

THE GEORGIAN FAMILY IN THE TRANSITION CONDITIONS

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ABSTRACT

The process of democratization and transition to the market economy in Georgia has in the first place brought about the re-distribution of rights and obligations between the state and its citizens. Drastic socio-political changes have radically altered ways of life, leading to the emergence of unemployment, marginalization of certain individuals and groups, deterioration of once officially recognized standards and systems of values, and a sharp rise in the social and economic activities of people. Migration for the purposes of conducting trade or seeking long-term employment have become quite common. As for the impact of democratization and the market economy on Georgian family, it is clear that Georgia still remains a traditional country. According to the Georgian culture and traditions wife is responsible for well-being and morality as well as for bringing up children. However, as time passes this pattern is getting obsolete. With the increased westernization, Georgian women assume more independent roles and care much more about their professional lives, which is not fiercely protested by their partners. The results of the questionnaire displayed changing tendencies, though it was also obvious that in some respects situation has not changed significantly. That it is desirable to conduct such studies at a regular basis in order to be able to obtain more reliable data and to draw much more intelligent and relevant conclusions.

Keywords: Georgian Family, traditions, women's role, democratization

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INTRODUCTION

Georgia is a newly independent country in the Caucasus, formerly a southern republic of the Soviet Union, is bordered to the north by the Russian Federation, to the east by Azerbaijan, to the west across the Black Sea by Ukraine, to the south by Armenia and to the southwest by Turkey.¹ The territory of Georgia covers 69,700 km² and is influenced by a temperate seasonal climate. According to 2002 census, Georgia's population is 4.4 million in the territories controlled by the central government of Georgia, nearly 84% of whom are ethnic Georgians, 6.5% Azeris, 5.7% Armenians, 1.5% Russians, and 2.5% others. Orthodox Christians constitute 83.9% of this population, Muslims 9.9%, Armenian-Gregorians 3.9%, Catholics 0.8%, others 0.8%, none 0.7%.² Progress on market reforms and democratization has been made in the years since independence, but this progress has been complicated by two ethnic conflicts in the breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. These two territories remain outside the control of the central government and are ruled by de facto, unrecognized governments, supported by Russia. Russian-led peacekeeping operations continue in both regions. A war broke out recently between Russia and Georgia in August 2009, which threatens the territorial integrity of the country.

As in all the other spheres of the life, the post-Soviet countries have been undergoing remarkable transformation in the family structure, Georgia being not an exception. Just as there is a transformation on the individual level from the Soviet man to the man of society³ through homo transformativus and homo economicus,⁴ the Georgian family has been experiencing, and affected by, substantial problems and alterations in parallel to the transition from the centrally planned economy to the market economy. These problems include unemployment, inflation, the poverty of families not known before.

In this paper we examine the transformation process of the Georgian family during the transition period accompanied by social, economic and cultural, and moral problems. The research covers description and analysis of the Georgian family, such as creating a family, decision-making mechanism therein, changes in the social environment and economic model of the family and other information connected to the developing structure of the Georgian family. The study also includes the results of a survey conducted to find out the

impacts of the transformation process of the Georgian family in the market economy conditions.

I. GEORGIAN FAMILY AND ITS SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL MILIEU

A. Georgian Family

Family denotes a group of people affiliated by consanguinity, affinity, and co-residence. The concept of consanguinity originally refers to relations by blood.⁵ Throughout history family has been the focal point of all aspects of group life.⁶ Family or kinred provided for the vital needs of its members, and was based on a carefully worked out division of labor by sex and age, in which men, women, and children had well-defined responsibilities. Georgian families are mostly characterized by their traditional relations among family members. This feature of the contemporary Georgian families is a character of the Eastern culture while traditional norms are somehow eroded, lost or forgotten in the Western societies to a considerable extent. The Georgian society remains male-dominated. The traditional image of a woman's role and responsibilities is that she should keep the family together, look after the children, and maintain the home. A man, meanwhile, is considered to be the head of the family, and he does not view the woman as an equal partner in family decision making. In Georgia, as elsewhere, women have always been subject to traditional gender roles and expectations: the experience of the majority of women -that of carrying the double burden of working and caring. However, shifts in gender roles are now increasingly evident. In the process of transition to a market based economy, women appear to be not only responsible for housekeeping and childcare, but are also breadwinners. The traditional family model of male provider and female homemaker, which was standard during the Soviet era, is observed to be changing. In the middle and lower classes of society (the majority of the population), women find employment easily than men (although such work is largely unregulated and often exploitative), whereas men are increasingly confronted with the problems of unemployment, poverty, and lack of opportunity.⁷

1 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Georgia_country, 13 Aug 2008.

