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Gender mainstreaming in local potato seed system in Georgia

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Alliance

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Acronyms

ADA	Austrian Development Agency
BOKU	University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CIP	International Potato Center
ENPARD	European Neighborhood Program for Agriculture and Rural Development
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FGD	Focus group discussion
FTF	Face-to-face interviews
GII	Gender Inequality Index
ISH	Integrated Seed Health
LAG	Local Action Group
MEPA	Ministry of Environment Protection and Agriculture
NAP	National Action Plan
PPN	Potato Producers Network
PSD	Potato seed degeneration
PSS	Potato seed system
RTB	Root, tuber, and banana
SME	Small and medium enterprises
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

Summary

This report presents the study findings associated with the project “Enhancing Rural Livelihoods in Georgia: Introducing Integrated Seed Health Approaches to Local Potato Seed Systems” in Georgia. It also incorporates information from the results of gender training conducted within the framework of the USAID Potato Program in Georgia. The study had three major aims: 1) to understand the gender-related opportunities and constraints impacting the participation of men and women in potato seed systems in Georgia; 2) to test the multi-stakeholder framework for intervening in root, tuber, and banana (RTB) seed systems as a means to understand the systems themselves and the possibilities of improving gender-related interventions in the potato seed system; and 3) to develop farmers’ leadership skills to facilitate women’s active involvement in project activities.

Results of the project assessment identified certain constraints on gender mainstreaming in the potato seed system: a low level of female participation in decision-making processes, women’s limited access to finances that would enable their greater involvement in larger scale potato farming, and a low awareness of potato seed systems and of possible female involvement in associated activities. Significantly, the perception of gender roles and stereotypes differs from region to region in Georgia; this difference is quite pronounced in the target municipalities of Kazbegi, Marneuli, and Akhalkalaki, with the last two having populations of ethnic minorities (Azeri and Armenian, respectively). For example, in Marneuli, although women are actively involved in potato production, they are not considered farmers but mainly as assistants to farmers, who are men. This type of diversity (or lack thereof) results in a different understanding of gender mainstreaming in the potato seed system as well.

Based on the training results obtained in three target regions—Akhalkalaki, Akhaltsikhe, and Marneuli—it is evident that women are keen on learning new technologies and on acquiring updated agricultural information, including on potato production. It is also clear that women spend as much time as men do on farming activities such as potato production, particularly in weeding and harvesting. However, women are heavily burdened with domestic work, and they are not major decision-makers with regard to potato variety selection, agricultural investments, and product sales, nor with the inclusion of participants in any training provided. Involving women in project activities will lead to greater efficiency in the potato production environment, as women’s increased knowledge will certainly contribute to an improved production process, and their new ideas will help to improve existing production systems, through which women could also gain confidence and power.

As a general recommendation, it is extremely important to develop equitable seed systems that take into consideration, among other factors, social context and the cultural aspects of local communities. Thus, understanding male and female farmers’ knowledge may promote the development of seed systems that are sustainable and responsive to farmers’ needs and capacities.

Gender mainstreaming in local potato seed system in Georgia

1 Introduction

The project “Enhancing Rural Livelihoods in Georgia: Introducing Integrated Seed Health Approaches to Local Potato Seed Systems” began in July 2017, with the financial support of the Austrian Development Agency (ADA). It aims to improve the livelihoods of Georgian farmers by increasing the profitability and sustainability of their potato crops and increasing the capacity of national players in the potato seed value chain. This is expected to be achieved by improving the quality of potato seed, which would ultimately benefit small-scale potato farmers in Georgia: not only would they see improvements in the quality of planting material, boost their productivity, and experience yield stability, they would consequently increase their—and their families’—income and quality of life. Increased profitability of the potato crop could also benefit consumers through lower and more stable prices. An improved seed system will lead to a more efficient diffusion of new crop varieties, which has benefits to farmers and consumers that transcend productivity.

The project ensures the diffusion of outputs through its integration into an existing CIP/Georgia initiative on potatoes, which has a broader mandate to improve the general productivity and sustainability of the potato sector. Thus, outputs from this project (e.g., country seed plan, manuals for seed production, pathogen detection and field inspection guidelines, and new varieties with virus resistance) will flow directly into the larger potato initiative.

Partners in this project are the Ministry of Environment Protection and Agriculture (MEPA)—Scientific Research Center at the Ministry, Farmers’ Extension Service Centers, Grain Logistic Company, Agricultural University of Georgia (Agri Uni), Farmers Informational and Consultation Center, and BOKU University in Austria.

It was decided to conduct a gender study at the beginning of the project in order to identify gender-related opportunities and constraints impacting the participation of men and women in potato seed systems in Georgia. It is expected that the results of the study and consequent recommendations may enable project management to plan activities with stronger gender components. This approach aims at promoting, initiating, and exploring equal opportunities for both men and women in the potato sector, specifically in the Potato Seed System in Georgia.

Certain results were incorporated from the findings of gender training conducted within the framework of the USAID Potato Program in Georgia. This program seeks to boost productivity and incomes among Georgian small-scale potato producers by providing new knowledge and locally produced, quality seed potatoes of high-yielding genotypes. Having identified gender norms and gender-based constraints and opportunities, we are now developing more gender equitable and socially inclusive approaches in this potato program.

2 Methodology

The study methodology aims to provide an overview of women's involvement and impact in the potato seed system in Georgia, as well as recommendations for improving gender mainstreaming frameworks in potato seed systems via project activities.

The study comprised the following steps:

1. A literature review, along with key (baseline) documents, presented information on 1) project activities, 2) gender country context as well as local context for selected municipalities, and 3) any cross-cutting issues, e.g., women's economic empowerment in the field of potato production.
2. A rapid gender assessment through conducting 1) interviews with various stakeholders: direct beneficiaries (with 30% women's participation), local government representatives, project management staff, and project partners; 2) focus group discussions (FGD) (including women's groups in Marneuli and Kazbegi), face-to-face interviews (FTF) involving local key informants (with 45% women's participation) in order to obtain more information on women's involvement in potato seed system activities and to identify main gaps of gender misbalance; and 3) other stakeholders (including international organizations working in the agricultural field in Georgia). A list of participants in interviews and FGDs, as well as key informants, is attached as Annex 2.
3. Gender-responsive participatory action research conducted during gender awareness training. This was implemented in three target municipalities of the project —Akhalkalaki, Akhaltsikhe, and Marneuli—with the objective of understanding context-specific gender norms and developing the leadership skills of women and men farmers so that they might facilitate the involvement of women in agricultural management at the community level. A total of 148 farmers (97 women and 51 men) participated. The training involved active discussions between women and men, as well as among men and among women. Key findings elaborated from the training included gender roles in potato production and domestic work, everyday time use, and perceived decision-making power. Gender training for farmers consisted of two sessions: one with a single gender group to foster discussion of gender norms, roles, and decision-making power, and one with a mixed gender group to support the sharing of ideas and opinions.



Figure 1: Gender training for farmers in Mauneuli in September 2020 Photo credit: Nizharadze, Maia

Prior to the field visits, a gender questionnaire was developed. It was designed not only for farmers, but also for local government bodies and other stakeholders in order to analyze gender equality issues in the potato seed system on a broader scale. The questionnaire enabled the collection of more information about the respondents' understanding of gender issues generally, as well as on specific subjects connected to women's

involvement in agricultural activities and, particularly, in potato seed system activities. The questionnaire is attached as Annex 3.

The findings and recommendations given at the end of the report are based on the methods described above (i.e., literature review, rapid gender assessment through field visits and interviews, and gender-responsive participatory action research conducted during the gender awareness trainings), as well as on a new methodology: the multi-stakeholder framework for intervening in RTB seed systems.

The multi-stakeholder framework was used in order to gain a better understanding of gender perspectives in availability, accessibility, and quality issues of the potato seed system, as well as a better overview of gender mainstreaming. The framework itself is designed to help any interested persons—practitioners, donors, policy makers, or project staff—to understand RTB seed systems and/or to improve interventions (e.g., projects or programs) in them. The framework that was used in the study, as described in this user guide, is elaborated by the RTB Program Management Unit in the International Potato Center (CIP) and is a slightly modified version of the multi-stakeholder framework for intervening in RTB seed systems (Sperling et al., 2013; Table 1).

The aim of using the multi-stakeholder framework was to analyze the current situation, identify bottlenecks to women's economic empowerment, and elaborate recommendations and a new improvement plan to contribute to the increased involvement of women in potato seed system interventions in the country. It was expected that the multi-stakeholder framework could broaden the understanding of gender and equity issues to include the knowledge that men and women have and how they participate in ensuring quality seed, including their involvement in the decision-making process and their ability to benefit from seed systems and marketing, as well as to influence policy.

