

Gender Equality Profile in LDN/SLM for Kareli Municipality, Georgia

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“Generating Economic and Environmental Benefits from Sustainable Land
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**“Generating Economic and Environmental Benefits from Sustainable Land
Management for Vulnerable Rural Communities of Georgia”**

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Contents

Methodology	2
General Overview	2
Gender Equality Policies at Municipal Level	2
Kareli Municipality Gender Equality Institutional and Legal Frameworks	2
Women's Participation in Decision-Making in Kareli Municipality	3
Population	4
Households	6
Infrastructure and Access to Services	7
Roads	7
Transport	8
Gasification and Alternative Energy	9
Water Supply and Sewerage	9
Waste Management/Cleaning	11
Education	11
Higher education	11
Schools	12
Kindergardens	13
Free Time, Non-Formal Education, Culture and Sports	14
Healthcare and Access to Healthcare Services Primary healthcare	16
Jobs and Incomes	16
Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in SLM and LDN	19
Gender Equality in International Rankings - A National Perspective on Georgia	19
Women in Agriculture and Environmental Stewardship - National, Regional, and Local Contexts	20
Main Gender Inequalities in Agriculture and Rural Development	29
Recommendations for Advancing SLM and LDN in Kareli Municipality through Gender-Responsive Approaches	33
Conculsion	35

Methodology

Three methods of data procession have been used to maintain the gender profile of Kareli Municipality:

1. Information obtained from Kareli Municipality about gender policy and gender statistics
2. Official information of the National Statistics Office of Georgia (Geostat)
3. Specially elaborated questionnaire, surveys carried out in the villages of the municipality

It is noteworthy that the National Statistics Office of Georgia keeps statistics only nation-wide, there are however some statistics on regional and municipal level as well, but there is hardly any statistics available on village level. As for the municipality itself, it hardly ever keeps gender disaggregated statistics. Therefore, elaboration of related gender profile would have been impossible without additional surveys on the ground.

Gender assessment of the villages of Kareli Municipality has been carried out in November-December 2021. The field activities have been carried out by the representatives of Kareli municipal Administration (Executive Body) in administrative units. Following the survey, the information about 21 villages of Kareli municipality have been assessed and analyzed.

General Overview

Kareli Municipality is located in the central part of Georgia on the plain part of Shida Kartli. The borders of municipality from the east is Gori, from the west is Khashuri, from the north it's Znauri and from the south Borjomi. Area of the municipality - 687.9 km² and Population - 55 285 in total.

Based on the information provided by statistics of Georgia, as of January 1, 2021, the population of Kareli Municipality is 47,600 people. Kareli Municipality includes one district center and 82 registered villages, which are united in 18 administrative units.

The administrative center is Kareli, the administrative units are: Urbnisi, Ruisi, Agara, Bebnisi, Kekhijvari, Khvedureti, Akhalsopeli, Mokhisi, Dvani, Zghuderi, Bredza, Ftsa, Dirbi, Breti, Abisi, Avlev, Giganti.¹



Gender Equality Policies at Municipal Level

Kareli Municipality Gender Equality Institutional and Legal Frameworks

According to the #23 resolution of Kareli Municipal City Council, the Gender Equality Council of Gori municipality was established on March 30, 2018¹, which is chaired by the Head of the City Council. The Council is comprised of 10 members (4 female, 6 male), which includes both the public servants employed at the City Council as well as at the Administration (Executive Body). The member of the Council is also an NGO. The gender equality action plan 2021-2023 for Kareli Municipality has been adopted under the Sakrebulo (Legislative Body) resolution².

¹Administration of State Representative – Governor of Shida Kartli, <http://shidakartli.gov.ge/ge/municipalities/index/4>

² http://ginsc.net/uploads/docs/eb7e9487d42fca29b5a16ce5985085e2.pdf?fbclid=IwAR2phzgWI-cq66scfE5uqMkg9VL5CF-D_1Fyf7kcLI0clJqyGXqrw4Bzw-A

Women's Participation in Decision-Making in Kareli Municipality

Although women's representation has increased throughout the country following the 2021 local self-government elections amid the introduction of legislative gender quotas, among others in Kareli Municipality, the number of male decision-makers is significantly exceeding the number of females both in Kareli Municipal City Council and the Administration (Executive Body). Women at Sakrebulo (Legislative Body) are mainly employed as specialists.

Out of the 27 members of the Kareli municipal Sakrebulo (Legislative Body) 5 are female (19%) and 22 are male (81%). The head of Sakrebulo (Legislative Body) is a male, his deputies are 2 male, 1 female. There are a total of 18 people holding political positions at the Sakrebulo (Legislative Body), out of which 3 are female (17%), 15 are male (83%). There are 5 commissions at the Sakrebulo (Legislative Body), 1 of which is chaired by a female, while 4 others – by men. The two factions are both chaired by men. A male chief of Sakrebulo (Legislative Body) staff is holding a managerial position. Out of a total of 10 public servants 7 are female, 3 are male, while 2 of the persons employed under a labor contract are male, 1 is a female.

Kareli municipal Sakrebulo (Legislative Body)³

№	Kareli municipal Sakrebulo (Legislative Body)		
	Position	Women	Men
1.	Member of Sakrebulo (Legislative Body)	5	22
2.	Opposition members of Sakrebulo (Legislative Body)	2	8
3.	Person holding political position	3	15
3.1	Chair of Sakrebulo (Legislative Body)	0	1
3.2	Deputy Chair of Sakrebulo (Legislative Body)	1	2
3.3	Chair of commission	1	4
3.4	Chair of factions	0	2
4.	Person holding managerial position		
4.1	Chief of staff	1	0
4.2	Head of service	0	0
4.3	Head of department	0	0
5.	Professional officer	7	3
6.	Person employed under a labor contract	1	2

Table 1 *Gender statistics of Sakrebulo (Legislative Body) employees*

Kareli municipal Mayor is a male. The Mayor has two deputies: 1 male, 1 female. The total number of persons employed on managerial positions stands at 15 (10 male, 5 female), including heads of service (4 male, 2 female) and heads of department (5 male, 3 female). Only the number of female public servants (specialists) exceeds the number of men at Kareli Administration (Executive Body). Out of the 49 [public servants] 20 are male, 29 – female. There are 8 persons (7 male, 1 female) employed under a labor contract at the Administration (Executive Body), while the number of persons employed under an administrative contract stands at 40 (23 male, 17 female).

³ Number of letter: 105-105213504 date: 16/12/2021

	Municipal Administration (Executive Body) (Kareli)		
	Position	Women	Men
1.	Persons holding political positions	1	2
1.1	Mayor		1
1.2	Deputy Mayor	1	1
2.	Person employed on managerial positions	5	10
2.1	Head of service	2	4
2.2	Head of department	3	5
3.	Public servant (specialist)	29	20
4.	Person employed under labor contract	1	7
5.	Person employed under administrative contract	17	23

Table 2 Gender Statistics of Administration (Executive Body) Employees

Population

Following the 2014 census the overall number of population in Kareli Municipality stood at 41 316, including 20 410 (49%) men, women – 20 906 (51%).

Based on to the information available at the National Statistics Office of Georgia, the number of population in Kareli Municipality as of January 1, 2021, stood at 47,600. Unfortunately, no related gender disaggregated data is available about the number of population in Kareli Municipality (Table #3)

Population of Kareli Municipality		Male		Female		Overall	
		Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
2014 census	Town	4810	48%	5208	52%	10018	24%
	Villige	15610	50%	15698	50%	31298	76%
Overall		20410	49%	20906	51%	41316	100%
Data for January 1, 2021	Town	-	-	-	-	6900	14%
	Villige	-	-	-	-	40700	86%
Overall		-	-	-	-	120600	100%

Table 3 Population of Kareli Municipality. Source: National Statistics Office of Georgia

The number of people living in municipality has increased by 15% Compared to 2014, however the number of people living in urban areas has decreased by 31% and the number of people living in rural areas has increased by 30%.

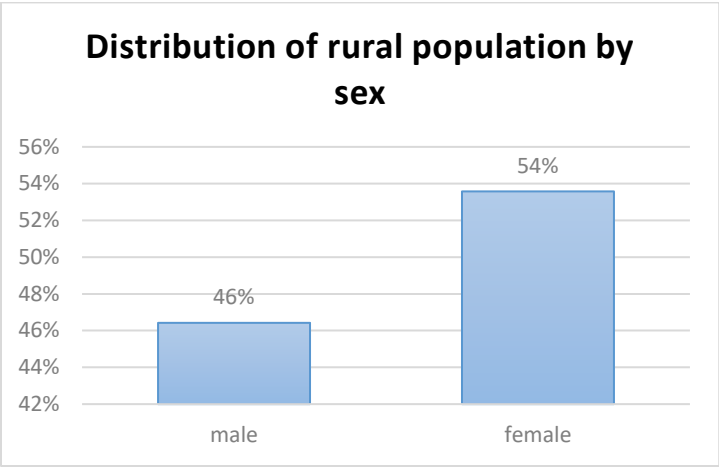


Chart 1 Distribution of rural population of Kareli Municipality by sex

The information provided by Kareli Municipality in 2021, shows that 54% of the population living in 82 villages of the 18 administrative units of the municipality are men, 46% are women. See Chart #1.

See information on gender and age by population in the village of Kareli Municipality in Table #4 below.

Distribution by rural population by age and sex																				
0-2 years			2-6 years			6-15 years			15-18 years			18-60 years			60-65 years			above 65 years		
male	female	total	male	female	total	male	female	total	male	female	total	male	female	total	male	female	total	male	female	total
367	351	713	698	722	1412	1603	1731	3328	891	963	1858	7783	9590	17313	3244	3640	6854	2116	2884	4971

Table 4 Distribution by rural population of Karely Municipality by age and sex

Population Migration

Internal migration

We obtained the data about internal migration from a survey based on a special questionnaire elaborated for the villages of Kareli Municipality.

As the mayor's representatives point out, internal migration from the villages of the municipality is high among the youth and is widespread in 76% of the villages, while in 24% it is less common. Internal migration is most frequent in Tbilisi (79%), as well as in other cities of Georgia (21%), such as Gori, Kareli, Batumi, Bakuriani.

External migration Part of the population of the municipality migrates abroad and target countries with the highest number of migrants are Turkey (26%), Poland (26%), Italy (23%) and others. See diagram

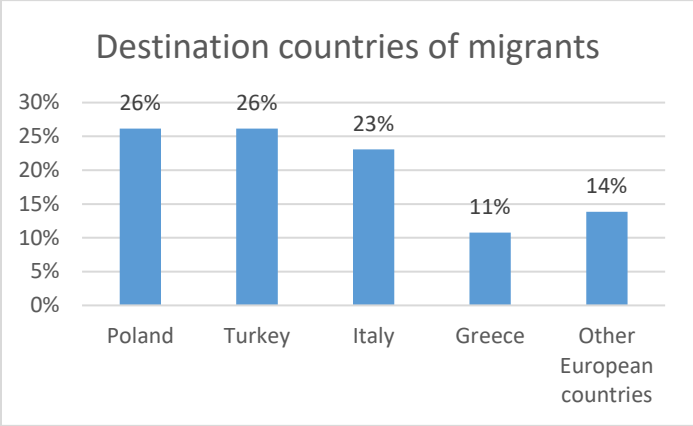


Chart 3 Destination countries of migrants from Kareli municipality

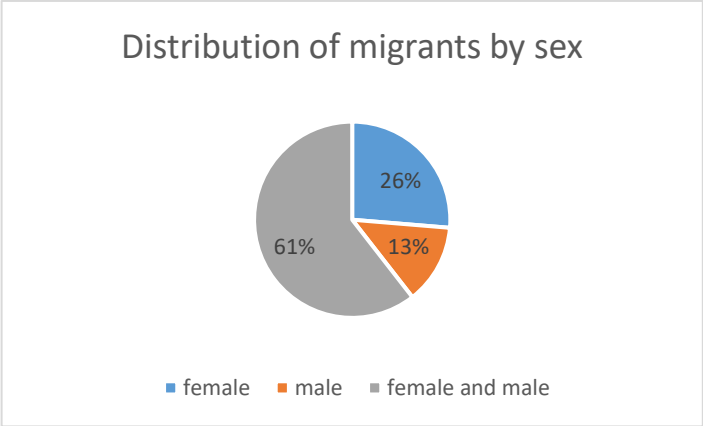


Chart 2 Distribution of migrants by sex

In 61% of villages, women and men are equally represented among job-seeking migrants. In 26% of the villages, mostly women and male migrants make up 13% of the villages. See the Chart #2.

Typically, women migrate for employment mostly to Italy, Greece and Turkey, while men travel to Poland and other European countries. The detailed data about the major target countries for migration for the villages of Kareli Municipality is available in Chart #3.

Households

There is no data about the overall number of households available in the municipality either on the webpage of the National Statistics Office of Georgia or at the disposal of the municipality. Based on the survey carried out by the representatives of the Administration (Executive Body) according to a specially elaborated questionnaire shows that head of households of 67% are run by men. See the Chart #4.