2 <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/gg.html>, 13 Aug 2008.

3 See, Özsoy, 2006, pp. 71-103.

4 Sulaberidze, 2004, pp. 75-8

5 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Family> accessed on 18 Aug 2008.

6 Burt N. Adams, John. L. Campbell. *Framing the Family* (Long Grove, IL.: Waveland Press Inc., 1984), 1.

7 Antadze, 2000.

The Georgian family even in urban setting often consists of three generations, and the eldest male is considered as the head of the family, exercising high authority. Although basic household in cities commonly consist of a nuclear family - parents and children, still quite frequently grandparents would live together with them, sharing responsibility for bringing up the children. Children are the focal point for any family, and much attention is paid to their education and development, especially in educated layers of the society.⁸

Georgian national culture, although male-dominated, strongly values respect to a woman, and rude or indiscreet attitude towards a woman is strongly disapproved. At the same time, women were supposed to fit to there predominantly subordinate roles, concentrate on family-related duties. Their behaviour outside of family is traditionally more restricted by social norms than that of males, and marriage is considered to be a norm.⁹ Georgians ascribe great importance to kinship ties, and the kin are expected to share both happy events and grievances. Relatives meet regularly at important social events such as wedding parties or funerals, and neglecting social duty to attend is disapproved. Kinship system played very important role in the period of extreme hardship (1992-1994) cushioning the implications of economic crisis, when social welfare appeared fully disrupted. Obligations towards family members and kin as well as friends are considered a priority and are placed before obligations to the state and society at large. The family structure of Georgia could, and to considerable degree still can be described as traditional.¹⁰

B. Socio-Economic and Cultural Milieu

In the Caucasus region the process of transition to the market economy has resulted in a significant worsening of the economy. Georgia is facing various problems in different areas, wherein the transition has been accompanied by economic and political crisis (Pkhakadze 2004). This has been related to the national conflicts arising from the territorial reallocation, on the one hand, and from an increase of the size of the shadow economy on the other. In the first half of the 1990's, the wages and salaries earned in the private and public sectors, the incomes received from private farms and earned in small business were very low and became the complex source of incomes for the population. The size of these incomes, in total per family, made up only the minimum amount for the living conditions. In these years, the

economic reforms in the Caucasus region were only in the initial stage and they had not yet touched sharply the social sphere (Melikidze and Tarkhan-Mouravi 1996).

The process of democratization and transition to the market economy in Georgia has in the first place brought about the re-distribution of rights and obligations between the state and its citizens. Initiative and responsibility suddenly shifted from the state to the people who had neither instruments of legal defense nor experience in providing for themselves. Socio-political changes caused unemployment, marginalization of certain individuals and groups, deterioration of once officially recognized standards and systems of values, and a sharp rise in the social and economic activities of women and young people. (Ravallion 1994). Unpunished corruption at the highest levels undoubtedly played a role in the migration of corrupt behavior into everyday life.

Transition to new political, economic and social systems has to a considerable degree affected families. In the first years after independence, however, devoid of work and their traditional role of breadwinners, men found themselves out of place in a society and in a family. Unlike more flexible and active women, men at large did not succeed in adjusting to new economic realities, they did not seek opportunities to open own business or find jobs outside their professional field. The base of their authority to a certain degree became eroded, and frequently even re-establishing in the subsequent period of their economic role in the family would not fully return their habitual dominance in family-related decisions. Indeed, confronted with the urgency of finding the means for feeding the family, women proved to be more flexible than their spouses, showed more readiness to "downgrade". Thus many women with the PhD degree gladly took the jobs of housekeepers or other toil. Petty trade was most vibrant business, especially in nineties, almost exclusively occupied by women. Making shuttle journeys to Turkey and Russia, bringing food and commodities for resale in Georgia, trading in small kiosks or market places - still remains females' domain. Women are also active in rapidly developing hotel and bed-and-breakfast business. They, more than men, are employed by international organizations. If at the beginning of transition men comprised the majority of economic migrants, now the pattern is apparently changing. Women seem to find jobs abroad more easily than men. However, if male migration target is Russia, where men are mostly occupied in construction business or trade, women more often go to Greece, Israel and US, where they work in families as housekeepers, au pair (nursemaid), or look after the old people.¹¹

⁸ Sumbadze & Tarkhan-Mouravi, 2003, 2.

