on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination (2014) also aims to eliminate all forms of discrimination regardless of sex. In 2010, Georgia also passed the Law of Georgia on Gender Equality, which establishes the fundamental guarantees of equal rights, freedoms, and opportunities of women and men granted by the Constitution, and defines legal mechanisms and conditions for their implementation in relevant spheres of social life. The aim of the law is to ensure prohibition of all kinds of discrimination based on sex in all spheres of social life, create appropriate conditions for implementation of equal rights, freedoms, and opportunities of women and men, and support prevention and elimination of all kinds of discrimination based on sex. The Government also adopted the Gender Equality

70 [http://diversity.ge/files/files/National%20Concept\\_Eng\\_AD-OPTED.pdf](http://diversity.ge/files/files/National%20Concept_Eng_AD-OPTED.pdf).

71 [http://mikeladzefoundation.org/multimedia/ups/1/Minority\\_Integration\\_In\\_Georgia\\_Eng\\_-\\_Levan\\_Mikeladze\\_Foundation.pdf](http://mikeladzefoundation.org/multimedia/ups/1/Minority_Integration_In_Georgia_Eng_-_Levan_Mikeladze_Foundation.pdf); <http://ecmcaucasus.org/upload/cnm/UNDP-Publication-ENG-FINAL.pdf>.

72 [http://www.ecmi.de/uploads/tx\\_lfpubdb/working\\_paper\\_46\\_en.pdf](http://www.ecmi.de/uploads/tx_lfpubdb/working_paper_46_en.pdf).

73 Law of Georgia on Internally Displaced Persons – Persecuted from the Occupied Territories of Georgia. <http://mra.gov.ge/res/docs/201406171444442634.pdf>.

74 Law of Georgia on Internally Displaced Persons – Persecuted from the Occupied Territories of Georgia. <http://mra.gov.ge/res/docs/201406171444442634.pdf>.

National Action Plan for 2014–2016 and national action plan on the implementation of the 2006 Law on Domestic Violence; both plans pay particular attention to IDPs, rural population, ethnic minorities, and women.<sup>75</sup> However, weak enforcement and limited implementation have been cited as challenges, including limited knowledge about such policies and legal instruments among minority women.<sup>76</sup>

**Regarding religious rights, the Constitution provides for the freedom of religion and the separation of church and state.** The Government also instituted a National Strategy for the Protection of Human Rights (2014–2020) and a corresponding action plan aimed at fostering religious tolerance and ending discrimination on religious grounds. However, there is absence of legislation to ensure the rights of religious communities other than Orthodox Christians, and such communities suffer from a lack of legal protection and are obliged to register as NGOs or nonprofit legal associations. The Greek Orthodox Church has a constitutional agreement with the state and practice shows that laws and policies favor the Greek Orthodox Church, granting it privileges not accorded to any other religious group.

**In 2015, the Georgian Government approved a new Law on the Development of Mountainous Regions to assist people living in remote areas of the country.** The law applies to settlements located 1,500 m above sea level, or between 800 m and 1,500 m if they meet additional criteria, related to mountain slope inclination, infrastructure, climate and natural environment, lack or scarcity of agricultural lands, demographic situation, and rate of out-migration. According to this law, 1,582 towns and villages were granted status of high mountain areas, and are eligible to receive certain tax and social benefits.<sup>77</sup>

75 [http://www.ecmi.de/uploads/tx\\_lfpubdb/Working\\_Paper\\_74.pdf](http://www.ecmi.de/uploads/tx_lfpubdb/Working_Paper_74.pdf).

76 [http://www2.unwomen.org/~media/field%20office%20georgia/attachments/publications/2014/study%20on%20ethnic%20minority%20women\\_eng.pdf?v=1&d=20150410T190238](http://www2.unwomen.org/~media/field%20office%20georgia/attachments/publications/2014/study%20on%20ethnic%20minority%20women_eng.pdf?v=1&d=20150410T190238).

