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Co-operatives and Women Empowerment – Twenty Years After Beijing
Conference – Case Study of Georgia
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Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis entitled **“Co-operatives and women empowerment – twenty years after Beijing conference – case study of Georgia”** is my own work and all the sources have been quoted and acknowledged by means of complete references.

April 27, 2017, Prague

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Abstract

In the year 2015 the international community commemorated the 20th anniversary of the 4th Conference on Women in Beijing and the publication of a human rights document *Platform for action*. Co-operatives based on principles of self-help, equality and solidarity with its potential to reduce poverty and boost the social development are often perceived as suitable tool for enhancing the empowerment of women, who face disadvantages of being small scale farmer. This research investigated the situation of rural women in Georgia who had decided to join the agricultural co-operative. In this study the problems women had had to face before they joined the co-operative and the expectations of women from joining a co-operative were investigated. Women-farmers members of newly established co-operatives (N=29) in Imereti region took part in the research. Besides them also members of boards of directors (N=14) and other stakeholders taking part in co-operative formation process (N=3) were asked about their opinion on gender equality in co-operatives and co-operatives' potential to strengthen women's role. The study was based on mixed type of research and employed both qualitative and quantitative methods. The data were gathered by questionnaire survey and semi-structured interviews and processed by using descriptive statistics and the method of weighted average scores. Qualitative analysis of data was carried out in order to deliver results for examination of incorporation of *Women's empowerment principles in business* into co-operatives rules and regulations. Mostly educated women of all age groups joined co-operatives and expected mainly improvement of their agricultural business activities. Women were active in co-operatives' affairs, however some obstacles for their full and equal engagement were identified. Representatives from boards of directors mostly stood for the idea of equality between women and men, however majority of co-operatives had not set developed internal policies and rules for ensuring women's full participation. However the lack such measures was mostly caused by immaturity of surveyed co-operatives which were mostly established in previous two years. The results can help to modify the objectives and services of already established co-operatives to better suit women farmers and also be used for further research investigating the potential of co-operatives to contribute to empowerment of its women members.

Keywords: co-operative, women, empowerment, Georgia.

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List of acronyms

ADAC	Agency for Development of Agricultural Cooperatives
ATSU	Akaki Tsereteli State University in Kutaisi
BPfA	Beijing Platform for Action
CEDAW	The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
ENPARD	European Neighbourhood Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GAD	Gender and Development
GEL	Georgian Lari
GEOSTAT	National Statistical Office of Georgia
HH	Household
ICA	International Co-operative Alliance
ILO	International Labour Organization of the United Nations
ILO/ICA	research conducted in 2015 by ILO with co-operation with ICA on contribution of Co-operative movement to women's empowerment and gender equality
PiN	People in Need
UN	United Nations
UN Women	United Nation Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women
WE Principles	Women's Empowerment Principles in Business
WID	Women in Development

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1. Introduction

In the year 2015 the international community was commemorating the 20th anniversary of the 4th Conference on Women in Beijing and the publication of a human rights document *Platform for action*. This conference was not the first one trying to open the discussion about the situation of women and gender issues – since the seventies three other conferences were held in Mexico City, Copenhagen and Nairobi. The principal themes of Beijing conference were the “advancement and empowerment of women in relation to women’s human rights”, “women and poverty”, “women and decision-making”, “the girl-child”, “violence against women” and other areas of concern (UN WOMEN, 2015). Women were therefore considered a topic themselves but especially for the development agenda aiming at achieving goals of sustainable development is also important the role of the rural women (Golmohammadi and Honari, 2016).

Yet despite the international effort the world is in past years facing progressive trend of “feminization of poverty”, which refers to an increasing share of women among poor population. Especially female headed households tend to face higher risk of falling into poverty since the share of dependent persons in the household is often higher than in male headed of households. Poverty among women has its causes in limited access to resources like land or credit as well as to healthcare or education. Taking care of family needs and devoting their time to work in subsistence farming to ensure the food for the household, women often stay tied in the private sphere. Women therefore in general have insufficient access to healthcare, education, childcare or elderly care. All this limits them in the equal decision making at home and in community. For disempowered poor women without access to important resources is very complicated to change their living conditions (UN, 2000). And on the other hand men who are generally more active in the public sphere have better chances to influence public affairs. And as was said by authors who criticize development from gender/feminist perspective, there are also gaps in equal distribution of benefits from development between women and men (Moser, 2003; Molyneux 1985).

One of responses to above mentioned issues is the concept of empowerment of women. There is a variety of conceptions of the process of empowerment which see it

as a tool for delivering diverse goals. It can be focused either on achieving development goals and providing individual agency for change in woman's life (the objective is to achieve development goals such as reducing poverty, malnutrition and child mortality, improving health, enhancing access to education etc.) or on changing the way the society looks at gender as such and gender division of labour and pushing towards equal and fair distribution of benefits of development.

Co-operatives are members owned and operated business entities with large emphasis on democracy and equality. The central idea of co-operatives is to meet members' economic, social, cultural, and environmental needs and thus achieve the social justice (ICA, 2015). All over the world, agricultural co-operatives are viewed and used to improve rural women's situation – not only by sustaining their basic material needs but also by enhancing their position within the society. These goals are achieved by economies of scale, enhancing members' collective bargaining power and reducing risks they are facing on the market and also by greater participation on decision making processes of a business entity. In co-operatives women can directly influence their working condition (ILO, 2015). All this contribute to improvement of income, leadership skills and overall socio-economic status of members and have positive impact on their household security and participation in community decision-making processes (Woldu et al., 2013).

2. Literature Review

In this chapter the main topic of the thesis will be introduced. The review contains information related to the history of the United Nations' actions and documents related to women in development. Specific approaches to gender planning will be described together with main features and conditions of empowerment. The following part of the review focuses at a description of the context of co-operatives, its values and principles and its contribution to women's empowerment and the reality of agricultural co-operatives in Georgia. The situation of women in Georgian society (with respect to gender equality) and basic facts about the agriculture in Georgia will be also presented.

2.1. UN efforts on women

The significant focus of the United Nations on women and their rights and situation began in the 70'. **The International Women's Year** was officially declared in the year 1975 and the March 8 was celebrated as an **International Women's Day**. In the same year the **First World Conference on Women** was held in the Mexico City and the **International Decade for Women (1976-1985)** was announced there. The most important outcome of the First Conference on Women is the *World Plan of Action for the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Women's Year*, the set of objectives to be achieved till 1985, which was formulated by representatives of governments together with civil society organizations. In the 1979 the *Convention on Elimination of All forms of Discrimination on Women (CEDAW)* was developed and adopted by UN General Assembly as legally binding addition to national law for states which ratified it. (UN WOMEN, 2007)

Till the end of the century three more Conferences on Women were held:

Second World Conference on Women in Copenhagen in 1980 (with its main aim to evaluate the progress in the field of achieving goals from First Conference).

Third World Conference on Women in Nairobi in 1985 (with its main aim to evaluate the progress in the field of achieving goals from International Decade for Women which was ending in the same year. The outcome of this conference was formulation of Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women which was then adopted by some governments).

and **Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing** in 1995. (UN WOMEN)

In the year 2015 the 20th anniversary of Beijing conference was commemorated and it was grasped as an opportunity for evaluation of the efforts which were done in order to improve the situation of women. Since the most important outcome from the Beijing conference is *Beijing declaration and Platform for action (BPfA)*, which will be described in following lines, most of researches focused on evaluating the progress in achieving goals presented in BPfA.

Beijing Platform for Action is the blueprint and agenda for advancing women's rights aiming at "removing all the obstacles to women's active participation in all spheres of public and private life through a full and equal share in economic, social, cultural and political decision-making" (UN, 1996). *Platform for Action* was based on an idea that not only equality in the face of law, but equality between women and men in most general sense is the core value. "[E]quality between women and men are prerequisites for achieving political, social, economic, cultural and environmental security among all peoples" (UN, 1996). The document describes 12 critical areas of concern and for each of them the strategic objectives were formulated together with the list of the actions, which should be taken in order to achieve fulfillment of each objective. Activities are divided into groups based on the institutions for whom they are proposed – national governments or other stakeholders at national, regional and international level. The critical areas of Concern of Platform for Action are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1.: Critical areas of concern of BPfA

1. Women and Poverty	7. Women in Power and Decision-making
2. Education and Training of Women	8. Institutional Mechanism for the Advancement of Women
3. Women and Health	9. Human Rights of Women
4. Violence against Women	10. Women and the Media
5. Women and Armed Conflict	11. Women and the Environment
6. Women and the Economy	12. The Girl-child

Source: UN, 1996.

The United Nations continues to maintain it's focus on all above mentioned problems and in 5 years long observation periods evaluates the progress of women and

fulfilling the actions formulated in BPfA. In 2013 with outlook to the 20th anniversary of BPfA governments were asked to draw up national reviews to sum up achievements on the field of women's empowerment and gender equality done in past 20 years.

For the purpose of our research, which focuses on the situation of women in agricultural co-operatives, three areas of concern were selected to be examined in the context of co-operative activities:

1. Women and poverty
2. Women and economy
3. Women in power and decision-making

Achieving equality between women and men and women's empowerment also became part of *Millennium Development Goals* as the Goal No. 3: "Promote gender equality and empower women" (UN, 2016) which was later on reformulated in the set of *Sustainable Development Goals* as the Goal No. 5: "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls" (UN, 2017).

2.2. Theoretical approaches to gender in development

2.2.1. Sex, gender and gender socialization

In gender studies' literature expressions "sex" and "gender" are widely used. The term "sex" is in the sociology used in order to describe anatomical differences between men and women. It defines "maleness" and "femaleness". However, sociologists are also using term "gender" to describe the properties of each sex ascribed/given by the society – psychological, social and cultural differences between men and women. Gender defines "masculinity" and "femininity" (Giddens, 2009).

West and Zimmerman in their work *Doing gender* explicates the distinction between sex, sex category and gender in following way: sex is based on criteria of one's biological givenness (eg. genitalia) and ascribes the maleness or femaleness to a person with such a biological givenness. Sex category is based on person's affiliation to the biological category (male or female) no matter of individual sex. Gender refers to the attitudes and activities related to the maleness and femaleness, the social expectation to each of sex category. Gender is therefore from definition always socially constructed (West and Zimmerman, 1987). The arguments of sociologists on the matter of

differences in behaviour differs in the level of emphasis either on gender or on sex, one explains differences by biological nature of human being, other by socialization by learning into gender roles. (Giddens, 2009).

Gender division of labour could be also result of gender socialization (depend on which approach is consider as the leading one). The important characteristics of activities consider to be female activities have more private nature (reproductive work – maintaining the household, child rearing, preparation of food) while men are often performing more in public sphere (productive work – work which generates income, production of goods and services). Reproductive work is in many cases not consider a “real work” and therefore not financially rewarded. In the same time the burden of reproductive work is time consuming so women either do not have time for income generating activities or have to manage both so they works much more hour per day than men. Women trapped in the private sphere of life have less opportunities to influence important decision-making processes in the society (Sikod, 2007).

2.2.2. Third World policy approaches to women in development

There is an assumption that women have some common interests or needs (Mohanty and Jonasdottir in Ferguson, 2004). Molyneux (1985) divides the gender interests into two groups. First group consist of “Practical gender interests” which relates to traditional gender roles and gender division of labour. For example if the role of women is responsibility for household, her interest lies in functional government provision of welfare. However the “Strategic gender interests” are growing from the need for change of women’s (and men’s) traditional role within the patriarchal society. Moser (2003) in her work *Gender planning and development* uses the terms practical and strategic gender needs and examines which Third World policy approach to women in development gives more space to practical or strategic need. She identified the five development approaches which are described in following paragraphs.

When we analyse historical evolution of these approaches we can distinguish two fundamentally different lines of thinking and practice. We will use two terms that are sometimes used to describe those two basic types – the **“Women in development” (WID)** approach which originated from the recognition that in contrast to men, women were not benefiting from development projects because they were (not necessarily

intentionally) designed to suit better men rather for both of sexes. Later occurred also “**Gender and development**” (GAD) approach as a critical response to WID and its omissions.

The *Women in development* approach was formulated within the development discourse in 70’ and focused on increasing the productivity and income of women and on making women more effective in management of their tasks (reproductive, workload) and thus improving their situation. It highlights the potential of women who are left from development and their contribution to economy is untapped (Moser, 2003). It therefore strives for the participation of women in development from an economic efficiency point of view. Women’s empowerment in the WID scheme is the **Liberal empowerment** that is consistent with development goals, it is its instrument (for eradication of poverty, creating equal access to education and training and thus to income improvement etc), tackling not the existing system (which is defined by male domination – patriarchy), but only individual ability of women to cope with it. Liberal empowerment according to Ferguson (in Sardenberg, 2008) is about individuals obtaining resources in order to deliver change in their self-interest. It originates in liberalism with its emphasis on individual liberty and rights and equal opportunities and also inspires itself from neoclassical economics. The overall focus of WID approach and liberal empowerment is on practical gender needs.