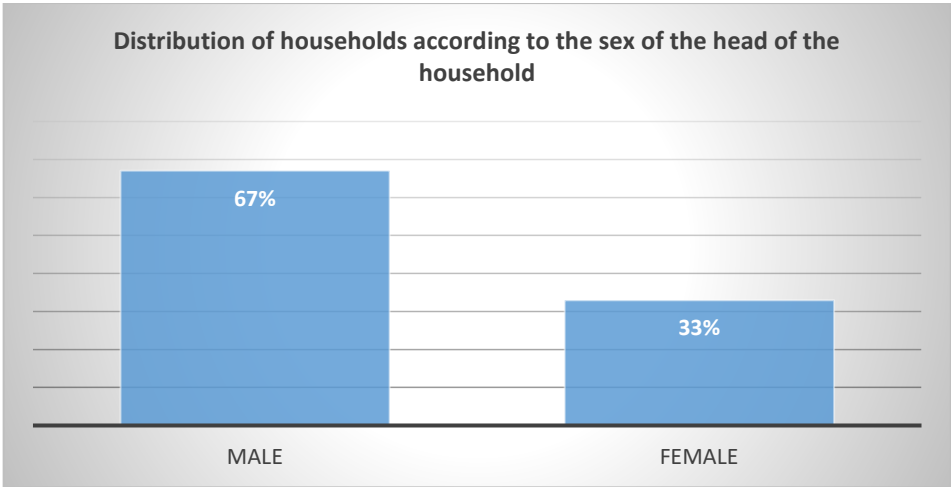


Chart 4 Distribution of households according to the sex of the head of the household

Infrastructure and Access to Services

Roads

Proper road infrastructure is important for household development, income growth, access to services and socialization. For women, who typically have lower incomes, have less access to their own means of transportation. Moving on a faulty road causes discomfort as well as the need for additional financial resources. For low-income families and women, most of the families are low-income in villages, it reduces women's mobility, development, access to services, and the well-being of themselves and their families. Defective road infrastructure is especially problematic for people with disabilities and families with young children, all of whom require wheelchair access.

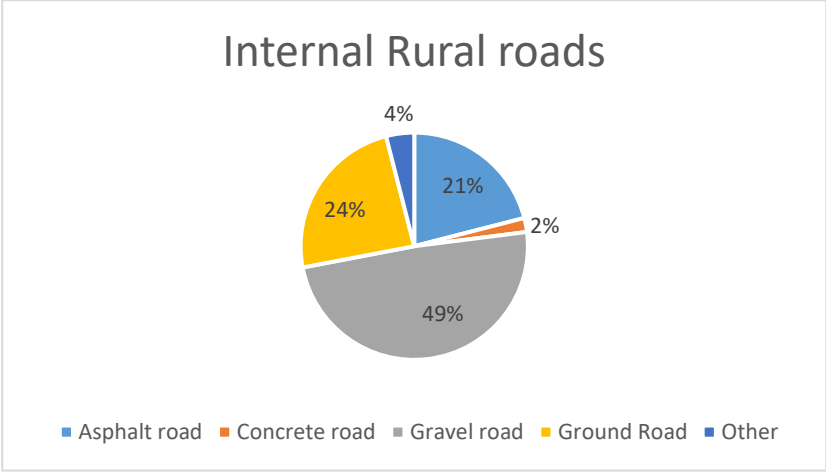


Chart 5 Internal Rural roads

The condition of the internal road infrastructure in the villages is mainly assessed quite negatively, as bad - 58% of the cases, very bad - in 11%, and only in 5% of villages rated as average.

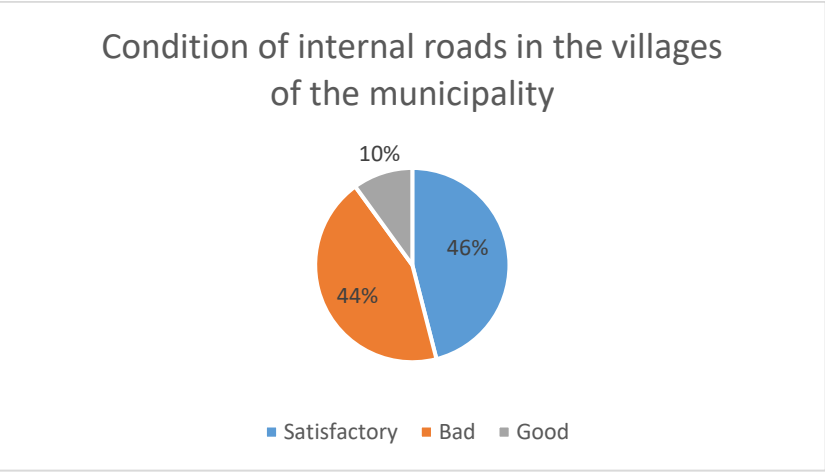


Chart 6 Condition of internal roads in the villages of the municipality

Drainage system_in Kareli Municipality is ensured in 43% of the internal roads, it is partly ensured in 21% of the cases, while in other 36% there is hardly any drainage system on the roads of the villages. For those villages where it's already ensured, the main need is cleaning the drainage system.

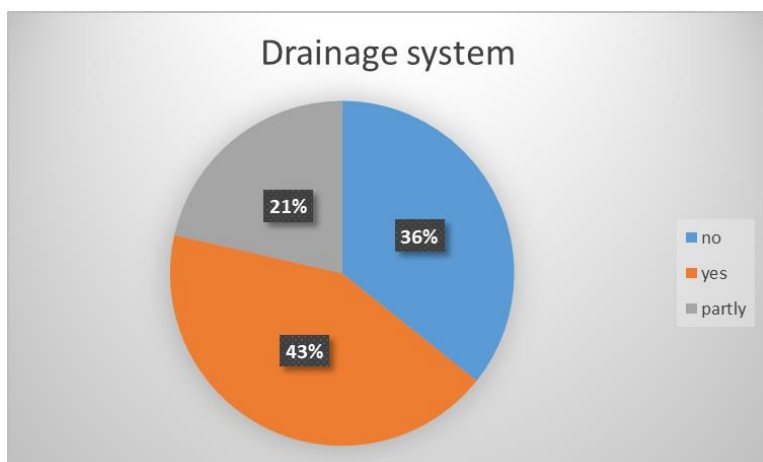


Chart 7 Drainage system

Outdoor lightning

Based on the information provided by the Administration (Executive Body) representatives in the administrative units of Kareli Municipality, 91% of the roads in the villages are equipped with outdoor lighting, and in the case of 9% - partly, mostly on the central roads. It is important that a large part of the inner roads of the villages of the municipality are equipped with outdoor lighting, which is important for the safe movement of the population, especially women and girls during night time.

Transport

No municipal transport operates in Kareli Municipality. The population mainly uses private transport – micro buses, buses or private vehicles to travel and access various services.

The private transport available at the municipality – micro buses, buses – serve only 67% of the villages, while no private transport is available in 33% of the villages.

As for car owners, a large part of them throughout the municipality are male, 92% of the owners of the vehicles are male and 8% are female.

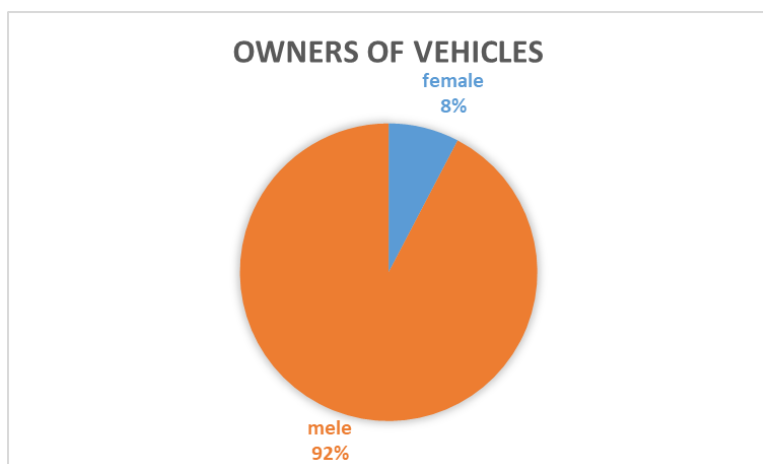


Chart 8 Owners of Vehicles

These data show that access to transport for women remains a significant challenge. Far fewer women than men have their own car. For the population, especially for women, the lack of municipal transport and the insufficient amount of private transport is a problem of movement and creates a barrier to access to various services (including health, education, etc.).

Therefore, it is important to develop municipal transport, scheduled in line with the needs of the local population, especially women/girls. Proper, safe municipal transport would contribute to increasing higher mobility among women, access to healthcare services, improve the quality of life and give the local population more self-esteem.

Gasification and Alternative Energy

The absolute majority of the villages in Kareli Municipality, which represents 96% of the families, has access to natural gas.

Despite that the majority of the villages in the municipality have been gasified, the number of households still use firewood stoves and in some cases gas heaters, remains the major source of heating in winter. 50% of the rural population uses firewood stoves for heating, 45% of households use gas heaters so called karma together with firewood stoves, and an average of 8% of households use natural gas for heating. 6 % of the households in the municipality use natural gas for central heating, while 82% of households have firewood stoves as their main source of heating.

The fact that the families are still using firewood in winter despite the gasification, points at their low income, the families have no central heating or hot water, which would be more energy efficient, ecologically safe and alleviate the household workload of women.

It is important to note that some households (17 households) in Kareli Municipality use solar panels as an alternative energy source. Although the number of families using alternative energy is not that high, this is a positive trend anyway.

Water Supply and Sewerage

Access to water is particularly important for women considering the huge burden of responsibilities primarily in the village: household activities, water supply, sanitation and hygiene, and the welfare of the family. Lack of access to qualitative, constant water supply decreases women's quality of life and negatively affects their health conditions. The issue has become even more important amid the coronavirus pandemic.

In Kareli Municipality, drinking water is supplied through the main pipeline to 56% of the villages, 59% of villages have an individual source of water supply. According to the representatives of the mayor of Kareli Municipality, 92% of the water supply facilities in the villages are protected. The drinking water distribution system in some villages needs to be rehabilitated.

The distribution network of the villages is mainly arranged via polyethylene pipes, only one village (Dvani) was named, where the distribution network is arranged via polyethylene, cast iron and iron pipes.

Drinking Water

Challenges related to the supply of continuous and quality drinking water have been identified in the villages of Kareli Municipality.

Water supply mode:

- 29% of the villages in Kareli Municipality receive water on a 24-hour schedule

- 29% of families in villages of Kareli Municipality are left without water supply
- 16% of the villages in Kareli Municipality are supplied with water on schedule.

The water supply schedule is varied. Especially noteworthy are those villages where water is supplied once every two or three days. E.g. Village Zemo Khvedureti - 60% of the population receive water 1-1.5 hours a day, the village of Dvani near the so-called administrative border - "there is no schedule, water is supplied as much as possible." In some villages the water supply schedule is organized - days and hours, in some cases the water schedule is unclear, which especially is a heavy burden for women - the largest water supply users.

Water Supply Disruption

Delays in drinking water supply are frequent or very frequent in 33% of villages, and rare in 67%. The main reasons for water supply disruption are:

- Mechanical damage: Engine failure, water pump or switching system failure, well pump failure, pipe damage, water well failure, faulty pipeline
- Damage of the water pumping station
- Reduction of water debit related to climate conditions
- Use of drinking water for irrigation
- Power cuts

Quality of Drinking Water

- Mainly (77%), water quality is periodically checked by Kareli Municipality, however, the mayor's representatives note that water is mainly chlorinated once a year. Water quality is not controlled in 23% of villages. No cases of drinking water poisoning have been reported in the municipality.
- 54% of the mayor's representatives assess water quality as good, while 46% assess it as normal. For example, in the village, Berdzenauli, drinking water is salty.

Water and Household Activities

Continuous distribution of quality water causes alleviation of family labor. The heavy burden of family labor falls mainly on women. Often women have to wash clothes or wash dishes in cold water by hand. Water supply disruption, especially in villages has a negative impact on women's health. In order to alleviate labor, families who can afford it buy washing machines even if there is no continuous distribution of water or have to accumulate water supplies and bring them from a long distance. If needed, women even pour water by hand in a washing machine to alleviate their labor even slightly.

In the villages of Kareli Municipality, 63% of households own a washing machine, however a small number of households own a dishwasher - only 5%.

It's also noteworthy the availability of hot water in the kitchen and bathroom, see chart 9.

These data indicate the burden of family labor in difficult conditions, which is dissatisfying and needs to be leveled up.