⁹ Ibid, 2.

¹⁰ Sumbadze & Tarkhan-Mouravi, 2003, 2.

¹¹ Ibid, 3.

Migration for the purposes of conducting trade or seeking long-term employment have become quite common, bringing about greater knowledge of other cultures. It is very important to find out how the Georgian family has adapted to the novelties of democratization and the market economy and in what way this situation has affected the status/role distribution among the family members, their value orientations, and the position of a family, as a social institution, within a broader social system? Under socialism it was considered that the essential family-related social problems were settled. Currently, in the republics of the Caucasus region the process of regulating incomes is generally based on the activities of market forces. (IDP's Reference Book 2002).

In Georgia, household incomes are produced by employment in both public and private sectors and distributed according to the form of their value and kind. In recent years the share of the private sector in the whole economy has been continuously growing. (World Bank 1999). In recent times employment in the private sector has kept expanding. Some 35% of the population of Georgia is engaged in the private sector of agriculture. In contrast with other countries, economic reforms in Georgia have not been followed by a radical polarization of the population of the villages. In order to avoid unemployment, a large number of inhabitants of towns returned to land which belonged to their fathers and grandfathers, but they still keep in touch with the town. The phenomenon of a "population with two addresses" has emerged. These circumstances partially explain the indicator of registered unemployment in Georgia, which is 8-12 %, whilst the same figure for the European countries at the most critical periods was more than half of the population able to work. Some new trends of income production and distribution are connected with the creation of self-employment and activation of people's savings (Tokmazishvili 2005). The sale of property, accumulated in the past, gives the population a way to survive, in the form of self-employment. People create working places themselves, by establishing small markets for retail sale in a disorganized way, or by developing small handicrafts. The share of self-employment in total employment has been increased. The small salaries in the public sector influence people to seek additional working places and to be employed at three, four and sometimes more places simultaneously. Besides work in the public or private sector, self-employment and work on farms create the general incomes for a large number of families. Income from humanitarian assistance, especially for refugees and children, makes up a significant share of income among the population of the Caucasus region. In the process of liberalization of prices, staple goods were distributed at low prices for special cards.

Nowadays complete liberalization has been carried out and subsidies have been finally cancelled (World Bank 1999).

Poverty continues to be one of the main sources of human misery and at the same time a serious obstacle for democratic development in Georgia. Poverty is defined as a standing of a human being or family when it has no capability to satisfy basic needs (food, shelter, physical safety, basic education, personal growth, health, communication) due to low income or nonavailability of money. The great section of the population (more than 11 percent) live on the margin of, or below, the poverty line, many owing their survival not to state safety net but to the system of informal benevolence of their extended family, friends or neighbors. (Greely 1994). Still unemployment or underemployment remains the key issue in causing poverty.

There is significant difference between rural and urban poverty. They considerably differ from each other. Urban poverty is mostly related to an insufficient food supply, which is viewed as an indicator of severe and deep poverty. This is conditioned by the fact that households of rural places consume the food of own production (EDPR 2003). Urban poverty is much more severe and much deeper, being highly sensitive towards seasonality and climatic fluctuations, as well as depends on availability of seasonal credits and supplies. The significant portion of the poor in Georgia are indeed the new poor, their poverty caused by and linked to the current economic crisis, ethno-territorial crises or other transitional processes. It seems to be important to distinguish between the chronic poverty, and the transitional/new poverty, as the interventions and approaches need necessarily to be different in order to obtain positive results (EDPR 2003).