Prior to conducting the gender-responsive participatory action research, respective training materials were designed and developed. Gender awareness training consisted of two sessions: one involved a single gender group that would discuss gender norms, roles, and decision-making power, and the other involved a mixed gender group that shared ideas and opinions with each other.

Information on gender norms, perceptions, roles, and decision-making were collected through a gender-responsive participatory exercise, group work, and discussions between men and women. In total, five tools were used. The first two comprised a brainstorming exercise to recognize gender differences, and card mapping on gender roles and decision-making drawn on CARE Australia's approach to gender training. The third tool—a 24-hour time use exercise—was conducted by drawing a typical female or male farmer's day through a representative of each gender group. Although time use can vary by season and individual, this exercise helps in understanding typical gender differences and in visualizing how women are overburdened. The time use described by each gender group was then presented and agreed to by both men and women participants. The fourth tool—the degree of power and freedom—was assessed by private voting, and later the results were shared and discussed by both men and women participants. The fifth tool—identifying the interests and challenges of men and women in agriculture—was implemented first with women in order to recognize and respect their opinions; men's opinions were then added on to the women's versions. The framework with entry points is attached as Annex 1.

3 Country gender profile

Georgia has made significant progress in adopting anti-discrimination legislation and numerous policies in support of the protection and promotion of human rights. Yet gender stereotypes remain deeply rooted, leading to many challenges that inhibit the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

According to the 2017 Global Gender Gap Report, Georgia ranked 99 among 149 economies in how well they use “their female talent pool, based on economic, educational, health-based and political indicators” (World Economic Forum, 2018). Georgia scored 54.5 in the 2012 Women’s Economic Opportunity Index, where a score of 100 represents a favorable environment, and holds the 59th position among 128 countries included in this index. With regard to women’s economic opportunity, it is defined as “a set of laws, regulations, practices, customs and attitudes that allow women to participate in the workforce under conditions equal to those of men, as employees or as business owners,” and the index referenced above “is composed of the following determinants: General Business Environment, Women’s Legal and Social Status, Education and Training, Access to Finance, Labor Policy and Practice.” Georgia is ranked 70th out of 189 countries in the Gender Inequality Index (GII), published annually by UNDP. The GII is a composite index that measures gender inequalities in reproductive health, empowerment, and economic status. The Global Gender Gap Index, the Women’s Economic Opportunity Index and the Gender Inequality Index all suggest that women’s economic opportunities in Georgia are limited.

At the national level, the Inter-Agency Commission on Gender Equality, Violence against Women, and Domestic Violence is the institutional mechanism for gender equality and the empowerment of women in the Executive Branch of the Government. It was created in 2017 and unites representatives of all respective ministries as well as the Public Defender’s Office, the Legal Aid Service, the Public Broadcaster, the Gender Equality Council of the Parliament, and the Supreme Court.

In 1994, Georgia ratified the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Importantly, the most recent concluding observations of the CEDAW Committee to Georgia State Party (2014) placed special emphasis on the needs, priorities, and economic empowerment of women living in rural areas.



Figure 2: A beneficiary’s seed potato demo plot in Mtskheta-Mtianeti region, Georgia. Credit Rusudan Mdivani

4 SECTION I: Gender and agriculture in Georgia – A review of literature

Gender equality in agricultural policies

The Strategy of Agricultural Development of Georgia 2015–2020 provides a vision for the development of the agricultural sector in Georgia and considers seven main directions of development. The strategy mentions gender in two of the seven directions: Direction 1 – increasing the competitiveness of those employed in the agrarian sector; and Direction 2 – institutional development. The development of cooperatives is planned under the first direction, which states that the development of cooperatives improves the involvement of women in social and economic activities. The development of information databases and gender disaggregated data collection is planned under the second direction.

The 2018–2020 National Action Plan (NAP) on Gender Equality (part of the Human Rights Action Plan of the Government of Georgia) contains provisions on knowledge and increasing the qualifications of women involved in or interested in agriculture, as well as attracting more women into cooperatives and supporting more women in agribusiness activities. The Strategy of Agricultural Development echoes these provisions only with regard to attracting more women into cooperatives. Thus, it is partially harmonized with the Gender Equality NAP, according to which MEPA is responsible for these provisions (UN Women, 2016).

Rural Development Strategy 2017–2020 (Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, 2016) was developed with the assistance of ENPARD, UNDP, and FAO, which was adopted by the government in 2016, includes the improvement of social conditions and living standards as one of its three priorities. Objective #3 of this priority area highlights the increasing involvement of the local population (especially youth and women) in identifying local needs and determining the solutions for said needs. This objective is to be implemented by the Public Services Development Agency by holding at least six events related to women's rights and gender equality as well as 10 information meetings.

Small and Medium Business Development Strategy 2016–2020 was adopted in 2015 and aims to create a favorable environment for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) (Government of Georgia, 2015), enhance their competitiveness, and innovate their existing capacities, which will lead to income generation and job creation, resulting in inclusive and sustainable economic growth. The approach consists of five strategic directions: improving legislation, improving access to finances, developing SME skills, promoting entrepreneurship, and exporting and encouraging innovation. The strategy explicitly mentions the encouragement of female entrepreneurship under one of its priorities. In addition, the strategy will create a platform for cooperation for women in business.

As the above-listed policy documents show, gender equality principles stated in the laws are under-considered in agricultural policies. The same could be said about local development policies as well.

The separate document that regulates seed systems in Georgia has not yet been elaborated, but in the framework of the project “Enhancing Rural Livelihoods in Georgia: Introducing Integrated Seed Health Approaches to Local Potato Seed Systems,” it was planned to elaborate the Potato Seed Plan (PSP).

The objective of this plan is to provide direction to appropriate Georgian authorities for addressing constraints related to quality seed production in Georgia, especially potato seed degeneration (PSD), in the next five years. This plan is based on the Integrated Seed Health (ISH) approach, which describes three tactics for managing PSD

(Thomas-Sharma et al., 2015): 1) the adoption of varieties that degenerate slowly due to their natural resistance to the organisms that cause PSD, 2) on-farm practices to maintain or even improve seed quality, and 3) a more strategic use of certified seed (i.e., buying in small amounts or less frequently, depending on the other components of ISH). Each of these tactics corresponds to a component in the Potato Seed Plan. In the framework of the project, it was decided to incorporate gender principles into the components of the Plan. (For information regarding the inclusion of a gender component in the PSP, please see the Recommendations section below.)

Gender equality and agriculture

Gender perceptions in Georgia place men in a dominant position in many areas of social, economic, and political life. Data confirms persistent inequalities between women and men. There is a significant gender gap in labor force participation, with the gender wage gap, according to the National Statistics Office of Georgia (National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2019), reaching 35 per cent (average monthly salary for women in 2018 was 823, for men – 1282 GEL), and unpaid care work, among other tasks, constituting significant barriers to fostering women's full potential in economic life.

The situation of rural women in agriculture and rural development requires significant improvement in the policy sphere. Inequalities in women's involvement in agricultural production can be attributed, in part, to limited access to basic services and social infrastructure, and barriers to credit. While agricultural policies specifically address women's needs in some areas, meaningful gender mainstreaming has not been conducted for national, regional, and village level policies in this field. There is thus a significant need for gender mainstreaming in agricultural and rural development policies. For example, gender mainstreaming should be performed on the Strategy for Agricultural Development in Georgia 2015–2020 (Ministry of Agriculture of Georgia, 2015); this should include a gender-responsive budgeting analysis in order to determine any gaps in its responsiveness to women's needs and to foster gender equality in the agricultural sector. Furthermore, gender equality concerns and the gendered dimensions of specific problems are largely absent from regional development strategies, requiring increased supervision by the Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure, and amended policies (UN Joint Program on Gender Equality, 2018).

Gender and rural employment

According to the labor force study (2018, 3rd quarter), the unemployment rate in Georgia is 11.3 for women and 13.0¹ for men, and the employment rate is 64.3 for men and 49.7 for women. As of November 2018, the country's population included 196,299 extremely poor men and 238,226 extremely poor women.

Ninety-seven percent of all persons employed in agriculture are self-employed. Female workers represented 69 percent of the total number of non-paid workers, and 59 percent of the total number of self-employed women were non-paid workers. However, in reality, this figure could be substantially higher, considering the fact that many women who work in family farming do not regard themselves (or are not regarded) as farmers or workers, but rather see themselves as housemakers (FAO, 2018). Employment in the agricultural sector nationwide was

¹ Calculated on every 1,000.

found to be 50.5% of women and 49.9% men, while in rural areas, it was 50.3% of women and 49.7% of men (National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2015).