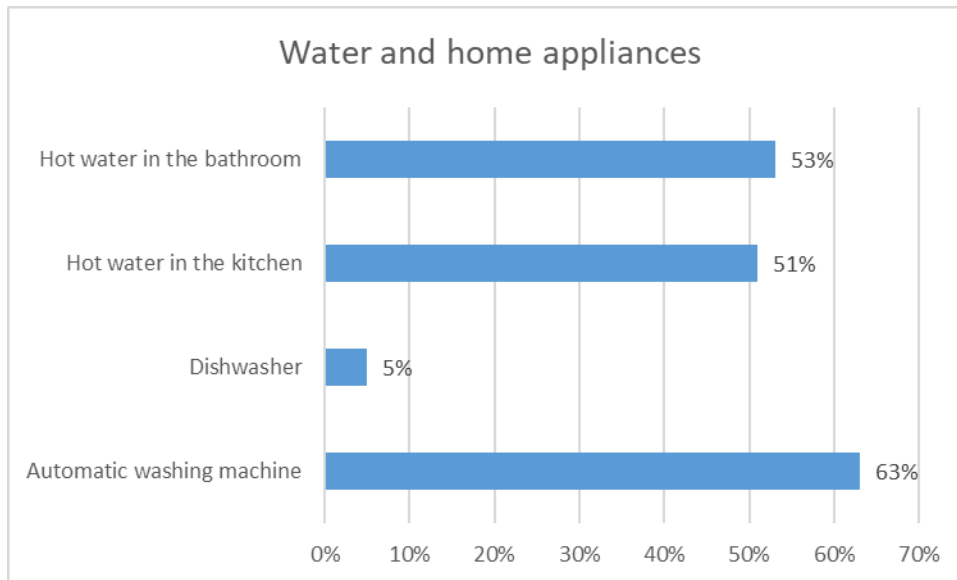


Chart 9 Water and home appliances

Counters in the Water Supply Network. It is noteworthy that the water supply network of the villages of Kareli Municipality is not countered in 74% of cases. Only 15% of villages are equipped with counters.

Irrigation Water. Irrigation water for family lands is mainly available for (48%), partially available for (17%), not available at all in 35% of villages.

Sewerage System. Sewerage system is a problem in the villages of Kareli Municipality. There is neither central sewerage system, nor the local sewerage system.

Waste Management/Cleaning

The situation is difficult concerning the waste management in the villages of the municipality. The population throws household rubbish in bins the number of which is not sufficient in the majority of the villages.

Removal of waste from bunkers is happening daily only in one small town, Agara. In the rest of the cases, garbage is taken out three times a week (12%), twice (60%), once a week (20%).

The problem is the lack of landfills. In some cases, the waste is dumped in ravines, which are not further cleaned.

Women typically manage household waste. It is important to improve municipal waste management policy / infrastructure, involve women in waste management and raise public awareness in this area.

Education

Higher education

The share of women, with higher education in the villages of Kareli Municipality is 10% higher, than the share of men with higher education. See chart 10.

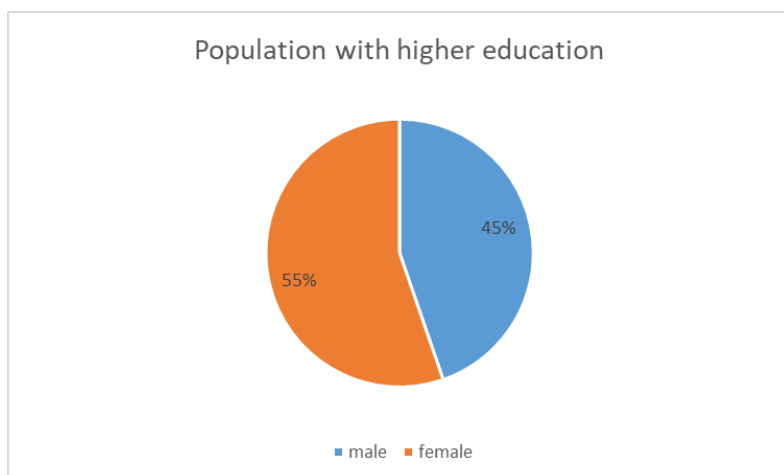


Chart 10 Population with higher education

Schools

The information, provided by the representatives of the mayor about the number of schoolchildren in the villages, shows that the number of schoolgirls at all levels in the schools of Kareli Municipality exceeds the number of schoolchildren. 2% in total. See chart 11 and table 5.

Only 25 of the villages in the municipality have schools. In the villages where the school is not functioning, the children are educated in the neighboring village schools. They are transported by a school bus.

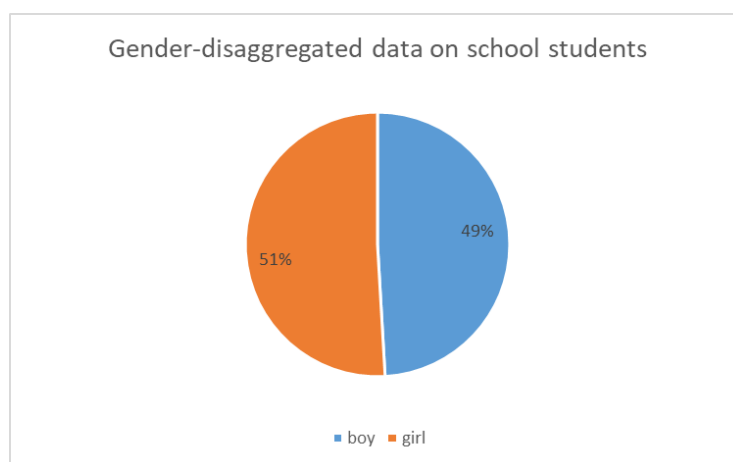


Chart 11 Gender-disaggregated data on school students

Gender-disaggregated data on school students								
Elementary level (1-6) classes			Basic level (7-9) classes			Intermediate level (10-12) classes		
total	boy	girl	total	boy	girl	total	boy	girl
1639	813	826	808	398	410	839	402	437

Table 5 Gender-disaggregated data on school students

In the villages of Kareli Municipality, more than half of the schools are renovated, 68% of the schools are partially renovated, and 17% of the schools are in need of major rehabilitation. Although most villages are gasified, 23% of schools still use firewood stoves for heating during the winter.

Only 58% of schools in villages are equipped with computers, and in 42% of cases schools need to be equipped with computers. Internet is available in the villages of the municipality. Based on the information provided by the mayor's

representatives, in school buildings water is supplied to most of the schools, except for two schools in villages; Koda and Gverdzineti.

The vast majority of schools use a local sewerage system.

Most of the schools in the villages of Kareli Municipality have a sports field, but in many cases they need to be rehabilitated. 5 schools do not have a sports field.

Kindergardens

According to the representatives of the mayor of Kareli Municipality, there are Kindergardens in 15 villages of the municipality with 1072 children. In total there are 1412 children (boys-698, girls-722) children in Kindergarten (2 to 6 years old). See chart 12.

The vast majority of Kindergardens do not have a nursery groups.

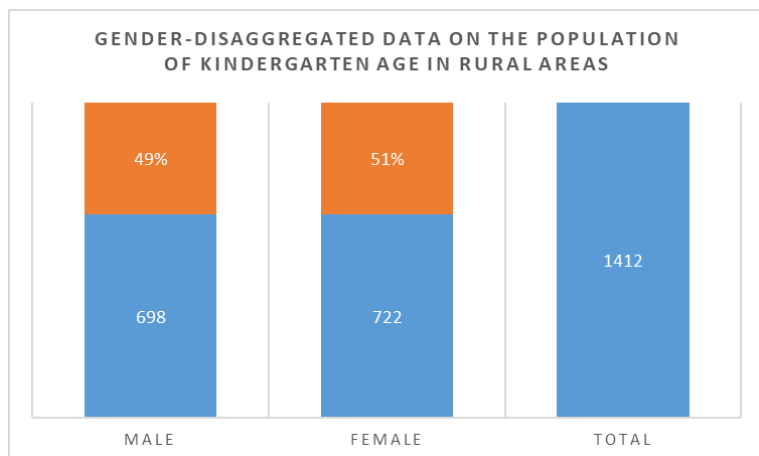


Chart 12 Gender-dissagregated data on the population of Kindergarten age in rural areas

In villages where there are no Kindergardens, children use Kindergardens located in a neighboring village, which is about 1 to 11 kilometers away. Unlike schools, part of the Kindergarten is served by transport. Children move on foot or by private transport.

24% of Kindergarten children do not go to Kindergarten. The reason why such a large number of children do not go to Kindergarten, the mayor's representatives name two main reasons: the long distance and the problem of transport; Village Koda Vardisubani - "10% don't do to Kindergarten, there is no transport"; Village Kheoba " 70% don't go to Kindergarten, because of the long distance"; Chandres

- "67% don't go to Kindergarten, because of the long distance".

In those villages, where children can not go to Kindergarten, there is a large contingent of children. For example, the villages of Bebnisi, Leteti, Mokhisi:

- The village of Bebnisi. Kindergarten age population - 120 (boy-75, girl-45). There is no Kindergarten in the village of Bebnisi. "Kindergarten is in Bebnisi. Children cannot go to the Kindergarten in this village, because of the long distance";
- The village of Leteti. Kindergarten age population is 48 (Boy-28; girl-20) "80% do not go to the Kindergarten, because it is difficult for small children to walk around the districts";
- Mokhisi. Kindergarten age population - 40 (boy-18, girl-22) "2% do not go to the Kindergarten, because of parental decisions"

Children do not go to Kindergarten mainly from villages where there is no Kindergarten, which is probably related to the long distance. A swell to the ability of the parent, mostly mothers, who have to provide transportation for the child in the Kindergarten. What deepens the situation is the lack of municipal transport and lack of access for women to their own transport (only 8% of women have their own car in the municipality). The problem of combining the time required for chores and for a woman to carry a child to Kindergarten and back home, should also be considered.

Kindergardens in the municipality are mostly renovated and provided with heating. Every Kindergarten is provided with drinking water, but in certain cases water gathers in individual reservoirs. The Kindergardens have separate sewerage system

Kindergardens in Kareli Municipality are not properly equipped with Kindergarten equipment, toys and educational materials.

Free Time, Non-Formal Education, Culture and Sports

The infrastructure in the villages of the municipality is not properly arranged for cultural-cognitive or sport activities.

According to the representatives of the mayor of the municipality, in a small number of villages, which have the building of the House of Culture, does not function and therefore no events are held.

The library functions in only 2 villages - Dirbi, Berdzenauli. In the village Berdzenauli there is a library located in the community center, equipped with computer and internet. The library of the village Dirby is not equipped with computer and internet.

Art groups. Only 3% of village children have the opportunity to engage in art groups (music, dance, choir). There is an opportunity to participate in art circles in the municipal center, however, due to the long distance, the children of the municipality are deprived of participation in art groups.

Sports groups. 23% of the villages in the municipality have the opportunity to engage in sports in the following activities - wrestling, judo, football. Except for the villages, there are the same sections in the municipal center in Kareli and also for families who have the opportunity to have children / young people go to K. In Gori.

There is no indoor sports hall in any village. There are instead open stadiums or other outdoor spaces on the territory of schools for sport activities. The vast majority of sports stadiums are designated for football. In certain cases, there are stadiums for basketball and volleyball.

Due to gender-segregated sports and gender stereotypes in society, only boys (53%) use stadiums. In the villages where there is a stadium, most of the boys use it. The small number of girls involved in sports activities mainly play volleyball, rarely basketball and other games (Mayor's representatives did not specify what is meant by other games) where the stadium allows it. It is important to have other alternative spaces in the village where women / girls will have more opportunities to engage in sports activities. Such is the case, for example, with open gym, which are in only 25% of the villages.

It is also important to improve the gender policy of the municipality in the field of sports, which would help eliminate gender stereotypes, equal opportunities and healthy living environment in the municipality.

Free time and spaces

Main gathering places for the population of the villages are the so-called "Birjha", stadium, square, school, village center. Women / girls and men / boys have different opportunities for leisure.

Mayor's representatives point out that the majority of men (65%) spend their free time on the so-called "birjha". As for women in the opinion of the mayor's representatives, the perception of women spending free time is completely different. They note that women spend their free time at home, 59% are engaged in family activities and in rare cases, 18% move out of the family to talk to each other. Literally a woman's free time is again related to the family, family activities.