Poor living conditions, failing utilities and dirty environment are among most apparent signs of poverty. The reduction of poverty is impossible without serious improvement of the living conditions both in the narrow and wider senses, i.e. the quality and size of the living space for a household, but also the neighborhood, services and whole environment. Efforts to increase awareness of the problems and also of what can be done to change these at individual, community and government level should be made in order to achieve a habitat in line with the changing society and one which is conducive to health and happiness now and in the future. However, different approaches are needed when dealing with special cases of universal poverty in some, in particular, rural regions, or with respect to the chronic poor with very limited human capitals, like old lonely pensioners and disabled. Other especially important cases include those of the homeless or orphaned/careless children, and the poorest of the poor who often escape the safety nets due to difficulty in registration of the homeless,

pauperized persons with cut family ties. Selective policies should be elaborated related to different kinds of poverty. Possible negative implications of institutionalized and prolonged humanitarian activities must be clearly understood, particularly with regards to development of dependency, the impact on the price system of food and drugs, employment of the best labor force and the introduction of higher levels of remuneration, etc. At the same time, there are cases of poverty linked to marginal vulnerabilities like age, health status, etc., where the institutionalized assistance should have permanent character, and the aim is just to improve its efficiency (Chambers 1995).

Poverty in Georgia has its historical-cultural reasons. Along with the similarities observed in scenarios of the impoverishment, there are many differences in expressing and perceiving poverty in the regions of Georgia. Differences in coping strategies and groups of poor are specified by economic, ethnic, geographic-climatic, and cultural. To be successful, any intervention or program that aims at the alleviation of poverty should take these differences into account. Also, different approaches are needed when in case the whole community is poor, or when the poor are randomly represented in all communities. When the poverty is just incidental, whether it is in urban or rural areas, mostly we have to deal with the households or individuals whose scarce capitals and resources would not allow them to develop sustainable livelihood without external support, which often has to have continuous form as in the case of lonely old and disabled. One of the possible directions of development in this latter case is to support the community itself to undertake the responsibility in assisting such persons, and creating general supportive environment and attitudes, often lacking in the society. There are also cases when the community itself is poor and common cushioning mechanisms like kinship system are no more effective. In such cases only massive intervention enabling the community to increase its coping capacity can solve the problem of vulnerable individuals. However, in general factor-specific groups of poor need to be determined, so that more adequate interventions can be planned in such cases. Economic growth is having strong influence upon reduction of poverty, and according to estimates, annual growth of 5-6 percent would reduce poverty incidence by one half in just five years. However, inequality stays remarkably high, partly due to the legacy of a long period of high inflation when it is people like pensioners on fixed incomes who suffer most, while the financially sophisticated and those with access to cheap loans can make great profits. In a strict sense, poverty means in sustainability of livelihood or well-being mainly caused by economic difficulties and low income. Though, in Georgian society, which relies less strongly on market relations and more on kinship and

traditional values the role of the economic factors is somehow cushioned, it is nevertheless a decisive aspect of poverty. Most vulnerable people in a post emergency situation, such as today in Georgia, appear to be extremely poor in the sense of having low incomes and being unable to secure a sustainable livelihood. Whilst levels of poverty of the type frequently found in other regions of the world, such as in parts of Africa or South Asia, seldom exist in Georgia (Tarkhan-Mouravi 1998).

Being poor in Georgia means many very different things. It can mean not having sufficient food to eat a balanced diet, having no money to afford heating in winter, being unable to afford essential medicines and medical fees. It can also mean the inability to afford the very basic provisions such as soap or clothing. Apart from just the material problems, poverty can have many psychological and social aspects. There can be feelings of desperation caused by unfulfilled expectations, forced dependency and lack of self-worth.

The traditional practice of taking a subjective income level as a poverty line and counting the number of households below it is the basic measure used by the SOS. The first problem is his to define the minimum income level. The World Bank's absolute poverty index is 1 USD per day at PPP exchange rates, but poverty is also a relative measure and depends on expectations and access to other facilities. For Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union the World Bank has used e 4 USD level per day. The SOS uses three different measures of the poverty line, all considerably lower than this: a subsistence minimum, 60% of national median consumption, and 40% of national median consumption. The subsistence minimum is an objective measure calculated on the basis of a hypothetical minimum consumption basket. It is possible that it considerably overestimates the income required to live, since its composition cannot adjust with the relative prices as quickly as people are likely to change their actual consumption. Many poor people actually eat a cheaper and less healthy diet, depending largely on bread. For 2006 the average subsistence minimum was 105 GEL (Georgian Lari) per month for a working man, 92 GEL for an average consumer, and 187 GEL for an average family. For an average consumer the poverty line according to the subsistence minimum is thus approximately 2.35 USD per day. The other two poverty lines are, of course, relative measures and useful more for identifying the poorest member of society than judging the extent of poverty in Georgia. They work out at about 70 and 47 GEL for 2005, the latter verging in absolute poverty even by African standards. The poverty level, as shown below, is then considered the percentage of the population with the income, monetary and non-monetary, below the various poverty lines (UNDP 1995).