More radical view (mostly stemming from authors from the Global South as an answer to liberal efforts to change the situation of women in development) on goals of empowerment has the **Liberating empowerment**, that wants to change the power relations between men and women and focuses on meeting strategic gender needs. According to Sen and Grown (in Sardenberg, 2008), the empowerment should be based on collective action and its core is a structural transformation and radical change of institutions of patriarchal domination. They put emphasis on intersectional nature of empowerment that “*must be thought and acted upon not only terms of gender inequalities, but also in terms of class, race, ethnicity and other social determinants among women, as well as of the unequal position of North and South in the Global arena.*” (Sardenberg, 2008). The need for application of liberation empowerment led to genesis of *Gender and development* approach in the late 70’ that explores the nature of relations between women and men and searches patterns of inequality and

discrimination that influence equal participation of women in development. It's goal is to transform this relationship to be more equal and it emphasises the need for change of gender roles. Women are already part of development, but they are involved by unequal terms. It criticizes WID approach which demands an activity from women without increasing their access to power and decision making mechanism and resources. GAD approach is performing a shift from efficiency to equity. But what had led to this shift? Project under the WID rationale were simply not too successful in improving women's situation (Campilo and Fauné, 1993). The major features of WID and GAD and distinction between them are described in the Table 2. Other marginal approaches with specific focus on class (WAD – Women and development) or environment (WED – women, environment and development) were also part of gender planning (Brown, 2006).

Table 2: From WID to GAD in theory

Feature	Women in Development	Gender and Development
Problem	Absence of women in development planning and policies – a problem for both women and economic development	Unequal social relations between men and women, limiting women's participation in development and rendering development inequitable
Women	Recipients of development assistance	Agents of change. Can not be addressed in isolation from their social context and larger gender relations
Development	Economic development	Economic, social, political and sustainable development – attention to distribution, equality and long-term impacts of development
Women's identity	Universal-single women's voice (drawn from experience of women in the North)	Women's lives affected by multiple variables, such as race, ethnicity and class
Goal	Integrate women into existing social structures and institutions to help women and increase economic efficiency	Empower women by transforming social structures and institutions to make development an equitable process for both

Source: Brown, 2006

The 70' were characterized by various UN efforts on the field of women's right and empowerment, however the international society was dealing with the role of

women in the development process already before. The first identified approach according to Moser (2003) was **Welfare approach**. It was mainstream from 50's to 70's and it is a "family-oriented" development strategy with a strong focus on reproductive work of women with a special interest in family planning. It supports women in the role of mothers and child rearers, because it recognizes motherhood as the most effective role they have. Men are supposed to have only a role in economic production separated from a family. This approach was strongly criticized on the First conference on women in 1975 for ignoring the strategic needs of women (Moser, 2003; Ferguson, 2004).

The welfare approach was later on replaced by **Equity approach**, the first of WID approaches that puts strategic gender needs in the forefront. It is still more or less a liberal feminist approach based on top-down measures (Ferguson, 2004) like development of legislation or affirmative action. It's basic goal is to enable women to be active in public sphere by means of improving their employment opportunities. It recognizes the need for changing traditional gender relations between women and men and thus changing the gender division of labour. (Moser, 2003).

Anti-poverty approach is also an WID approach focusing on meeting the practical gender needs. It is based on a presumption that the poverty of women is caused by the underdevelopment rather than by the oppression by patriarchal society. The cause of poverty is identified as a lack of access to private ownership of land and capital and discrimination on labour markets. Provision of access to productive resources is in this framing expected to lead to improvement of financial situation of women and thus benefit to development. Programmes aimed at women shall also contribute to a population reduction. This approach was criticized for orientation on women headed low income households or the spheres occupied mostly by women and therefore omitting the unequal gender relations and that with provision of help to low income households it substitutes the role of a state (Moser, 2003).

Efficiency approach started to be widely used in the 80's in the time when the Structural Adjustments were a popular condition for provision of aid. The basic idea of this approach was to use the full potential of human resources, so including women as work force was a logical step to increase the production and benefits to the economic growth. Focus was on provision of education and training to increase efficiency and use

the free time of women for provision of unpaid services and fully utilized the triple role of women (woman as mother, as a worker and as a community manager). Improvement in women's efficiency and their participation in economic process was considered as equity. Efficiency approach is top-down with focus on meeting the practical needs of women and is still popular till today (Moser, 2003).

Empowerment approach is the first GAD bottom-up approach based on strategic gender needs introduced by grass-roots movement called DAWN (Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era) at Third Conference on women in Nairobi in 1985. As compared with equity approach, which also works with strategic gender needs but more from a liberal point of view, both agreed on marginalization of women in the development process, but the empowerment approach is more radical in the way that it demand radical change of institutions and gender relations and thus empower women. Empowerment approach do not see oppression of women only as a matter of gender, but also is aware of intersectional nature of the oppression – that women also struggle because of their class, ethnicity, sexual-orientation or disability. The main focus of the empowerment approach in development is to end the structural oppression (Moser, 2003; Ferguson, 2004).

2.2.3. Women's empowerment

Empowerment is a widely used term in the development agenda, yet the understanding of what this term means tend to vary among the actors in development. According to Ferguson (2004), the empowerment of various groups in society is a goal of social movements from the 1960's. Mosedale (2005) works with a thesis that the *“empowerment is a process by which people begin making decision on matter which are important in their lives are being able to carry them out”* and also defines women's empowerment as a *“process by which women redefine and extend what is possible for them to be and do in situations where they have been restricted, compared to men, from being and doing”* or as a *“process by which women redefine gender roles in way which extend their possibilities for being and doing”*.

According to some authors (Kabeer, 1999; Mosedale, 2005; Sardenberg, 2008; Ferguson, 2004) there are particular parameters that should be met in order to fully match the definition of empowerment. Possibly there are more of those assumptions,

five of them were selected as most important. Each of them will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

a) To become participant of the process of empowerment, individual or group must be dis-empowered (Mosedale, 2005; Ferguson 2004)

Empowerment refers to a process of change, where on the beginning there is a person or a group, that is disempowered. Mosedale (2005) considers this the first of the assumption related to the definition of empowerment. The individual or group of people has to never have had or have lost their power and subsequently again acquire it. What does this *state of being disempowered* implies? Kabeer (1999) emphasizes that power, which is a basic component of empowerment term, refers to the *ability to make choice*. But not only one choice is needed, but all different **alternatives** in choosing different scenarios in the lived present or future is the condition for exercising this ability to make choice. Those, who had never been denied from variety of choices were never really disempowered. Still there are different choices and alternatives with *different relevancy* to the lives of people. Some life choices are more significant than others, are affecting the quality of life more in the depth. According to Kabeer (1999) choices associated with meeting the basic needs and exercising the fulfilling of one's human rights are considered as strategic life choices and empowerment should lead to the extension of ability of individual or group to make such strategic life choices. However according to Kabeer (1999) some choices or rejection of an alternative are consequences of a personal *preferences*, not of an inequality. Situation of being aware about the unequal roles of men and women, but not considering it as *unjust* might occur. This phenomenon is referred to as an **internalization** and it will be discussed later on.

b) The driving force in the process of empowerment cannot be the 'third party', but women or a group of women themselves (Mosedale, 2005; Ferguson, 2004)

Is feminism imported to southern parts of the world by western feminists? Are they importing values, which does not have place in different cultures than western ones? Mosedale (2005) states, that this view on feminism as something which is originally from West is incorrect for many reasons: women from South also fight for equality, feminists efforts are not a new feature in their history. But there is not only one proper way how to live as a woman and therefore the debate about "common women

interest” must be present. Nussbaum (2000 in Mosedale, 2005) draws attention to the cultural imperialism in the gender empowerment context, meaning considering the problem with the conception of assessment of what are the problems in woman’s life and what the ideal situation of her life looks like. Assessing categories could not reflect the point of view of the women, who are in the spotlight of development intervention, but it could be the categories of ideal life of women living in the western society. Therefore the questions about “Who sets the categories of success? Do those categories really fit on women in various cultural contexts?” are very relevant. There is a strong need to pay attention on the context of life of each particular woman and not to consider women a coherent group. Ferguson (2004) deals with an important question: “If women are not a coherent group, do they even have any common interest?” But while assessing the situation of a particular woman, one must be aware of her own criteria of quality of her life. Moser (2003) calls for bottom up participatory approach in assessing needs of women.

c) Actors in the process must be aware of male dominance and recognize the ideology that legitimises the unequal power relations (Balitwala 1994 in Sardenberg 2008; Ferguson 2004)

Integral part of empowerment of women is the recognition of the order in which males play the dominant role. To recognize the ideology, that allows this order to be legitimate (Batliwala, 1994 in Mosedale, 2005). Stromquist (1995, in Mosedale, 2005) sees empowerment made of cognitive (awareness about the cause of their subordination awareness about cultural and social expectation of gender roles, knowledge the legal rights and sexuality), psychological (escape from learned helplessness and gaining self-confidence and confidence to act individually and collectively upon their needs), economic (work as a means of gaining economic independence on men, enlarging the network of relationships) and political components. What is causing women to be in the subordinate role? It is a system of cultural norms, beliefs, customs and values which societies ascribe either to women or to men (Kabeer, 2000 in Mosedale, 2005).

The **internalization** of women’s unequal position is often leading to the rejection of feminist goals of empowerment – the need for empowerment and for change of gender relation in the society is not preferred by some women. The

internalization of subordinated position often leads to the practice of discriminatory attitudes against other woman in the community or society. Kabeer (1999) says that the result is a confirmation and deepening of male domination over woman through spreading ideology on woman themselves through indoctrination (according Hayward (2000) to discourage them from questioning the status quo). But is the total condemnation of this stance an adequate reaction to certain women's persistence on unequal power relations between gender as right and just arrangement? Is it possible to interpret it always as a result of manipulation and confused mind? Or shall the development community rather recognize the right of women to define their own relationships within the family and society as it suits themselves? Particular answers to these rather academic questions given by different authors shape the actual development agenda.

d) Individual woman or group of women must be convinced about right to equality, dignity and justice (Balitwala, 1994 in Sardenberg, 2008)

However there are women, who actively participate on the model of patriarchal society, women who internalize their oppression as the proper way of living. Those women, who are aware about unequal power roles between women and man, but they do not perceive it as unjust. Are those women also disempowered? Kabeer (1999) is talking about "choice not to make a choice". But do those women have any possibility to make any choice, to live their lives differently if they would decide to do so? Internalization of their own inferiority is leading to the deprivation on their own well-being and is often leading to practice of discriminatory attitudes against other women in the community. Is this real token of exercising the choice to live in patriarchal unequal power relations or inequality lived through the consent? Mosedale (2005) is mentioning the conflict between so called false consciousness – "*a way of thinking, that prevents person from perceiving the true nature of their social or economic situation*" (Stevenson, 2010) and "idea of doxa" which refers to the aspects of tradition and culture which are so taken-for-granted that they become naturalized (Kabeer, 1999)

e) Empowerment is a process, more than final product.

It is changing over the time, because state of being disempowered/empowered is relative to others or to the person/group in the centre during the time (Mosedale, 2005).

2.2.4. Feminization of poverty, feminization of agriculture

According to Haughton and Khandker (2009) the poverty is a “pronounced deprivation in well-being” (Houghton and Khandker, 2009). The phenomenon of poverty was traditionally linked to the economic dimension, where being poor meant lack of financial and material tools for living (such as food or home). Recently the approach has changed and people considered as poor are more likely viewed as people not only lacking material background, but also the ones without the tools to change such a situation, tools as proper education and literacy, good health and access to quality and affordable health care, the power to make political decisions and important decisions about own life and role in society. Common element of being poor is feeling of powerlessness and lacking influence (Veeran, 2000). Feminization of poverty means wide experience of these phenomena by women based on their sex, so they remain excluded from participation in community life, exposed to higher risks, stay vulnerable and incapable to satisfy their needs. (Veeran, 2015). Chant (2006) gives three characteristics of phenomenon: 1. women are poorer than men, 2. the incidence of poverty among women is increasing relative to men over time, 3. there is an increasing occurrence of female-headed households. The trend of feminization of poverty is seen especially by authors influenced by GAD approach as a result of unequal development efforts which are not addressing the patriarchal nature of gender relations (Moghadam, 1997 in Chant, 2006).

Multiple studies show that there is an uneven distribution of rural men and women in agricultural jobs. While generally there is only slightly more employed men than women in rural communities in developing countries, men occupy a much bigger share of positions in non-agricultural sectors and women are left in less stable positions with lower income (FAO, 2010). However this applies only for statistically recognized positions and the data is in fact rather scarce and situation in different locations probably differ a lot. Already in 1970's researchers started to recognize that there is a big share of women's “invisible” work which is partially in nature an agricultural production, yet it serves only for subsistence or is simply not recognized when evaluating the contribution to the production of various products destined for sale (Boserup, 1970). Some researchers therefore even think that there is more women than man among farmers and rural workers (Aazami et al., 2011).

Furthermore, there is probably a tendency for further strengthening of the relative proportion of women working in agriculture. There is a popular term “feminization of agriculture” that is used to describe this phenomenon, but a complex set of problems is hidden behind this simplifying label. Does the higher share reflect a real change or just a shift in focus of research and regular data collection? If there is a real change, is it caused by men leaving this sector or women entering it? What are regional differences? Are the regional data even sufficient and reliable enough to make a statement about an ongoing “feminization”? (FAO, 2010) However unclear answers for all these questions are, the strong (and probably growing) presence of women in both paid and unpaid positions in agriculture globally is to be considered a fact any policy have to deal with.