The lack of agricultural equipment, the low quality and high price of fertilizers and chemicals, undeveloped irrigation systems, low-quality seeds, and limited knowledge and agricultural technology negatively affect the incomes of those working in agriculture (FAO, 2018).

According to the publication “Men and Women in Georgia”, National Statistics Office of Georgia 2019, the average monthly salary of the employed population of Georgia in 2018 was 1,052 Georgian Lari (GEL). More specifically, the average salary was 823 GEL for women and 1,281 GEL for men, and in agriculture, it was 654 GEL for women and 716 GEL for men. Thus, according to the official statistical data, women earn less than men (91%) in the agriculture sector in Georgia, but it is significant that most of the agricultural work is not registered, and it is not clear what portion of the unregistered work is done by men and women. Also, there is no clear data on the salary of farmers, but it does provide general information on the agriculture sector.

Social assistance

In 2018, 745,001 persons (20% of the total population) received a pension. The majority of these beneficiaries (70%) were women. This can be explained by the longer life expectancy of women compared to that of men. In addition, the retirement age is 60 years for women and 65 for men.

According to the Social Service Agency, in the “unified database of socially vulnerable families” that groups people according to poverty level, an extremely poor category that receives social assistance packages (social allowance)², in 2018, a social allowance was received by 435,450 persons (11.7% of the total population), and the majority of these beneficiaries (55%) were women. It can be also explained by the longer life expectancy of women compared to men.

The socio-economic profile of target municipalities is briefly described below in the chapter “Gender equality at local level and its connection with potato seed system.”

Potato Seed systems in Georgia

Potato is an important crop in Georgia, with approximately 25,000 ha under production, and an annual per capita consumption of almost 55 kg (National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2015). As of 2016, potato ranked highest in terms of annual crop production in the country (249 thousand tons), outpacing maize and wheat (National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2017). Nearly all potato is consumed fresh, and Georgians consider the crop as their “second bread.” Despite the high importance of quality seed systems for the livelihoods of local agricultural communities, there is currently no functioning formal seed system in Georgia; 85% of seed is considered informal—self-saved or obtained from local sources by small-scale farmers who are unaware of practices to maintain seed quality (Forbes et al., 2018). Even the portion of seed that is imported and has been multiplied in the country is sold without certification or proper bagging and labelling. Farmers routinely do not use on-farm practices aimed at maintaining seed quality, seed treatment, and seed selection (Carli et al., 2010).

² It is given to those in the population with a less than 100,001 score.

It is important to underline the fact that no study has been conducted in Georgia regarding gender mainstreaming in the potato seed system, and that research has mainly focused, in general, on the agricultural sector, with limited inclusion of the potato component. Despite this limitation, it was quite interesting to ascertain gender roles in the whole sector, even though such insights may not be generalizable to include the potato seed system. However, there may be an indirect connection, one which may provide ideas for the future consideration of gender mainstreaming in the potato seed system.

Both women and men are major contributors to crop production in Georgia, as they are in other countries of the region (FAO, 2014). 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) (UN Women, 2016). Based on the World Bank sourcebook (World Bank, 2009), an apparent gender bias exists in access to formal seed systems. Men, who are generally more involved in growing commercial crops, seem to access and benefit more easily from formal systems. Women, on the other hand, rely more heavily on local systems to obtain seed for staple and minor crops. A similar result was found in the assessment done by FAO (2018), where women are mostly engaged in producing subsistence crops for home consumption, and men are responsible for cash crops due to its specificity (e.g., mechanization, traveling long distances, and dealing with providers and middle persons, which is associated with masculine gender roles). Pest and disease management are also viewed as men's tasks. Women are responsible for buying, sowing, and sorting, and are heavily engaged in the manual harvesting of crops. A resource endowment bias has also been observed, as resource-poor farmers—men or women—generally lack the cash to purchase seeds of modern varieties from formal seed suppliers (World Bank, 2009).

Based on the information provided by the Georgia Farmers Association, among the members of the association (4,000 members, 15% of whom are women) who work on potato production, only 10% are women.

5. SECTION II: Findings from a rapid gender assessment

Socio-economic profile of study sites

The rapid gender assessment focused on three municipalities: Kazbegi, Marneuli, and Akhalkalaki. These communities were selected for the study as they are project's target municipalities. These communities also differ in terms of ethnic composition, which adds an interesting dimension to the intersection of gender and ethnicity.

The socio-economic profiles of the target municipalities do not differ much from that of the general country profile, where the major beneficiaries of social assistance, as the poorest group in society, are women. Thus, improvement in socio-economic status and livelihood through different agricultural actions, including high-quality potato farming, can be considered as an option.

Socio-economic profile of target regions and municipalities

Region: Mtskheta-Mtianeti, with a population of 93.9 thousand, an unemployment rate of 7.8%, and an employment rate of 64.4% (2017); as of November 2018, there were 6,762 men and 8,271 women who received social packages; in **Kazbegi** municipality (with a population of 3.8 thousand), 292 men and 432 women received social packages.

Region: Kvemo Kartli, with a population of 432.3 thousand, an unemployment rate of 14.2%, and an employment rate of 62.2% (2017); as of November 2018, 19,290 men and 24,324 women received social packages; in **Marneuli** municipality (with a population of 106.5 thousand), 4,089 men and 4,789 women received social packages.

Region: Samtskhe-Javakheti, with a population of 155.9 thousand, an unemployment rate of 5.9%, and an employment rate of 74.4% (2017); as of November 2018, 4,834 men and 6,171 women received social packages; in **Akhalkalaki** municipality (with a population of 42.9 thousand), 594 men and 942 women received social package.

Source: Social Service Agency

Gender roles and perceptions

The gender questionnaire was distributed to local farmers and other stakeholders in all three municipalities. Based on its analysis, it appeared that in Kazbegi municipality, where a mixed group of men and women filled out the questionnaire (22 farmers in total, with a 23% presence of women), the farmers (82% of participants) do not consider gender equality to be a problem; most (86% of participants) thought that there was no gender inequality at all at the community level. With regard to the equal involvement of men and women in agricultural activities, respondents answered positively (59% of participants) that both men and women are equally involved; there were a few differences that mainly depended on the type of agricultural activity, as activities that imply physical work are done primarily by men (e.g., working with heavy equipment, lifting crops).

During a focus group discussion (mixed group) with farmers in Kazbegi, both men and women stressed that incentives do not need to be specific to men or women, but may, in fact, be the same: new technologies, financial support from the government and international donors, low interest loans from banks, a well-defined vocational

educational system, and additional training in different fields of agricultural production. It is interesting that while conducting FGDs separately with men and women, women stressed that although they are actively involved in potato farming, particularly at home for subsistence needs, they only assist men in larger potato production activities: they do not manage the process, they do what the men say, and they follow the men's decisions. Speaking with male farmers, they stressed that although women are actively involved in potato farming activities, most of the time it is the men who make decisions because "they have more experience to manage commercial crops, as they are larger scale and need more heavy work with mechanization."

In Marneuli, a municipality with an 84% ethnic minority (Azeri) population, a mixed group survey revealed that gender equality did not seem to be a problem at all (58% of participants answered positively), but it was interesting that when discussing an issue with a small focus group consisting of only women, all group members stressed that there is a clear gender inequality in their community, where women do not have the same rights as men. Describing how they see their role, the women state that "we assist farmers and help them in the field, follow their decisions and directives"—they do not consider themselves to be "real farmers," rather only their assistants.

In Akhalkalaki, a municipality with a 93% ethnic minority (Armenian) population, in contrast to the two other municipalities described above, local farmers admit (63% of survey participants) that there is gender inequality in their community, where women face certain disadvantages: women mainly do housework, while men, as head of the household, earn money; as expressed by a female participant, women do not own "their own pocket money and financially fully rely on their husbands." As for agricultural activities, men are definitely more involved, with one small exception: women are slightly more active in harvest gathering, but still the process is managed and lead by men, while women actively assist them.

Traditional gender stereotypes are considered to be one of the causes of women's underrepresentation in decision-making processes in Georgia. This point is particularly clearly seen in the communities with ethnic minorities (i.e., Marneuli, Akhalkalaki). Focus group participants are aware that decision-makers at the local level are mostly men, but they still accept the fact that women's participation can be beneficial. Focus group discussions clearly showed that women are mostly passive regarding community decision-making, based on their understanding of women's roles. This completely corresponds with widespread gender stereotypes: women should stay at home and look after the children, while their husbands should represent the family outside of the household.