The most worrying fact about poverty now is that not only is it so widespread but it appears to be on an increase. In 2004 45% of the population had recorded incomes below the subsistence minimum. By the first quarter of 2005 this had risen to 49%, and in the second quarter it was 51%. Urban poverty is more widespread than rural, reaching 56% in the second quarter of 2006. This is before the impact of recent price rises, but probably reflects the fiscal chaos and widespread non-payment of wages and pensions already apparent earlier in the year (Antadze 2000). One person and very large households are most likely to be poor, with single person households showing the greatest depth and severity of poverty. Pensioners, living alone in towns, are particularly likely to be lacking social support networks and certainly require targeting. Poverty increases almost directly with the number of children in the family, and even more with the number dependents per working person. Both are also likely to be good measures for targeting poverty support. 69% of the families with no member of working age have incomes below the minimum subsistence level. Single parents appear to be more complicated targets. 60% are poor if they are not working, although there are no such families in villages. 71% of working single parents are poor in villages, but, in towns, this group is actually unusually well off, perhaps because this lifestyle is relatively common among the more independent and educated (Forster, Greer and Thorbecke).

Not surprisingly, poverty also increases with the number of unemployed in family. Two-thirds of families with no employed member are poor. Yet employment isn't a guarantee against poverty. 43% of families with a member employed in a state organization are poor. In a situation where the conventional economy is still in a state of collapse, better proxies for the abilities of households to cope may be access to human and physical assets, such as particular skills and educational attainment, land livestock, a car, a rental apartment or garage, business trips abroad, and more well-off relatives. Indeed after a long period when it was the most educated who seemed to be the poorest, there now seems to be stronger link between education and absence of poverty. The highly educated were initially hit very hard by the disappearance of state-funded academic and research jobs, while those with more practical skills were less affected. Now it seems that many of the educated have come to adapt. Once again the highest levels of poverty are among those, where the head of the family has only primarily or incomplete secondary education. Particularly vulnerable appear to be manual workers in declining industries, and low level clerical workers, demand for whom had fallen with the dismantling of the planning bureaucracy and streamlining of production. As everywhere else in the world, education remains a highly effective anti-poverty tool (UNICEF 1995).

The process of democratization and transition to the market economy in Georgia has brought unemployment and poverty which caused migration of population to other countries. Society is moving forward in the right direction. Georgia still needs economic development and reduction of poverty in the country, so the problems with special impact on the welfare of the country and its citizens, economic situation and poverty must be solved.

In Georgia, as in other transition economies, poverty and inequality have increased together in recent years, as sharp losses for the great majority of the population have translated into fantastic gains for the top 5 or 10%. Inequality was remarkably high: the richest 10% of households surveyed had 48.3% of the total income, and the poorest 10%, only 0.5% of the total. Partly this must reflect the legacy of a long period of high inflation, when it is people, like pensioners on fixed incomes, who suffer most, while financially sophisticated and those with access to cheap loans can make great profits. In any case, the results of social differentiation process are disturbing-average money income of richest 10% of population exceeds incomes of 10% poorest about 250 times. In towns, the poor often have to sell their apartments in more prestigious districts and to move into cheaper, poorly located and worse flats which increase spatial as well as income inequalities. The richest decline recorded in the household survey still reports an average cash income of 433 GEL per month, of which 45% is spent on food, and cash consumption provides 30% of the total. This may be an indication that even the rich in Georgia are relatively poor. (Mskhiladze 1991).

