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GENDER POLITICS IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS

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Guest Editor: Tamar Sabedashvili, Special Advisor to UNIFEM in Georgia

Gender Politics in Georgia

By Ketevan Chkheidze, Tbilisi

Abstract

Achieving gender equality on the way to building a democratic state has been challenging for Georgia. Although the Georgian government has made some positive attempts to elaborate and implement a gender equality strategy and has adopted international obligations like the other South Caucasus countries, it must make a greater commitment to ensure gender equality and combat all kinds of discrimination against women.

No Democracy Without Equality

After the Rose Revolution, Georgia pursued a number of reforms with the goal of inculcating democratic values into society. Achieving democracy requires implementing numerous mechanisms and practices including establishing gender equality in which men and women have equal rights and opportunities. Civil society groups have gradually introduced gender equality into the political discourse and placed it on the list of required reforms; however, along with many other emerging social problems and political tensions, this issue has not received priority attention. It is essential to realize that gender equality is an explicit goal for democracy-building processes and institutions and a formal and declarative character cannot result into substantive gender equality.

Transition and the Local Context

Since independence, Georgia has made efforts to improve the situation of women; however, this work must be seen against the larger political context. For more than 15 years, Georgia has been struggling with the challenges and difficulties of the transition period on its way towards building a democratic state. Indeed, independence brought considerable freedoms and opportunities, but at the same time the country experienced political and economic uncertainties, including two unresolved ethnic conflicts that have affected both women and men in Georgia. These processes including the high level of migration, unemployment and poverty have had an especially negative impact on the status and condition of many women.

Women's status and rights in Georgia are deeply affected by the local context, traditions and cultural specificities. First of all, patriarchal traditions and behavior patterns persist in Georgia, especially in the rural areas, influencing the private and public spheres and the division of roles among women and men as well as attitudes about their respective places in society. In this regard, male supremacy becomes grounds for unequal treatment and discrimination against women. What's more, male-dominated households give women very little voice to express their opinions and little space to act.

Deeply rooted stereotypes that favor men over women are common everywhere in Georgia. Additionally, the rise of militarism and religious fundamentalism create especially powerful threats to the freedom and rights of women. All these contextual factors are fundamental in establishing an unequal power distribution between the genders and create a strong basis for gender inequality.

While the transition has taken a heavy toll on both women and men, women have found strategies to cope with it. Considering their background and work experience in such traditional female professions as education and health care, women easily became active in civil society by establishing and joining volunteer organizations and addressing a variety of social issues that are important for women, men and children. Although women started undertaking a number of roles in society, this new activism could not change their status in the family and society. This period witnessed the birth of a number of women's NGOs. Today, there are 200 officially registered organizations, out of which 80 are active throughout the country. Women's rights defenders have won some victories, however, their activism has been fragmented and, unfortunately, the women's movement has failed to consolidate into strong organizations, prepare effective initiatives, and communicate its concerns to the broader public.

The governments of post-communist countries, including Georgia, sought to pursue women's advancement and gender mainstreaming in policy and practice after the 4th World Conference on Women and after the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action. During the newly-independent state's difficult political and economic transition in the late 1990s, the Georgian government sought to address women's issues by establishing the first state institution for the advancement of women in 1998. However, this attempt had a formal character and could not bring any substantive change or real positive development to the status and rights of women in Georgia.

Georgia expressed its readiness to fight discrimination against women and support the establishment of gender equality when it joined the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against

Women (CEDAW) in 1994, thereby giving hope to many for a real commitment followed up by concrete steps for achieving greater gender equality in the country. In line with CEDAW, Georgia is expected to fulfill obligations endorsed by UN Security Council Resolution 1325 for increasing women's role in peace-building and conflict transformation and the Millennium Development Goal #3 on Promoting Gender Equality and Empowering Women, by 2015. However, women's and civil society groups in Georgia have always criticized these efforts, claiming that the state is not sufficiently committed to accomplishing its international or domestic obligations.

Emerging Issues for Women in Georgia

Women in Georgia face a reality filled with contradictions. On one hand, they have access to education, work actively in civil society organizations, and run small businesses, but, on the other, society still considers the major duty for a woman to be taking care of her children and household. Although lately there has been a shift in gender roles and women are starting to become their families' main breadwinners, this situation has not changed men's roles and the division of labor in households. Such traditional practices and attitudes leave little room for women to actively engage and advance in the public sphere.

Women are especially underrepresented in all types of politics—at both the local and federal levels, and in the legislative and executive branches. At present, after the democratic reforms witnessed during recent years, women MPs comprise just 6% of the entire Parliament and there are three women ministers in the government. Women's rights activists support the idea of introducing mechanisms that would result in greater gender balance in the relevant legislation on political parties and the electoral code; In this case, political will, ensured by the adoption of a gender equality law in March 2010, could help address these issues.

Women are largely employed in unpaid jobs and the Labor Code requires significant improvements in regard to women.¹ What's more, there is no national strategy for mainstreaming women in the labor market or giving them opportunities to overcome poverty and engage in the formal economy. Indeed, many studies show that the participation of both women and men in formal paid jobs increases economic efficiency and living standards.

While facing disadvantages in finding employment in other spheres, women are particularly well represented in the civil society sector. Women comprise

58% of NGO staff in Tbilisi and 63% of NGO staff in the regions of the country.²

Abortion remains the major birth control method in Georgia. Definitely, the introduction of various family planning methods have had a positive impact on the health of women in the last few years, however, many women still do not have access to information or resources about reproductive health services.