Differences in gender roles and understanding that have been revealed during the local farmer's survey clearly indicate the need for different approaches while implementing local initiatives, including agricultural actions.

Envisioned gender approaches in the potato seed system

Based on the survey results, in Kazbegi, there is not much difference in the involvement of men and women in potato production, which also refers to the seed system (based on 82% of the survey participants). There is a small difference when it comes to the informal system, small production for household needs, and as a mean of subsistence, where women are more involved. As there is no formal seed system, the survey could not reflect gender inequality issues in this regard. Nonetheless, it was significant that local farmers during FGD stressed the importance of women being more actively involved in the informal system and perhaps, if it develops, in the formal system as well. Thus, there was an emphasis on the importance of imparting more information to women in order to expand "their small work" and to encourage their involvement in broader farming opportunities, including the formal seed system.

Farmers in Marneuli also underlined that it would be extremely important to encourage women to be more involved in different activities specifically in the potato sector, including the potato seed system. One of the barriers that may limit women's involvement in potato production in general, and perhaps the reason behind the limitation of women in the potato seed system as well, based on local farmers' opinions, is the lack of relevant information and knowledge, as "farmers should know that being involved in the potato seed system does not require much physical work and can be perfectly managed by men and women equally."

Farmers in Akhalkalaki underlined the importance of having an equal involvement of men and women in potato farming, which may correspond to the seed system as well. They also addressed barriers that limit women's participation in this milieu: family obstacles (restrictions from husband, taking care of family members all day long, taking care of the entire household) and a lack of information on potato seed system. As commented by one of the local farmers, "With adequate information, women will be aware that the potato seed system does not imply heavy physical work, but it is a 'woman-friendly' activity—easy manageable by women, particularly at a small scale when production is not huge and does not imply heavy mechanization."

As representatives of the Local Action Group (LAG) in Kazbegi mentioned, women are quite actively involved in LAG initiatives and activities—for example, women provided substantial input during the Rural Development Strategy process (note: the organization consists of 66 female and 67 male members). One of the recent activities of LAG Kazbegi was to support business ideas and to fund small-scale projects. As the representative mentioned during the meeting with the organization, they encourage women to apply for small-scale business project funding, which has been done through LAGs in Georgia. Finally, 34 ideas were supported financially (14 projects by women and 20 by men). Unfortunately, none of the business ideas provided by women was related to potato farming, but mainly focused on guest house development and running a chicken and egg business. Ideas provided by men were mainly on a bigger scale—for example, requesting equipment (tractors, quadrocycles, vehicles) and running a greenhouse business. One explanation for these differences, as highlighted by the representative of LAG Kazbegi (representatives of LAGs have an opportunity to have direct conversations with applicants), is the limited amount of knowledge about potato farming, and given that potato production is considered to be "women friendly," there is not much interest among them to explore possible activities with respect to men.

Gender and availability, accessibility, and quality of seed

Availability of seed refers to the physical existence of the seed—in other words, having enough seed at the right time and place (RTB, 2018).

About 10–15% of seed is imported yearly, which is mainly used by larger farmers, most of whom are in the southern part of the country. The remaining part of the seed is provided by informal sources, either via other farmers or local markets, or the seed is produced and saved on the farm. The latter is believed to be the largest source of seed in the country (Forbes et al., 2018). There was no official study conducted in Georgia on the availability of seed for men and women, as it is supposed that gender aspects were not considered during seed distribution.

Gender mainstreaming in seed availability was stressed by different stakeholders, including international organizations working on agricultural projects in Georgia. For example, in the framework of the project "Strengthening Community Based Farmers' Groups and Agricultural Services in Samtskhe-Javakheti," implemented by Mercy Corps, local farmers received high-quality, A class potato seeds, but during seed distribution, no gender aspects were taken into consideration. As the representative of the organization

stressed, it is much more desirable to consider gender aspects while implementing projects targeting increased seed availability.

As local farmers in Kazbegi, Marneuli, and Akhalkalaki emphasized, there is no specific gender-related issue—either for men or for women—to having seed availability in their municipalities. Based on discussions with local farmers, the problem is rather the existence of healthy seed. Through the project, it is planned to provide a small amount of healthy and high-quality seeds to local farmers, and it would be extremely important to target both men and women equally.

Accessibility to seed refers to having resources (financial and other) to obtain seeds. It includes sources such as delivery channels, financial affordability, and awareness, or having the right information (RTB, 2018). Out of these three sources, the ones most attributed to gender balance may be financial accessibility and access to information. The same consideration was justified by farmers in all targeted municipalities.

This is the general practice in many countries, where women are the main food producers in farm households and, as a result, their seed security—their access to reliable supplies of good seed—is of the highest priority (World Bank, 2009). Thus, any kind of intervention that increases women’s access to potato seed may have a positive impact on local food security and economic growth.

Financial accessibility is a very sensitive issue for local farmers, and especially for women, as they are considered to have lesser financial abilities (i.e., less money) to buy seed. As described above, women in Georgia have a lower economic status due to their smaller income (lower salary, lower participation in business, etc.), while women have a bit higher salary when it comes to the agriculture field (see section 3.3 on “Rural employment”). Perhaps that is one of the reasons why international assistance targets the empowerment of women and girls in rural areas of Georgia by creating business opportunities, funding different small-scale business projects, and creating farmer’s cooperatives for women. For example, within the framework of ENPARD, in cooperation with CARE International, during the implementation of activities under the “Community Initiated Project” (CIP) component, CARE supported the activities of local cooperatives, including those involved in potato farming. One of the targets was to reach a 30% level of female membership in these cooperatives. However, there was no specific aspect targeting men and women’s equal participation in the potato seed system.

There is a problem with women’s access to information that can help them build an opinion about agricultural production, including the potato seed system. In any type of formal or informal communication or mobilization channels engaged in by men, women are usually excluded because they are less likely to be regarded as farmers in their own right. These low levels of access to information, knowledge, and agricultural innovation hinder, in turn, women’s economic opportunities.

As mentioned above, it is clear that women farmers would appreciate someone providing them with qualified information on agricultural issues, potato production, and, specifically, the potato seed system. Along with this information, it also seems valuable for local farmers to be aware of gender equality issues in agricultural activities, including the potato seed system, as it may give them a greater understanding as to the importance of the equal involvement of men and women in the potato sector, the possibilities of women in the potato seed system, and so on.

In sum, study results revealed that in all three municipalities, there is an important need for knowledge and information related to gender issues in the agriculture field, specifically for women. At the meeting with local farmers in Marneuli, it was stressed that “otherwise, an informational vacuum makes them excluded from possibilities to be more involved in the potato seed system, to understand their roles as farmers.”

Seed quality includes concepts or desirable varieties (which corresponds to farmer demand) and quality itself (health, generic purity, etc.) (RTB, 2018).

The larger seed project plans to identify new virus-resistant varieties and promote them as part of the Integrated Seed Health strategy, as well as to promote the use of a virus-resistant potato breeding program and evaluate virus resistance in commercial varieties currently grown in Georgia. This is in order to implement research-related activities with project partners in the Scientific Research Center at MEPA.

Based on the survey conducted in Kazbegi, it appeared that women may be slightly more interested in adopting new varieties of potato seed, as they know well from personal practice the importance of using high-quality potatoes in their households, and their involvement in potato production focuses on such issues of subsistence. Even so, the participation of both men and women in a positive selection process, as planned by the project, should be equally encouraged. In Marneuli, farmers who completed the questionnaire, as well as women who participated in FGDs, underlined that it would be extremely important to involve more women in the selection process for a number of reasons. First, women are, in general, less involved in potato farming, and their participation in the selection process may increase their interest; second, the activities do not require heavy physical work and seem very “female friendly”; and finally, women would be able to share their personal experiences of seed selection and storage.

Farmers’ experimentation with new varieties, and the subsequent introduction of adapted and accepted varieties, can potentially strengthen seed systems by increasing yields, improving drought resilience, boosting resistance to pests and diseases, and capturing new market opportunities (Sperling et al., 2006), all of which could widen women’s livelihood options.

That is why it would be extremely important to involve equally both men and women in selection processes, such as small experiments with seed varieties as defined by the project under the activity “Select the Best,” which includes the training of farmers in positive selection skills development. To date, few training exercises have been conducted, but more, with the significant involvement of women, are expected.