C. Structural Change and Mobility in the Georgian Family

The economic changes have first of all influenced the power structure of the family, previously fully dominated by elder members who were also the main breadwinners, while the younger members remained economically dependent upon their parent until quite late in their lives. Now families deploy young adults for work as part of a larger household survival strategy, or, actually young adults enter the labour market out of economic need to help reduce the vulnerability of their households as well as to pursue their own career. This way they are nonetheless provided with opportunities to sustain their families, but also to learn, to grow as individuals, and prepare for the future career, as how and when a young person enters the labour force can set the stage for future status and work opportunities. Economic globalization is providing unprecedented opportunities for older adolescents and young adults, especially girls, to earn incomes that can increase their social and economic standing, self-esteem, and skills. Simultaneously, this changes their status within their respective families. The young,

who in many cases appear to be more flexible and active in the labour market than their less dynamic parents, start to contribute more and more significantly to the family budget, which radically increases their say in family matters. At the same time, there is higher unemployment among young adults than other age groups. Youth unemployment has many implications for the labour market, for poor households, and for young adults themselves - the inability to find work exacerbates economic exclusion, poverty, and the probability of future joblessness. As working is an important means for young people to develop adult roles and responsibilities, unemployment obstructs the movement of young people from adolescence to adulthood. These both factors create increased diversity in the power structure within a family, but in any case lead to earlier maturing of the youth.¹²

At the dawn of Soviet rule, as a result of drastic changes in external factors (political, economic, and social factors), a transformation of certain traditional functions of the family took place. For example, the state took the function of production away from the family's economic function, and instead the family acquired the function of consumer. By way of "statization," against the will of the family, the state took on the obligation of providing for all of the needs of the family. What took place was the undesirable transformation of the family from one that was independent of the state to one that was dependent on the state. During the Soviet era, owing to the liquidation of economic independence, the family lost the ability to take part in boosting its income, and the state went into the family business. Ignoring the independence of the family constituted a violation of relations of partnership between the state and the family. The family failed to fulfill completely the traditional functions assigned to it, while the state failed to fulfill its obligations. The result was a conflict between the family and the state, which was reflected in the destabilization of certain functions of the family (Sulaberidze 2004, p. 82).

According to Sulaberidze (2004, p. 83) in the member countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) the transformation of the family has gone along the lines, basically, of revolutionary form. This is the reason why, in the member countries of the CIS, the results of the process of transformation of the family have proved to be so deplorable. Among the political factors that have influenced the transformation of the family, particular attention needs to be focused on the fact that the state has gained political independence. In some of the member countries of the CIS this process took place peacefully, while in other countries it took place against the background of ethnic conflicts, which to a large extent accounted for the difficulties in the process of the transformation of the family and society. In Georgia as

well as in a number of other members of the CIS, along with gaining independence there came interethnic and regional ethnic conflicts, which resulted in the disruption of the territorial integrity of the country, and the country's difficult social and economic situation was made even more difficult by the large numbers of refugees. Against the background of the high level of politicization of society, the family became involved in civil conflict. The state was not able to work out a safe and stable conception of strategic development and appropriate programs. Sulaberidze (2004) argues that the family's economic transformation has had a tough time. The inconsistent course of economic reforms, economic depression, the inadequate legal foundation for the reforms, financial destabilization and the budget crisis, hasty and incorrect privatization, the large magnitude of the shadow economy as a result of the rapid rise of corruption and smuggling, the energy crisis, the inadequacy of economic programs from the standpoint of social results, and problems of the financing of the programs, inflexible tax policies, and so on, have resulted in an incorrect direction of the economic transformation of the family. In the form of small business, family business has gone along the lines of services rather than production. There has been practically no rehabilitation and development of the family's productive function. For the most part, family members are employed in the sale of goods that have been produced in other countries.¹³

Downward mobility is the ability to move from a higher social status to a lower one. In Georgia downward mobility has important repercussions among the new poor with respect to the education. The working places they manage to occupy do not require the level of education, which many of them have. Therefore, their attitude toward education, which used to be very positive, tends to become neutral. In addition, impoverished families have no funds to provide their children with high quality education, which is becoming more expensive in general. Therefore, the children cannot receive an intensive education and their attitude toward education also becomes negative as to something needless and useless. According to the social prestige the impoverished and displaced people represent the lowest social stratum, which is based not as much on their level of income but on their occupations or on the status of unemployed. The poor when questioned mostly emphasize physiological deprivations - inaccessibility of dwelling, food, clothes, recreation. Especially painful for them is also the fact that due to indigence they cannot participate in the social life of relatives and friends (inabilities to give presents provide material aid) (Hoeven 1995).