77 These benefits include a 20 percent increase in for the elderly; a 20 percent supplement to social assistance of eligible vulnerable households; a bonus for doctors and nurses in the amount of the state pension; a monthly cash assistance for newly born children; and a compensation of 50 percent monthly charges for electricity (not exceeding 100 kWh).

**A number of legislations cover issues regarding social assistance, protection of PWDs, and social rehabilitation.** Law on Social Assistance of Georgia (December 29, 2006) regulates relations related to social assistance, defines administrative bodies authorized in the field of social assistance, and determines type and fundamental principles for the allocation of social assistance. The Law on Social Protection of Persons with Disabilities serves as the basis for the state policy toward PWDs and is intended to ensure equal enjoyment of rights by PWDs as well as to create favorable conditions for these persons to lead full lives and participate in the economic and political activities of the society. On April 14, 2014, the GoG approved the National Program of Social Rehabilitation and Child-care. One of its sub-programs—Emergency Help for Families in Crisis with Children—includes provisions for satisfying the basic needs of poor families with children. The program aims at improving living conditions and social inclusion for PWDs (including CWD), the aged population, and poor families with children and socially vulnerable children. In 2012, the minister of Justice of Georgia also initiated the Rehabilitation and Resocialization Program, which is the first state program to support former prisoners, released from penitentiaries, and assist their successful reintegration into society.

#### *Existing programs*

**Health care:** In 2013, the Georgian Government started implementation of a universal health care insurance program and all citizens are now provided with basic medical services (including preventive care). About 3.2 million people are involved in the Universal Healthcare Program, while 530,000 are on private or corporate benefits.

**Social assistance allowance (TSA Program)** is based on the rating score, which includes various components: land, livestock, income, expenses for utilities, demography, education, property including all movable property, and home appliances. Poorest families receive GEL 60 for one member and GEL 48 for each subsequent family member. Additional subsidy is also provided to certain groups to assist with household utility bills. A separate program (provision of the children under the risk of abandonment with food) provides children (0–1 year of age) from the socially vulnerable families with artificial food products.

## Assistance for PWDs:

- (a) **The Law on Social Protection of Persons with Disabilities** serves as the basis for Georgia's policy toward PWDs and is intended to "provide social protection to PWDs and create necessary conditions for their individual development, and realization of their creative and production capabilities."<sup>78</sup> The Internal Audit Department of the Ministry of Labor, Health and Social Affairs is responsible for monitoring the implementation of all relevant policies and programs.
- (b) The social assistance to PWDs includes provision of both financial (social package - pension, other types of financial support) and technical and other assistance (wheelchairs, prosthetic and orthopedic products, and other supporting facilities<sup>79</sup>). The Law of Georgia on Social Assistance defines the basis for awarding of a social package—pension to PWDs.
- (c) Assistance programs are available for PWDs, such as the Community Organization Program for PWDs over 18 years of age, implemented by about 20 NGOs across the country, which aims to provide the PWDs with food, clothes, medical service, and vocational training and to support their integration. For children, the Early Child Development Program aims to develop the social, cognitive, self-care, and communication abilities for integration of the disabled children (with mental and physical disability), including rehabilitation and daycare.
- (d) In addition, there are programs to assist with employment of PWDs. Some state agencies (for instance, the Public Registry, Revenue Service) are implementing programs supporting the employment of PWDs. The Min-

istry of Sport and Youth Affairs has a program of social integration of PWDs.

- (e) Education and employment. To fulfill the obligations of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia is working on the reform 'Implementation of the Inclusive Professional Education in the System of Professional Education and Retraining of Georgia'. The program aims to provide PWDs and the ones who need special education with necessary skills. The Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia, together with its counterpart ministries, already implements pilot projects of employing PWDs.
- (f) The implementation of inclusive education started in 2005. The Law of Georgia on Secondary Education and the National Education Plan were amended and appropriate work was started to create the necessary environment in schools. There are nine integrated classes for CWD in different schools of Georgia. In addition, the Ministry of Education and Science works with the Ministry of Labor, Health and Social Affairs to integrate day centers into public schools. The total number of CWD who go to school are 6,000 and there are 1,300 teachers in different schools in Georgia trained to teach CWD. Of the 2,084 public schools in Georgia, 250 public schools have ramp access for the physically disabled; 13 new schools with ramp access will be added by the end of the year. In addition, additional funding has been allocated for the schools where there are children with special educational needs and special guides have been created for teachers.