Domestic violence is a critical gender issue for Georgia. Georgian women are subject to all forms of domestic violence; in addition to physical violence, psychological violence and economic control are also common. The widespread impunity of offenders and ignorance of women's rights have been major obstacles in combating this problem. Additionally, male supremacy as a basis for unequal treatment is quite common in Georgian families. The first nation-wide study on domestic violence in the South Caucasus (UNFPA, 2010) revealed that in Georgia among married women at least every eleventh woman has been subjected to physical violence, while more than 35% of married women have experienced acts of violence aimed at controlling their behavior. Most importantly, domestic violence is still considered a private matter, as a recent nation-wide survey revealed that about 78% of women consider that cases of domestic violence should remain within a family and shouldn't be publicly discussed.³

Georgia has a sound number of ethnic minorities. Ethnic minority women face cultural and language constraints, violation of human rights and lack of access to information and skills what especially hinders their integration and development. Although other minority groups of women, e.g. sexual minorities, manage to organize themselves and cooperate with a few women's NGOs, they face absolute isolation and discrimination from society.

Due to the two ethnic conflicts, Georgia has a large number of internally displaced persons (IDP). The 2009–2012 State Strategy on IDPs has gender aspects, but IDP women and rural women are in most vulnerable conditions resulting into the low economic status and poverty and having less access to information, rights and skills.

Gender Equality Policy in Georgia

Since the Shevardnadze government failed to address gender discrimination and advance women's rights, after the Rose Revolution gender equality once again appeared on the government agenda. In order to address gender issues, the parliament set up a Gender Equality

1 Georgia Gender Assessment, USAID, Georgia 2010

2 Sumbade Nana, "Gender and Society: Georgia," UND/SIDA, 2008, p. 57

3 Domestic violence survey in the South Caucasus, UNFPA, 2010

Advisory Council and the government established the Gender Equality Governmental Commission as institutional mechanisms in 2004–2005. Later, in 2006, at the initiative of UN agencies and women's civil society groups, the Parliament adopted the Concept on Gender Equality as a framework document for achieving gender equality in various spheres. Subsequently the parliament adopted the Gender Equality National Action Plan for 2007–2009. However, state agencies in both the legislative and executive branches failed to actively support implementation of this blueprint, monitoring showed.⁴ In practice, most of the resources and efforts put forward came from NGOs and international organizations.

While Georgia still lacks specific gender sensitive legislation and an overall gender approach to adopting laws, in March 2010 the parliament adopted a Law on Gender Equality. Women's rights NGOs, UN agencies and the Gender Equality Advisory Council helped to draft the law and worked to ensure its adoption. The law aims to eliminate discrimination and achieve gender equality in the areas of political participation, employment, education, health and social care. Although the law was watered down from an earlier draft, in the future it could serve as the basis for further legislative acts, documents and reforms. Nevertheless, the law gives women legitimate rights in various spheres. Passing a gender equality law is indeed a step forward; however because it has recently been adopted, there is not much evidence of how it will be implemented in practice.

The Gender Equality Advisory Council remains the only institutional body on gender equality in Georgia which has been granted a permanent mandate by the Gender Equality Law of Georgia⁵ and it will closely follow the implementation of the National Action Plan on Gender Equality currently being drafted.

A lot has changed in combating human trafficking and domestic violence after the Rose Revolution. In 2006 the government's commitment to reform and its willingness to work closely with NGOs resulted in the

adoption of laws on human trafficking and domestic violence. This legislation is backed up with the relevant action plans, establishment of interagency institutional bodies and a State Fund for Protecting and Assisting Victims of Human Trafficking, which at present has a crucial role in elaborating and implementing trafficking and domestic violence policies.

Conclusion

It took a long time to introduce gender equality into the political discourse in Georgia. The country has endorsed international obligations to fight discrimination against women and has expressed political will by adopting laws addressing gender equality, domestic violence and human trafficking while striving to adopt principles of democracy; still, these commitments need to be translated more into practice. In general, Georgia's national legislation is not gender sensitive and state policies and strategies lack gender mainstreaming. In addition, stereotypes, deeply rooted gender roles, and women's own lack of awareness of their rights prevent them from fully enjoying their freedoms and rights. The women's movement in Georgia has to be more consolidated and stronger to promote women's advancement.

Although Georgia has adopted broad democratic reforms, it has not yet expressed enough commitment to achieving gender equality. While there is a need for more commitment—political, financial and human resources—for addressing broader gender equality issues, instead most of the pressure comes from international organizations. If Georgia strives for accession to the European Union, it should note that combating gender discrimination and introducing equality in programs and policies is one of the core principles the EU considers for future member states. Adherence to such principles guarantees the establishment of effective and sustainable democracies, inclusive and diverse societies and equal opportunities for community members.

About the Author:

Ketevan Chkheidze is a graduate of the Central European University, Budapest. She is a gender consultant for Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia for the Asian Development Bank and she has served as a researcher and consultant on gender and women's rights for several international organizations.

Recommended Reading:

- Georgia Gender Assessment, USAID, 2010: <http://georgia.usaid.gov/index.php?m=28&newsid=512>
- Sumbadze Nana, "Gender and Society", UNDP/SIDA, 2008: http://undp.org.ge/new/files/24_425_824113_gender&society2008.pdf
- Sabedashvili Tamar, "Gender and Democratization: the Case of Georgia 1991–2006", Issue 1, HBF Surveys and Policy Papers, Tbilisi 2007

⁴ Review of Gender Equality Strategy and Monitoring implementation of 2007–2008 GAP, UNFPA, 2008.

⁵ *Gender Equality Law of Georgia*, March 2010, Article 12.

Policy Attitudes towards Women in Azerbaijan: Is Equality Part of the Agenda?