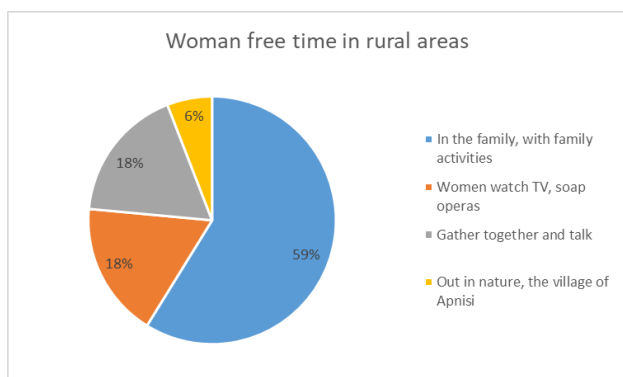


Chart 13 Women free time in rural areas

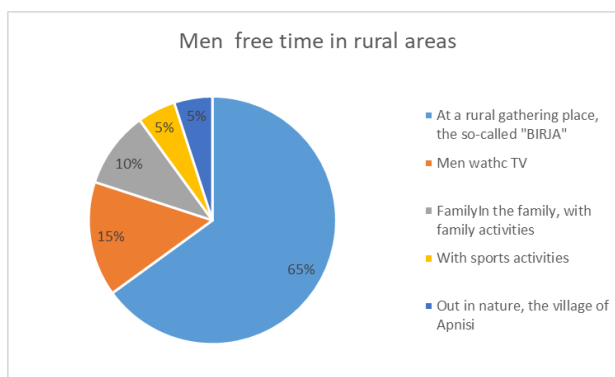


Chart 14 Men free time in rural areas

As for the use of free time by young people and children, although the information was not provided in a gender context, the data available from the mayor's representatives show that in this case, too, there is gender coloration. Young people and children are more engaged in sports activities in their free time, while girls have less access to sports and mainly boys are involved in sports - football, judo, wrestling and others. Mayor's representatives generally point to games, and none of the questionnaires show the use of computers and the Internet, social media entertainment neither in adults, nor in young people and in children. Which requires additional research.

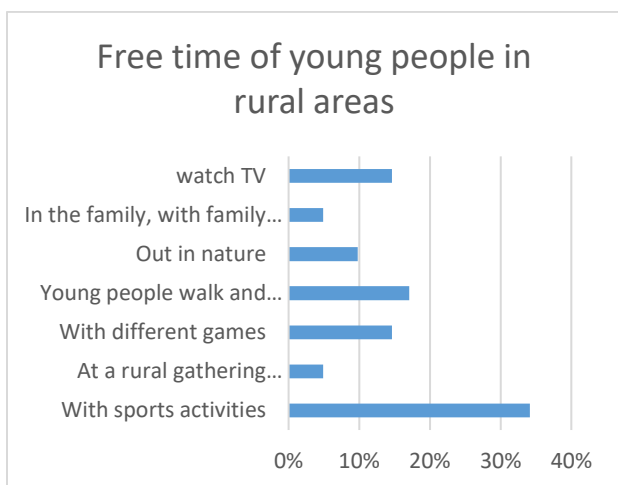


Chart 15 Free time of young people in rural areas

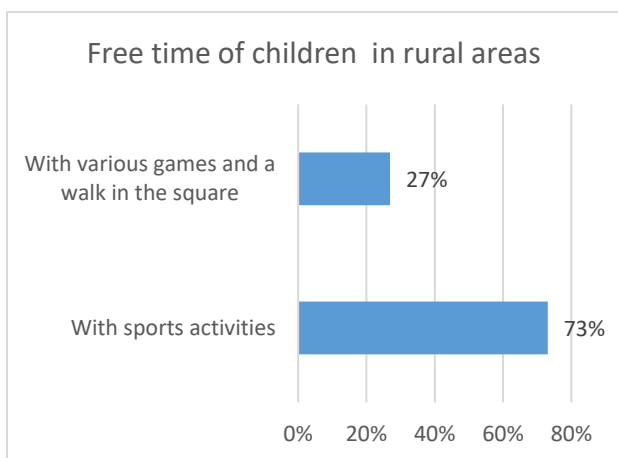


Chart 16 Free time of children in rural areas

It is characteristic for the municipality to celebrate the New Year and Orthodox religious holidays. The data show that the attitudes of the mayor's representatives are in line with the gender stereotypes in the society about women and men's labor, leisure, free time and its use.

Healthcare and Access to Healthcare Services

Primary healthcare

In the villages of Kareli Municipality, the population receives primary healthcare at the village ambulance from a family doctor and a nurse.

Mayor's representatives provided information about the ambulatories in 63 villages out of the 83 villages. According to the information provided, 71% of the villages are not equipped with the ambulatory. Where there is no ambulatory, the population receives services in a neighboring village.

Mayor's representatives assess the service of medical staff mostly positively, although there is an insufficient number of medical staff in some ambulatories. In addition, in some villages the doctor comes once, twice or three times in a week. There is a problem in the ambulatory infrastructure. Some of them need to be repaired, some have problems with access to water and the sewerage system.

Lack of municipal transport is an obstacle to receiving ambulatory services, especially for people with disabilities and retirees who are unable to move independently or find it difficult to get there due to unsatisfactory health. There is also the problem of accessibility for women with young children and parents of children with disabilities.

Ambulance service is available for most villages, although the exception is 2 village (Bani, Batiuri) where ambulance service is not available to the population. Ambulance services are assessed as mostly satisfactory, although the mayor's representative in these 2 villages (Leteti, Spnisi) points out service deficiencies related to timely services.

Pharmacy has emerged as one of the problems as there is no pharmacy in most of the villages. Residents have to go to another village or the center of the municipality to buy medicine.

Screening programs are not available at all in 19% of villages of the municipality.

Distance to medical facilities, less access to transport, established social norms and gender stereotypes, reduce access to quality health care services for women. Especially, attention should be paid to the active involvement of women from villages in the screening program, and increase access of outpatient services, to physician / nurse preventive services, including for persons with disabilities and retirees.

Jobs and Incomes

The main source of income for the population in Kareli Municipality is agriculture (42%), livestock and poultry (30%), cereal crops (10%) and others. See chart 17.

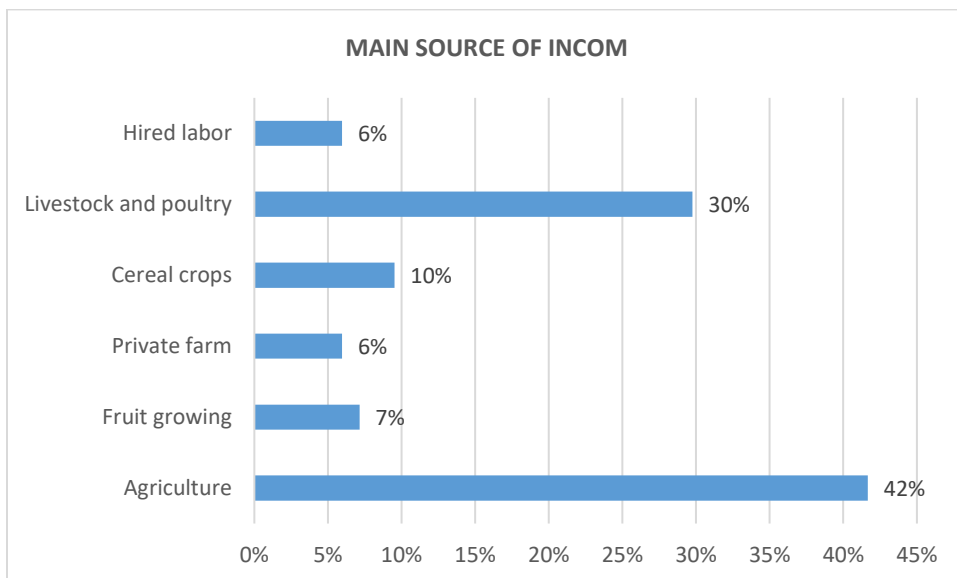


Chart 17 Main source of income

Livestock (39%), horticulture (31%), fruit growing (25%) are considered to be the most profitable type of agriculture in the villages of Kareli Municipality. See diagram 18.

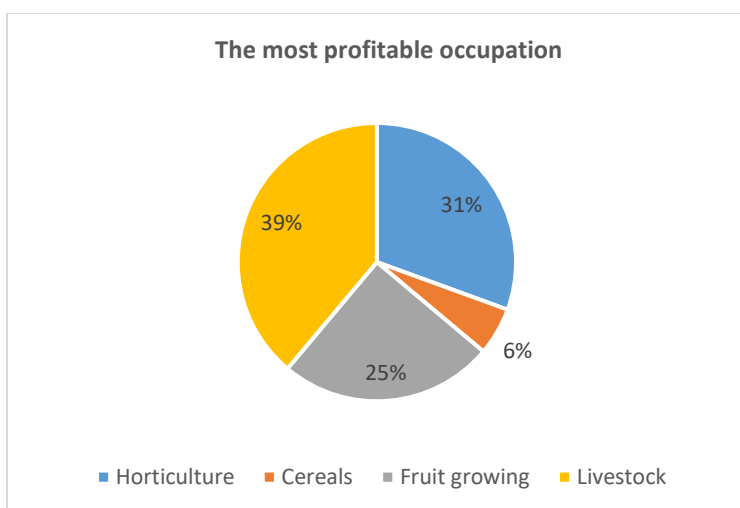


Chart 18 The most profitable occupation

On average, family vegetables meet 59% of the household needs for vegetables.

According to the mayor's representatives, 58% of the villages have no other employment opportunities than agriculture, 16% of the villages have employment opportunities in the private sector, 16% in the public services (school, Kindergarden), and 10% is self-employed. In the case of employment in the private sector, the most often named work places are - shop, pharmacy, bakery.

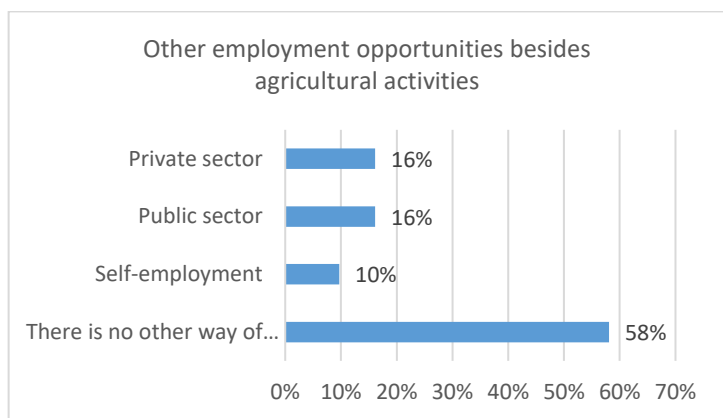


Chart 19 Other employment opportunities besides agricultural activities

90% of mayors believe that agricultural activities are equally distributed equally between women and men, while 7% believe that men work harder, with only 2% of mayor representatives notice that women contribution in agriculture is higher.

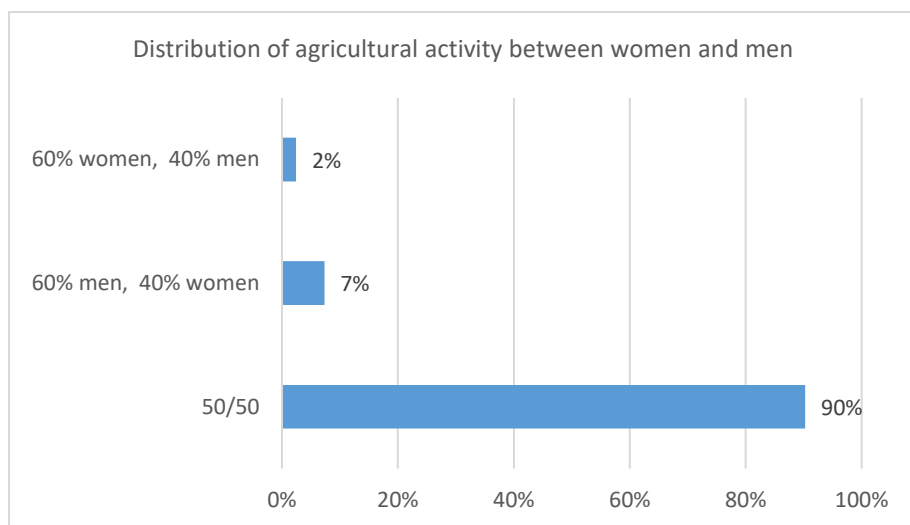


Chart 20 Distribution of agricultural activity between women and men

Given the fact that the most lucrative activities in Kareli Municipality are livestock, horticulture, fruit growing, and the share of women in this field is quite large, especially in horticulture, we can say that the role and labor of women is negligible, which indicates a lack of gender sensitivity.

In agriculture, the most commonly used agricultural machinery is mowing (43%), while 57% of villages lack the equipment for cultivating the land.

The leading sector of the municipality is agriculture. Significantly, agronomist services are not available in a large proportion of villages (77%). At the same time in the municipality, one of the leading sectors is livestock. Access to veterinary services is provided by 92% of the villages.

Half of the villages (50%) have no opportunity to get news, additional information and knowledge on modern agricultural technologies. The population receives information mostly (27%) from the Internet, and from television and brochures (24%).

According to the mayor's representatives, the monthly income of people living in rural areas is quite low. It ranges from 50 to 800 GEL for men and 30 to 500 GEL for women. According to the information provided by the representatives of

the Administration (Executive Body), the income of men is slightly higher than the income of women by 27%. Given the fact that almost 100% of the mayor's representatives are men, their opinion may be subjective, and therefore the difference between male and female incomes may be even greater, given that, according to Geostat, the national gender pay gap in 2020 was 32.4%.

It should be noted that the number of women migrants exceeds the number of male migrants, hence the share of women in remittances sent by migrants from abroad to families is higher.

Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in SLM and LDN

Gender Equality in International Rankings - A National Perspective on Georgia

Georgia has made positive steps in elaborating and implementing a gender equality strategy and has adopted number of international commitments. However, there is an overall consensus that greater efforts are needed to ensure gender equality and eliminate all forms of discrimination against women. Georgia ranked 61st of 189 countries on the United Nations Development Programme's Human Development Index (HDI) 2020⁴, falling in the category of countries with 'very high human development'. The HDI is an internationally comparable measure of average achievement in key dimensions of human development: health, knowledge and living standards. Georgia's HDI ranking has experienced steady progress, rising by seven places since 2014. Its HDI value of 0.812 is below the average of 0.898 for countries in the very high human development category, and above the average of 0.791 for countries in Europe and Central Asia. In terms of the ranking of other neighbouring countries, the HDI 2020 places Georgia ahead of Azerbaijan (which ranks 88th), Armenia (81st) and Ukraine (74th), but behind Russia (52nd), Belarus (53rd) and Turkey (54th).

The Gender Development Index (GDI)⁵ measures gender gaps in human development achievements by accounting for disparities between women and men in the three basic dimensions of human development. The GDI is the ratio of the HDIs calculated separately for females and males using the same methodology as in the HDI.

The female HDI 2020 value for Georgia is 0.800, compared to the male HDI value of 0.817, resulting in a GDI value of 0.980. As a result, the country is placed in Group 1. Country groups are based on absolute deviation from gender parity in the HDI. This means that the grouping takes into consideration inequality in favour of men or women equally.

On the Gender Inequality Index 2020 (GII)⁶, Georgia ranks 76th of 162 countries, with a GII value of 0.331. The GII measures gender inequalities in three important aspects of human development – reproductive health (measured by the maternal mortality ratio and the adolescent birth rate), empowerment (measured by the proportion of parliamentary seats held by women and the proportion of adult women and men aged 25 and older with at least some secondary education) and economic status (measured by the labour force participation rate of the female and male populations aged 15 and older). The GII is built on the same framework as the Inequality-adjusted Human Development Index (IHDI) to highlight differences in the distribution of achievements between women and men. It measures the human development costs of gender inequality. Thus, the higher the GII value, the more disparities between women and men, and the more the loss to human development.

⁴ UNDP (2020). Human Development Report 2020 /UNDP, New York, 2020.

<https://hdr.undp.org/system/files/documents/hdr2020.pdf>

⁵ UNDP (2020). Gender Development Index 2020 /UNDP, New York, 2020.

<https://hdr.undp.org/gender-development-index#/indicies/GDI>

⁶ UNDP (2020). Gender Inequality Index 2020 /UNDP, New York, 2020.

<https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/thematic-composite-indices/gender-inequality-index#/indicies/GII>

On the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index 2021⁷, Georgia ranks 49th of 156 countries and has a value of 0.731 (with '0' corresponding to imparity and '1' to gender parity). The index shows that Georgia's position has improved in terms of its overall ranking, rising from 54th place in 2006. However, its performance has deteriorated on some of the components of the Global Gender Gap Index, such as economic participation and opportunity. In terms of these areas, Georgia ranked 64th of 156 countries in 2021, compared to 41st of 115 countries in 2006. The country's performance on educational attainment also deteriorated (from 28th place in 2006 to 30th in 2021), as did its performance on political empowerment (from 59th place in 2006 to 60th in 2021). However, its performance in terms of health and survival has significantly improved – rising from 115th place in 2006 to 50th place in 2021. In terms of regional comparisons, Georgia ranks 12th on the index 26 countries in Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

Women in Agriculture and Environmental Stewardship - National, Regional, and Local Contexts

The share of rural population in the total population of the country was 42% for 2017. It was reduced by 1% to 41% by 2020, and it is 40.6% in 2021⁸. By 2019, agriculture, forestry and fisheries accounted for 7.4% of gross domestic product (GDP)⁹.

Nationwide problem of land fragmentation is particularly acute in the agricultural sector. The issuance of loans is hindered by various factors in practice. Fragmentation of agricultural lands is high, which makes small enterprises risky. Commercial credit organizations, on the other hand, focus on large farmers as usual.¹⁰

However, when state programs require land beneficiaries to own land, women are in a doubly disadvantaged position because they either do not own land at all or own little land.

According to Geostat¹¹, there is still a radical imbalance between men and women in the percentage of agricultural land distribution. According to 2017 data, this figure was 17.9% for women and 82.1% for men; In the following years, these figures have changed slightly. Namely, in 2018, the area of land used for agriculture was 19% for women and 81% for men, while in 2019, women owned 19.8% and, consequently, man owned 80.2%. In 2020, this figure was 20.7% for women and 79.3% for men.

Recent studies show that rural people are significantly more prone to poverty. However, these risks are equally characteristic of men and women. The poverty rate for women and girls was highest in 2018 at 23.3%, although it was 23.0% for men as well. According to the regions, women and girls living in rural regions are more prone to poverty compared to women and men living in capital city of Tbilisi, who are at the lowest risk of poverty.¹²

In Georgia, a man is traditionally considered to be the head of the household. Accordingly, the share of male-headed households exceeds 60 percent.

⁷ World Economic Forum (2021). Global Gender Gap Report 2021 /WEF, Cologny, 2021.

https://www.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2021.pdf

⁸ GeoStat (2021). Population of Georgia by Regions and Self-Governed Units in 1994-2021 (as of 1 January for each year). [online]:

<https://www.geostat.ge/en/modules/categories/41/population>

⁹ GeoStat (2021) - <https://www.geostat.ge/en>

¹⁰ European Union (2021). Gender Equality in Georgia in GAP II Priority Areas: Country Review // EU 4Gender Equality: Reform Help Desk" project, funded by the European Union and implemented by NIRAS.

https://georgia.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/gender_eng_part_2.pdf

¹¹ GeoStat (2021). Women and Men in Georgia / Statistical Publication, Tbilisi, 2021.

https://www.geostat.ge/media/41855/WOMEN-AND-MEN-IN-GEORGIAN_-2021.pdf

¹² UN Women (2016). Georgia: Gender Assessment of Agriculture and Local Development Systems.

<https://dspace.nplg.gov.ge/bitstream/1234/156815/1/GenderAssessmentOfAgricultureAndDevelopmentSystems.pdf>

Household total income and expenditures as well as poverty indicators do not reveal gender differences among male- and female-headed households. However, gender differences are revealed through an analysis of certain categories of household incomes and expenditures. Incomes from wages, self-employment and selling agricultural production are higher for households where the head is male, while incomes from property leasing, interest on deposit and money received as a gift are higher for households where the head is female. In case of expenditures, expenses on agriculture and property acquisition are higher for households where the head is male, while expenses on health care and clothing and footwear are higher for households where the head is female. Women are less likely to be employed, and their salary/earnings is lower in almost every economic sector - especially in agriculture.

The most recent data of 2021¹³ show that the number of men founding businesses is almost twice as high as the number of women in the same category. In terms of the economic sectors, a relatively small number of women business owners are found in the mining industry, construction, transport and warehousing, and agriculture. On the other hand, the number of female owners is much higher than the number of male owners in areas of activity such as education, health and social services and other services.

The Government Human Rights Action Plan for 2018-2020¹⁴ sets out certain commitments that the State has made to strengthen the economic participation of women living in villages; The Action Plan also sets out a commitment to ensure equal access to agricultural land and real estate. It should be noted, however, that the projects implemented by the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture did not include a gender component. As various reports point out, obtaining agro-credits by women is still a challenge as it involves owning land and other property.

Rural women also have less access to information that includes support for agriculture and manufacturing. It should also be noted that the indicators for the 2020 task of the 2018-2020 Action Plan of the Rural Development Strategy of Georgia¹⁵, as well as newly approved Agriculture and Rural Development Strategy of Georgia for 2021-2027 and its Action Plan for 2021-2023¹⁶, take into account the gender perspective, but, actually, in substantially general priority areas, for example, these action plans aim to raise awareness of innovation and entrepreneurship and to encourage collaboration by promoting skills development and employment (especially for young people and women); The plans also emphasize the importance of increasing the involvement of the population (especially women and youth) in identifying local needs and ways to address them. However, these measures are not sufficient to meet the needs and interests of women and girls living in villages; They also fail to strengthen them economically as these measures are not supported by appropriate effective mechanisms, including the obligation to implement gender budgeting in local municipalities.

The Law on Gender Equality of Georgia¹⁷ does not oblige relevant agencies to provide gender budgeting, gender impact assessment or gender audit and appropriate reporting. Consequently, without these tools, the needs of women and girls living in villages are difficult to be fully reflected in relevant strategies or state and local programs implemented in Kareli Municipality.

¹³ GeoStat (2021). *Women and Men in Georgia / Statistical Publication, Tbilisi, 2021.*
https://www.geostat.ge/media/41855/WOMEN-AND-MEN-IN-GEORGIAN_-2021.pdf

¹⁴ Government of Georgia (2019). Human Rights Action Plan for 2018-2020,
<https://myrights.gov.ge/en/plan/Human%20Rights%20Action%20Plan%20for%202018-2020>

¹⁵ Government of Georgia (2017). Rural Development Strategy of Georgia for 2017-2020 and its Action Plan for 2018-2020.
<https://eu4georgia.eu/wp-content/uploads/Rural-Development-Strategy-of-Georgia-2017-2020.pdf>

¹⁶ Government of Georgia (2019). Agriculture and Rural Development Strategy of Georgia for 2021-2027 and its Action Plan for 2021-2023.
<https://eu4georgia.eu/wp-content/uploads/Agriculture-and-Rural-Development-Strategy-of-Georgia-2021%E2%80%932027.pdf>

¹⁷ Gender Equality Act (2010) // Law of Georgia on Gender Equality of 26 March, 2010 (*Official Gazette of Georgia – Legislative Herald of Georgia* (LHG), web-page: matsne.gov.ge, Ref.: 2844-Is, Registration Code No. 010.100.000.05.001.003.962 - [Unofficial Translation in English]
<https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/91624>

The above programs are implemented by the Rural Development Agency which is operating within the system of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia (MEPA). It has to be noted that, until June 1, 2019, the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia (MEPA) maintained a presence at the municipal level through its territorial bodies, specifically:

- *Municipal Information-Consultative Agricultural Centers*, which were directly subordinated to MEPA.

At the regional level, MEPA was represented by:

- *Regional Agricultural Offices*, which were likewise directly subordinated to MEPA.

It is also important to note that the Municipal Information-Consultative Agricultural Centers operated independently and were not subordinated to the Regional Agricultural Offices.

As of June 1, 2019, both the Information-Consultative Agricultural Centers and the Regional Agricultural Offices were merged into the Agricultural and Rural Development Agency (ARDA), operating under the control of the MEPA. In 2020, this agency was renamed the *Rural Development Agency (RDA)*¹⁸. Following this reorganization, these centers became territorial units of the RDA.

At present, Agricultural Information-Consultative Centers - informally referred to as agricultural extension centers or extension services - are established in each municipality (incl. Kareli Municipality) and are directly subordinated to the RDA. Their primary role is to provide agricultural extension services to farmers and to disseminate information on ongoing and planned agricultural and rural development programs. These centers offer a range of services, including in-office consultations, remote support, and on-site field visits. In addition, extension officers conduct rural outreach activities, including farmer training sessions and informational meetings.

In parallel, the RDA implements government-funded programs and projects initiated by the MEPA. These initiatives are financed through the state budget and are aimed at fostering sustainable rural development and enhancing the link between rural and urban areas. The RDA's mission includes integrating traditional agricultural knowledge with modern innovations to support rural prosperity. Furthermore, the RDA is responsible for managing and developing the national farm and farmer registry system.

In addition, there is established **the *Multistakeholder Municipal Land Degradation (LD) Working Group of Kareli Municipality***. The Working Group was established in 2019 by order of the Mayor of Kareli Municipality as a multi-stakeholder advisory platform aimed at addressing the pressing issue of land degradation within the municipality. The formation of the group aligns with national and international efforts to promote sustainable land management (SLM), land degradation neutrality (LDN) and climate-smart agriculture (CSA) as effective strategies for improving agricultural resilience, ensuring environmental sustainability, and enhancing rural livelihoods.

The establishment of the Working Group was catalyzed by a broader initiative supported by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and implemented under the auspices of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia (MEPA) through the Regional Environmental Centre for the Caucasus (REC Caucasus).

Core Functions of the Working Group Include:

- Providing expert advice and recommendations to the Mayor of Kareli Municipality on land degradation issues;
- Identifying priority areas and strategic objectives for achieving land degradation neutrality (LDN);
- Supporting the planning and implementation of SLM and CSA measures;

¹⁸ <https://www.rda.gov.ge/en>.

- Facilitating stakeholder coordination for project implementation;
- Promoting awareness, capacity building, and knowledge exchange among local communities.

