Gender Violence in Georgia
Magda Lekiashvili and Nino Kikvadze

Our organisation, Young Christians for Peace and Democracy (YCPD), actively participates in activities that aim to overcome violence. After the Lingua Franca Stop Being Silent! seminar in Novi Sad, we held one training against gender violence in Georgia in the Tbilisi State University on 8 April 2010. Students from various universities were able to take part in this training. It was a one day meeting supported by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the International Centre on Conflicts and Negotiations (ICCN).

YCPD is interested in researching gender and family violence and finding ways to prevent and overcome it. This article is about gender violence, specifically about family violence in Georgia. First, we overview the challenges of definitions of gender and sex, then we briefly examine gender stereotypes in Georgia and give a few statistics on gender violence in Georgia. Following this background information, we interviewed Rusudan Gotsiridze, a member of the ICCN, an organisation that works on this theme and takes steps to address these problems.

Gender in Georgia
Gender is an English word. Originally, it was a grammatical term and meant the sex of a noun. In the second half of the 20th century, social scientists began to use the word 'gender' to explain men's and women's functions in social and cultural environments.

To understand gender, we must distinguish it from the word sex, which refers to men's and women's physiological attributes. People are most often born with a biological sex, and in most cases, for example, this denotes whether or not someone can give birth to children. Sex is determined by biology.

Differing from the biological sex of a person, a person's gender refers to their appearances, expectations, or roles in society (male or female), and is dependent on the social environment. People are born with a biological sex, but they are taught how to behave and feel the gender expectations placed on their particular sex. These gender roles also include expectations of the positions they will have in the family and in society. These exterior expectations are issued by the extended and immediate family and by authorities and religious or cultural institutions.

Female and male gender roles also differ depending on culture, and they even vary within different social groups consolidated within one culture. In spite of these differences, in most cases the dominating structure in Georgia is patriarchal, and women are given minor positions. But we must not view gender issues as a challenge and problem only for women, as gender issues can be difficult for both sexes.

Gender itself, however, is a neutral issue and is not innately good or bad. Gender is an instrument to understand social processes and their classifications. Despite this, many

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societies have or form gender stereotypes, which, in most cases, give inexact exterior expectations about men's and women's abilities, social behaviours, and functions. If the society is very traditional, the gender stereotypes are even stronger. It is said that Georgia has a traditional society, because our people strictly value our ancestors’ traditions. Thus it is no surprise that there are many gender stereotypes in Georgia.

The mainline gender stereotypes in Georgia are as follows: the woman's role is to be at home, to take care of children and, opposite of this, the man must work to earn money. Women must be compliant; they are not viewed as having the same intellectual abilities as men. Men have different characters and they are more aggressive. They are seen as rougher, cleverer, and as more rational. These stereotypes often lead to discrimination, sexism, and even can fuel or be used to justify domestic violence.

Gender-based violence
Sexism is based on gender stereotypes and is discrimination against someone based on their sex. Sexism is only one example of gender-based violence.

The most common form of gender violence in Georgia is family violence (or domestic violence), which can be divided into two parts. It can be both physical (one person abusing another’s body, from striking to biting to sexual assault) and psychological (aimed at manipulating someone's mind).

There has been a lot of research on this in Georgia. According to the results of a study in 2006 in Tbilisi, every 4th or 5th (22.2%) woman recognises that she is a victim of physical violence. Research done on psychological violence shows that 44% of women in Georgia are victims.1 The study questions and results are on the top of the next page (32).

N1) How often has your husband or partner physically assaulted you or attempted to physically assault you?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(Distribution in %)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attempted a couple times but never did it</td>
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<tr>
<td>Once or twice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It took place previously but not now</td>
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<tr>
<td>It never took place</td>
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N2) *Were there cases when your husband made you feel:*

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<tr>
<td>That you are incapable of independent decision making</td>
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<tr>
<td>That you are nothing without him and will perish</td>
</tr>
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The fight against domestic violence is at the top of the agenda for the Georgian government, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia, as well as other agencies including local and international organisations. For this purpose, in 2006, the Parliament of Georgia adopted a law 'On the Prevention of Domestic Violence, Protection of and Extending Assistance to the Victims of Violence'.