By Yuliya Aliyeva Gureyeva, Baku

Abstract

Since independence, the government of Azerbaijan has been struggling to formulate its policy approach to the so-called “women’s question.” This issue should have been reconsidered in the light of the social transformations during the transition to a market economy that resulted in the increasing disempowerment of women and the provision of fewer opportunities to them. The global feminist agenda that was gaining greater prominence in international institutions was thus lagging behind in Azerbaijan. The “women’s question” in Azerbaijan continues to be challenging since the dominant national discourse primarily regards women as mothers and guardians of national traditions. However, the international agenda advocates for the broader active participation of women in public life. This paper presents a brief account of how these two approaches coexist in the policy attitudes towards women in Azerbaijan

National Machinery for Gender Mainstreaming

The Azerbaijani government took the first steps towards mapping a national policy on “women’s issues” by signing the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) on the eve of the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. The Azerbaijani delegation actively participated in the Beijing conference and reaffirmed the recognition of women’s rights within the general human rights framework. In 2000, Azerbaijan acceded to the Optional Protocol of CEDAW, thus recognizing the competence of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (the body that monitors states’ compliance with the Convention) to receive and consider complaints from individuals or groups within its jurisdiction. And in 2001 Azerbaijan joined the Council of Europe, actively participating in the work of its Committee on Gender Equality.

Azerbaijan’s foreign policy has thus recognized the issue of gender equality. Azerbaijani delegations have regularly attended international and regional meetings on women’s issues. The delegations have not only sought to demonstrate a concern for gender equality, but also to remind the international community about the Nagorno-Karabakh issue and that more than one million refugees, mainly women and children, have been displaced as a result of the conflict. Almost all government reports on women’s issues in Azerbaijan exhibit reservations about the possibility of making progress in the protection of women’s rights before a resolution of this conflict.

In addition to the implementation of international obligations on this issue, it is particularly interesting to see how the global agenda on women’s issues is being translated into domestic policy language. A decree on the “Implementation of the State Women’s Policy in the Republic of Azerbaijan” was signed by the President of Azerbaijan on the eve of the 8th of March, 2000, Inter-

national Women’s Day. This was meant as a symbolic present to women. The decree is not only a brief statement of the policy intention to provide equal representation of women and men at the decision-making level in all state bodies. It is also an account of the accomplishments of the women of Azerbaijan who are praised for being a “source of life and an embodiment of wisdom”, thus playing a significant role in sustaining national values. The rhetoric of the document suggests that its major aim was not only to outline the domestic gender mainstreaming policy, but to justify the policy by declaring that the women of Azerbaijan “deserved” a new policy due to their virtues.

The protectionist policy approach¹ became more visible when the State Committee on Women’s Issues was renamed as the State Committee on Family, Women and Children’s Affairs (SCFWCA) in 2006. This was an indication that the state regards women as vulnerable “reproductive units,” who should be protected by the state in exchange for their devotion to “family values”. The head of the committee, Hijran Guseynova, is the only woman in the Cabinet of Ministers of Azerbaijan. During interviews she has expressed regret that the word “gender” is often confused in Azerbaijan with the term “feminism,” which has negative connotations. She also called for women to actively pursue careers while not neglecting their family responsibilities.² In

1 “The protectionist approach which, while recognising differences, seeks to curtail or curb women’s activities or freedoms with the rationale that the aim is to ‘protect’ women from harm or wrongdoing. This approach does not challenge gender discrimination, but reproduces it in the guise of protecting women”. For more information about various policy approaches towards women, please visit IWRAW-Asia Pacific knowledge portal at: <http://www.iwraw-ap.org/convention/equality.htm> (Last accessed November 26, 2010).

2 Interviews with the head of the SCFWCA, Hijran Huseynova can be accessed here: http://gender-az.org/index.shtml?id_main=26&id_sub=59&id_sub_sub=55 (last accessed October 11, 2009)

addition, she stated her opposition to the introduction of quotas for women even though women in Azerbaijan are extremely underrepresented at decision-making levels in all state bodies across the country.

The state's protectionist approach is also evident in many legal documents. For example, the state takes a mixed approach towards women's employment, simultaneously encouraging family-friendly employment policies, such as legislative measures specifically assisting pregnant and breastfeeding women, while adopting provisions based on stereotypes about gender roles. Thus, the 1999 Labor Code provides special protection for pregnant women and young mothers with a child under the age of 3, but prohibits all women from work places with difficult or potentially harmful labor conditions.³ This clause restricts access for women to certain positions in some profitable industries, such as oil and gas production—Azerbaijan's most lucrative industry.

Moreover, the law on "Guarantees of Gender (Men and Women) Equality" enacted in October 2006 seeks to eliminate "gender-based discrimination" while also containing clearly discriminatory provisions that take into account the "special nature of women", including different ages for marriage and retirement for men and women; military service exclusively for men, as well as different punishment sentences and imprisonment regimes for men and women. The most important provision of the law is that it bans sexual harassment at the workplace and makes possible the prosecution of the abuser as well as any employer who attempts to conceal sexual harassment in the workplace. However, there have been no court trials related to sexual harassment in the workplace to date.

The most recent positive development in Azerbaijan is the adoption of the Law on Domestic Violence in October 2010. Unfortunately, the SCFWCA popularizes this law in the regions under the banner of "strengthening domestic culture" and traditional family values, and not within the gender equality framework.

These shortcomings and inadequacies in the implementation of international commitments on gender mainstreaming in Azerbaijan indicate that the state so far has failed to formulate a clear and sustainable policy that would address the disempowerment of women. It continues to operate within the framework of a traditional patriarchal ideology that maintains that a woman's primary role is with family and children, as indicated in the name of the State Committee on Family, Women and Children Affairs.