Based on the FGDs in Kazbegi and Marneuli, women can be even more interested not only in the selection process but also in seed certification. The explanation given by one FDG participant was that “women, more than men, may be very much interested in a better quality of potato, close to the certification standards”; thus, certification seems to be a kind of warranty for them to “feed their family members with a good quality of potato.”

Based on the FGD conducted in the Scientific Research Center of Agriculture, it was revealed that the possibility that women may be more interested in selecting virus-free varieties is slightly high. According to participant research, as conveyed by a Research Center representative, women are more selective—“picky”—and they spend much more time choosing anything, especially food products, than men. “Women pick things by shape, color, taste, etc., while men are more interested in amount, and thus, they are more committed to choose quality things.” This opinion was endorsed by others as well, highlighting the fact that women are more detail-oriented and pay much more attention to small details; it then comes as no surprise for women to be more engaged and interested in better quality potato seed.



Figure 3: A female potato farmer in Kvemo Kartli region planted ARC potato seedlings, which yielded in up to 40 t/ha. She is happy and will apply modern technology next years as well (photo: R. Mdivani/CIP)

6. SECTION III: Findings from gender-responsive action research

Gender differences in time use

It was evident that women farmers have a strong willingness to learn new technologies and to obtain new knowledge and information in potato production, irrigation, processing, and marketing. The training provided an opportunity for men farmers to recognize women's needs and interests in agriculture. Furthermore, male participants admitted that women have heavy domestic workloads and yet still engage in farming as much as men do. (Additional information on participants by region and gender is included in Annex 9.3.) The main objectives of the gender awareness training sessions were: 1) to identify gender-based interests, constraints, and opportunities in potato production at the community level; and 2) to develop farmers' leadership skills in facilitating women's active involvement in the project.

This section presents the results from the gender-responsive participatory action research: 1) 24-hour time use of typical men and women in the community, 2) gender divisions of labor and decision-making in agriculture and domestic work, and 3) perceived power and freedom of men and women.

Typically, women in all three regions spend 5–8 hours on domestic work, while men's involvement in domestic work is marginal (Figures 4–6). Women also spend 7–10 hours on agricultural activities, while men spend 10–13 hours, which is slightly longer. As a result, women do not have much time for relaxing compared to men, who sit and relax for 4–7 hours. This implies that women have significant time constraints on their ability to participate in agricultural training, and that helpful labor- and time-saving technologies are needed. However, if new technologies require a greater investment of time and labor, it is less likely that women will adopt them. The figures also confirm that women *are* farmers, and that they spend as much time on farming activities as men do; thus, they should be clearly recognized as farmers—not farmers' wives—by themselves and by their spouses.

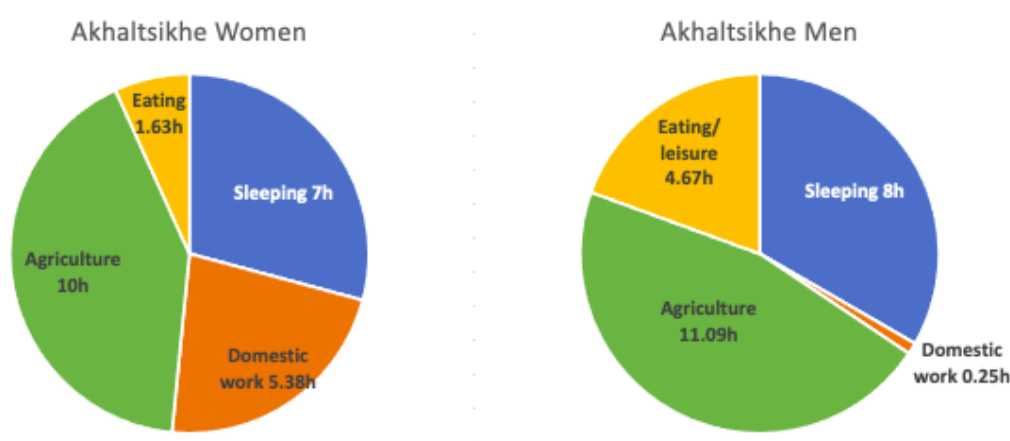


Figure 4: 24-hour time use of typical women and men in Akhalsikhe

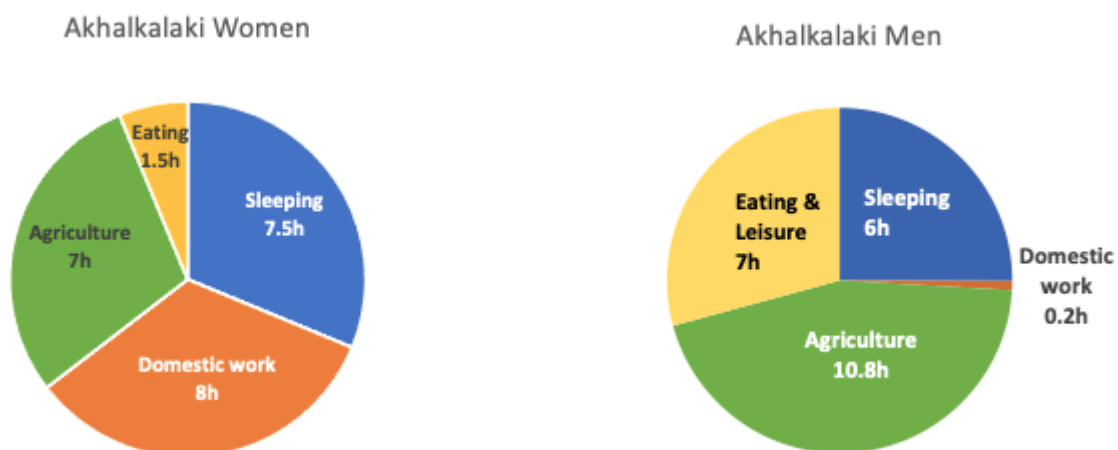


Figure 5: 24-hour time use of typical women and men in Akhalkalaki

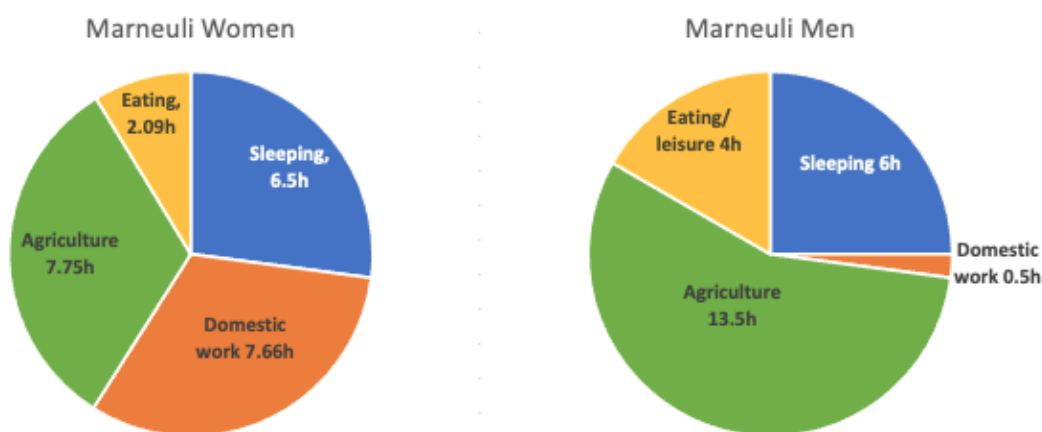
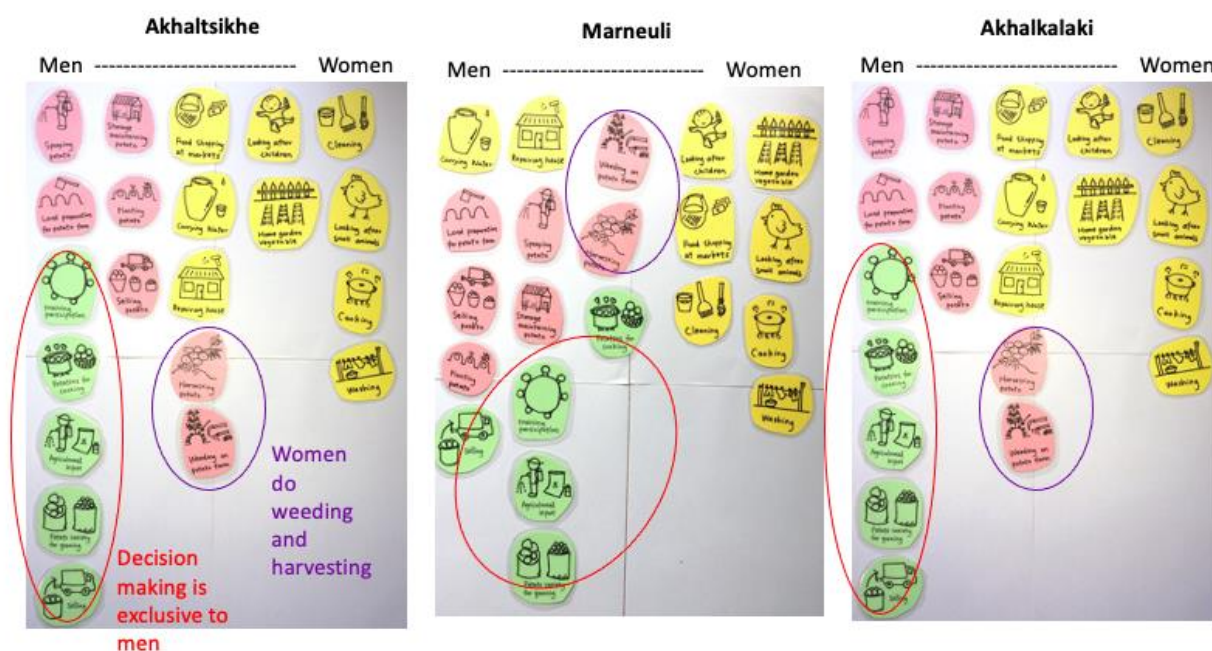