There is an evidence that gender inequalities are present in the agricultural sector. The patterns of gender-based labour market segmentation in agriculture are described in many studies. Different remuneration for the same amount of working hours have various causes. The primary case is probably that the cultivation of commercial crop is a domain of men while subsistence farming was left as women’s responsibility. In the case of family farms, resources available for household as well as work provided by family members are often distributed in favour of men and their plot of land. Women therefore have less yields on the same plot of land than men (Udry et al., 1995). Many of rural workers are self-employed and those who work for wage are often employed in part-time and seasonal jobs. These jobs and also others less paid jobs in agriculture are often occupied by women. This can be caused by missing education and experience in the agricultural sphere as well as occupation of women by household and family responsibilities. (FAO, 2010; Sikod, 2007)

2.3. Co-operatives as tool for development

The co-operatives as business venues operating in the environment of alternative economy are based on values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity (ICA, 2015). Co-operatives have great potential to reduce poverty and boost social development of its members and their communities and are perceived as a suitable tool for enhancing the empowerment of women and contribute to achieving the gender equality. Through engagement into co-operative activities women are gaining

economic benefits in form of improvement of their financial situation thus escape from poverty and can get greater opportunity to influence decision-making processes related to their work conditions and community (ILO, 2015).

“A co-operative is an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically-controlled enterprise” (ICA, 2015). Co-operative could be understood also as multi-purpose organization of people who apart from economic goals are also interested in fulfilling social and cultural goals of their living. Co-operatives are benefit-oriented corporations even with zero-profit operations and activities, that are established to give farmers opportunity to obtain service in the situation when its provision is not profitable for profit-oriented corporation or when the payments for the service are unaffordable for farmers. Farmers join together so that they also can exert a market force to compete with other corporations more effectively than each of them alone could. The General Assembly declared the year 2012 as United Nations International Year of Co-operatives.

According to the ICA, co-operatives are based on a set of principles, which were firstly announced in 1995 within the Statement on the Co-operative Identity (before known as Rochdale Principles). However the history dated the first attempts to run official co-operative business back to the 19th century. The co-operative principles are following:

1. Voluntary and Open Membership
2. Democratic Member Control
3. Members Economic Participation
4. Autonomy and Independence
5. Education, Training and Information
6. Co-operation among Co-operatives

7. Concern for Community; and deeply explained in the document Guidance Notes on Co-operative Principles (ICA, 2015).

2.3.1. Women in co-operatives – benefits, obstacles and motivations to join

All over the world women are members of all types of co-operatives. In this chapter the benefits from co-operative membership for women will be described

together with obstacles women are facing and motivation of women to join the co-operatives.

Benefits of co-operative membership

According to a worldwide research realized by ILO together with ICA in the 2015 that aimed at finding out the linkage between co-operatives, women's empowerment and gender equality(ILO, 2015) the participation of women in co-ops is getting more significant, the number of women owned co-ops grows, the representation of women in leadership roles is getting stronger and overall focus on gender issues within the co-operative movement becomes a daily practice. Three main area of benefits of co-operative membership for women were identified:

a) better access to employment for women because of improved access to the financial, legal and marketing services that helps women to start their own businesses and therefore to gain an access to self-employment independent on external job supply and even to become providers of job opportunities for others. Possible co-operative focus on people from marginalized and disadvantaged groups contributes to inclusion of women struggling with poverty, gender-based violence or insufficient education.

b) improved conditions of work refers to the improvement of bargaining power in contact with authorities and external power centres, greater transparency of activities due to collective ownership, better opportunity to influence the conditions of work and subsequently improved income and livelihoods.

c) social benefits like the existence of democratic processes within co-operatives which enables members to push their needs on workplace, harmonization of working and family needs, improvement of self-esteem and recognition in the community and acquisition of skills through trainings and other educational activities. Co-operatives' democratic mechanisms of ownership and control are mainly manifested by principle "one member one vote" despite on ownership interest. This enables even people with lower material background to equally participate on decision making processes and planning of future actions taken within the co-operative (ILO, 2015).

The example of Koka – mostly women's agricultural co-operative in Georgia, shows how co-operative can empower its members. The three ways of empowerment are recognized: (1) empowerment through leadership refers to the recognition of women in the leadership role, (2) empowerment through work refers to the benefits which are

delivered through enhancement of food security and learning new skills. All of these combined lead to the improvement of self-esteem and social status and to (3) empowerment through changing gender roles. Women actively working and being involved in decision activities in co-operative are more likely to be participating in a communal politics and in the decision making processes in home (Nan, 2000). Similar research done in Ethiopia shows that co-operative membership provides food security for local community as well as other economic and social benefits like access to education and technology, to productive resources, increases the role of women in decision making in a family and increases women's engagement in income generating and decision-making activities in general. (Berhane, 2013; Biru, 2014) Other benefits of agricultural co-operative membership we can list them as follows: better marketing of production; better access to low interest loans, agriculture inputs and adult education; increased participation on decision-making at home and in a community (Grigoryan et al., 2015; Olawale, 2012; Vicari and DeMuro, 2012).

There are important factors which influence a process of empowerment of a particular woman in a co-operative. According to researches done in Ethiopia and India the factors that are most important in enhancing of woman's empowerment are monthly income, education level, training and years of membership. The number of dependents and age of the women are on the other hand most significantly reducing the possibility of a woman to be empowered (Sebhatu, 2015; Trivedi et al., 2011; Thapa and Gurung, 2010).

Obstacles for capturing benefits of co-operative membership

The evidence from Armenia and Iran compiled with results from ILO/ICA research identifies obstacles for women to fully participate in co-ops as following:

Time scarcity: due to household and family farm work women do not have time to participate in other activities.

Lack of control over the resources: members of an agricultural co-operative are commonly farmers living in the same village or community engaging in the same type of activities, where only one member from the family is present in the co-operative. This creates obstacles for woman's membership in co-operatives because mostly it is their husband who represents the family in the co-operative and the woman stands aside.

If both are members there is a risk that her subordinated position will be replicated also in the co-operative context and important decision about resources is again done by the man.

Socio-cultural barriers: Traditional norms are valued and respected – the proper place of a woman is in a household and a family, women are disregarded in public sphere and structurally excluded from financial mechanisms. And furthermore these traditions are in some cases also anchored in the legal system.

Lack of employment: women are mostly engaged in household and subsistence activities, often not having income generating activities and therefore financially dependent on their husband. They might have problem to pay the fee to become a member of co-operative.

Managerial obstacles: low awareness of management about co-operative principles which leads to rejection of involvement of other members into decision making processes and low participation of women in management of co-operatives in general (Grigoryan et al., 2015; Niknami and Bandrez, 2013; ILO, 2015).

Motivation of women to join the co-operatives

The motivation for participation was a subject of multiple studies that identified the most important of them as follows (Tesfay and Tadele, 2013; Vicari and De Muro, 2012):

- to gain access to alternative financial resources (credit and saving services)
- to increase bargaining power
- to reduce market risks
- to gain access to market
- to experience collective and autonomous production,
- to gain access to decent work – improvement of working conditions
- to achieve better income and improvement of family well being
- to have opportunity of participation in community development
- to gain access to knowledge and training.

2.4. Context of Georgia

2.4.1. Traditional Concept of Women's Role in Georgian Society

According to Lika Nadaraia, the Georgian society is very traditional with strictly defined gender roles. “*Traditionally women are not expected to drink strong alcohol, smoke tobacco, have premarital sex, or live separately from her parents, to be decision-makers inside the family or be breadwinners... The ideal woman is to be shy, virtuous, noble, charitable, delicate and obedient wife, good housewife, a good mother, patient, caring and diligent person.*” (Nadaraia, 2013) However the myth of independent women with power to influence everyday matters of life and cult of motherhood created the illusion that there is no gender inequality in Georgia and until there is no human rights violation there is no need of measures to generate more equal and just society. (Nadaraia, 2013)

However the results of public opinion poll about women's political participation in Georgia from 2014 with a national representative sample shows that 64% of Georgians believe that there is no gender equality in Georgia and thinks that women are under-represented in the leading roles and politics in general and that the political environment would benefit from a stronger women's presence. There were only 17 females out of 150 members of parliament in 2014 and 23 in 2017 (Parliament of Georgia, 2017). Respondents identified three main causes that hold women back from politic career: *family related issues* (eg. women are responsible for household, lack of family support, family being the most important for woman, lack of access to good kindergartens), *perceptions/other* (eg. lack of interest or self-confidence, no place for women in politics, negative perceptions about politics, no free time because of work, lack of solidarity) and *features related to resources/education* (lack of relevant education or experience, lack of financial resources, lack of necessary connections). 53% of respondents believe that male Georgian politicians do not treat their women colleagues as equals. Opinions on the equality of chances in other fields of activity varied strongly (National Democratic Institute, 2014).

2.4.2. International and national legislation related to gender equality in Georgia

The Global Gender Gap, measurement of gender-based disparities within the political, educational and health spheres compiled by World Economic Forum to

provide countries' comparison ranks Georgian on 82nd place out of 145 countries with the score of 0.687 (where 0 = inequality and 1 = equality) (WEForum, 2016). Gender Development Index has value 0.970 and Human Development Index is for female 0.754 and for male 0.777 which places Georgia into a group of countries with high human development (UNDP, 2016).

In 1994 Georgia ratified the CEDAW and a year later adopted BPfA and thereby committed itself to work towards equality between men and women and toward women's empowerment (UN, 2007; UN ESCAP, 2014). It is also bonded by *European Convention on Human Rights* (1999) and by Sustainable Development Goals.

Georgian national legislation have tools which aim at ensuring equality and protecting women. Fundamental document is the *Constitution of Georgia* that in its Article 14 ensures that: “*Everyone is born free and is equal before the law regardless of race, colour of skin, language, sex, religion, political or other opinions, national, ethnic and social affiliation, origin, property or social status, place of residence*” (The Citizens of Georgia, 2007). In 2005 the Governmental Commission for Gender Equality and Gender Equality Advisory Council were established and in 2006 they together developed the *Gender Equality Strategy of Georgia*.

Since 2010 there is also the *Law of Georgia on equality* that guarantees the compliance of Constitutions and equal rights of women and men granted there (Parliament of Georgia, 2010). In 2014 the *Law of Georgia on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination* was signed-the responsibility of surveillance over fulfilling the law have the Public Defender of Georgia (Parliament of Georgia, 2014a).

2.4.3. Women at work and in agriculture in Georgia

Gendered segregation in context of labour opportunities is present also in Georgia. Horizontal segregation refers to limited career opportunities for one gender within particular sectors and vertical segregation to the phenomenon of the persistence of one gender in leading positions. The sectors occupied mostly by women are health services and social work¹ and hospitality², while the wholesale and retail trade, real estate, renting and business activities; manufacturing industry, transport and communication and construction are sectors occupied mostly by men. But even in

1 Up to 70% of employees in health services and social work are women.

2 Up to 60% of employees in hospitality are women.

sectors occupied mostly by women the remuneration is unequal in favour of men. Overall wage disparities in average monthly nominal salary is showing that women earn only around 63% of what is salary of men (GEOSTAT, 2015).

In agriculture in 2015 self-employed make 57.5% of the total employed population.³ The slightly higher proportion of women than men are self-employed (62.4 % of employed women are self-employed, 60% of employed men are self-employed). The majority of men are self-employed in the entrepreneurial sector (71% of self-employed men), while most of the women are self-employed in the agriculture sector (60 % of self-employed women). It can be assumed, that in those 60% are also women who are self-employed in agriculture are also present women who are working in home as well as producing agriculture product for use of household and do not generate any cash income due to their activities. Co-operatives as a toll for enhancement of situation of women are acknowledged in “2014-2016 National Action Plan for Implementation of Gender Equality Policy in Georgia“ in the objective 3.5. Women participation in starting and developing the agrarian cooperatives. The activity aims on awareness rising about existence of agricultural co-operatives as well as consultations related to legal and technical requirements in the process of establishing one. This Ministry of Agriculture shall be responsible for fulfilment of this objective (Parliament of Georgia, 2014b).

Results from research done by UN Women in 2016 among rural dwellers in Georgia showed, that in general only small number of women are involved in decision making activities in villages and municipalities (the average representation of women in local councils is 9%). The low engagement of women in such activities is explained by traditional gender stereotypes and low interest of men to participate on change of this situation (prevalence of idea that women should stay in HH and raise the children). Women spend more hours per day doing unpaid work in HH and have less free time than men (Sepashvili, 2008 in UN Women, 2016). Specific task of women is to maintain the cattle so they spend more time in animal husbandry than men. The typical women tasks in agriculture are seen as light tasks as milking, sorting fruits and crops, cleaning while men job is the physically heavy tasks. In general women spend more time by agricultural activities (on average by 80 hours per year more than men) as well as by

3 According to ILO methodology used also by GEOSTAT employed people are either self-employed or hired, but the category of self-employed includes also people who works “for free” in their homes, which includes also people working in subsistence farming.

unpaid work in HH than men. Women, who are breadwinners struggles more with low income and poverty. Women identified problems with access to land and the protection of their property rights. Only 30% of farm in Georgia are owned by women. Loans are less accessible for women due to the lack of collateral. Generally the problems identified both by women and men were related to the accessibility of land and productive resources (as machinery and equipment, fertilizers, pesticides and knowledge how to use it) and irrigation. Access to advisory services was not seen as a challenge (UN Women, 2016).