Civil Society's Response

It is difficult to estimate the number of women's organizations and groups in Azerbaijan, especially since many have problems gaining state registration. Nevertheless, some unregistered groups are actively implementing projects, whereas some of the registered NGOs have suspended their activities for various reasons. The directory of the national gender portal (www.gender-az.org) provides a list of activities carried out by 124 women's organizations and includes a list of 69 other NGOs who were involved in the implementation of projects related to women's issues⁴. A data base of the gender focal point in Azerbaijan released in 2007 by the OSCE has a list of 64 women's organizations and 76 other organizations involved in projects concerning gender equality⁵. A 2009 NGO Sustainability Index produced with support from USAID suggests that the total number of registered NGOs in Azerbaijan varies from 2,600 to 3,220⁶, which means that the ratio of women's NGOs is relatively small and many of them are not active for various reasons.

At the same time, two main factors limit the ability of civil society organizations to adequately push for the implementation of the Azerbaijani state's policy towards women. First, the independence of NGOs, including women's organizations, continues to be a problem since many of them have direct links to the state or were established by people working for state institutions. Some of the NGOs have joint projects with the state or are recipients of the state grants. Second, some of the women's groups have a limited understanding of the gender equality principles or declare an adherence to the traditional family values as part of their agenda.

Reports produced by some international organizations suggest that the SCFWCA has recently become more open for cooperation with NGOs. Some NGOs are more involved in discussing the committee's plans and legal initiatives, and committee members sometimes attend different NGO events. However, meetings organized by the committee are usually restricted to a limited number of invitees and the criteria for their selection are not transparent.

3 Labour Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Available at: http://www.gender-az.org/index_en.shtml?id_doc=100 (last accessed October 11, 2009).

4 Azerbaijan Gender Information Center's Directory of women's NGOs and NGOs implementing projects on gender issues can be accessed here: http://www.gender-az.org/index.shtml?id_main=27&id_sub=55 (Last accessed November 26, 2010).

5 Data base of Gender Focal Points in Azerbaijan, last updated October 2007, can be accessed at http://www.osce.org/documents/html/pdf/tohtml/29493_en.pdf.html (Last accessed November 26th, 2010).

6 2009 USAID NGO Sustainability Index—Issued on July 2010, can be accessed at www.usaid.gov/locations/europe_eurasia/dem_gov/ngoindex/2009/azerbaijan.pdf (Last accessed November 26, 2010).

Still there are women's groups who tend to challenge certain aspects of the state policy through the use of international advocacy platforms. The most recent example is the active involvement of Azerbaijani women's NGOs during the 44th session of the UN's CEDAW in July 2009. These NGOs (one international and five local) submitted as many as six alternative reports in response to a government report on the progress of the implementation of CEDAW obligations in Azerbaijan. The reports tackled various issues of gender inequality ranging from problems in the labor market to the rights of internally displaced women, and from early marriage to women's inclusion in decision making. The most interesting aspects of these reports were that two of them touched upon issues regarding marginal women's groups that are often neglected in the current state policy on women's issues: homosexual, bisexual, or transsexual women, women sex workers and women drug users.

According to the coordinator of the women's program in the Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) organization Gender and Development Nigyar Nagiyeva, the government approach towards homosexual women is similar to the "don't ask, don't tell" principle where people are not encouraged to disclose their identity or to advocate for their rights. Thus, this organization was not openly registered within the Ministry of Justice as a LGBT organization, but under the general umbrella of gender equality issues. Although homosexuality was officially decriminalized in 2000, there are no official documents to date that would recognize the existence of discrimination based on sexual identity even though it is widespread in Azerbaijan, especially in the labor market.

At the same time, the major problem of women's organizations and NGOs across the country is lack of the trust in them among ordinary women. Women in Azerbaijan are not likely to perceive women's organizations as representatives of their interests or as women's rights advocates. This failure can also be attributed to poor outreach activities among the NGOs that are mostly located in the capital and limit the scope of their activities to large cities. Thus, according to the report "Gender Mainstreaming: The Role of Civil Society. Results of Monitoring the National Gender Mechanism" published in August 2010 by the Public Union for Gender Equality and Women's Initiatives, only 10.4% of women think they would appeal to NGOs if their rights were violated⁷.

Conclusion

Legal and policy documents in Azerbaijan continue to incorporate certain norms and provisions that contradict the country's international obligations to the principles of gender equality. The state's approach to women's issues is limited. It concerns women with family responsibilities and does not include women from other vulnerable groups. Some women's groups try to address these issues; however, they often need the support of international institutions in order to be heard by the government. The lack of a coordinated and organized response from women's groups hinders their ability to gain the trust of ordinary women whose interests and issues are not yet publicly defined or debated.

About the Author:

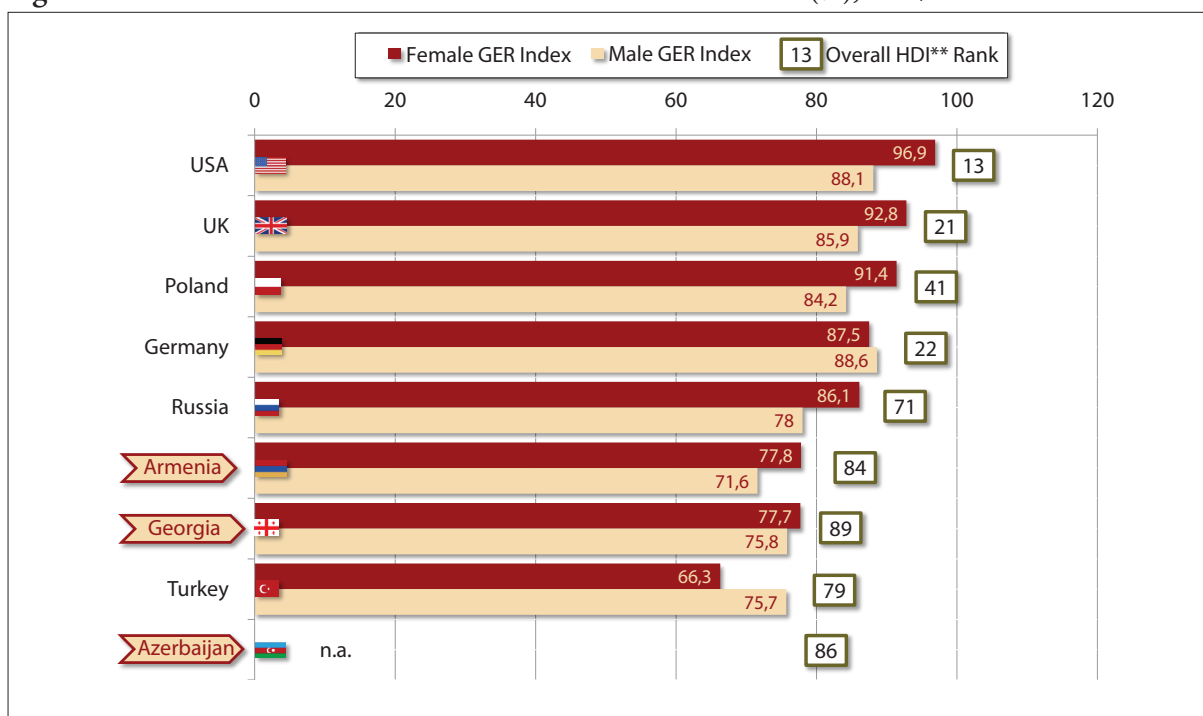
Yuliya Aliyeva Gureyeva is Program Manager at the Caucasus Research and Resource Center, Azerbaijan. She has been participating in various research projects mainly related to gender studies since 2003.

7 "Gender Mainstreaming: The Role of Civil Society. Results of Monitoring the National Gender Mechanism" report by the Public Union for Gender Equality and Women's Initiatives, Baku, August 2010, paper copy.