Figure 6: 24-hour time use of typical women and men in Marneuli

Gender roles in potato farming and domestic work

There are clear gender differences in the roles associated with agriculture and domestic work. Figure 7 shows divisions of labor based on a mapping exercise and discussions between male and female participants in three communities. Three findings are highlighted. First, in all communities, women participate in weeding and potato harvesting. Women therefore should be involved in any kind of training on potato production, particularly crop protection (e.g., symptoms of pests and diseases). Second, men are responsible for making all decisions, such as who among the family members is to participate in agricultural training, what potato varieties to grow, how much potato should be sold to whom, and how much to invest in potato production. This means that if we want women to be involved in potato production and management, the project needs to consult with men first (to receive their support for women's participation, new roles, and decision-making capability). Third, although it was clear from the previous section that men spend a marginal amount of time on domestic work, they still perceive themselves as active participants in this activity. Although this is beyond the scope of the potato

project, men's limited recognition about women's heavy burden in domestic work is a fundamental issue, making it difficult for women to lead and manage agricultural concerns.



Yellow cards = domestic work, pink cards = potato activities, green cards = decision-making; as demarcated at the top, left side = mostly done by men, right side = mostly done by women

Figure 7: Gender division of labor in three communities

Gender roles in potato farming and domestic work

Perceived power and freedom of men and women: This exercise was to measure individuals' perceptions about the degree of power and freedom for men and women in their community in general (drawn from GENNOVATE). Women and men participants were asked to vote privately to rate (on a scale of 1–5) the degree of power and freedom of their own gender group. The result (see figure 8) shows that the gender gap is less in the community with a majority of Georgians (Akhaltsikhe) compared to those with a majority of Armenians (Akhalkalaki) and Azerbaijanians (Marneuli). In all three communities, both men and women perceive that women have more power and freedom compared to 10 years ago. Both Armenian and Azerbaijan women were very active during the single gender group discussion but tended to be quiet in the mixed gender group discussion. This indicates that specific support and arrangements are required when the project invites women to participate in training or events, such as making women the majority group to facilitate their public speaking ability or organizing women-only agricultural training.

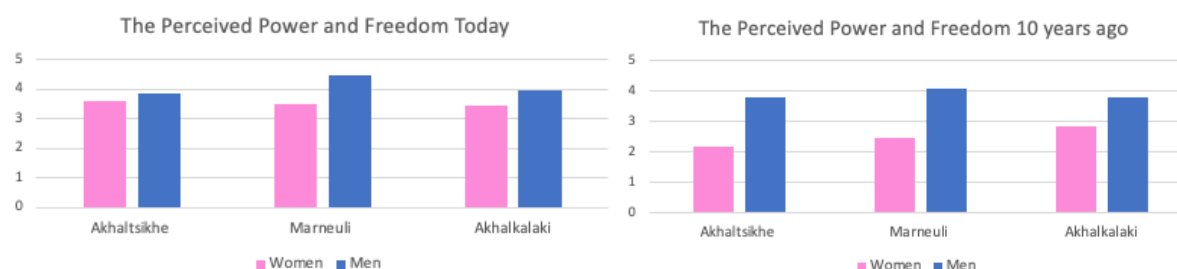


Figure 8: Perceived power and freedom today and 10 years ago

7. Recommendation

Based on the literature review, as well as on the study conducted in the target communities, the following recommendations are proposed to the project team, the project management team, and national policymakers and practitioners involved in project formulation, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation in agriculture, rural development, and gender equality.

Support women's increased availability and accessibility to seed through integrated seed system

One of the options for increasing the availability and accessibility of women to potato seed is potato seed policy, which should create a framework that enables public and private resources to be used to meet gender-specific demands for seed, and that fosters an enabling environment for the synergistic development of the formal and informal seed system. Indeed, in Georgia, as women are more involved in informal small-scale potato production and, in most cases, do not refer themselves as farmers, larger scale commercial activities, where men are more actively involved, may foster women's involvement in decision-making processes and thus help them to be involved in the potato sector as "real farmers."

The formal seed system can enhance the quality and functioning of the informal seed system by, for example, implementing capacity-building activities addressing both men and women, strengthening community seed storage, and improving seed selection.

In the framework of the project "Enhancing Rural Livelihoods in Georgia: Introducing Integrated Seed Health Approaches to Local Potato Seed Systems," more women who were previously involved in informal seed systems and small-scale potato production should be encouraged to participate in project activities. Perhaps the distribution of a small amount of seed with gender considerations (i.e., equally to men and women) by the project team could be an option.

Facilitate women's involvement in cooperatives at a management level

Despite the positive effect of cooperatives' development on women's social and economic involvement, as mentioned in the Strategy for Regional Development, gender is not mainstreamed in the Law on Cooperatives, and it is clear that the establishment process is not involving women to the same extent as men. According to the Agency of Cooperatives, there are 1,291 cooperatives registered in Georgia, with women accounting for about 30% of all members. It is recommended to support women's increased involvement in cooperatives through initiating gender mainstreaming in the Law on Cooperatives. By being more actively involved at this level, women may be exposed to greater opportunities for information and knowledge sharing. Such an initiative may also foster more information exchange possibilities with regard to potato farming and the potato seed system, which, in turn, may result in the joint development of business ideas about Potato Seed System.

Access to grants and low interest loans for implementing small-scale business projects should be improved. Women are already active in local potato farming and informal seed systems, and they could make important contributions to emerging small-scale seed enterprises.

In the framework of the project "Enhancing Rural Livelihoods in Georgia: Introducing Integrated Seed Health Approaches to Local Potato Seed Systems," it may be possible to prepare the groundwork for business idea development that may be budgeted by other donor support, as it is not envisioned to give small grants through the current project. Preparing this groundwork may be planned via the greater involvement of women in the

project, such that their understanding of the importance of the potato seed system is increased, and better business ideas for high-quality potato production are encouraged.

The already established cooperative within the USAID Potato Program in Georgia is the Potato Producers Network (PPN), established by 9 selected leader farmers and comprising only one woman, and managed by a Board of Directors (BoD). The project is supporting the cooperative's effort to obtain status from the Ministry of Agriculture, which will enable PPN to submit grant applications to state projects and obtain funding for the improvement of cooperative activities. Although the PPN will be managed by a BoD and its head, there will be some issues requiring the involvement of all members of the cooperative. In addition, the BoD will be elected for a specific time period and, within the constructs of project implementation, will rotate about four times, which will enable other members to be elected as future directors, based on their active involvement. It is recommended that there be a 30% female representation in the PPN, with members being encouraged to vote for female members of the BoD. Selection indicators should also be elaborated in order to ensure women's participation in decision-making processes in the Network. Additionally, it is recommended that specific incentives be offered to female members and, perhaps, to their husbands in order to facilitate more active participation in the cooperative's daily life.

Increase training opportunities and information sharing

Equal outreach and benefits to rural women and men should be ensured through projects and trainings on the potato seed system, adapted to their (substantive and logistical) needs and interests, and their use of all possible communication channels (including cooperatives, municipal women's rooms, women leaders at the community level, and local networks) for mobilization.