Crucially, the Working Group operates as a multi-stakeholder coordination platform at local (municipal) level, bringing together representatives from:

- Local government (municipal administration);
- Central government agencies and their municipal branches;
- The Office of the State Representative (Governor);
- Academic and research institutions;
- Non-governmental organizations;
- Subject-matter experts.

There are 8 members on the Working Group, of whom only 3 are women. Though head of the Working Group is a woman (Deputy Mayor of Kareli Municipality), it is recommended that the composition of the Working Group be expanded to include more women in order to achieve a reasonable gender balance.

Currently, the following nationally supported programs are available and have the potential to contribute to the implementation of SLM/LDN approaches in the rural municipalities of Georgia, including Kareli Municipality:

*Preferential Agrocredit Program*¹⁹: Preferential Agrocredit Program was initiated by the MEPA and is supported by the central state budget funds. The purpose of the Program is to improve the processes of primary agricultural production, processing, storage and sale by providing the legal and natural entities with cheap, affordable long-term and preferential funds. Estimated allocations²⁰ under the above *Preferential Agrocredit Program* for 2021-2024 will be UD\$ 12 million in total.

*Agroleasing Program*²¹: Agroleasing Program is managed by the MEPA and is supported by the central state budget funds. The program serves for the development of the agricultural products' added value generating infrastructure. Preferential agroleasing are benefited by the companies, involved in creation of the agricultural products (modern farms, greenhouse, etc.) or engaged in any form of processing of agricultural products (storage, packaging, recycling), or producing packaging materials for the agricultural products, as well as the companies, which have approved the state co-financing within scopes of the co-financing Program. Estimated allocations²² under the above *Agroleasing Program* for 2021-2024 will be UD\$ 5 million in total.

*Produce in Georgia Program*²³: The Agricultural component of the program 'Produce in Georgia' is jointly implemented by the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development (MESD) and the Ministry of Environment Protection and Agriculture of Georgia (MEPA) and is supported by the central state budget funds. This includes co-financing of agricultural primary production and processing by the state, inter alia, for high-technology greenhouses of vegetables, berries, herbs and mushrooms; production of seedlings and saplings; gardens, vineyards, plantations of perennial crops; processing fruits, berries, vegetables, mushrooms, citrus etc. Estimated allocations²⁴ for agricultural part of the above *Produce in Georgia Program* for 2021-2024 will be UD\$ 40 million in total.

¹⁹ https://rda.gov.ge/programs/read/agro_credit/5:parent/

²⁰ Estimation is based on approved average annual amount for 2021, however this amount could be substantially increased in post pandemic period.

²¹ https://rda.gov.ge/programs/read/agro_credit/9:child/

²² Estimation is based on approved average annual amount for 2021, however this amount could be substantially increased in post pandemic period.

²³ http://rda.gov.ge/programs/read/agro_credit/10:child/

²⁴ Estimation is based on approved average annual amount for 2021, however this amount could be substantially increased in post pandemic period.

*Plant The Future Program*²⁵: Plant The Future Program is managed by the MEPA and is supported by the central state budget funds. Co-financing will be carried out in two separate components of the program: a) component of co-financing perennial gardens (hereinafter referred to as ‘gardens’ component’) and b) co-financing component of the nursery gardens. One of the objectives of the program is support of the local, high-quality, phytosanitary clean planting material (seedlings) production, which will make possible for individuals interested in creating modern, intensive cultivated gardens, offer cheap, local materials for planting compare to imported ones. Estimated allocations²⁶ under the above Plant The Future Program for 2021-2024 will be UD\$ 25 million in total.

*Young Entrepreneur Program*²⁷: Young Entrepreneur Program supports young entrepreneurs in rural area desiring to conduct a business activity in Georgia. The program is managed by the MEPA and is supported by the Denmark International Development Agency (DANIDA). Program aims at Promoting of development of young entrepreneurs; Investing in value chains of the agricultural products. Estimated allocations²⁸ under the above Young Entrepreneur Program for 2021-2024 will be UD\$ 15 million in total.

*Agro Processing and Storage Enterprises Program*²⁹: Agro Processing and Storage Enterprises Program is initiated by the Ministry of Environment Protection and Agriculture of Georgia (MEPA) with financial support from the state budget. The target area of the program covers all rural municipalities of Georgia. Estimated allocations³⁰ under the above Agro Processing and Storage Enterprises Program for 2021-2024 will be UD\$ 16 million in total.

Moreover, there are also two ongoing international agricultural aid programs relevant to SLM/LDN implementation in Kareli Municipality:

*The European Neighbourhood Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development (ENPARD)*³¹ was launched in 2014 in Georgia with the goal of reinvigorating the agricultural and rural sectors in the country by supporting the Government’s Agriculture Sector Strategy, strengthening small farmers’ organizations, and enabling sustainable rural development. ENPARD is composed of a variety of aid modalities, from direct budget support to the Government to technical assistance and small grants to NGOs. The total budget for ENPARD in Georgia for 2018-2021 (Phase III) is about about 77.5 mln Euro, while for 2022-2025 (Phase IV) it is estimated at 55 mln Euro. ENPARD is operating in 9 selected municipalities of Georgia, including Kareli Municipality.

*The USA-funded Zrda Activity in Georgia*³²: ZRDA is a five-year program for 2016-2021 designed to promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth in target regions by improving micro, small, and medium sized enterprise growth; increase productivity of rural households; facilitate market linkages between producers and buyers; and promote local economic development by establishing and strengthening networks. Zrda targeted communities in proximity to the administrative boundary lines in Shida Kartli Region (incl. Kareli Municipality) and communities with ethnic minority populations. In total, the Zrda activity has been working in 81 communities within five regions of Georgia to create at least 2,400 jobs, increase sales for at least 860 MSMEs, boost incomes of 13,200 households, and generate measurable improvements in community resilience. ZRDA supports gender mainstreaming, in order for women, men, boys and girls

²⁵ http://rda.gov.ge/programs/read/plant_future/2:parent/

²⁶ Estimation is based on approved average annual amount for 2021, however this amount could be substantially increased in post pandemic period.

²⁷ <http://danida.arda.gov.ge/quest/about>

²⁸ Estimation is based on approved average annual amount for 2021, however this amount could be substantially increased in post pandemic period.

²⁹ <http://rda.gov.ge/programs/read/grant/6:parent/>

³⁰ Estimation is based on approved average annual amount for 2021, however this amount could be substantially increased in post pandemic period.

³¹ <https://eu4georgia.eu/enpard/>

³² <https://mepa.gov.ge/En/Projects/Details/48> / <http://zrda.georgiano.ge/index.php/en/about-us> / https://issuu.com/observer-diplomat/docs/diplomat-2020_october/s/11209600

to participate and benefit from development efforts.

In 2020, UN Women published the Gender Equality Profile of Georgia, which included, among other topics, sex-disaggregated indicators for small-scale food producers in Georgia, in accordance with SDG Indicators (see Table 6 below).

Table 6 Small-scale food producers by sex status - according to SDG indicators (Source: UN Women, 2020³³)

Indicator	Data
Average income of small-scale food producers, by sex and indigenous status (SDG indicator 2.3.2)	Data not available
Average monthly income of agricultural population by household from employment or the sale of agriculture products (country-specific indicator 2.3.2.1)	GEL 445 in 2018 (combining income from wages, self-employment and the sale of agricultural products) 43 per cent of the agricultural population produces goods for sale, with an average monthly income of GEL 313.30. However, the distribution is highly positively skewed; therefore, reporting a median income of GEL 133.30 is more appropriate.
(a) Proportion of total agricultural population with ownership or secure rights over agricultural land, by sex; and (b) share of women among owners or rights-bearers of agricultural land, by type of tenure (SDG indicator 5.a.1)	Of the total landowners, 62.3 per cent are men and 37.7 per cent are women. 81 per cent of land is owned by men; 19 per cent, by women. In 2016, women owned 28.2 per cent of the agricultural lands; 10 per cent of the farming land under lease; and 17 per cent of the total farming land (including under lease). Considering ownership by tenure type, women own 19 per cent of the land that has legal ownership or is in legal owner-like possession; 11 per cent of the land that is rented out; and 18 per cent of the land that is operated with a long-term lease (no possession).
Proportion of population living in households with access to basic services (SDG indicator 1.4.1)	14.3 per cent of the rural population does not have access to drinking water on their premises. Collection of drinking water is almost equally divided between men and women (aged 15 and above): 50.6 per cent and 45 per cent respectively. About 77.6 per cent of the rural household population is satisfied with water quality. The piped sewer system is available for 15.8 per cent of rural households.
Access to kindergartens	23.3 per cent of children living in rural areas (aged 36-59 months) do not attend kindergartens.
Number of deaths, missing persons and directly affected persons attributed to disasters per 100,000 population (SDG indicator 13.1.1)	Between 2011 and 2015, the average death rate attributed to natural disasters was 0.2 per cent.

A number of issues were highlighted in conjunction with the above data. Namely, two thirds of the labour force in rural areas is employed in agriculture. The table's data on land ownership by sex point to only a slightly disproportional ownership; however, considering land size, women are in a disadvantaged position, which is also reflected in the economic inactivity in villages.

³³ UN Women (2020). Gender Equality Profile of Georgia / Authors: Nino Javakhishvili, Tamar Tskhadadze, Maia Barkaia, Lika Jalagania (Gender Research Center and D. Uznadze Institute of Psychology, Ilia State University) and Nani Bendeliani (UN Women Georgia).
<https://georgia.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20Georgia/Attachments/Publications/2020/Country%20Gender%20Equality%20Profile%20of%20Georgia.pdf>

Women and men are equally involved in farming, with men spending 98.1 days and women 84.3 days per year in the crops value chain, while men spend 165.8 days and women 259.9 days in the animal husbandry value chain. Taking care of domestic animals and producing dairy products heavily depend on problematic water and gas supplies; this is probably one of the reasons for the long hours spent on animal husbandry.

Indeed, rural women have limited access to basic services, as indicated in the preceding table. These shortages affect women as they are the main caretakers of family members and, thus, use water for everyday household activities such as cooking, washing and cleaning; quite frequently, women wash in cold water to save family expenses.

Waste disposal is a problem for many households without a car. Such situations for rural women may hamper their income-generating activities, as women with limited access to basic services spend much more time and effort on household chores and have less time for other income-generating activities, not to mention free time. The lack of kindergartens - or the poor conditions or long distances of existing ones - leave almost no chance for women with small children to find the opportunity to work.

The shortage of basic supplies pushes the rural population to collect firewood for heating, which, in turn, affects the environment. Mainly poor and elderly women collect non-timber resources, such as mushrooms and berries; a consequence of deforestation is the additional foraging time and effort required of those who rely on forests for firewood, fodder and other non-timber forest products. The lack of transport - and thus the need to walk long distances - is another problem for women who use forest resources. In addition, road construction might create some adverse impacts on the local population, such as excessive dust causing health problems in children and more time spent on cleaning for women, who usually care for the children and take them to see a doctor.

Environmental challenges, including climate change and the risk of landslides, floods, fires and droughts, affect women and men differently. As women are mainly responsible for housework, they are less ready to react quickly to natural disasters. Women and children are 14 times as likely as men to die during disasters. The most vulnerable groups are inhabitants of high mountainous regions and rural areas, poor people and those living below the poverty line, and people living alone.

In addition, some women are victims of varying forms of domestic violence; in the case of economic violence, for example, husbands forbid their wives to work. Other victim women and their children are in need of shelters and crisis centres; however, these are not always accessible. Crisis centres are very limited in number and geographical scope. Rural women have limited access to economic opportunities, like starting their own business or being employed in a highly rewarded position; in addition, they face barriers to taking out loans and borrowing credit as they lack their own income or property.

Not being a landowner creates the additional risk of being excluded from village development programmes and, correspondingly, from decision-making processes. The same holds for IDPs and ethnic minority women. Because of traditional gender stereotypes, women are not entitled to decision-making in public activities; rural women rarely participate in decision-making affecting their own village or town's development, including environmental issues.

Small and medium-sized enterprises provide the main source of economic growth and employment in countries with market economies. During the third quarter of 2018, the share employed in this type of business constituted 63 per cent of the entire employed population in Georgia. Women-owned enterprises were few; beyond that fact, women face problems selling their products as they cannot compete with large food producers, in addition to lacking food-keeping facilities.

The main problem for rural women as well as the rural population is the lack of income and lack of income-generating activities. This, in turn, exacerbates their careless approach to environment protection, which also arises from a lack of

awareness on environmental issues. Women are in a disadvantaged position because of their submissive role in families and societies, lacking a voice in decision-making processes in their own communities. Family responsibilities as dictated by traditional gender roles further impede women's economic and decision-making activities in villages.

Earlier, in 2016, UN Women also published sex-disaggregated data and analyses in terms of gender differences in access to productive resources for agriculture within a regional context³⁴, including for the Shida Kartli region (see *Table 7*), where Kareli Municipality is located.