One of the outcomes of the downward social mobility experienced by the new poor is the

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Sulaberidze, 2004, 83.

strengthening of their social integration, especially of the extended families. Indigence made them more dependent on each other, and also increased the importance of kinship, neighbors and friends. In some cases, the reasons of impoverishment may be attributed to individual circumstances and biography. More often this relates to the chronic poor who were not impoverished due to recent changes but have been under these economic conditions for a long time and therefore had adapted to it both psychologically and socially (by requirements, needs, aspirations, education, social environment, living style, etc.). Frequently, people of this group were raised in families belonging to the same social stratum and therefore their living style is not unfamiliar even if no less distressing for them. It is true that at the given point the difference between the new and the chronic poor may not be so noticeable in respect to purely economic conditions but rather in respect to their psycho-social attitudes, however, the difference is considerable. The major point here is that while the chronic poor represent a socially stable group who have not changed their status for perhaps several generations; as for the new poor, this group is marked with high social mobility. The background, norms, education, values, social resources and social-cultural standards of the latter are not consistent with their status at a given point thus motivating them strongly to improve their conditions in order to attain desirable status. With regard to personal and social resources for improving their status the new poor possess by far more potential than the chronic ones. (Tarkhan-Mouravi 1998)

In the families where women became prime breadwinners, male heads of families lost much of their power and authority. This tendency is apparent not only in urban families with high level of education, but now also in rural areas. Although it should be noted that male authority is seldom challenged either by women or the young generation openly and in public. Women often even try to downplay their share in family income for leaving space for men's pride. Market economy also imposed hard conditions of employment. Those who have own business or work in a private sector often work for 10 or more hours a day, 6 or even 7 days a week, have no vacations. The family usually feels happy if at least one of its members is employed. Hence other members of the families frequently take the gender-specific role of the employed. So the traditional role division between husband and wife is not kept any more. Husbands known for their authoritarianism and adherence to traditional role division now can easily be found doing all kinds of house chores and looking after the children. Possibility to generate income increased the self-esteem and independence among previously dependent women. It also contributed to the increase of responsibility and self-reliance.¹⁴

14 Sumbadze & Tarkhan-Mouravi, 2003, 4.

II. SURVEY OF THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC STRUCTURE OF THE GEORGIAN FAMILY

A. Background, Purpose and Method

As a newly independent post-Soviet country, Georgia is poor in the statistical data. In order to see the real aspects of the impact of the transition period and the market economy conditions on the Georgian family we intended to study the social and economic conditions of the Georgian family through a small questionnaire consisting of a series of questions. The purpose of the questionnaire, which was held in 2007, is to follow, and collect data about, the structural change, the roles of family members, mobility tendencies, income level, income sources, distribution of the expenditures, reasons for family conflicts and so on. 300 respondents from different cities of Georgia mainly concentrating on Tbilisi and the neighboring cities and towns participated in the survey. Questions were asked to every possible aged people and gender was chosen to be equally divided on purpose. However, women were observed to show far more enthusiasm when answering the questions.

B. Findings

The findings we have derived from the survey can be summarized as follow:

- Divorces and second marriage is very unpopular and only small number of people are involved in.
- Popular age for marriage remains to be from 19 to 25 years. The best quantity of children is 2. However the most of respondents wished to have more children but they say they do not have material situation for having more than two.
- With the increased role of women as an income earner, the duty of bringing up children has been partly redistributed to men or, sometimes to other members of the family.
- Average monthly income of the household with lowest income level equals GEL 51.8, average monthly income of the richest household constitutes GEL 710.6, i.e. 13 times more (75% respondents' opinion).
- Food expenses constitute the most portions of the household costs (85% of students' opinion and 95% of residents' opinion).
- Distribution of the expenditures is not appropriate (70% of respondents' (300 respondents) opinion).
- Unemployment is a very important factor defining extreme poverty level (97% respondents' opinion).