One of the initiatives to increase women's participation in decision-making processes, as well as to increase information-sharing possibilities, was establishing women's rooms in several municipalities. In this way, women who come to the municipality (rooms are located in the municipality buildings) for their business can use the facilities of these rooms and receive consultations on other municipality services. The project was supported by Mercy Corps, TASO Foundation, and UN Women. Similar activities, in which women who are well informed and involved in decision-making processes are supported, can foster an action in any agricultural field, including potato production or perhaps the potato seed system, through the acquisition of relevant information.

Awareness-raising training on gender equality should be supported and conducted, and women-targeted programs and activities should be implemented that not only address capacity development in potato seed system farming activities, but also gender stereotypes and inequalities, and seek to improve women's access to knowledge and information, finance, markets and agricultural inputs, technologies, and equipment.

In the framework of the project "Enhancing Rural Livelihoods in Georgia: Introducing Integrated Seed Health Approaches to Local Potato Seed Systems," training is planned for farmers in the targeted communities. It is recommended that more women be involved in these training exercises in order to increase their knowledge of selection processes, thereby fostering their interest and desire to get involved in the potato seed system at the local level. (Note: a separate document on women's increased involvement in planned training was developed within the project.)

Include gender component in policy document

As mentioned above, gender aspects are under-considered in agricultural policies; furthermore, there is no policy document on potato seed policy that reflects gender issues. Thus, it is anticipated that crucial gender

issues will be addressed through the components of the Potato Seed Plan, such that policy makers will have the ability to pay close attention to gender considerations (Mudege et al., 2017). The points for gender mainstreaming in the Seed Plan are as follows:

Component 1: Adoption of varieties that degenerate slowly due to their natural resistance to the organisms that cause potato seed degradation (PSD). The activities in this component are aimed at improving the adoption of varieties resistant to viruses, the main cause of PSD in Georgia, as the varieties currently grown in Georgia are susceptible to viruses. At all stages of variety adoption, specific attention should be paid to gender issues—for example, maintaining gender balance while conducting participatory varietal trials to select different potato genotypes as a part of a variety development program, and while distributing new varieties of seeds to the farmers.

Component 2: On-farm practices to maintain or even improve seed quality. The activities in this component are aimed at improving farmers' capacities to manage their potato seed in the field and include activities for adapting technologies and training materials to Georgian conditions, training extension agents and farmers, and monitoring progress on seed health. Training modules may be elaborated, taking into consideration gender aspects—for example, including gender equality issues in the modules or stressing the importance of gender balance in the potato seed system—as well as the importance of maintaining gender balance (reaching a female presence of at least at 30%) while conducting trainings (or ToTs) for extension agents and farmers.

Component 3: Strategic use of certified seed. This component will promote the production of certified seed in Georgia and improve its use by implementing seed replacement practices that combine the use of high-quality seed and on-farm practices. At all levels of the implementation of the component—starting with the survey and the identification of opportunities and bottlenecks, through the development of innovation plans (three categories), and up to the implementation of the innovations—gender balance should be considered. For example, women and men should have equal opportunities to participate in innovation plan development as well as in their implementation.

In general, the recommendation reflected at the policy level would be that the project manager/CIP country office hold discussions with stakeholders—such as local governments, seed companies, and processing companies—to organize activities/events that support women farmers.

Improve gender mainstreaming in seed systems' frameworks

As mentioned above, one of the aims of the study was to test the multi-stakeholder framework for intervening in RTB seed systems in order to understand the possibilities of improving gender-related interventions in potato seed systems by its use. Thus, there was an attempt to integrate gender issues into the framework itself, and to look at the gender-related perspectives of different stakeholders.

Although the framework provides a good picture of the gender-sensitive issues in the seed system, it does possess some specific limitations. For example, while the framework successfully captures problems (barriers), it does not allow a deeper examination into the reasons behind them, or of the ways they can be addressed. Also, it is not clear how stakeholders envision gender mainstreaming at different levels of the seed system; they simply underline the importance of gender equality in general.

It may be desirable to add some sections to the framework that provide a clearer understanding of gender roles from the stakeholder perspective relative to issues defined by the framework: availability, associability, and quality of seed.

Elaborate gender-sensitive project design

To address existing gender equality gaps and gender stereotypes in the division of labor, as well as the disproportionately heavy burden of women in reproductive and productive work, development organizations and other actors implementing projects should design their projects with very clear gender targets and indicators; they should also design special initiatives that promote the engagement of women in potato seed system activities.

In the framework of the project “Enhancing Rural Livelihoods in Georgia: Introducing Integrated Seed Health Approaches to Local Potato Seed Systems,” such indicators (if not defined yet) would be: the number of women with availability to seed, the number of women with accessibility to seed, and the number of women participating in trainings.

For the USAID Potato Program in Georgia, the project sets up activities specifically targeted to women, such as apical cutting training, the evaluation of potato variety trials, informing women when the project distributes seed potatoes, and inviting women to crop protection training at a time and season amenable to them and at a location they can easily visit. The monitoring and evaluation of the project should be conducted for women and men farmers separately to understand how women and men benefited from the project.

Initiating a change in gender norms at the community level

Some fun events may help men and women farmers to be open-minded.

Examples are:

- 1) Organize a potato cooking contest for men (evaluated by women).
- 2) Produce a short video expressing gender roles, interests, and challenges in potato production (produced by male and female farmer volunteers), and host a video presentation event in the community, inviting local government officers to attend.
- 3) Hold a potato harvesting competition in the trial field (e.g., a couple works together to harvest the potato crop, and the fastest couple is given an award).

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6 Appendices

Entry points for gender mainstreaming in implementing the multi-stakeholder framework for intervening in the potato seed system in Georgia

Stakeholder	Availability/supply	Accessibility			Quality	
		Delivery channel features	Affordability/profitability issues	Information to create awareness & demand	Variety (including biodiversity)	Health, genetic purity, physiological age, and physical quality
Policy makers	Does country have any relevant policies, and if so, does it include gender considerations on seed availability/supply? Does the Seed Plan have relevant gender elements: equal availability/supply possibility of seed for both men and women?	Does any policy document, including the Seed Plan , contain seed delivery channel features, and if so, how does it address the gender issue?	Do the policy documents, including the Seed Plan , consider the financial capacities of both men and women to buy seeds?	Is there any awareness-raising activity that initiates demand for both men and women equally (if AR is planned at all)?	Does the Seed Plan include a clear indication as to gender considerations in the adoption of new varieties?	Does the Seed Plan consider gender aspects while conducting training on seed quality management (positive selection) for extension agents and farmers?
National and international research	Is there data on the availability of seed for men and women? Research points: How men and women can be affected by the availability of seed?	Is there data on accessibility of seed for men and women (<i>refers to affordability and info access as well</i>)? Research point: Do men and women have different delivery channels? How can equal access through different delivery channels for men and women be ensured?	Research point: What are the main obstacles to financial access for men and women? How can these problems be addressed?	Research point: What are the main obstacles to information access for men and women? How can these problems be addressed?	Is gender equality considered while conducting research on seed variety (# of men, women participants in the research)?	How do gender roles impact seed health management? How is equal participation of men and women ensured in positive selection?
Traders (local markets)		Are male and female (if any exist) seed traders able to participate competitively in the seed market?	Do male and female traders have equal financial capacities to engage in seed trade?	Do male and female traders have equal access to market information?		

Farmer organizations and specialized seed producers	How do they ensure that women and men have equal access to seed?	Do they consider that many men and women need different access channels to seed?	Do they consider that men and women may have different financial access to seed (i.e., women may be more disadvantaged financially)?	Do they target men and women differently or equally while conducting marketing/promotional campaigns?	Do they take into account that men and women may have different variety preferences?	Do they target equally men and women for seed quality trainings?
International & NGOs & national extensions	Do they have seed to deliver? If so, do they target women and disadvantaged groups? Do they have any mechanisms in place to ensure equal access to quality seeds for both men and women, and how do they address the problem in their projects?	Do they deliver seed? How do they ensure that it reaches both men and women equally?	Do they implement projects that increase rural women's financial ability to purchase seeds? Do they offer to local populations financial systems that increases their financial capacity in general?	Do they equally target men and women while conducting AR campaign? Trainings (any kind of meeting, workshop)?	Do they ensure the equal participation of men and women in the selection process? Is there involvement of both men and women in their respective training?	Do they have any mechanism to offer quality seed to both men and women? Is there involvement of both men and women in their respective training?
Seed users, farmers	Do men and women experience similar problems/challenges when it comes to seed availability?		What kind of obstacles (if any) do men and women face when they try to access seed? Are there any interventions in place to increase women's and men's access to funds (loans, grants)?	Do men and women have equal access to increasing their knowledge (e.g., training opportunities), learning how to manage seed and becoming involved in the potato seed system?	Is there any gender preference related to potato seed variety?	Are there any barriers to men and women participating in the selection process equally? Are women and men equally interested in the selection of healthy seeds?