2.4.4. Agriculture in Georgia

Georgia has long agricultural tradition and the due to local conditions is suitable for cultivation of variety of crops which thrives in temperate and subtropical climate like cereals, early and late vegetables, melons, potatoes, technical crops, grapes, subtropical crops, fruits and many others (Ministry of Agriculture, 2015). Around half of population (50.1%) works in agriculture (World Bank, 2017), although the agriculture sector in Georgia contributes to the GDP only by 9.1% in the 2015 (GEOSTAT, 2017). The 787.7ha of agriculture land is utilized mostly by households (86.5%). Georgia is facing particular problems in agriculture sector, some of them caused by inappropriate policy measures from 90', which caused the overall deterioration of agricultural sector (and related educational institutions) and the land fragmentation. 75% holdings are using plots of land smaller than 1ha – their total area constitute 21.5% of whole operated agricultural land which is a consequence of re-distribution of formerly collectivized land back to the households (GEOSTAT, 2016).

Table 3: Area of land owned by farms

Farm size (Ha)	%
Less than 0.1	8.24
0.1-1	66.85
1-5	23.28
5-50	1.46
50-500	0.15
500 and more	0.01

Source: Geostat, Agriculture Census 2014

95% of employed in agriculture are small scale subsistence or semi-subsistence farmers (FAO, 2012). Current problems are (among others) ongoing decreasing of local agricultural production in favour of import of agriculture products from abroad, poor management of communal pastures and no existence of proper land inventory which complicates land-related planning (Ministry of Agriculture, 2015).

2.4.5. Agricultural Co-operatives in Georgia

Concept of collective farming is not an innovation in the post-Soviet countries. Before 1990 the large scale collective farming (kolkhozes) was the most common way of organization of agriculture production. These kolkhozes were not result of voluntary associations, but rather the forced collectivization. They were often subsidized by state and there were no efforts to improve it's entrepreneurship strategies. Therefore the part of population aware of that times can understand co-operative ideology in negative connotations. (Gardner and Lerman, 2006). Modern co-operatives on the other hand are organizations owned, financed and controlled by its members with profit handed out equally among them.

Present legislative documents relevant for agriculture co-operatives are:

1. The Constitution of Georgia
2. The Civil Code of Georgia
3. The Law of Georgia on Entrepreneurs
4. The Law of Georgia on Agriculture Co-operatives
5. International treaties ratified by Georgia (Parliament of Georgia, 2013).

Co-operatives are in the Law of Georgia On Agricultural Cooperatives defined as the legal entity of co-operative established under the Law of Georgia on Entrepreneurs. According to the Law on Agricultural Cooperatives, the person could become a members when is: “an 18-year or older citizen of Georgia, who is directly involved in agricultural activity carried out by the agricultural cooperative and who owns shares” (Parliament of Georgia, 2013) and co-operatives has to have at least 3 members in mountainous areas and 5 members in the rest of Georgia. The only official conditions for farmers to join the co-operative is to buy particular amount of shares (which is consistent with the 3. Co-operative principle “Member’s economic participation”), otherwise unofficial conditions was identified as the reliability of person

(must be known and trusted by community) (Garguláková, 2016). Nowadays there are 1506 co-operatives registered under the Agency for Development of Agricultural Cooperatives (ADAC, 2017).

The importance of agriculture co-operatives for sustainable development of agriculture in Georgian is acknowledged in the Strategy for Agricultural Development in Georgia for the years 2015-2020. The vision of strategy is to: *“create an environment that will increase competitiveness in agro food sector, promote stable growth of high quality agricultural production, ensure food safety and security, and eliminate rural poverty through sustainable development of agriculture and rural areas”* (MoA, 2015). The strategy is aware of the problem of fragmentation of agricultural land and supposes that the land consolidation could contribute to more effective land management and agriculture co-operatives should play an important role in the process. Adoption of Law on Co-operatives created the legal environment for agricultural co-operatives and newly founded the Agency for Development of Agricultural Cooperatives promote and facilitate the formation of co-operatives. The improvement of income, reduction of risks related to agriculture business and involvement of vulnerable groups into economic activities (all of it leading to poverty reduction) are expected benefits of support aimed at agricultural co-operatives (MoA, 2015).

Also the Rural development strategy for 2017 to 2020 sees agricultural co-operatives as a good tool for achieving sustainable development of rural areas. The vision for the future in the strategy is: *“ensuring the constant improvement of the quality of life, and the social conditions of the rural population, based on a combination of increased economic opportunities, more accessible social benefits, a rich cultural life, environmental protection and the sustainable management of natural resources.”* (MoA, 2017.) Priorities are given to economy and competitiveness, social conditions and living standards, environmental protection and sustainable management of natural resources. Support of agriculture co-operatives is a tool for achieving the better competitiveness and improvement of economic side of farming business. Focus on youth, women and people with disability is an integral part of the strategy (MoA, 2017).

The rise of agricultural co-operatives are being supported by development project *“Enhancing Small Farmers’ Cooperation and Productivity in Imereti and Racha Regions”* implemented by ENPARD programme for Georgia (ENPARD, 2015) and

People in Need Georgia (PIN, 2016) which aims at reducing rural poverty through increasing the income of farmers. The project is facilitating establishment of new agricultural co-operatives (and supporting the members to develop and set the suitable and effective setting of inter-organization processes and achieve the economies of scale) by providing a grant. It is furthermore focusing on a support of technical skills of members of co-operatives through provision of trainings focused on farming, processing and marketing techniques. Improvement of agriculture sector legislation through direct participation of farmer and rural population on policy making processes is another significant activity within the project (PIN, 2016). An important condition for receiving the grant is an obligation of beneficiaries to reinvest part of the grant later on into community development activity (Člověk v tísni, 2013).

3. Aims of the Thesis

The main objective of the study is to find out possible contributions of agriculture co-operative enterprises to gender equality and women's empowerment in achieving the objectives of the Platform for Action from the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995 and *Women's empowerment principles in business*.

The first specific objective is to identify problems that women (members of newly established co-operatives) are facing in agriculture business activities in Imereti region, Georgia.

Second specific objective is to find out the expectations of women (members of newly established co-operatives) from joining co-operatives in Imereti region, Georgia.

The third specific objective is to examine level of incorporation the WE Principles s in the co-operative rules and regulation.

4. Methodology

This study is based on mixed type of research (Creswell, 2014). It employs features of both qualitative and quantitative types of research. According to Yin's classification has this research parameters of a case study, particularly a descriptive single case with embedded units (Yin, 2003 in Baxter, 2008). It makes sense to do this research in the form of descriptive case study, because it's nature is totally non-experimental and we just want to find out and describe "how" any "why" certain phenomenons occur in their context. Our basic unit of analysis are in this case women in all agriculture co-operatives in studied area in general and our sub-units (embedded units) are groups of women from individual co-operatives.

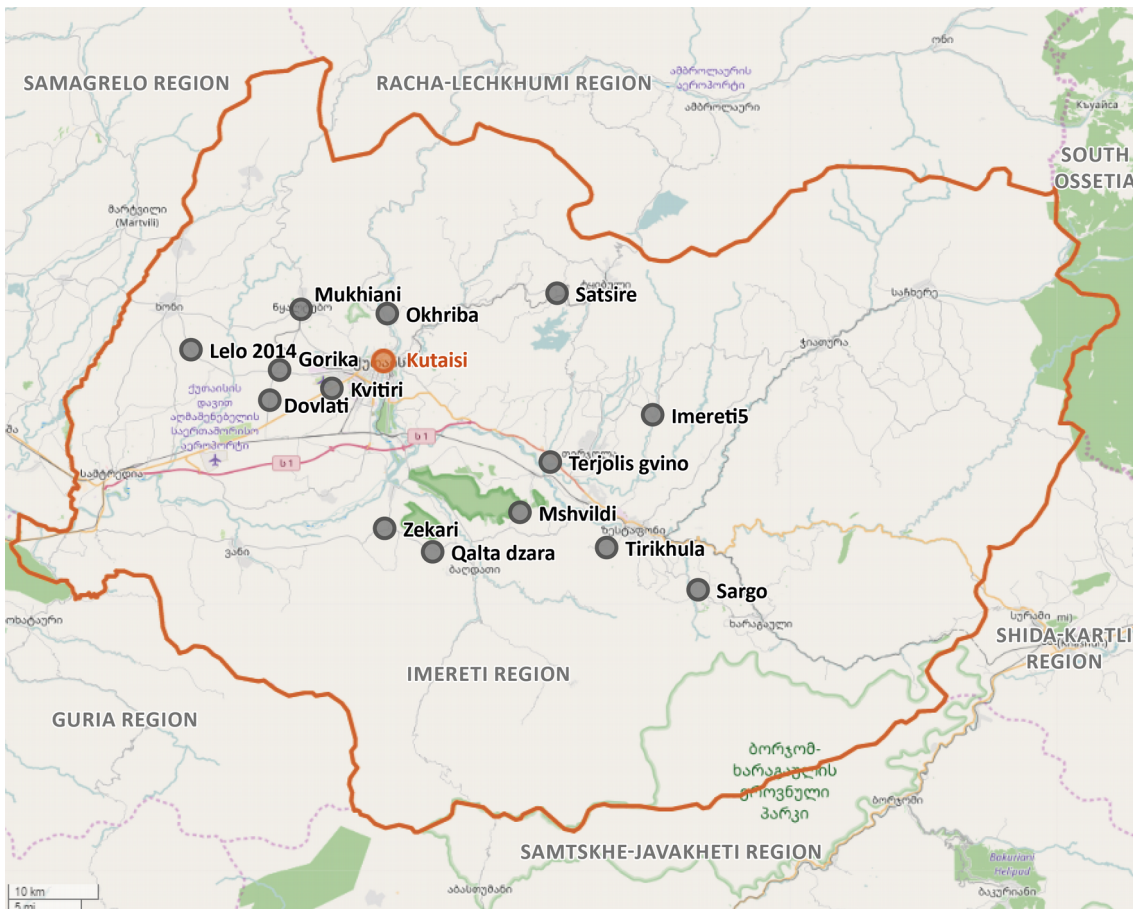
This study also uses a combination of primary data (questionnaire survey and interviews) and secondary data (data collected by People in Need in years 2015 and 2016, scientific papers, statistical publications, reports from UN agencies, Georgian government agencies and other relevant sources of information related to the topic.

4.1. Study site

Presented research was conducted in Imereti region in Georgia. Imereti region was selected according ongoing project of People in Need and ENPARD. According to the 2015 census, Georgia have a total population of 3 729 500 inhabitants (GEOSTAT, 2015). Imereti region is the second most populated region-533 906 people lived there in 2015. It consists of 12 administrative units-11 municipalities and Kutaisi, the largest city in region, which is it's administrative centre and also the third most populated city in Georgia.

The subject of research were people involved in co-operatives which were founded within the development project "*Enhancing Small Farmers' Cooperation and Productivity in Imereti and Racha Regions*" implemented by ENPARD programme for Georgia (ENPARD, 2015) and People in Need Georgia (PIN, 2016).

Figure 1: Map of Georgia and Imereti region



Source: © OpenStreetMap contributors; David Pfann.

4.2. Study sample

Subject of interest connected to the **first objective** of the research are **all women members** of agricultural co-operatives newly established by the above-mentioned programme. The most important group of data were therefore collected directly from these women. Our initial plan was to collect data by means of interviews and questionnaires with all the women members from co-operatives in region-we have chosen this approach because there were only about 60 of such women members in total. But smaller part of women were willing to participate in our research. The reasons for low participation are described in the limitations of the study. Our sample is therefore convenient and an outcome from a non-probability sampling (Disman, 2002) based on just one simple parameter-all women members of co-operatives which were willing to cooperate with us. The final size of sample is therefore 29 respondents.

Data from other sources are also used in order to deliver the results to **second objective**. The interview was therefore conducted also with **at least one member from management of each co-operative**⁴ to which our women respondents belong. The respondents from the group of members of managements of co-operatives were chosen by non-probability sampling technique – the basic parameter was again the willingness to participate. Also three representatives from co-operatives with no woman members were interviewed. The size of this sample is 14 respondents.

The other group of respondents were so called “**key-informants**” (Disman, 2002) who were selected by non-probability purposive sampling technique. Respondents were chosen based on their assumed knowledge about the position of women in co-operatives and related problems so in the end all key informants are the project workers participating in the implementation of above-mentioned ENPARD and

4 Why the members of the board were chosen to be asked about opinion? There are more types of leadership with specific accents. Carling (2000) identifies two main types of leadership: transactional leadership (is more about dividing the tasks and supervising the process) and transformational leadership (focus is on of transformation of visions into actions and reality). The best is the combination of both (Carling 2000 in Gutema 2014). It was assumed, that members of the board could have acted (in ideal situation) upon both types of leadership and be the ones with vision, who are thinking about the development of co-operatives in long term perspective. Therefore it was consider as strategic in order to get the information about incorporation of gender equality related policies and visions from members of the board of co-operatives. The evidence from agricultural co-operatives in Armenia supports our assumption (the task of members of the board of director is to identify the prior areas of co-operative focus) (Grigoryan, 2015).

PIN project. This last group of data is used to amend the reliability of first two groups of data and the size of the sample is 3 respondents.