- The risk of households to live below the poverty line is increasing according to the number of unemployed members in the family. Out of 40% of the households below poverty line no single member of the family is employed. Out of almost 45% of poor households, one working member of the family has to support two or more other family members including self on average (87% respondents' opinion).
- Official subsistence minimum is the amount of GEL 120–125 per month for an adult equivalent to the age of men with working capacity (73% respondents' opinion).
- Extreme poverty line as of today GEL 50-55 per month for an adult with working capacity (66% respondents' opinion).
- 85% of teenagers and young population does not have any income and they live on parents money; 15% of some students work after lectures late at night and help the family. 35% of teenagers and young population does not have any income and they live on parents money; 65% of some students work after and during lectures to help the family and sustain themselves.
- People who live in town are provided with goods and products they grow but they have low salaries (81% respondents' opinion).
- 80% of big families could not sustain family because of low family income. 50% of average family income is from 100 to 300 GEL; 55% of average family income is from 300 to 500 GEL; 5% of average family income is from 500 to 800 GEL. (82% respondents' opinion).
- Main sources of income is: working for government (60%), commercial business (30%), other (10%). (75% respondents' opinion).
- Wages have increased compare with previous years but family's monthly salary is not enough from month to month for all family expenses. (92% respondents' opinion).
- 90% of family conflict arises because of poor economic conditions and 5% of husband's alcohol abuse (76% respondents' opinion).
- 40% of main economic problems effecting Georgian family is the poverty - 50% is unemployment (92% respondents' opinion).
- 80% is low salary and 80% - high taxes (85 % respondents' opinion).
- The wellbeing of Georgian family relies on economic development of the country (97% respondents' opinion).
- Unemployment rate is higher in villages than in towns (93% respondents' opinion).
- The percent of population living in poverty is high in Georgia (81% respondents' opinion).
- 80% of the population do not have insurance at all (87% respondents' opinion).
- The number of beggars and homeless people decreased but still exists in the country (83% respondents' opinion).

- The wages and salaries earned in the private and public sectors, income received from private farms, and income earned in small business are very low (80% respondents' opinion).
- The average size of the salary was 4-6 times less than the minimum value of a consumer's basket but this rate has increased comparing last years (95% respondents' opinion).
- Employment in public sectors has decreased, factories do not work, so in recent times employment in the private sector has kept expanding (76% respondents' opinion).
- 35% of the population of Georgia is engaged in the private sector of agriculture (63% respondents' opinion).
- Half the population lives below the poverty line (55% respondents' opinion).
- 20% of the economy is agriculture with 40% of the population employed in this sector (87% respondents' opinion).
- 10% of richest people still have well over 40% of incomes (86% respondents' opinion).
- 69% of the families with no member of working age have incomes below the minimum subsistence level (88% respondents' opinion).

III. ASSESSMENT AND CONCLUSION

The process of democratization and transition to the market economy in Georgia has in the first place brought about the re-distribution of rights and obligations between the state and its citizens. Drastic socio-political changes have radically altered ways of life, leading to the emergence of unemployment, marginalization of certain individuals and groups, deterioration of once officially recognized standards and systems of values, and a sharp rise in the social and economic activities of people. Migration for the purposes of conducting trade or seeking long-term employment have become quite common. As for the impact of democratization and the market economy on Georgian family, it is clear that Georgia still remains a traditional country. Almost every respondent answered that relations in their families are guided by traditional norms. Role of husbands in bringing up children is surprisingly rising. This can be result of their unemployment and thus as the questionnaire shows women's' role as income earners has increased. With the change in service sector of the economy women's work and obligations are gaining more and more importance and recognition in contemporary society. This tendency may seem inadequate and peculiar for traditional Georgian society, as it was always considered that the primary role in the family belonged to men. In spite of this, Georgian families still continue being patriarchal. What is interesting here is that almost every man answered that their

family structure was patriarchal while some women agreed to men's superiority. According to the Georgian culture and traditions wife is responsible for well-being and morality as well as for bringing up children. However, as time passes this pattern is getting obsolete. With the increased westernization, Georgian women assume more independent roles and care much more about their professional lives, which is not fiercely protested by their partners. People are ready to do any job to earn money. That is the way many of them start working as merchants. Unemployment and poverty remain main problems for contemporary Georgia. There is still a lot of uncertainty and doubts. Some people are pessimistic about the future of the Georgian economy. However most of Georgians remain patient optimist about future of country as they say man lives with hope.

The results of the questionnaire displayed changing tendencies, though it was also obvious that in some respects situation has not changed significantly. One thing that immediately comes to mind is that it is desirable to conduct such studies at a regular basis in order to be able to obtain more reliable data and to draw much more intelligent and relevant conclusions. Though the results we have derived from this small scale questionnaire may not provide a clear insight into Georgian family structure, still it helped us identify the main problems of the Georgian family, and of the country. No need to to express the need for more comprehensive studies in this field.

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