Table 7 Problems related to Land Cultivation in Shida Kartli Region (Source: UN Women, 2016)³⁵

Problem Description	Rating (%)
None	9.0%
Agricultural land shortage	12.5%
Land cultivation equipment is not available in the region	15.4%
There is not enough land cultivation equipment available in the region/need to wait	13.5%
Land cultivation equipment is outdated (modern equipment is not available)	1.6%
Rental of land cultivation equipment is too expensive	41.4%
Fertilizers, herbicides, fungicides, insecticides, and other chemicals are not available in the region	11.6%
Fertilizers, herbicides, fungicides, insecticides, and other chemicals are too expensive	56.1%
Available fertilizers, herbicides, fungicides, insecticides, and other chemicals are not of the desired quality	18.5%
Qualified agronomists consultation is not available in the region	0.5%
Limited access to irrigation water	47.2%

A large part of the surveyed population in Shida Kartli region (incl. in Kareli Municipality) experienced financial difficulties - this may be influenced or worsened by restricted access to productive resources, knowledge and expertise. A vast majority of the population produced small quantities of agricultural products; just enough for household consumption, or even less. Access to irrigation water, and to a smaller extent, access to agricultural land were the key challenges in the most municipalities of the region.

Access to land cultivation equipment, fertilizers, herbicides, fungicides, and insecticides were also highly problematic in the most municipalities (incl. Kareli Municipality) of the region, mainly due to relatively high costs. About 30% of the population had additional income from non-agricultural activities, however, it was small, and women earned half of what men earn. Many focus group respondents indicated a wish to have a permanent job outside of the agricultural sector, as the latter is less stable. They did not plan to expand farming nor improve their agricultural/farming knowledge and/or skills. Only 1.4% of the surveyed population had used extension services, and a limited number of Technical Vocational Education and Training Colleges offered agricultural education.

³⁴ UN Women (2016). Georgia: Gender Assessment of Agriculture and Local Development Systems.
<https://dSPACE.nplq.gov.ge/bitstream/1234/156815/1/GenderAssessmentOfAgricultureAndDevelopmentSystems.pdf>

³⁵ UN Women (2016). Georgia: Gender Assessment of Agriculture and Local Development Systems.
<https://dSPACE.nplq.gov.ge/bitstream/1234/156815/1/GenderAssessmentOfAgricultureAndDevelopmentSystems.pdf>

Gender stereotypes might further prevent women from getting agricultural training, and fewer women than men were aware of what the extension services offered. While agricultural cooperatives might be a path to increased production, very few respondents were involved in cooperatives, and women constituted only 25% of the cooperatives membership base.

Gender Differences in Access to Productive Resources

Women and men are differently affected by difficulties in access to resources in the most municipalities (incl. Kareli Municipality) of the region. This finding is based on the survey and focus group data³⁶: According to the survey data, about 90% of the population in the target region - Shida Kartli - experienced financial difficulties.

As the survey data showed, respondents identified challenges in relation to **land cultivation**, however the main challenges reported varied across the most municipalities (incl. Kareli Municipality) of the region. Overall, access to irrigation water, and to a smaller extent access to agricultural land appeared to be key challenges in the most municipalities (incl. Kareli Municipality) of the region. The shortage of agricultural land was comparatively lowest in Shida Kartli region. Access to land cultivation equipment was also a challenge in the most municipalities of the region, primarily due to high costs, but also due to waiting periods for accessing the equipment. Few respondents reported that the land cultivation equipment available was outdated, however, in Shida Kartli 10-15% of respondents reported that this equipment was not available at all. Access to fertilizers, herbicides, fungicides, insecticides, and other chemicals was also problematic due to high costs. Kvemo Kartli respondents identified this problem to the lowest extent (5.1%). Access to qualified agronomist consultations and the availability of a labor force were reported as challenges only by very few respondents, while access to markets was identified. Access to markets is complicated because of: a) bad roads (although the main roads are in a good condition, secondary roads in villages are underdeveloped); and b) a lack of money for transport and for renting stalls to sell products in the markets. Finally, access to irrigation water was reported by 35% to almost 50% in Shida Kartli region.

No statistically significant differences were found between men and women in terms of facing the above problems.

The above data presented is also reflected in the needs of the surveyed population, and includes those who are willing to engage in income-generating agricultural activities in the future.

About 20% of the surveyed population reported receiving non-agricultural income via wages and about 10% via self-employment. The data showed a clear gender wage gap: the median annual wage for men is 4,000 GEL, while for women it is 3,000 GEL. The median annual self-employment income for men is 4,000 GEL, while for women it is half of that: 2,000 GEL.

According to experts (key informant interviews), addressing poverty in rural regions and creating a sustainable livelihood as well as income-generating activities were complex issues. Among other things, this would require a change in behavior and a willingness to take certain risks so that production could be increased for sales purposes, for establishing an agribusiness and/or for joining or establishing a cooperatives. However, only 20.9% of those surveyed planed to engage in some kind of income-generating agricultural activities. Out of those who think about expanding **land cultivation activities**, 40.3% were women and 59.7% were men. Some 5.5% planed to take a loan to address their needs.

³⁶ UN Women (2016). Georgia: Gender Assessment of Agriculture and Local Development Systems.
<https://dSPACE.nplq.gov.ge/bitstream/1234/156815/1/GenderAssessmentOfAgricultureAndDevelopmentSystems.pdf>

Generally, loans are more difficult to access for women than for men, as women to a lesser extent possess land or a house that would function as collateral for the bank. In Georgia, women are more often co-owners of property (for example, as shareholders of their parents' property or in the case of divorce) than owners.

Only 9.3% of the survey respondents reported taking a loan to finance farming activities, and no statistically significant difference between women and men was found. Forty-nine percent of these loans were taken for purchasing equipment; 20.9% for purchasing livestock; 17% for operational/running costs; and the remaining 13% was divided among other expenses. Among respondents, 5.3% think that agricultural credits are not equally available for men and women. No statistically significant gender difference is found in this answer.

Key informant interviews showed that most of the population was not primarily interested in agriculture or farm development; they wished to have permanent jobs in, for example, construction, education, or medicine as a main or more sustainable source of income. The key informants also noted that, unfortunately, the rural population does not express a special interest in learning new or other ways of *land cultivation or animal husbandry*. Focus group meetings showed that those farmers who were actively engaged in income-generating activities were also interested in receiving deeper and more advanced knowledge as well as practical skills in their respective areas of interest. Those who were not engaged in income generating activities were not interested in expanding their knowledge, as they did not see a tangible outcome of such development, were scared of innovations, and/or may also lack the finances needed to invest in business development.

Main Gender Inequalities in Agriculture and Rural Development

In fact, gender equality issues in agriculture and rural development are more or less the same across the country – incl. Kareli Municipality of Shida Kartli region. This was consistently demonstrated by FAO assessment³⁷ across the Georgia that attempted to highlight the challenges, gaps and practices in the area of gender and agriculture and rural development that need to be considered by policy-makers and project managers in their decision-making and their implementation of development interventions.

This reiterated the main gender inequalities in the country. These included: the gap between policies, legislation and their implementation; the gender gap in earnings; the vertical and horizontal gender-based segregation in employment; the widespread of gender stereotypes; the rigid division of gender roles and decision-making at all levels, and other systemic issues. This assessment drew attention to rural women's time poverty. Women in rural areas were extensively involved in work related to the production of goods and services for the family and household use. This work included crop production and breeding of livestock in the households' plots and family farms; production of household goods; production of food for consumption by the family and household members and for sale; fetching water and firewood; housework; looking after children, the elderly and sick members of the families. Poor rural infrastructure, the low level of housing, limited access to transport and modern energy supplies increased women's workload and time use. However, even women themselves rarely considered this work because it is not paid and is considered part of their gender responsibilities. As such, their contribution to the agricultural production remained invisible and under-recognized.

At the same time, the above assessment emphasized women's limited access to productive resources such as land, finance and decision-making - and more limited when compared to men - access to information, new technologies and agricultural inputs. This may often happen due to the widespread stereotypes that areas such as, for example, agricultural machinery 'naturally' belongs to the men's domain. Trainings and services for these products also tend to

³⁷ FAO (2018). Gender, Agriculture and Rural Development in Georgia – Country Gender Assessment Series. Rome.
<https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/ad43affd-9e14-41ce-96c7-e9b84edf5709/content>

be directed towards men. This approach not only sustains the existing status-quo. It also overlooks women's existing roles (in the management and storage of pesticides, for example), ignoring the fact that if women had better access to training and information, they would increase agricultural productivity.

Main gender inequalities in agriculture - including sustainable land management (SLM), land degradation neutrality (LDN), and rural development - based on nationwide aggregate data and analyses, can be broadly characterized for Kareli Municipality in the Shida Kartli Region in the section below:

- *Gap between legislation, policies and their implementation*

Despite the progress made by the Government of Georgia over the last two decades in improving the national legislative frameworks and developing policies in gender equality, the enforcement and monitoring of these laws and policies remains a challenge.

- *The social status of women in rural areas (villages) remains low, gender stereotypes persist and there is a low awareness of existing gender inequalities*

This implies a rigid division of gender roles and decision-making within the household and family farming that directly and negatively affects women's economic opportunities. Gender inequalities and gender stereotypes are perceived as somehow natural or acceptable. Agricultural work (as helpers and not as managers) along with domestic and care work are both believed to be women's primary responsibilities, and there is a general underestimation of time workload of women for this work. The disadvantaged status of rural women and the prevalence of gender stereotypes are reinforced at different levels. For example, given the social existing patrilocal form of marriage, rural households have less interest in investing in girls because the potential economic returns are perceived to be significantly lower than that of boys. This has long-term implications for the status of young women and their life opportunities, limiting their abilities to have access to well-paid jobs and other various resources. It also has an impact on overall agricultural productivity and rural development.

- *Significant gender pay gap, and women are overrepresented as unpaid workers*

Because of the perception of women as helpers or contributing family members, they are more likely to be involved in unpaid and informal work, and the gender pay gaps in agriculture, forestry and fisheries are significant. Women are also paid less in almost all the sectors of agriculture. As of 2020, in agriculture, hunting and forestry, women earn 75 percent of men's salary, what falls to 35 percent of men's salary in fisheries. Nearly 60 percent of self-employed women are non-paid workers³⁸.

- *Gender gap in technical and professional expertise on agriculture and rural development*

There is both a vertical and horizontal gender-based segregation in employment, with men being more highly represented in higher managerial positions and in technical subjects as agriculture, engineering and construction, where very few women are represented.

- *Women's access to information, innovation and knowledge is lower compared to men*

Due to deeply entrenched bias, 'farmers' are perceived only as men, while women are seen only as 'wives of farmers.' Rural advisory services, as it was revealed by FAO³⁹, inform farmers by contacting a small number of men from local communities, and who tend to inform other men farmers of the neighborhood. Women are

³⁸ GeoStat (2021). *Women and Men in Georgia / Statistical Publication, Tbilisi, 2021.*

https://www.geostat.ge/media/41855/WOMEN-AND-MEN-IN-GEORGIAN_-2021.pdf

³⁹ FAO (2018). *Gender, Agriculture and Rural Development in Georgia – Country Gender Assessment Series.* Rome, pp. 80.

<https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/ad43affd-9e14-41ce-96c7-e9b84edf5709/content>

usually excluded from these communications and mobilization channels because they are less likely to be regarded as farmers in their own right. Furthermore, women are only between 9 and 25 percent of employees of rural advisory services in the Shida Kartli region, which reinforces the consideration of extension service channels as “masculine” domains. This low access to information, knowledge and agricultural innovation hinders, in turn, women’s economic opportunities.

- *Women’s access to new technologies, machinery and agricultural inputs is lower compared to men*

According to official sources, women and men from rural areas (villages) have similar access to computers and the Internet. However, in family farming practice, men are usually involved in agricultural activities that require technology and machinery, and women are mostly involved in manual and labor-intensive work. Women have less access to labor-saving technologies partly because of the widespread stereotype that machinery is a “man’s thing” and because women have limited access to finance and decision making.

The same happens in accessing irrigation, pesticides, fertilizers and other agricultural inputs. Because men are regarded as decision-makers and those responsible for dealing with providers, women experience de facto barriers in accessing these resources.

- *Women’s limited access to ownership of land and other property*

The lack of land registration limits women’s access to governmental subsidies, credit and grant schemes that operate in the regions because of lack of collateral. More importantly, limited access to land (or any other property) ownership and registration also diminishes women’s status in and outside the family. It has been demonstrated that women who own property are less likely to suffer from domestic abuse, as they have a way out.

- *Women’s limited access to large, more profitable and wholesale markets*

Wholesale marketing is mostly associated with men while retail and small marketing is associated with women. Women have less access to mobility and means of transportation, including trucks, and usually can only carry small amounts of products. As a result, they mostly only have access to local markets. Women usually sell milk, vegetables and fruits, including berries and other non-wood forest products. These are usually products that women produce or collect themselves. Men are mostly associated with selling meat. Women are perceived as better sellers due to the stereotype that women have better communication skills than men.