4.3. Tools for data collection

Primary data were collected during the July and August of 2015 and 2016 during two visits of the author in Imereti region in both cases in the course of a handful of weeks. In order to collect the data for delivering the result of **the 1st and 2nd objective**, the structured questionnaire survey was done among women members of newly established co-operatives. Questionnaire was divided into four parts. The purpose of the first part was to collect basic demographic information about respondents using mostly closed questions. Second part was designated to identify problems, that women had to face before they joined the co-operative and the Likert type questions were used (more about the Likert type questions in the section 4.4 Method of data analysis). Type of problems used in questionnaire were selected according the research which were published (mix of questions from already published manuscripts/research – Olabisi et al., 2015; Olawale 2012; Tesfay and Tadele, 2013; Biru, 2014) and in the way that can cover the topics from three chapters from the Platform for Action (Women and poverty, Women in business, Women and decision making). In the third part of questionnaire the questions investigating activity of respondent within the co-operative were present. The close (dichotomous, multiple choice) and open ended questions were used. In the case of some close questions respondents were also asked to explain their choices. The last part of questionnaire consisted of examination of expectations of women from becoming a member of co-operative. As in the second part of questionnaire also Likert type questions were used and as an inspiration for statements the scientific articles were used.

The questionnaire for women members were originally drafted in English language, then translated by students of Akaki Tsereteli State University (ATSU) in Kutaisi into Georgian language and subsequently was the quality of translation checked by their university pedagogue. The process of filling out the questionnaire with women took approximately 35 minutes and took place in headquarter of co-operative or respondent's home.

For the collection of data for purpose of the **3rd objective**, the members of a board of a given co-operative were interviewed. The interviews were conducted with at least one member of the board from each co-operative from which our women members were from. As a basis for this structured interview was used a document “*Women empowerment principles in business-a set of 7 Principles for business offering guidance on how to empower women in the workplace, marketplace and community*” launched in 2010, which is adding the gender dimension into the business (corporate) responsibility (UN Global Compact, 2017). Members of board of agricultural co-operatives featured in the study (N=14) were interviewed in order to find out if co-operatives are operating with the topic of gender equality and women’s empowerment. The set of *Women’s empowerment principles in business* was reformulated in order to fit in the context of co-operatives as following:

Table 4: Set of Women’s empowerment principles original and modified

Original (UN Global Compact, 2017)	Modified
1. Establish high-level corporate leadership for gender equality	1. Equal participation in leadership of co-operative
2. Treat all women and men fairly at work-respect and support human rights and non-discrimination	2. Treat all women and men fairly in co-operative
3. Ensure the health, safety and well-being of all women and men workers	3. Ensure health, safety and well-being of all women and men members
4. Promote education, training and professional development for women	4. Promote education, training and professional development for women members
5. Implement enterprise development, supply chain and marketing practices that empower women	5. Implement enterprise development, supply chain and marketing practices that empower women
6. Promote equality through community initiatives and advocacy	6. Promote equality through community initiatives and advocacy
7. Measure and publicly report on progress to achieve gender equality	7. Measure and publicly report on progress to achieve gender equality

For each principle the set of indicators was designed (see the Table 5) and for each indicator the questions investigating its fulfillment were developed. Interviews were done in Georgian language and were led by students of ATSU and recorded on a voice recorder and later translated by them into English.

Table 5: Set of indicators for evaluation of fulfilment of *WE principles*

1. Equal participation in leadership

1a Existence of rule about share of women in the board of co-operative

1b Women participation in the board of co-operative

2. Treat all women and men fairly in co-operative

2a Equality is important for co-operative

2b Women do participate in decision making

2c There are no constraints for women to participate in decision making in co-operative

2d Women and men equally capture benefits of co-operative membership

3. Ensure the health, safety and well-being of all women and men members

3a Provision of help for members in case of agriculture activity difficulties both officially by co-operative or unofficially among members

3b Provision of help for members in difficult life situation (illness, financial issues, invalidity) both officially by co-operative or unofficially among members

3c Existence of official policy on issues of gender-based violence

3d Existence of unofficial policy on issues of gender-based violence

3e Women members have better chance to avoid gender-based violence in the community

4. Promote education, training and professional development for women

4a Co-operative provides training for its members

4b Women and men have equal opportunity to participate on trainings provided by all stakeholders (Co-op, PiN, Elkana, Young Economists)

4c There are no barriers for women to participate on trainings

4d Existence of unofficial benefits from the contact with other members

5. Implement enterprise development, supply chain and marketing practices that empower women

5a Co-operative provides credit services for its members

5b Co-operative provides opportunities to gain new business contacts for its members

5c Co-op do not have preference on gender of its business partners

6. Promote equality through community initiatives and advocacy

6a Co-operative contribute to fight against gender stereotypes and sexism

6b Provision of trainings focused on gender equality

6c Co-operative supports other activities in community promoting strong role of women in society

7. Measure and publicly report on progress to achieve gender equality

7a Co-op emphasise role of women members and their contribution to co-operative in the annual report

Apart from the collection of primary data sets this research also uses data from questionnaire survey conducted by People in Need Georgia in 2015 and 2016 (which were related to the period of the year 2014 and 2015) and by short direct observations of the situation in co-operatives by the author during her visits there. All tools used in data collection are summarized in the Table 6.

Table 6: Overview of data collection tools

Objective	Tool for data collection	Target group	Time of data collection
Objective 1 To identify the problems women are facing in agri business activities	Structured questionnaires	Women members of co-operatives N=29	July – August 2015 July 2016
Objective 2 To identify the expectations of women from joining the co-operatives	Structured questionnaires	Women members of co-operatives N=29	July – August 2015 July 2016
Objective 3 To examine level of incorporation of Women’s empowerment principles in business into the co-operatives rules and regulations	Semi-structured interview Semi-structured interview	Members of the board from co-operatives N=14 “Key informants” N=3	July – August 2015 July 2016 July – August 2015 July 2016

4.4. Methods of data analysis

We have decide to collect the data from group of **women members of co-operative** (N=29) respondents using the questionnaire survey. Basic descriptive statistics was carried out in order to find out demographic characteristics of respondents and their activity in the co-operative (the first and third part of questionnaire. The Likert type questions were used in second part of questionnaire to determine problems women respondent have to deal with before they joined to co-operative and in the last part of questionnaire to determine expectations that women have from joining the co-operative. The scale from 1 to 5 were used to give respondents options for showing their consent with particular statement. The every number in the scale stands for a level of consent with the statement. See the example of a statement and the scale of answers given below in the Table 7:

Table 7: Example of Likert-type question used in questionnaire survey

Statement:	“Before you joined the co-operative you have to deal with insufficient income”				
Response options:	Strongly agree	Partly agree	Not agree or disagree	Partly disagree	Strongly disagree
Value of response:	1	2	3	4	5

All collected data were subsequently coded and rewritten into Libre Office Calc and processed (determination of number of counts for each response option, value of median, modus), results were delivered by using **method of weighted average score** (Sajeev and Singha, 2010). The formula for calculation of score is following (Guh, Hon, Wang and Lee, 1996):

$$WAS = \frac{(NV * WC 1) + (NV * WC 2) + (NV * WC 3) + (NV * WC 4) + (NV * WC 5)}{\text{Total Number of Votes}}$$

Code: WAS–value of Weighted Average Score; NV–Number of Votes; WC–Weighting for Column

Values of weighted average score were then put into two tables (one related to problems and second related to expectations) and ordered from lowest to the highest score.

Also output from structured questionnaires for **members of the board of directors** (N=14) was analysed. The *WE Principles* were used as a basis for the questions and reformulated in order to fit into co-operative context. The set of indicators to find out if the particular principle was fulfilled were developed. Answers were summarized into the tables and commented in words. Indicators were then identified as either fulfilled or not fulfilled (means that conditions for fulfilling the indicator were met or not). In particular cases the information for evaluation were missing or indicator was not relevant (for example the case of co-operative without women members, the questions examining the participation of women on decision-making processes were irrelevant). Also the quotations of some of respondent’s answers capturing the important information were added into the tables for better understanding of the context.

Data from interviews with **Key informants** (N=3) were used for triangulation and verification of reliability of results. However not all of our respondents provided us with information related to the topic of our study, therefore data obtained from only one interview were finally used.

4.5. Limitations of the study

There is a wide range of limitations in this research. We can sort them in few groups according to their nature and the way they possibly distort the picture of reality presented in this research. We will therefore speak about data collection limitations, data processing limitations and limitation related to the interpretation of results.

4.5.1. Data collection limitations

During the interviews with respondents the privacy was often not respected, the third person or group of persons were present in the same room and in some cases they even directly interfered and started to express their views on certain facts and problems instead of a questioned women. In many cases it was the male member or director of a co-operative and because of the local cultural norms and the rules of hospitality it was impossible to demand them to leave the interviewer, a translator and a woman alone. This fact have most likely also influenced the way how our respondents were answering questions.

Most of interviews during the second data collection were done by one student, who was inconvenient about the topic and objectives of the research he was participating in, although he was familiar with the topic of research and the content of the questionnaires before the data collection started. Based on the observation of the behaviour and statements of this student, his attitude may influenced the process of data collection a lot.

Questionnaires were two times translated (from English to Georgian and later on from Georgian back to English). There is possibility, that due to the translation the meaning of some questions or answers were changed. Also some of the questions could be formulated in the way that was difficult to understand the meaning of that question.

We are also aware of possible processes that could influence the way, how respondents were answering the questions:

- respondent adjusts the answer to look “better” to interviewer or oneself (more independent, having no problems with..., able to influence all important processes in the household) or respondent modify the answer in the way to give the answer which she expects interviewer wanted to hear

- process of filling the questionnaire/interview induces attitudes that did not existed before the contact with researcher (Disman, 2002)
- with respect to Likert-type questions, those effect can occur in the preferences of respondent in ranking the level of their agreement with the statement:

Leniency: tendency to rate something too high or too low (i.e. rate in an extreme way).

Central tendency: reluctance to give extreme scores.

Proximity: give similar responses to items that occur close to one another. (Albaum, 1997)

Not all women members of co-operatives were participating in the study. Some of them were in the time of data collection not present in the community. It is possible, that some of them were not comfortable with the idea of interview so they refuse to meet us. In the case of one co-operatives we were told by the director of co-operative that she will not provide us by contacts on women members, because she do not want us to make interview with them.

4.5.2. Limitation related to the interpretation of results

Low number of respondents prevents the further generalization of results, however the impossibility of generalizing the results is a feature of qualitative type of research we are aware of. However the limitation of low number of respondents is almost impossible to get rid of in potential future research of this topic in this place, because there is only a small number of female organized in co-operatives which will make it hard to produce larger data collection. The way this research tried to cope with this issue was to combine data from multiple sources and through their triangulation to create a better understanding of the situation.

Co-operatives which the research team visited during the data collection were established newly, so at that time they have often worked only one year or even less. Some questions investigating the activities of women within the co-operatives were therefore found as non-relevant due to no experience of members with particular activities in the co-operative (such as: meetings, trainings, selling production through co-operative).

5. Results

The purpose of this study is to examine, what are the characteristics of women who joined the co-operatives, what kind a problems they had to face before they join the co-operatives and what expectations from co-operative membership do they have. It also tries to evaluate how co-operatives cope with the *Women's empowerment principles in business* in their norm and rules and the last goal is to understand why women join the co-operatives and to examine the relevancy of co-operative activity for empowerment of women. In newly established co-operatives under the PiN/ENPARD project in Imereti region the majority of members are men. In the year 2015 (the time of the first data collection) only 13% of members were women, while in 2016 (the time of the second data collection, the number of co-operatives and it's members was continually growing) the share of women increased to 34% out of all members of co-operatives. Existence of women members increases the chances of a co-operative to reach the support from PiN/ENPARD.

The first part of this chapter will try to give the overall description of respondents and according to data collected by questionnaire survey the motivations for joining the co-operative and characteristics of women's activities within the co-operative will be described. In subsequent part the results related to objectives will be presented.

5.1. Characteristics of respondents

Majority of our respondents were married women (72.4%) with university education (58.6%). It was not unusual that our respondents aside from co-operative activities have full time or part time employment (for example: teacher in the kindergarten/primary school/high school, school accountant, bank operator) or that they study. Co-operative was not the only source of income for them and they were not able to dedicate all their time to the agricultural activities. Only 27.6 % of women were unemployed before they join the co-operative.⁵ Part of the women who were single were living with same household as their family and consider themselves as dependent member of the household, means that their contribution into household income was minimal. All age groups were represented in our sample. For specific data see Table 8.

5 Women on maternity leave were in questionnaires included in the group of unemployed.

Table 8. Basic demographic characteristics

Feature	Frequency	%
Marital status		
Single	6	20.7
Married	21	72.4
Divorced	1	3.4
Widow	1	3.4
Highest achieved education		
secondary	5	17.2
high school	2	6.9
vocational	5	17.2
university	17	58.6
Age		
18-30	7	24.1
31-40	7	24.1
41-50	6	20.7
51-60	4	13.8
61 and more	5	17.2
Respondent was unemployed before joining the co-operative		
yes	8	27.6
no	21	72.6

Most common type of household setting was a family with 3-5 members with both husband and wife and 1-2 dependent members so households are not too large and they work as a nuclear family (Bengston, 2001) where sometimes the care for old members (parents of respondent or her husband) is provided. Only 27.6% of respondents stated, that their income is the main source of money in the household. Also the main responsibility for housework was done only by respondent (37.9%) and in the same number of cases was done by somebody else from the family. In 24.2% was done by respondent together with other members of household. According to that result it is not possible to say, that the burden of household responsibilities is only women's matter.

5.1.1. Motivation for joining the co-operative

Respondents were asked about their motivation to join the co-operative. In majority cases they stated more than one reason for joining. Different motivation were summarized in Table 9, together with information about the frequency of each

argument. The most common motivation was related to the improvement of income and living conditions.