STATISTICS

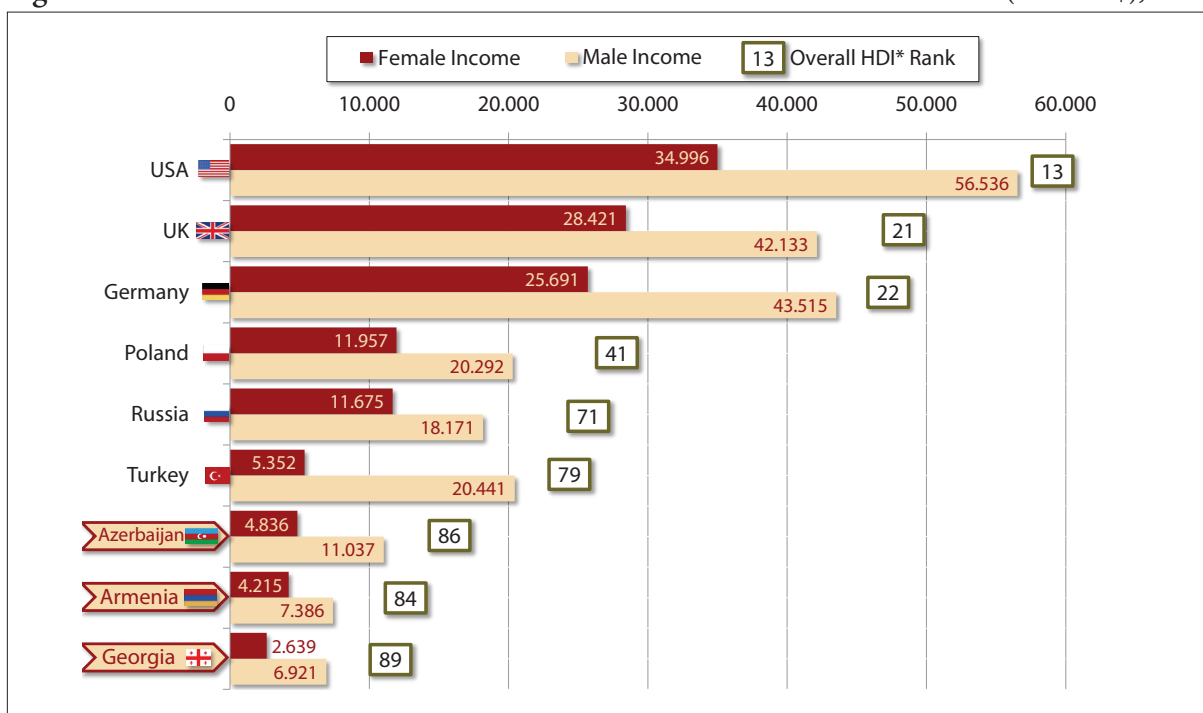
UNDP Indicators for Gender

Figure 1: Female Vs. Male Combined Gross Enrolment Ratio* (%), 2007

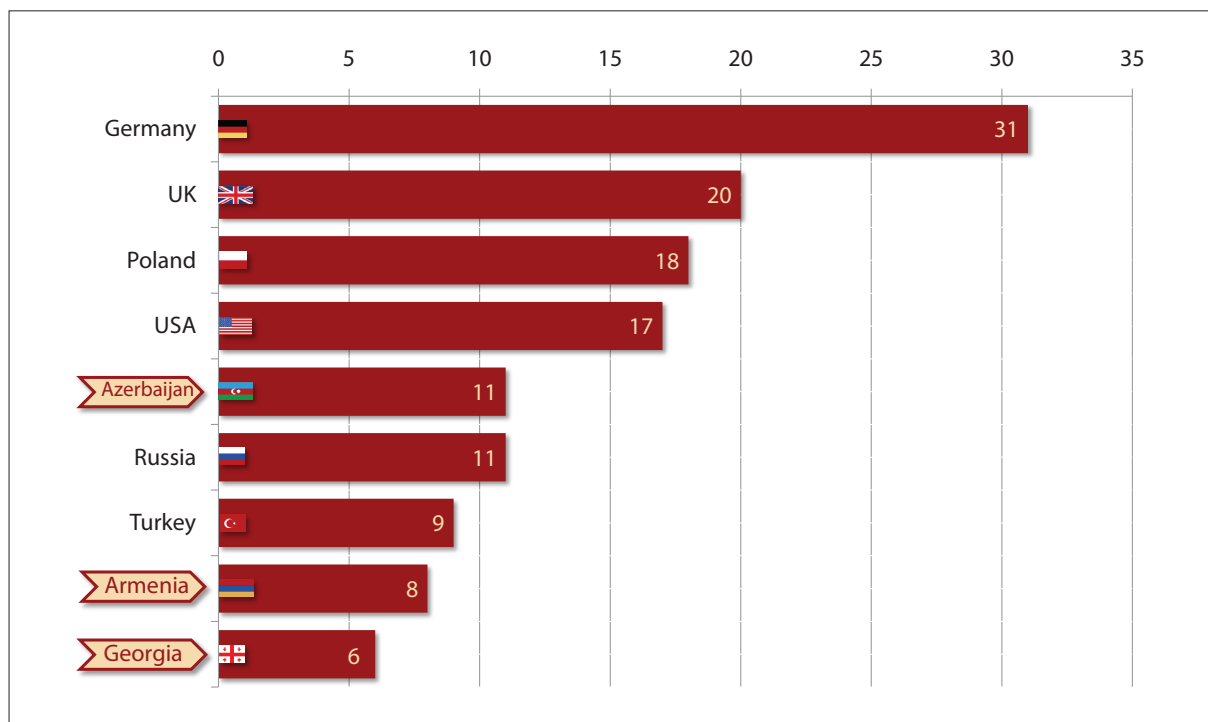


* The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) is the enrolments (of all ages) in primary, secondary and tertiary education; ** HDI: Human Development Index; source: Human Development Report 2009, <http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/indicators/>

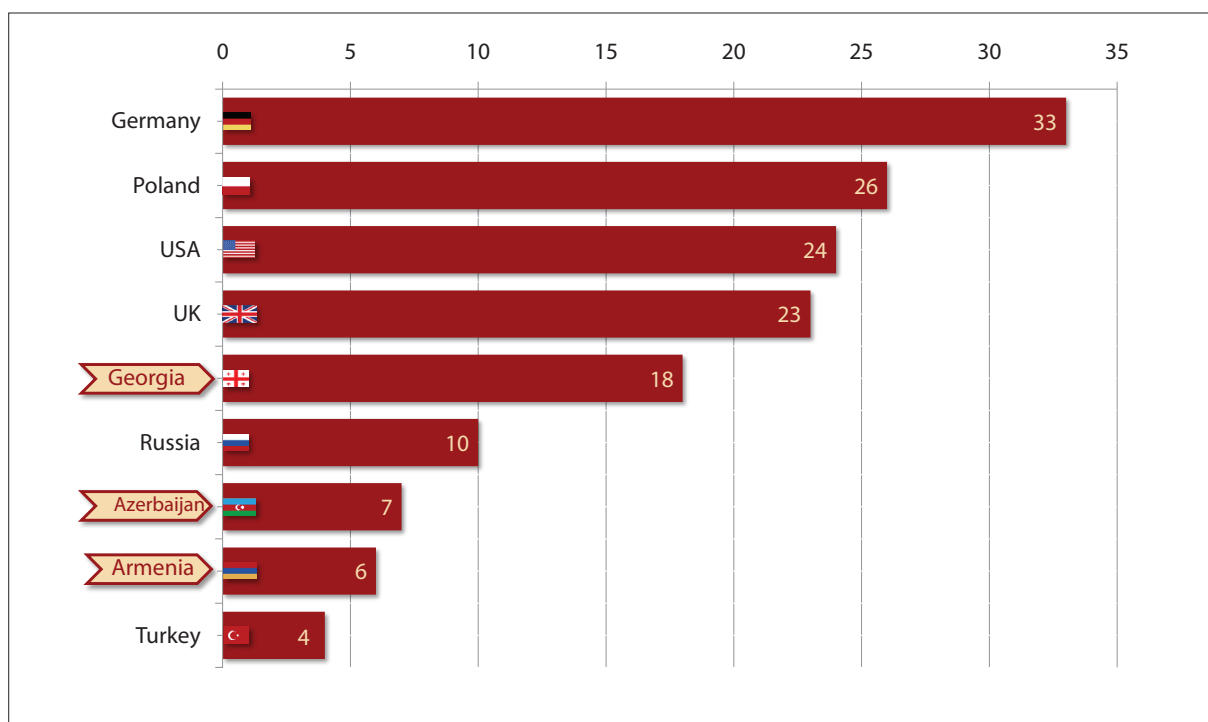
Figure 2: Female Estimated Earned Income Vs. Male Estimated Earned Income (PPP US\$), 2007



* HDI: Human Development Index; source: Human Development Report 2009, <http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/indicators/>