- *Women’s underrepresented in cooperatives, both as members and as chairpersons*

The Strategy of Agriculture and Rural Development of Georgia⁴⁰ aims to promote women’s social and economic advancement. However, gender equality considerations are not systematically mainstreamed in other laws and decisions. There are programs focusing especially on women’s participation, but they are insufficient. Women only make up 25 percent of all farmers’ cooperative members according to the latest data. As of 2018⁴¹, out of 2 106 cooperatives, only 100 (4.7 percent) were headed by women.

- *Reoccurring gender imbalances in food and nutrition security*

Access to diverse, high-quality food is problematic especially in remote settlements due to poor infrastructure.

⁴⁰ Government of Georgia (2019). Agriculture and Rural Development Strategy of Georgia for 2021-2027 and its Action Plan for 2021-2023. <https://eu4georgia.eu/wp-content/uploads/Agriculture-and-Rural-Development-Strategy-of-Georgia-2021%E2%80%932027.pdf>

⁴¹ FAO (2018). Gender, Agriculture and Rural Development in Georgia – Country Gender Assessment Series. Rome, pp. 80. <https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/ad43affd-9e14-41ce-96c7-e9b84edf5709/content>

Even though women generally buy and cook food for their family, they consume food with lower nutritional value than men do. This has direct effects on women's health conditions, preterm complication and mortality as well as newborn and infant health conditions.

- *Poor rural infrastructure, limited access to transport and modern energy supplies*

Poor public transport and infrastructure are reflected in a lack of regularly scheduled public transport to villages and smaller towns, the lack of lighting, bus stops, commuter information, pedestrian crossings and road signs. This restricted mobility also poses other burdens on women, from limited access to social services including medical services to access to administration, information and decision-making.

- *Poor housing impact on rural women's workload*

Since domestic activities are socially linked with female gender roles, infrastructural development (e.g., women's lower access to transportation and mobility) and the low level of modernization of households, including access to domestic appliances, create and increased burdens for local women. Women are also severely affected by water restrictions as they are responsible for fetching water when there is no centralized water supply. This adds an extra burden to their workload.

- *Access to basic energy recourses as well as modern energy services for rural women*

Other health hazards arise from the fact that women do most of the cooking. They are exposed to large amounts of smoke and particulates from indoor fires and suffer from a number of respiratory diseases. Unequal gender relations limit women's ability to participate and voice their energy needs in decision-making at all levels of the energy system.

- *Low level of access to rural finance*

Women's access to financial resources is dependent on women's access to the property in rural areas (villages). Due to limited or no access to land and other property, women cannot participate in some of the agricultural funding schemes and are not always eligible for bank loans. Women are less likely to be registered as property owners, whether of land, houses, or capital equipment, leaving them at a significant disadvantage. For the same reason, funding schemes in rural areas (villages) are less accessible for women except for the cases when women are the target.

- *Roles in crop agriculture*

Both women and men are major contributors to crop production in Georgia as in other countries of the region. The primary annual crops grown on agricultural holdings are maize, haricot beans, potatoes, vegetables (tomatoes, cucumbers, red beets, cabbages, capsicum and paprika peppers, garlic, dry onions, green onions, greens, carrots, eggplants and other vegetables. Annual crops also include wheat, barley, oats, maize, melons, hay from perennial grasses and hay from annual grasses. As far as permanent crops go, agricultural holdings primarily produce fruits (grapes, apples, pears, quinces, plums, cherries, walnuts, other fruits). Regarding time use, the crop value chain is slightly more dominated by men (98.15 days a year) than women (84.29 days a year)⁴². While women are mostly engaged in producing substance crops for home consumption, men are responsible for cash crops due to its specificity (e.g., mechanization, traveling long distances and dealing with providers and middle persons are associated with masculine gender roles). Pest and disease management are

⁴² UN Women (2016). Georgia: Gender Assessment of Agriculture and Local Development Systems.
<https://dSPACE.nplq.gov.ge/bitstream/1234/156815/1/GenderAssessmentOfAgricultureAndDevelopmentSystems.pdf>

also viewed as men's tasks. Women are responsible for buying, sowing and sorting and are heavily engaged in the manual harvesting of crops.

- *Rigid gender-based roles*

Men in Georgia are stereotypically expected to be the main breadwinners, providers and protectors of women and the family. These masculine gender roles - often associated with alcohol, tobacco consumption and risk-taking behaviours - put pressure on men, leading to frustration when these social expectations are not fulfilled.

- *Data gaps on gender issues in agriculture and rural development*

Availability of sex-disaggregated data at the national level has increased in recent years. Since 2011, Geostat has regularly collected sex-disaggregated data in health, education, social protection, labour, income and expenditure, entrepreneurship, crime and representation in the institutions of governance policy areas. These statistics are presented in the Geostat annual publication "Women and Men in Georgia"⁴³. Despite the progress being made, there are still areas where accurate and reliable gender-sensitive data and gender-specific indicators are needed.

Recommendations for Advancing SLM and LDN in Kareli Municipality through Gender-Responsive Approaches

As of 2021, women comprised more than 53% of the total population in Georgia⁴⁴. According to the Georgia ranked 61st of 189 countries on the United Nations Development Programme's Human Development Index (HDI) 2020⁴⁵.

2020 Human Development Report by UNDP⁴⁶, Georgia has improved its Gender Development Index (HDI) rating, securing the 60th spot globally. Georgia's HDI stands at 0.814 with a marginal decline from its 2019 value of 0.816.

Like many other countries worldwide, Georgia has yet to fully regain its pre-pandemic development levels. When accounting for societal inequality, Georgia's Inequality-adjusted HDI experiences a reduction of 10.6 percent, settling at 0.728. While this reflects a slight improvement from 2015, when Georgia's HDI lost 12.5 percent to inequality, Georgia's decline in HDI is still noticeable compared with other countries in the Eastern Europe region. Gender Inequality Index (GII) that measures disparities across reproductive health, empowerment, and labor market participation, ranking Georgia 69 out of 166 countries with a GII value of 0.283 in 2021, Georgia has demonstrated steady progress in reducing gender inequalities since 2009. However, recent years have seen a slight regression, with Georgia GII rising to 0.287 in 2021.

These indicators suggest that Georgia, including the **Kareli Municipality**, generally demonstrates relatively equitable gender conditions, which provides a favorable foundation for addressing gender-related issues and promoting further progress.

⁴³ GeoStat / Women and Men in Georgia / Statistical Publications.

<https://www.geostat.ge/en>

⁴⁴ GeoStat (2021). Population of Georgia (as of 1 January 2021). [online]: <https://www.geostat.ge/en/modules/categories/41/population>

⁴⁵ UNDP (2020). Human Development Report 2020 /UNDP, New York, 2020.

available at: <https://hdr.undp.org/system/files/documents/hdr2020.pdf>

⁴⁶ UNDP (2021). The 2020 Human Development Report.

<https://hdr.undp.org/system/files/documents/hdr2021.pdf>

There is a need to contribute directly and indirectly to enhance the status of women by strengthening their capacity to participate in decision-making processes and engage in SLM/LDN. These efforts have the potential to improve their economic well-being.

Rural areas (villages) in Georgia, similar to the **Kareli Municipality**, are experiencing population decline primarily due to a lack of economic opportunities and jobs. This migration trend affects both men and women, with approximately 56% of migrants being men and 44% women in 2021.

There is a need to consider this demographic dynamic and address migration-related challenges by fostering local opportunities for both men and women.

The key areas in agriculture, and in particular in SLM/LDN have to be strategically targeted with a focus on gender equality and women's empowerment to ensure that SLM/LDN contributes effectively to community well-being. In **Kareli Municipality**, more than 52% of the total population are women, and they are disproportionately affected by agricultural land degradation due to their significant yet underrecognized roles in SLM.

Women's and men's needs in this context **differ due to their distinct roles** and responsibilities. Women are primarily concerned with securing reliable sources of fodder, improving livestock health, and enhancing productivity to support household nutrition and income. However, they have less access to cropland leasing, land ownership, and financial resources, which limits their participation in SLM decisions and their eligibility for available credit and grant schemes. Consequently, their economic opportunities are constrained, exacerbating poverty and inequality. In contrast, men are more involved in crop growing, market access, and cropland infrastructure-related aspects.

These differences have to be addressed through gender-responsive and transformative approaches that ensure that agricultural activities are tailored to both women's and men's needs and constraints, preventing unintended reinforcement of gender inequities.

Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) targets in the municipality will become more productive, sustainable, and resilient to climate change by incorporating gender-responsive and transformative considerations.

In terms of inclusive decision-making and capacity building, active promotion of women's participation in community-level decision-making processes related to SLM is very important by setting a target of at least 50% female representation in local planning activities and training sessions.

Through such activities women may will receive leadership and technical training tailored to their roles in SLM, enhancing their decision-making power and influence. LDN baseline assessment, feasibility studies, and Municipal LDN Strategy will integrate gender-responsive and gender-transformative perspectives. This, in turn, will encourage the active and effective participation of women and reflect their needs throughout the degraded lands restoration activities, emphasizing affirmative action during restoration planning and implementation, supported by gender-responsive and transformative budgeting. Women will particularly benefit from skills development, education, and training, as well as improved access to modern knowledge, which will contribute to increasing both their incomes and social capital.

Additionally, it has to be developed **Municipal Gender-Responsive Communication and Awareness Strategy** to promote SLM/LDN. This strategy has to incorporate gender mainstreaming across knowledge products, including approaches such as engaging both male and female knowledge developers for diverse perspectives, using gender-responsive language and balanced imagery that portrays women as agents of change, and ensuring content is based on reliable sources and gender-disaggregated data. It will also reference relevant national and international policy frameworks, strategies, and plans.

Municipal gender analysis has to be conducted periodically to provide gender-responsive and transformative recommendations to ensure that gender considerations are properly integrated into SLM/LDN, aligned with national gender equality legislation⁴⁷ and addressing existing gender equality barriers⁴⁸.

Comprehensive Municipal Gender Mainstreaming Activity Plan in SLM-LDN for Kareli Municipality has to be also developed, capturing insights from the in-depth gender analysis to empower women and men while achieving gender-equitable outcomes. This plan has to ensure appropriate and equal participation or representation of women and men in decision-making in SLM/LDN activities. It has to also consider women's and men's different needs based on their concerns, experiences (including roles and responsibilities), and constraints, ensuring that proposed activities and approaches lead to gender-responsive results without unintendedly reinforcing gender inequities. The plan has to include specific gender targets to integrate gender considerations into monitoring and evaluation processes. Additionally, gender will have to be properly mainstreamed within the appropriate budget to ensure sufficient financial and human resources are dedicated to gender-responsive activities.

Conclusion

The gender profile of Kareli Municipality shows that certain steps have been made to elaborate and implement gender policy: the Gender Equality Council has been established, and the 2021-2023 Municipal Gender Equality Action Plan has been approved.

However, it is necessary to make rapid steps to move the practice of gender policy implementation in the municipality to a new level.

First of all, the municipality should ensure regular registry of gender statistics so that while elaborating the municipal policy and programs/projects it could ensure gender mainstreaming, consider the needs of girls/women and implement local policy that supports gender equality.

It is necessary to elaborate a new municipal plan that would lead to solving the challenges identified by the gender profile of the municipality:

- Improve the rural infrastructure, especially to ensure water provision in every family, arrange waste management (add garbage bins, increase the frequency of taking out the garbage, make sure everyone takes rubbish to bins, etc);
- Ensure municipal transport, or to support private companies offer comfortable services to rural population;
- Increase access of the families to Kindergartens in every village (add transport wherever necessary);
- Increase access of the families to Kindergartens in every village (add transport wherever necessary)

⁴⁷ Gender Equality Act (2010) // Law of Georgia on Gender Equality of 26 March, 2010 (*Official Gazette of Georgia – Legislative Herald of Georgia (LHG)*, web-page: matsne.gov.ge, Ref.: 2844-Is, Registration Code No. 010.100.000.05.001.003.962) - [Unofficial Translation in English] <https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/91624?publication=9>

⁴⁸ Parliament of Georgia (2018). Gender Equality in Georgia: Barriers and Recommendations.

<https://www.undp.org/georgia/publications/gender-equality-georgia-barriers-and-recommendations-2018>

- Increasing access to health services, ensuring the involvement of rural people in screening programs, introducing preventive health measures on the basis of rural outpatient clinics;
- Increase access to healthcare services, ensure involvement of rural population in screening programmes, eradicate the practice of home birth, include preventive mechanisms to rural hospital service;
- Improve rural sport infrastructure in a way to ensure girls/women's involvement in sport activities;
- Create spaces for cultural activities in rural areas;
- Create spaces for social gatherings, ensure parks and squares;
- Finance household horticultural programmes by raising knowledge on bio and eco production aimed to increase rural women's income.
- Raising the gender awareness of the representatives of the mayor's administrative unit in order to improve the quality of gender-segregated information collection and analysis of the different needs of women / girls and men / boys.