Table 9: Motivation of respondent to join the co-operative

Feature	Frequency	%
improvement of income and living conditions	18	36.0
improvement of marketing and sales of the product	9	18.0
co-operative ideology	7	14.0
new business opportunity (including new employment)	6	12.0
to gain new experiences in agricultural practices	3	6.0
to gain new social contact	3	6.0
development of existing agricultural business	2	4.0
to get access to machinery and equipment	2	4.0

5.1.2. Respondent’s activity within the co-operative

Respondents were members of the 11 service co-operative which provides marketing and distribution services and they were selling their production through the co-operative. Co-operatives were established within the years 2010 and 2016 and some of them are not operating too long. Most common length that respondents have been members of co-operative during the time of data collection was 1 year (55.2%), followed by “less than a year” (typical for the second data collection done in summer 2016) with the value of 24.1%. The length of co-operative membership has also impact on the outcome of co-operative activities and possible (positive) change in their agriculture business activities – significant part of women during the time of data collection were not generating any income by selling their production through co-operatives. 25 respondents were members of co-operative and 4 were members-directors of the co-operative.

Table 10: Characteristics of the co-operative and respondent’s position

Feature	Frequency	%
Total number of co-operatives		
11		
Date of establishment of co-operative		
2010	3	10.3
2014	11	37.9

2015	9	31.0
2016	6	20.7
Years of respondent's membership in co-operative:		
less than a year	7	24.1
1	16	55.2
2	4	13.8
3	0	0.0
4	2	6.9
Position in co-operative		
member	25	86.2
employee	0	0.0
board member	0	0.0
director	4	13.8

Respondents were asked to evaluate their decision-making power about the allocation of financial resources within the household.⁶ More than half of women had participated in decisions about allocation of financial resources in the HH before they joined the co-operative however there is around one third of respondents who had lacked this ability.

Table 11: The ability of women to influence financial situation in the HH

Statement: “Before I joined the co-operative I had the ability to influence the financial situation in the HH”

Response option	Frequency
strongly agree	16
partly agree	3
not agree or disagree	1
partly disagree	0
strongly disagree	9

The amount of income generated from co-operative activity was possible to measure only in the case of respondents that were members of co-operatives for the time

⁶ Students who helped with data collection considered this question controversial. They demanded it's removal from the questionnaire because they believed it could insult women only by assuming a possibility that women in Georgia lack power to influence such an important thing. We insisted on keeping this question in the questionnaire and the results show, that not all women think they can influence income activities and expenditures within the household. However the inconvenience of interviewer while asking this question was visible.

period long enough to sell some of their production. Only 11 respondents were able to do so. In most cases they earned on average up to 200 Gel per month and that consist mostly to 50% of the total income of the household which means, that income from co-operative had to be supplemented from other source in order to get sufficient amount of money for living.

Table 12: Income generation from co-operative activities (N=11)

Feature	Frequency	%
Income generation due to co-operative activity		
Up to 100 Gel/month	5	45.5
101-200 Gel/month	3	27.3
201-300 Gel/month	2	18.2
301 and more Gel/month	1	9.1
Share Income from co-operative activity in % of total HH income		
0-10 %	3	27.3
11-30 %	4	36.4
31-50 %	2	18.2
51-70 %	1	9.1
71-80 %	1	9.1

5.1.3. Awareness about co-operative ideology and principles.

Only 6 out of 29 women were aware about at least one co-operative principle. Those who have knowledge about principles were asked to describe principle which they found important and the second “Democratic member control” and third principle “Members economic participation” were mostly stated.

“We all contribute”,

“We all participate on decisions” -some of women added their comments to this topic (data collection 2015, 2016).

However as it is described in chapter 5.1.5 about meetings and trainings in co-operative, members are much more aware about co-operative ideology.

5.1.4. Process of joining the co-operative

Women were informed about possible membership in co-operative in various ways, most of them get the information from family or member from co-operative. One

women was even the founder of the co-operative – together with her husband they found information about co-operatives on the internet and decided to organize their entrepreneurship activities into co-operative business model. One women took part in training provided by PiN (information about event found in newspapers) and there she met members from a co-operative and then decide to join it, however she already knew about existence of this particular co-operative before. Other women was neighbour and friend of founder of wine co-operative and she decide to join the co-operative because she was “curious”, money was not a motivation for her. Some of women were relatives of other members of the same co-operative.

Table 13: Source of information about the co-operative and respondent’s decision

Feature	Frequency	%
Source of information about co-operative		
Family	8	27.6
Member from already existing co-operative	7	24.1
Friends	6	20.7
ENPARD campaign	3	10.3
Extension agent	2	6.9
other	2	6.9
Influence on respondents decision to join the co-operative		
Talks with member of co-operative	16	44.4
Experience of neighbour/family/friend	9	25.0
ENPARD campaign	8	22.2
Other (internet)	2	5.6
Talks with extension agent	2	5.6
Visit in co-operative	1	2.8

The co-operatives formed among members of one or more families were not exceptional. In 17 cases the respondent was the only member of the family who joined the particular co-operative, however in 12 other cases more members from one family joined the same co-operative and in one case there were 4 members from one family in the same co-operative. One of conditions all the respondents had to meet to be allowed to join the co-operative was to make some an investment into the co-operative property.

Only two respondents considered this compulsory investment in shares in a co-operative a problem.

Table 14: Number of members of same co-operative from one family

Feature	Frequency	%
1 member (respondent)	17	58.6
2 members	9	31.0
3 members	2	6.9
4 members	1	3.4

5.1.5. Meetings and training within the co-operative

All respondents stated that they attend meetings in a co-operative at least once a year and all of them except for one consider themselves active during these meetings. They take part mostly in discussions and in proposing important topics. Being asked if they feel that their opinion is taken seriously during meetings and that they can influence the decision-making process, 27 out of 29 respondents answered positively. Most of women were surprised by such a question and explained that all members have equal rights and can influence processes in the co-operative equally. This is an evidence that even though only minority of respondents was aware about co-operative principles they know about one of essential features of co-operatives – democratic member control and participation on decision-making.

“Members of co-operative consider opinion of each other.”

“All members opinion is important.”

“All members can equally influence what is happening in the co-operative.” (Data collection 2015, 2016)

Membership in co-operative enhances the social networking so members are meeting each other also in not official occasions. Almost 76% of respondents meets with other members more then before they join the co-operative on the non-business basis.

Slightly more than half (55%) of respondents were taking part in trainings provided by co-operatives or by PiN, Elkana or Young Economists. But only two co-operatives were providing trainings at the time of data collection and members from other co-operatives could only attend trainings provided by above mentioned institutions. Trainings were related to milk and nut production, corn planting,

management and organizational performance. However the majority of respondents were not able to describe to us subject of trainings. As a constraints to attend meetings and trainings more often following reasons were described:

- lack of time due to employment
- lack of time due to studying
- lack of time due to household responsibilities
- lack of time due to taking care about children or grandchildren
- no presence in the neighbourhood
- long distance between home and headquarters
- health conditions (mostly associated with high age of respondent)

Nevertheless 27 out of 29 respondents strongly agree that women and men have the same opportunities considering their participation in trainings.

5.2. Problems women have to face before joining the co-operative

The results for the second objective are presented in the Table 15. Problems women have to face before joining the co-operative were sorted by the value of weighted average score and accordingly the urgency of problems women have to deal with was determined. Issues identified as the most significant⁷ were these:

- insufficient income
- high cost of production
- lack of machinery and equipment for product processing
- low bargaining power
- lack of machinery and equipment for land cultivation
- insufficient access to training
- insufficient access to advisory services.

Lack of money to pay for health care, food and housing, insufficient access to legal and credit and saving services were identified as the least serious problems⁸. The most serious problems are mostly linked to the area of entrepreneurship and influence women's income. Payments for housing was not seen as a problem possibly because many of them lived in a family-owned houses. They also mostly explained that they do not need access to legal services.

⁷ Value of weighted score ≤ 2.5 .

⁸ Value of weighted score ≥ 3 .

Table 15: Problems that women face in agricultural business activities

Variable	Value of weighted average score*
Insufficient income	1.9
High cost of production	1.9
Lack of machinery and equipment for product processing	2.1
Low bargaining power	2.1
Lack of machinery and equipment for land cultivation	2.14
Insufficient access to training	2.34
Insufficient access to advisory services	2.41
Insufficient marketing strategy	2.59
Insufficient access to leadership training	2.69
Insufficient access to agricultural inputs	2.79
Inability to process the production	2.93
Inability to sell the production	2.97
Lack of knowledge about good agriculture practices	2.97
Lack of money to pay for a health care	3.03
Lack of money for food	3.28
Inability to pay for housing	3.48
Insufficient access to legal services	3.55
Insufficient access to credit and saving services	3.86

*Code: value of score 1=strongly agree, 2=partly agree, 3=not agree or disagree, 4=partly disagree, 5=strongly disagree

Respondents were also asked if their co-operative experience provided them an opportunity to improve the situation. Part of respondent explained, that membership so far helped them:

- to increase sales of the product
- to increase their experiences (in general and in area of product manufacturing)
- to increase the bargaining power
- to achieve economic and social growth for her and hers business
- to provide access to training and consultations
- to provide access to material and technology.

5.3. Expectation of women from joining the co-operative

This chapter aims to present the results to Objective 2: to determine expectations of women from joining the co-operative. The table below shows the value of weighted average score to all statements, which we asked women to determine the level of agreement with.

The table is divided into three parts to show the strong expectations (value of weighted average score from 1 to 1.5) central expectations (1.6 – 2.4) and least strong expectations (2.5 – 3.21). The value of the score ranks from 1.03 as the lowest one to 3.21 as the highest one, so majority of choices given to women were considered as real expectations (only four choices were close to middle score which indicates neither agreement nor disagreement with the statement).

Expectations related to economic improvement constitute the largest group which consists of:

- better sales of my production
- to share experiences with other farmers
- better opportunity to process the production,
- gaining new business contacts
- improvement of bargaining power

Expectations linked to the poverty reduction are:

- additional source of income

Expectation linked to the women in power and decision making are:

- gaining new social contacts

The results showed, that strongest expectations are linked to the economic performance, while those related to the (collective) power and decision-making issues (like expectation to feel more autonomous, to gain access to trainings, to be independent on husband's income, to participate on community development and to meet with other women farmers) are represented mostly in the lower part of table. The need for participation on decision making and to experience collective strength (women united for common aims) was almost not noticed. To expectations linked to the improvement of living conditions (more money to spend on food and health care and that joining the co-operative was only way how to sustain the livelihood) was also given less importance.

Table 16: Expectations of women from the co-operative membership

Variable	Value of weighted average score*
Additional source of income	1.03
Better sales of my production	1.14
To share experience with other farmers	1.28
Gaining new social contacts	1.28
Better opportunity to process my production	1.38
Gaining new business contacts	1.41
Improvement of bargaining power	1.45
Access to machinery and equipment	1.61
Better access to agricultural inputs	1.62
Access to info about good agricultural practices	1.69
More money to spend on food	1.76
Reduction of costs of production	1.79
To feel more autonomous	1.93
Access to trainings	2
To be self-employed instead of employee	2.28
Greater independence on husband's income	2.34
To gain money to spend on health care	2.38
Access to credit and saving services	2.41
It is only way how tu sustain farm in business	2.52
Opportunity to participate on decisions about community development	2.55
To meet with other women farmers	2.66
Access to advisory and legal services	3.21

*Code: value of score 1=strongly agree, 2=partly agree, 3=not agree or disagree, 4=partly disagree, 5=strongly disagree

5.4. Level of incorporation of empowerment principles into the co-operative activities

In this chapter the results to the third objective of the study will be introduced. The *WE Principles* adjusted to the context of co-operatives a basis for the evaluation of women's empowerment in co-operatives. Answers of respondents from boards of directors to the questions related to the fulfillment of these indicators were organized in tables and commented in words. Numbers in the table represent the amount of answers

which indicate either the fulfillment or unfulfillment of the indicator, missing answer or not relevant question for the context of particular co-operative⁹.

5.4.1. Results for principle 1: Equal participation in leadership

Out of all co-operatives not a one had rule about the share of women in it's board of directors and 3 co-operatives even had no women members at all. In 8 cases there were women present in the higher management of co-operative while in 3 cases there were women members in co-operative, but no woman present in the board. One representative explained poor engagement of women in board by their own decision, other by lack of management skills and strengths of women. In 3 cases there was a condition for women to be in the board of directors was given: a woman that wants to be part of the board have to be strong and experienced both in agricultural practices as well as in co-operative environment.

Table 17: Indicators for principle 1: Equal participation in leadership

Feature	Result*			
	positive	negative	missing	irrelevant
1. Equal participation in leadership				
1a Existence of rule about share of women in the board of co-operative	0	14	0	0
1b Women participation in the board of co-operative	8	6	0	0
“Co-operative is going to involve women in the board more in the future”				
“Women were not interested in taking part in the board”				
“The work in co-operative is too hard for women”				
“If women will be strong enough, they could be in the board in the future”				
“It is too difficult to cooperate with ‘active’ women”				

*Code: positive-indicator fulfilled; negative-indicator not fulfilled; missing-the missing answer; irrelevant-not relevant question for particular context

5.4.2. Results for principle 2: Treat all women and men fairly in co-operative

The majority of representatives from boards of directors stated that gender equality is an important value for their co-operative. Women members are beneficial since they are creative, hard workers, punctual and can bring new experiences into co-operative. In co-operatives with women members all of them participate on decision-making processes, only constraints preventing them from it were identified as

⁹ For example investigating the participation of women in a board of directors is not relevant in co-operatives with no women members at all

pregnancy or family and household responsibilities. But these constraints were acknowledged only by two representatives. In co-operatives with women members all representatives stated, that all members benefit equally. Exception were two co-operatives that had started only recently and therefore had no benefits yet.