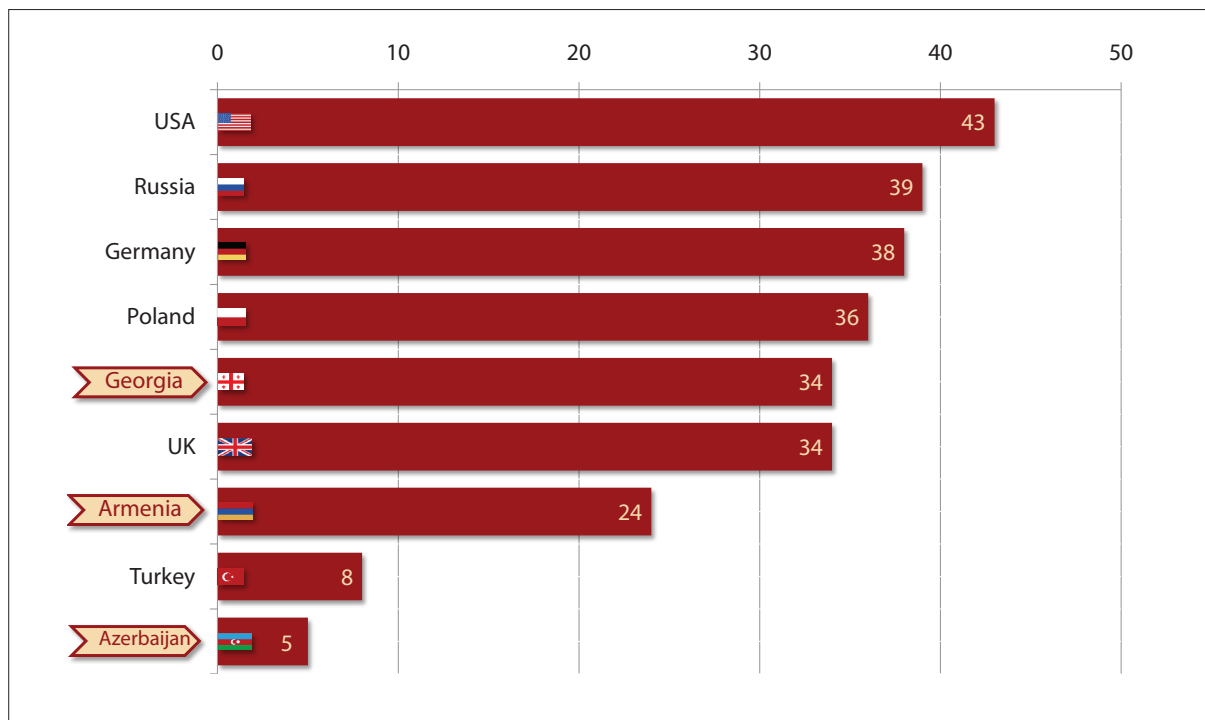
Figure 3: Seats in Parliament (% held by women), 2008

Source: Human Development Report 2009, <http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/indicators/>

Figure 4: Women in Ministerial Positions (% of positions), 2008

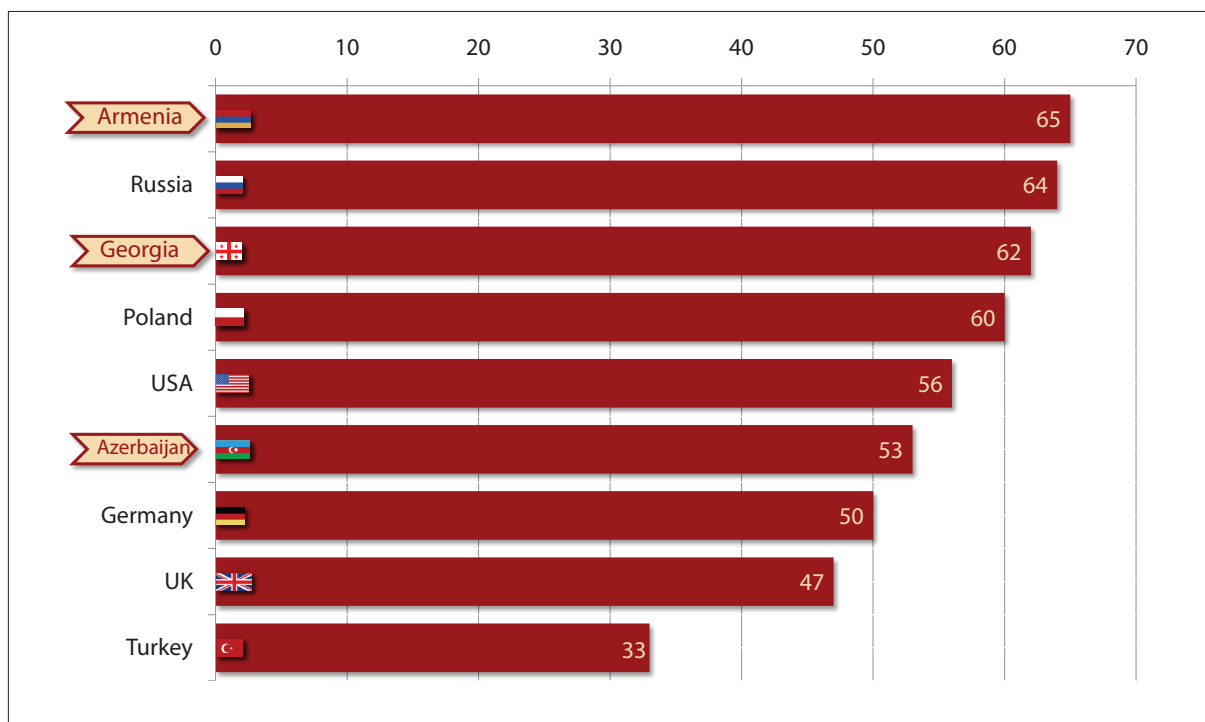
Source: Human Development Report 2009, <http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/indicators/>

Figure 5: Legislators, Senior Officials and Managers (% female), 1999–2007



Source: Human Development Report 2009, <http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/indicators/>

Figure 6: Professional and Technical Workers (% female), 1999–2007



Source: Human Development Report 2009, <http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/indicators/>