**Interview with ICCN**

Family Violence in Georgia has been investigated by the non-governmental organisation ICCN (International Centre on Conflicts and Negotiations). We interviewed a member of ICCN, Rusudan Gotsiridze (RG), for further information on his work.2

**NL and MK - First of all, can you tell us about your organisation?**

**RG** - ICCN was founded in 1995. Our initial aim was to hold trainings that were linked to the conflicts. ICCN's work spreads in several directions. We pay more attention to religious and ethnic minorities and to gender issues. For over a year ICCN has had close relations to the UNFPA (United Nations Population Fund), which ran a programme called 'Overcome Gender Violence in Georgia'. Our organisation executes this mission in Georgia.

**NL and MK - What are your main aims?**

**RG** - The main aim of our organisation is to raise awareness in society. We hold trainings that are executed in two stages. In the first stage, 200 people in Georgia are trained. They then will hold second stage trainings about gender violence. They also work to raise awareness and spread knowledge to others about individual rights. With knowledge of their rights, many will then be better able to identify, prevent, and overcome gender violence themselves.

**NL and MK - How do you choose the participants of the trainings?**

**RG** – Normally, the participants are those who are in risk groups that are most likely to become potential victims. Often the participants are housewives who do not work outside the home, and thus often lack information on gender violence and their rights.

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2 An Interview - Rusudan Gotsiridze works in Gender Issues. By journalists N Kikvadze, M Lekiashvili, 18.01.2010, Tbilisi, Georgia.


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**NL and MK** - Have you done any research on gender violence in Georgia. If yes, do you have any statistics?

**RG** - Of course we do investigative research, but we are not the only ones. With this gathered information, we compiled statistics about gender violence. As usual, when studying gender violence, you get into closer contact with men and women, both of which can be victims. But our research shows that 90% of victims of gender violence are women.

The main achievement of our trainings is that people begin to talk loudly about such issues in society. Women no longer feel ashamed to recognise that they are victims. In addition, as they are now protected by the new law, every victim has a possibility to speak about their experiences and the violence committed against them. They can appeal to law enforcement or other organisations.

We must point out that there are many organisations that not only spread information about gender violence but also work with victims of the violence. In Georgia, there are institutions, safe-houses, where victims live together. They have ‘round tables’ and they talk about their struggles and problems. Many of these organisations also help victims to find employment so that they are not forced to stay in abusive homes for economic reasons. This is also very important for their communication and integration with others.

The initial stage of our project, to inform and protect members of Georgian society through the first trainings, has been completed.

**NL and MK** – Thank you, Rusudan, for sharing information about your work with us.

In conclusion, the work of non-governmental organisations to address gender violence in Georgia is generally very helpful for people who are victims and suffer every day. Nowadays, many people who could not even voice their problems before have places to talk about them and to share them with society. More and more involvement and more financial and psychological support for victims will be next step to overcoming gender violence in Georgia.

*Magda Lekiashvili graduated from the Tbilisi State University, Faculty of Social and Political Science with a degree in journalism in 2010. She is 21 years old, and currently works as a correspondent for the Georgian daily newspaper ‘24 Hours’. Magda is a member of the board of the NGO ‘Young Christians for Peace and Democracy’ (YCDP). As YCDP is interested in gender issues, she took part in the SBS! seminar in Belarus in 2010.*

*Nino Kikvadze is 21 and works for the NGO ‘Young Christians for Peace and Democracy’ as the vice chair. She often writes articles about minorities and especially about violence. Nino has taken part in many trainings, conferences, and youth meetings against gender and family violence, racism, and intolerance. She attended the SBS! Seminar in Novi Sad in 2009. She graduated from the Tbilisi State University, Faculty of Political and Social Sciences.*


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