Table 18: Indicators for principle 2: Treat all women and men fairly in co-operative

Feature	Result*			
	positive	negative	missing	irrelevant
2. Treat all women and men fairly in co-operative				
2a Equality is important for co-operative	12	2	0	0
2b Women do participate in decision making	11	0	0	3
2c There are no constraints for women to participate in decision making in co-operative	9	2	0	3
2d Women and men equally capture benefits of co-operative membership	9	0	0	5

“Women could be constrained from equal participation in co-operative by family obligation”
 “Women can be prevented from full participation in co-operative activities by pregnancy”
 “It’s important to have women in co-operative, because they are creative and hard-workers”
 “Women are more punctual, they know how to do their job”
 “Women bring new experience into co-operative”
 “It’s important to have women in the co-operative, especially for the development of co-operative, it is an advantage”
 “Women are not entitled for any kind of support during pregnancy or maternity leave, but members are trying to help in unofficial way”
 “Members do not distinguish between women and men, they don’t have special treatment for women or prefer men as members over women”
 “As young co-operative we do not have defined rules about organizational matters like frequency of meetings”

*Code: positive-indicator fulfilled; negative-indicator not fulfilled; missing-the missing answer; irrelevant-not relevant question for particular context

5.4.3. Results for principle 3: Ensure health, safety and well-being of all women and men members

Interviewees were asked about their opinion on both official and unofficial benefits of co-operative membership related to the agriculture activity difficulties and difficult life situation. The results showed that almost all co-operatives have potential to help it’s members in need, both by direct help of co-operative (donation of financial surpluses or provision of the means of transportation, purchasing the seeds and fertilizers for members on the expenses of co-operative) or unofficial help of co-

operative co-members. In three cases the condition for provision of financial help was determined by financial surpluses of co-operative in the future.

No co-operative developed policy on gender-based violence. It is partly because some co-operatives were too newly established to have highly developed internal rules and regulations, partly because the topic of gender discrimination and gender-based violence is generally not popular. Two respondents explained that there is no such policy because there are no of cases of gender discrimination or gender-based violence. One stated that there is no such policy and never will be because gender discrimination does not happen at all.¹⁰ The existence of unofficial practice to cope with potential gender-based violence within the co-operative was stated by 6 respondents – wrongdoer will be excluded from co-operative. In almost half of cases interviewee said that women members have better chance to avoid gender-based violence in the community because of their membership in a co-operative. The same number of respondent skipped the question while 3 disagreed. This question was clearly not an easy-to-answer one and some respondents apparently felt uncomfortable to speak on this topic. Some respondents were also possibly convicted that gender-based violence/discrimination does not exist at all and this question therefore did not make sense to them.

Table 19: Indicators for principle 3: Ensure health, safety and well-being of all women and men members

Feature	Results*			
	positive	negative	missing	irrelevant
3. Ensure the health, safety and well-being of all women and men members				
3a Provision of help for members in case of agriculture activity difficulties both officially by co-operative or unofficially among members	13	0	1	0
3b Provision of help for members in difficult life situation (illness, financial issues, invalidity) both officially by co-operative or unofficially among members	11	2	1	0
3c Existence of official policy on issues of gender-based violence	0	12	2	0
3d Existence of unofficial policy on issues	6	7	1	0

¹⁰ Probably in the sense that it does not happen in general, not only that it never occurred in the co-operative or community.

of gender-based violence

3e Women members have better chance to avoid gender-based violence in the community	6	3	5	0
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“We will provide help for our members no matter of gender”

“If such case happened (hardship related to production, difficult life situation), we will provide financial help and means transportation”

“We will be able to provide such help in the future, now we don’t have financial resources”

“Policy on gender-based violence going to be discussed on next general assembly”

“I heard for the first time about policy on issues of gender-based violence, in case of necessity we are willing to develop it”

“We don’t have any policy related on gender discrimination or gender-based violence. There are no such cases, so we don’t need it”

“There is no policy (on gender discrimination) and never will be”

“The one who will commit it (gender-based discrimination/violence) will be excluded form co-operative”

“Women members of our co-operatives have better chance to avoid gender-based violence, because they are strong”

*Code: positive-indicator fulfilled; negative-indicator not fulfilled; missing-the missing answer; irrelevant-not relevant question for particular context

5.4.4. Results for principle 4: Promote education, training and professional development for women

Half of co-operatives do not provide any training, mostly because they operate only for short period of time and due to lack of financial resources. However some members of co-operatives participate on trainings provided by other institutions. Question about equal participation of both women and men on training was irrelevant for three co-operatives with no women members. In two cases the answer was missing, otherwise all of respondents agreed on equal opportunity for participation. The barriers for participation of women were acknowledged mostly as family obligations. 7 respondents have an opinion, that co-operative membership creates opportunities for building relationships and friendships which give it’s members also some kind of unofficial benefits (like spending free time with other members, borrowing things, lending money) as is confirmed also by results from data collection among women members of co-operatives (22 out of 29 respondents stated, that after joining of co-operative they are meeting each other outside co-operative more frequently).

Table 20: Indicators for principle 4: Promote education, training and professional development for women

Feature	Results*			
	positive	negative	missing	irrelevant
4. Promote education, training and professional development for women				
4a Co-operative provides training for its members	6	6	2	0
4b Women and men have equal opportunity to participate on trainings provided by all stakeholders (co-operative, PiN, Elkana, Young Economists)	8	0	3	3
4c There are no barriers for women to participate on trainings	6	4	1	3
4d Existence of unofficial benefits from the contact with other members	7	5	2	0
“We don’t provide trainings due to lack of financial resources” “Our co-operative participated on trainings provided by other institutions like” “Unofficial benefit of co-operative membership is help among members with hard work related to production” “Benefits from meeting each other? Yes, of course. They are responsible among each other, co-operative concept of cooperation is suitable for Georgian people.” “Unofficial activities within the co-operative: playing football, drinking wine”				

*Code: positive-indicator fulfilled; negative-indicator not fulfilled; missing-the missing answer; irrelevant-not relevant question for particular context

5.4.5. Results for principle 5: Implement enterprise development, supply chain and marketing practices that empower women

In the time of data collection no co-operative was providing credit service for it’s members. The most common explanation was that co-operatives are either not functioning yet or not fully operating, so there were no finances for working credit service. In 5 cases respondents were open to the possibility of provision of credit service for co-operative members in the future. In the case of provision new business contacts for it’s members the situation had some common features. More of co-operatives were able to facilitate such contacts, but those who did not (4 cases) explained that by their short existence. Gender of business partners was important only in one case (not stated which gender is preferred), in one case the answer was missing and in other cases it was not important whether person is male or female.

Table 21: Indicators for principle 5: Implement enterprise development, supply chain and marketing practices that empower women

Feature	Results*			
	positive	negative	missing	irrelevant
5. Implement enterprise development, supply chain and marketing practices that empower women				
5a Co-operative provides credit services for its members	0	13	1	0
5b Co-operative provides opportunities to gain new business contacts for its members	8	4	2	0
5c Co-op do not have preference on gender of its business partners	12	1	1	0
“If we will have money, yes then we will establish credit service in the future”				
“It is not important whether the person is man or woman, important is quality of business relationship”				

*Code: positive-indicator fulfilled; negative-indicator not fulfilled; missing-the missing answer; irrelevant-not relevant question for particular context

5.4.6. Results for principle 6: Promote equality through community initiatives and advocacy

Slightly more than half of respondents (who were willing to answer the question) indicated that co-operative they are members of have the potential to fight gender stereotypes and sexism. They therefore implicitly agreed on existence of such phenomenons as not equal role of women and men in the society. However the other half disaffirmed this role of co-operative and some of respondents even denied the existence of gender discrimination. One representative was able to imagine that the co-operative might have such a role in the future. No co-operative organized trainings on gender equality related topic, in three cases such training will be possibly organized in the future and three respondents again denied the existence of gender discrimination and therefore refused the need for such trainings. Majority of co-operatives do not provide support for community activities on promoting the strong role of women in society (mainly because of lack of financial resources), only one did (the only women’s co-operative).

Table 22: Indicators for principle 6: Promote equality through community initiatives and advocacy

Feature	Results*			
	positive	negative	missing	irrelevant
6. Promote equality through community initiatives and advocacy				
6a Co-operative contribute to fight against gender stereotypes and sexism	6	5	3	0
6b Provision of trainings focused on gender equality	0	13	1	0
6c Co-operative supports other activities in community promoting strong role of women in society	1	10	3	0

“We are willing to conduct trainings focused on gender equality in the future.”

“There are no cases of gender stereotypes or sexism, so there is no need to fight against it.”

*Code: positive-indicator fulfilled; negative-indicator not fulfilled; missing-the missing answer; irrelevant-not relevant question for particular context

5.4.7. Results for principle 7: Measure and publicly report on progress to achieve gender equality

Only 7 out of 11 co-operatives did actually have a document similar to annual report. 5 of respondents stated that the annual report mentions women members and their contribution to co-operative activity. In two cases respondents said there is no such thing in the report and 3 answers are missing. The remaining 5 co-operatives were newly established so there was no such document and therefore the question was irrelevant.

Table 23: Indicators for principle 7: Measure and publicly report on progress to achieve gender equality

Feature	Result*			
	positive	negative	missing	irrelevant
7. Measure and publicly report on progress to achieve gender equality				
7a co-op emphasises role of women members and their contribution to co-operative in the annual report	5	0	3	6

“We put emphasis on role of women members and their contribution to co-operative because women are fully rights members.”

*Code: positive-indicator fulfilled; negative-indicator not fulfilled; missing-the missing answer; irrelevant-not relevant question for particular context

6. Discussion

In order to assess the situation of women in agricultural co-operatives, the first part of the result explores the characteristics of women who joined agricultural co-operatives established under the Pin/ENPARD project in Imereti region in Georgia between years 2010 and 2016. The second part of findings deals with problems women had had to face before they joined the co-operative. And the third part of results is about expectation women had from joining the co-operative. The level of incorporating women's empowerment principles into the co-operative rules and visions makes up the last part of results.

It was found out, that **co-operatives attract for membership women from all age groups** (from 18 to over 60), mainly with university education (58.6%). In most cases, a co-operative was not the only source of income – 72.4% of women were employed also elsewhere. However the income of majority of respondents was not the only source of income for their household so they were partly dependent on the income of their partner. Nugussie (2010) and Grigoryan et al. (2015) stated that the burden of work related to household, family and subsistence limits women in activities outside home, either from employment or membership in co-operative, and it renders them more dependent on partner's income. However only 37.9% of our respondents stated that they are exclusively responsible for housework and in the rest cases they said that this responsibility is shared with other members of a household or managed exclusively by them.

The results on the level of highest achieved education shows that most women members of co-operatives are well educated – more than half of respondents had achieved university education and 17.2 % of them at least vocational school. This is in accordance with result of Berhane (2013) who found that education of women members from agriculture co-operatives in Ethiopia varies from basic education to university, however the example from Iran (Azami, 2011) showed, that women members had generally basic education and higher education was rather an exception. However the level of education is affected by cultural conditions of countries of origin of investigation, in Georgia the value of gross enrolment ratio for secondary education is 99% and for tertiary education 39% data from 2014 (World Bank, 2017), therefore the

results should not be such surprising. However the education of the respondents is still significantly above the average so there is a space for further investigation in role of education in motivation to join a co-operative. More authors discovered that level of education have significant positive impact on the ability to capture the benefits of co-operative activities and to achieve higher income and therefore achieve empowerment through co-operative membership (Biru, 2014; Niknami and Bandres, 2013; Olabisi et al., 2015), or other way around that the lack of skills and education threatens achievement women's empowerment (ILO, 2015) and limits the women's active engagement and participation in co-operative activities (Olawale, 2012). Education is important for the adoption of useful innovations and to keep pace with research and development of new procedures, materials and practices (ENPARD, 2017). Therefore, based on prevalence of university educated women in our sample, their opportunities to participate in the activities in co-operatives and enjoy the benefits from the membership should be great. This is also possible subject of future research.

Results showed that almost 90% of co-operatives were established only few weeks, months or year or two before the data collection was done so they are too new to deliver expected benefits to it's members. Some of them even did not start fully working at that time, so the activity of respondents in the co-operative was limited as well as was the income generation through co-operative activity. Therefore it's so far not possible to evaluate the contribution of co-operative membership to empowerment of it's women members in the long-term perspective. Azami (2011) shows that years of membership of women and their participation on the co-operative activities is positively correlated and Biru (2014) sees similar correlation between years of membership and income generated through co-operative activities. The longer a women is a member of a co-operative, the better she can involve herself in it's activities and the better her income is.