List of key informants

#	Key Informant	Organization	Name	Position	Location
1	Local government	Information and Consultancy Center at MEPA	Sophio Sabauri	Senior specialist of second category	Kazbegi
2	Local government	Information and Consultancy Center at MEPA	Artem Stamalaidze	Senior specialist of second category	Kazbegi
3	Research, Local government	Scientific Research Center at MEPA	Levan Tkemaladze	PhD, researcher	Tbilisi
4	Farmers association	Farmers association of Georgia	Natia Niniklashvili	Project Manager	Tbilisi
5	Int. NGO	CARE International in the Caucasus	Khatuna Madurishvili	Regional Gender Adviser	Tbilisi
6	Int. INGO	CARE International in the Caucasus	Natia Katsia	Operations Manager	Tbilisi
7	Int. NGO	CARE International in the Caucasus	Katie Kartvelishvili	Communications Coordinator; Gender Focal Point	Tbilisi
8	Int. NGO	Mercy Corps	Irakli Kasrashvili	Country Director	Tbilisi
9	Local Action Group (LAG)	PIN	Nino alibegashvili	Project assistant	Kazbegi
10	LAG	PIN	Nana Avsajanashvili	Field officer	Kazbegi
11	LAG	PIN	Tariel Qarelidze	Project officer	Kazbegi

Technics		Target	Sample size
12	Focus group discussion	Researchers of the scientific Research Center	17 participants (mixed)
			9 women
			9 men
13	Focus group discussion	Local community members, Marneuli	5 women
			11 men
14	Interviews with farmers	Kazbegi	22 farmers (5 women, 18 men)
		Marneuli	12 farmers (5 women, 7 men)
		Akhalkalaki	16 farmers (4 women, 12 men)

Number and gender of participants of gender trainings:

Region	Ethnic groups		Women	Men	Total
Akhaltsikhe	Mainly Armenians	1	16	16	32
		2	14	6	20
Marneuli	Azerbaijanians*	3	18	13	31
Akhalkalaki	Mainly Armenians	4	13	10	23
		5	36	6	42
Total			97	51	148

Gender questionnaire to identify gender balance in potato seed systems in selected municipalities of Georgia

This questionnaire was prepared for farmers who are involved in the project activities and are active participants in the local potato seed system.

The questionnaire contains open-ended and closed-ended questions that enable the development of a more comprehensive understanding of gender issues in local potato farming.

Topic	Question	Yes or No	Comment
1. Gender, general	1. What is gender equality for you?		
	2. Do you think there are some gender inequalities in your community?		
	3. If yes, what kind of inequalities can you identify?		
	4. Do you think women are more open to new agricultural approaches? Innovations?		
	5. Do you think it is important for you to get more information about gender equality?		
2. Farming, general	6. In your opinion, between men and women, who is more involved in agriculture?		
	7. Please explain your opinion, and give examples of what you mean.		
	8. Do you think it is important that women and men are equally involved in farming/agricultural activities?		
	9. What are the obstacles that restrict women from participating fully in farming/agriculture activities? Please give examples.		
	10. What are the obstacles that restrict men from participating fully in farming/agriculture activities? Please give examples.		
	11. What are the opportunities that promote women's participation in farming/agriculture activities? Please give examples.		
	12. What are the opportunities that promote men's participation in farming/agriculture activities? Please give examples.		
	13. Do you think women need more incentives to be involved in farming/agricultural activities?		
	14. What incentives do women need? Please explain and give examples.		
	15. Do you think men need more incentives to be involved in farming/agricultural activities?		
	16. What incentives do men need? Please explain and give examples.		
	17. In your opinion, who is more involved in potato farming—men or women?		
3. Farming, potato crop /potato farming	18. Please explain your opinion. Give examples of what you mean.		
	19. Do you think it is important that women and men are equally involved in potato farming?		
	20. What are the obstacles that restrict women from participating fully in potato farming activities? Please give examples.		

	21. What are the obstacles that restrict men from participating fully in potato farming activities? Please give examples.		
	22. Do you think women need more incentives to be involved in potato farming activities?		
	23. What incentives do women need in this regard? Please explain and give examples.		
	24. Do you think men need more incentives to be involved in potato farming activities?		
	25. What incentives do men need in this regard? Please explain and give examples.		
4. Farming, potato seed system	26. In your opinion, who can be more involved in the potato seed system—men or women?		
	27. Please explain your opinion. Give examples of what you mean.		
	28. Do you think it is important that women and men are equally involved in the potato seed system?		
	29. What are the obstacles that restrict women from participating fully in the potato seed system? Please give examples.		
	30. What are the obstacles that restrict men from participating fully in the potato seed system? Please give examples.		
	31. Do you think women need more incentives to be involved in potato seed system activities?		
	32. What incentives do women need in this regard? Please explain and give examples.		
	33. Do you think men need more incentives to be involved in potato seed system activities?		
	34. What incentives do men need in this regard? Please explain and give examples.		
4. Policy, seed plan ³	35. Do you know whether Georgia has a seed policy in place?		
	36. If yes, what does this policy say regarding the production of seed potato?		
	37. What are the policy guidelines with regard to engaging with farmers?		
	38. Does the policy ensure equal participation of men and women in seed system interventions?		
	39. What opportunities do these guidelines offer for women to participate as seed farmers?		
	40. What opportunities do these guidelines offer for men to participate as seed farmers?		
	41. Does the policy ensure equal benefit from the seed system for men and women?		
	42. Should women be more encouraged to contribute to policy making in the agricultural field?		
	43. Do you think it is important to incorporate gender in any action plan (e.g., seed plan)?		
	44. What are the obstacles of this policy for women to participate as seed entrepreneurs?		

³ Questions about seed plans will mainly be used for local government and other partners involved in plan development, and not for farmers.

	45. What are the obstacles of this policy for men to participate as seed entrepreneurs?		
	46. Are local farmer women involved in decision-making and policy elaboration on potato farming?		
	47. Do the policies consider the financial capacities of both men and women to acquire seeds?		
	48. Do the policies allocate money for gender-sensitive research?		
	49. Are there any incentives for both men and women to adopt new varieties of potato?		
5. Certification	50. Have you heard about seed certification?		
	51. If yes, what do you know about seed certification?		
	52. Have you heard specifically about potato seed certification?		
	53. If yes, what do you know about potato seed certification?		
	54. Have you ever put into use seed certification?		
	55. What can be the advantages of certification for women?		
	56. What can be the advantages of certification for men?		
	57. What can be the disadvantages of certification for women?		
	58. What can be the disadvantages of certification for men?		
	59. Is a certification system more greatly preferred by women than by men?		
	60. Who can benefit more from certification—men or women?		
	61. How? Please explain.		
	62. Who advocates more for certification—men or women?		
6. Positive selection	63. Have you heard about positive and negative selection?		
	64. If yes, what do you know about them?		
	65. Have you ever put into use selection?		
	66. Have you heard specifically about potato positive and negative selection?		
	67. If yes, what do you know about them?		
	68. Have you ever put it into use?		
	69. Do know advantages and disadvantages of positive and negative selections?		
	70. Are women or men, or both equally, more concerned about/interested in positive selection?		
	71. Is it more comfortable for women to participate in positive selection or for men?		
	72. Is it possible that women and men equally are actively involved in the training about positive selection (select the best)?		
	73. Do you think women may have some obstacles (e.g., house, family) to attending training? Please elaborate.		
	74. Can women and men benefit equally from training on positive selection?		
	75. Do you think it is important to keep gender balance as trainers during training, or ToT?		
7. Research on virus resistance	76. Do you think women or men are more interested in obtaining virus-resistant types of potatoes?		
	77. Please explain your opinion.		

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CIP is a research-for-development organization with a focus on potato, sweetpotato and Andean roots and tubers. It delivers innovative science-based solutions to enhance access to affordable nutritious food, foster inclusive sustainable business and employment growth, and drive the climate resilience of root and tuber agri-food systems. Headquartered in Lima, Peru, CIP has a research presence in more than 20 countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

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