## Implementation/institutional arrangements

**There are a number of state bodies responsible for assistance to vulnerable groups.**

- (a) The Public Defender of Georgia (also referred to as the Ombudsman) and the Constitutional Institute, which supervises protection of human rights and freedoms within the territory of Georgia, report violations and fa-

78 <http://www.ombudsman.ge/en/specializirebuli-centre-bi/shshm-pirebis-uflebata-dacvis-departamenti/informacia-shshm-pirtatvis>.

79 Such as provision of sign language translators for the hearing impaired and mute; program for people with mental disorders; physical rehabilitation; household-utility cash benefit; and others.

cilitate the restoration of violated rights. The Ombudsman works on the national preventive mechanism, anti-discrimination mechanism, and monitoring of the convention on the rights of PWDs among a number of other competencies. The Ombudsman supervises the activities of national and local public authorities, public officials, and legal persons; evaluates all legal acts passed by the Government; and gives recommendations and proposals. The Ombudsman supervises the implementation of international conventions on human rights, minorities, gender, children's rights, the rights of PWDs, and other related conventions. The Ombudsman's Office is well funded from the state budget. The office also receives some support from donors. There were no major complaints on underfinancing the office.

- (b) The Ministry of Labor, Health and Social Affairs regulates the health care system, labor issues, and the social security system and carries out social protection policy. State social and health protection programs are administered by the Social Service Agency, the legal entity of public law (LEPL) which acts under the direct supervision of the ministry. The agency directs its services to beneficiaries—the various contingents which require services or assistance, with social disbursements, state health and social programs—state pension, social assistance, health insurance, appropriate provision of the PWDs, guardianship and custody of children deprived of care, and so on.
- (c) IDP policy is regulated by the MRA. It also defines state policy on refugees, asylum seekers, repatriates, and victims of natural disasters and their accommodation. The ministry also works on migration issues. One of the main duties of the ministry is to promote IDPs' socioeconomic integration and improve their living conditions (IDPs' housing solutions). The ministry is the sole collector of national figures on IDPs. It registers the displaced and grants IDP status in line with the Law on IDPs.<sup>80</sup> It also ensures that IDPs

receive their monthly allowances, temporary accommodation, and emergency aid, supports with finding temporary employment, and so on.

- (d) To ensure systematic and coordinated work regarding gender issues, the Gender Equality Council was established in the Parliament of Georgia. The council develops an action plan on gender equality and ensures the coordination and monitoring of its implementation. In addition, the council performs an analysis of legislation and develops proposals to eliminate existing gender inequality in legislation. The council coordinates activities with various public institutions on gender issues and consists of the representatives of each agency.

**Overall, the implementation of Georgia's legislation on the elimination of ethnic and religious discrimination is evaluated as insufficient by local NGOs.**

There are frequent cases of xenophobic expressions in the media as well as in statements by politicians. A number of NGOs monitor cases of discrimination, rights violations, and violence against children, women, ethnic, and religious and sexual minorities, but in their data they rely on legal filings. Unfortunately, due to stereotypes and the attitude of society in general, many victims do not file complaints. Newspapers and sometimes school textbooks often plant negative stereotypes and a misleading vision of ethnic or religious minorities. Despite amendments made to the Criminal Code (March 2012), which qualifies crime committed on the grounds of intolerance to be an aggravating circumstance, there is still much to accomplish in the realm of protection of minority rights.

80 Law of Georgia on Internally Displaced Persons – Persecuted from the Occupied Territories of Georgia, February 6, 2014.



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