In general women were aware about co-operative ideas and have the general notion about democracy and participation on decision-making activities. 7 respondents even claimed that co-operative ideology was one of reasons they joined the co-operative. The information about the possibility to join the co-operative was mainly passed by family, member of co-operative or friend, so there is a room for assumption that some of the women joined the co-operative only to help family or friends to achieve the contribution from the PiN/ENPARD project, since there is a condition of having

women members in co-operative which gives better chance for co-operative to be involved in the project and reach the financial support. This concern was also expressed by Buba Jafarli, project coordinator in PiN. Most influential for women to take decision to join was to talk with a member of a co-operative or to hear about experience with a co-operative from family member or a friend. Approximately in 40% of cases more members from one family joined a co-operative, which is according to Buba Jafarli undesirable. The point of co-operative formation should be the attraction of resources from different sides – rather from more than one (interview from 16.7.2015). If a husband and a wife are members, the possible unequal position of the woman in the marriage will be most likely reproduced in the co-operative reality and therefore the membership of the woman will lack the empowerment potential (Grigoryan et al., 2015).

According to results women are attending meetings in co-operative, they are active in proposing and discussing topics and other members care about their opinions, so they can influence decision making about co-operative affairs. Trainings organized by or for co-operatives were attend by slightly more than half of respondents. Findings of Tesfay and Tadele (2013) on similar features shows that women's activity in co-operative (apart from annual meetings) is rather low, approximately 50% are willing to be part of training or decision making about profit allocation, business expansion and assets control. In this respect, women from co-operatives which took part in the study are more active and influential in sphere of decision-making in co-operative. Women were generally constrained from higher participation on meetings and trainings by various factors as: (1) lack of time due to other employment (or participation in other co-operative activities), household and family responsibilities or school attendance; (2) long distance from the place of meeting; (3) health conditions. Also Grigoryan et al. (2015) mentions the time scarcity as factor that prevents women from greater activity in co-operative important affairs. Other authors described socio-cultural norms in the society which ties women up to household work and care about family and limits them from participation in some of co-operative activities (ILO, 2015; Niknami and Bandres, 2013).

In the studied co-operatives, the majority of members were men (66% in the year 2016) and men also occupied majority of leadership position. Only 14 women were

members of the board of directors or even directors (from the total 75 person on such positions) which is consistent with results of Grigoryan et al. (2015) who also reports low representation of women in board. Results from ILO/ICA (2015) showed that although women make about 50% of members of studied co-operatives, in most cases their participation in board is less than 50% even though the opportunity to participate in the management of co-operative is highly important for women members of co-operative (ILO, 2015). Woldu et al. (2013) explains, that low participation of women in management is result of cultural barriers in the society, which does not see women as leaders and in the same time there is overall shortage of women members in co-operatives. They also say that women participating in management could attract more women into co-operatives and be role-models for them.

Second part of results pursues to find out the **problems women had to face in the field of agriculture business activities** before they become members of co-operative. The obstacles related to economic activities (such as high cost of production, lack of machinery and equipment and low bargaining power) were seen as most significant. Also problems co-operatives were able to partly solve within the time of membership of women were also related mainly to the area of production and sales (better access to equipment, material and technology; increase of bargaining power and better sales). The results from ILO/ICA (2015) research among all types of co-operatives confirms the improvement of situation of women members in terms of better access to income generating activities. Other significant problem identified by women and later on partly solved by co-operative membership was access to education and information. Findings from Olawale (2012), Vicari and DeMuro (2012) shows, that access to adult education is (among others) valued benefit of co-operative membership.

The results from the third part of the research were divided according to three areas of concern from Beijing Platform for Action. The aim of this part was to find out the **expectations of women from co-operative membership**. The findings showed, that the majority of the most significant expectations were related to the improvement of economic and entrepreneurship activities of women and therefore lies in the area “Women and economy” (apart from gaining additional source of income which is related to the area “Women and poverty” since co-operatives gives some women opportunity to increase the number of working hours). But it is not possible to say, that

two other areas are left behind, because all three are strongly interconnected (poverty reduction, economic activity and participation on decision making processes as well as correction of unequal power relations).

Based on the results from the examination of problems women have to face before joining the co-operatives and their expectation from the membership the motivation of women to join the co-operative could be recognized: if they perceive their economic efforts as problematic and in the same time expected these problems to be solved by co-operative membership, it is possible to assume, that their **motivation** is mostly linked to the improvement of economic situation and through that the generation of more income. This is with accordance with point of view of Buba Jafarli that co-operatives have also potential to offer other services for women but the first role is economic.

Women were asked about their motivation to join also separately in different question and results identified main motivations to join a co-operative as mostly linked to improvement of economic activity (better sales of production, access to machinery and equipment and development of agriculture business, access to knowledge about agriculture practices), improvement of income generation (access to employment, improvement of livelihood) and improvement social life. Co-operative ideology as a reason to join was ranked on the third place. The various authors came to similar results and in addition also other motivation was found: improvement of bargaining power, better access to market, opportunity to participate on community development, experience of collective and autonomous production and access to trainings (Tesfay and Tadele, 2013; Vicari and De Muro, 2012).

The last part of result was examining the **incorporation of Women's empowerment principles in business into the co-operatives activities, rules and visions**. The first principle "Equal participation in leadership" was rather unfulfilled, since no co-operative have the rule about share of men and women in leadership position and women are represented in board of director only in 7 from 13 co-operatives. Even though affirmative action is often seen as controversial, it is considered in some cases necessary for improvement of the participation of women on decision-making activities (ILO, 2015).

The second principle “Treat all women and men fairly in co-operative” was considered as rather fulfilled since almost all members of the board consider equality as an important value for co-operative, women do participate in decision-making and there are no constraints to limit women from such participation and in co-operative which works the capture of benefits is also equal. These results are surprising and in contradiction to other results from our survey because women themselves identified constraints to fully participate. Since the majority of interviews were done with male representatives of co-operatives, we might assume, that male respondents did not consider possible different women’s experience (like household works, caring about children, maternity leave). Results showed, that the traditional role of women as child rearers and household keepers was not challenged. Women who have to cope with the traditional gender division of labour are limited in participation in important situations of co-operative reality. The different situation of women was identified but the conditions for women to fully participate in spite of their traditional role were not created. Therefore we assumed that women do participate in decision making in co-operative but they do so only in limited scope. Some of the respondents supports the idea, that having (more) women members could be beneficial to co-operative, however according to their arguments why is it so (women are hard-workers, more punctual, creative) we might assume that these statements made by male members show that they expect women to have some extra skills to “deserve” their membership, while for potential male members there is no such high standard. But we do not have enough data to support this assumption.

According to the results the third principle “Ensure health, safety and well-being of all women and men members” was on a half way to be fulfilled. Co-operatives are able to provide help to its members more in unofficial way, because many of them do not fully function yet. No co-operative have official policy against occurrence of gender-based violence and only half of them have defined unofficial practice that would regulate what to do in the case of someone committing gender-based discrimination or violence. According to research done by ILO/ICA (2015) almost 60% of co-operatives participated in the study implemented some kind of gender sensitive policies to enhance women’s participation in co-operative activities. Those policies vary from equal employment opportunity to harassment policies and affirmative action and quotas. So in

the case of agriculture co-operatives in Imereti region in Georgia there is room for improvement, if co-operatives strives to be inclusive and safe place for women, this kind of policy should be definitely developed.

Fourth principle is related to “Promotion of education, training and professional development for women” and it is considered by fulfilled in half way. Trainings are provided only by 6 co-operatives and in 8 cases members are taking part in trainings provided by other institutions. 6 members of board are not aware about any constraints that can prevent women from participation on trainings. However 4 other respondents as well as women themselves identified many constraints for full participation (mainly the family obligations). This information implies that women really do not have same opportunity to take part in educational activities within the co-operative or that family issues impact the male members in the same intensity. But that is in contradiction to strong emphasis on traditional division of labour in Georgia (Nadaraia, 2013). Opportunity of trainings and new sources of information was important component of women’s motivation for joining the co-operative and according to Niknami and Bandres (2013) and Olabisi et al. (2015) lack of education related to the field of co-operative activity also plays role in limited empowerment of women. The provision of proper training is especially important in the situation, where many women have achieved their education in different than agriculture field and their main source of income is from the job not related to agriculture.

Fifth principle “Implement enterprise development, supply chain and marketing practices that empower women” is considered as partly fulfilled since no co-operative provide credit services for its members (although 5 of them are open to do that in the future when co-operative will be fully working and generating financial surpluses), in 7 cases the co-operative facilitate new business contact for the members, however almost all respondents stated, that the gender of their business partner is not important while they are arranging new business contacts. In the studies done by Tesfay and Tadele (2013) and Vicari and DeMuro (2012) the access to alternative financial resources as provision of low interest loans was identified as source of motivation to join the co-operative. Also access to additional financial resources with reasonable interest is important for the enhancement of women’s economic activity and provision of employment to other women (ILO, 2015) However according to Vicari and DeMuro

(2012) and Woldu et al. (2013) the membership in co-operative increases the possibility to reach the credit from different sources than co-operative itself.

During the interviews related to the principle number 6 “Promote equality through community initiatives and advocacy” was identified, that half of respondents is denying the existence of gender inequality or gender discrimination. Therefore they refused that co-operative could play role in the gender equality promotion and also denied importance of trainings focused on gender equality. No co-operative provided training focused on gender equality and also no co-operative support financially other community initiative promoting strong role of women in society, except for one (the only women co-operative). Result from survey done by ILO/ICA (2015) shows, that in only about 27% of co-operatives provides trainings relevant to women’s empowerment, however women members do consider such trainings as important because it *“enable women to take multiple roles within the co-operatives as well as develop high level skill such as negotiation or performing legal accounting procedures (...) help women engage in addressing the broader constraints they face”*. (ILO, 2015). The study also suggest adoption of more measures on gender equality such as Equality action plans, internal Gender equality committees with board representation and many others.

The principle 7 “Measure and publicly report on progress to achieve gender equality” was seen rather unfulfilled because majority of co-operatives have not developed annual report or document alike yet, most probably due to the short time of existence.

7. Conclusions

The agricultural co-operative movement in Georgia have a long history with some years of a break off after the fall of The Soviet Union in 90's. However in past years the co-operatives are being established again under the development programmes like ENPARD and are considered even by the government a tool for recovery of agriculture, rural development and improvement of farmer's livelihood. Agricultural co-operatives in today's concept are expected to provide economic and also social benefits especially to marginalized groups in society. Women constitute a significant proportion of people employed in agriculture, therefore co-operatives have to be an inclusive place where they also can contribute and reach the benefits.

The focus of the research was not to find what changed in their livelihood or to evaluate the empowerment potential of co-operatives since the length of their existence is too short. It was more aimed at describing of women's situation in newly established co-operatives: if there are women members, if and how they are involved, what problems they face and what expectations from co-operative membership did they have.

In the studied co-operatives women make up only smaller part of members (according to available information it was 13% in 2015 and 34% in 2016). In general all kinds of women were involved in co-operatives-even those, who were not professional farmers before. Majority of them have university education and have been employed (and remained in employment) before they became a member. In half of cases also other member of their family joined the same co-operative. They have general awareness about co-operative ideology, mainly the democratic setting of decision making processes that give them a chance to express their opinion – and most of them think that this really happens. Nevertheless some of them reported that they are limited in full involvement by the family and household responsibilities. Women members of co-operatives perform different levels of involvement and they are limited in full participation in different ways.

It was found out that although gender equality and involvement of women is considered an important, there are members of the board of directors who lack awareness of specific issues women have to cope with in their lives and also as members of a co-operative. The lack of measures within the co-operative which could

help women not to be limited by the implication of their role is possibly the result of not enough attention paid on the existence of different gender roles and thus different ability to be involved in co-operative activities.

Considering the results mentioned above we have to state that studied co-operatives partly fail in it's inclusive role. It is possible that inclusiveness and gender equality is not priority for men who nowadays constitute a majority of members in co-operatives. Georgian society as a whole is rather traditional and also male and female roles are understood in a traditional way. According to the results of the research it is the gender division of labour and other culturally conditioned inequalities (together with denying their existence) that prevents women from equal participation in co-operatives' activities the most.

It was found out that women join a co-operative to generate extra income and to solve some particular problems mainly related to their agricultural economic activity. Their expectations from co-operative membership was to improve their income and situation of their agriculture business activities. Women also seek for better access to income generating activities in general. Yet minority of women also mentioned they got involved also because they had hoped to improve their social bonds with other members of community involved in a co-operative.

Most women therefore were not motivated by social benefits that are considered an important part of co-operative movement, however some of them were aware of this aspect of their membership. And even though they did not consider this to be an important factor in the decision whether to join, majority of women in the end get also some social benefits apart from the expected economic ones too. Co-operatives therefore partly fulfill their mission to bring also some social benefits to theirs members but they do not use their potential fully. This fact and also a low awareness of potential other than economic benefits of a membership may be connected to a short history of modern co-operatives existence in the region and their small number.

Co-operatives still do not cope with the specific gender roles of women and men and if the ideal situation of an equal participation of both women and men is to be reached specific conditions must be created. Inclusion of women into decision-making processes and other activities is possible by adjusting the conditions for them (for example by scheduling of meetings that will not interfere with other responsibilities of

women, provision of care services for them). Subsequently provision of credit services and investment into the capacity building opportunities for it's (women) members could be objectives for the growth of co-operatives in the future. Such benefits could also attract more potential women members. The establishment of only women's co-operative could create the environment where women could develop their potential without being exposed to patriarchal settings of power relations, as well as improve self-esteem and gain the recognition in the family and society through income generating activity and overall participation in public sphere.

Due to the short operational time of majority of studied co-operatives it is not possible to assess their contribution to the achieving the objectives of the Platform for Action from the 4th World Conference on Women in 1995. Also to assess the ability of women to achieve some progress in the process of empowerment through the co-operative membership. Further research on those topics is recommended after more years of co-operative existence.

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