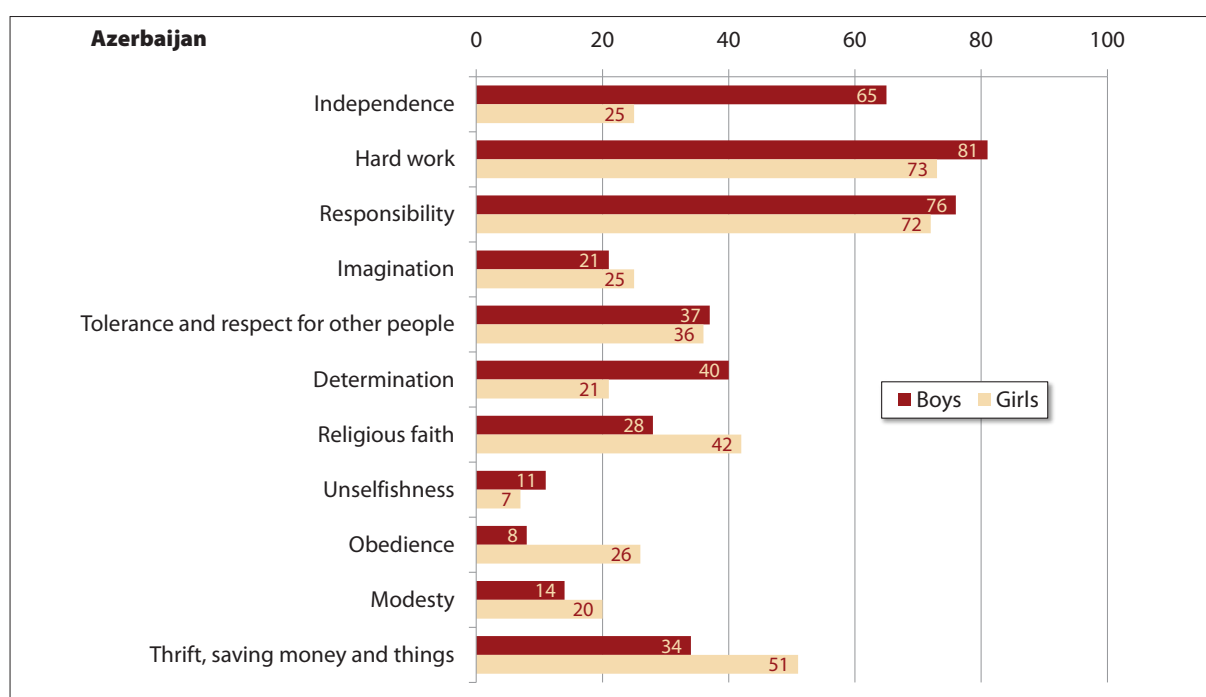
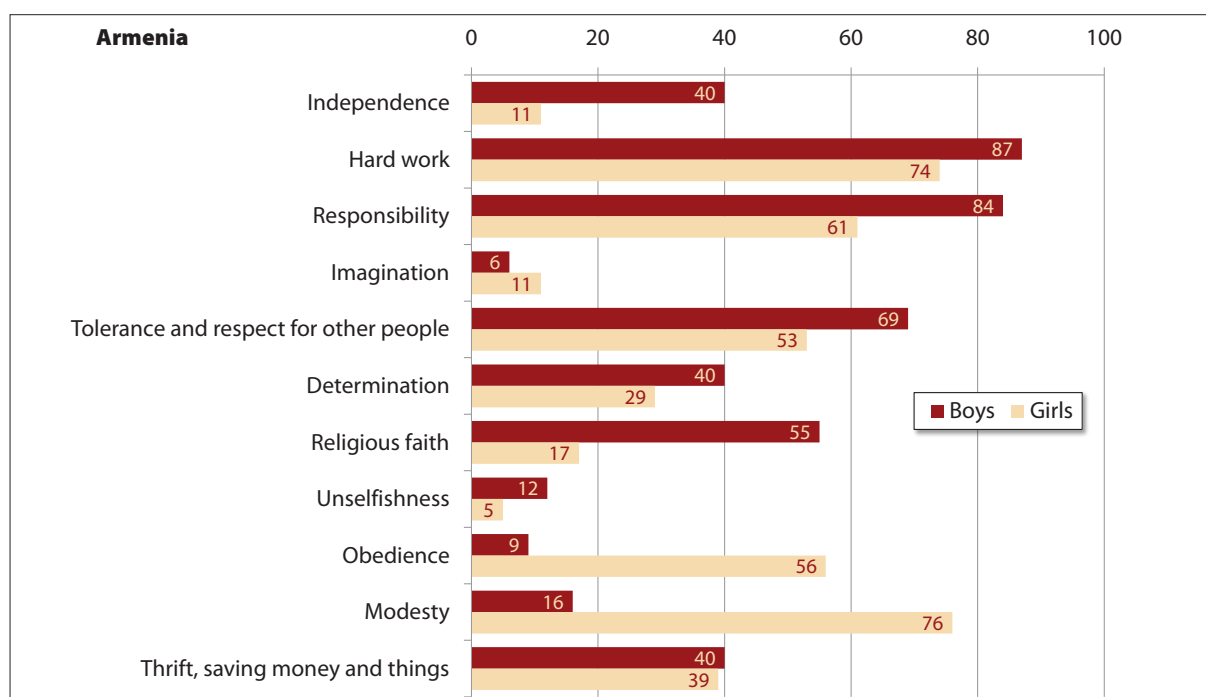
Compiled by Ksenia Pacheco

OPINION POLL

“Sugar and Spice ...”

Gender Stereotypes and Parenting in the South Caucasus Countries

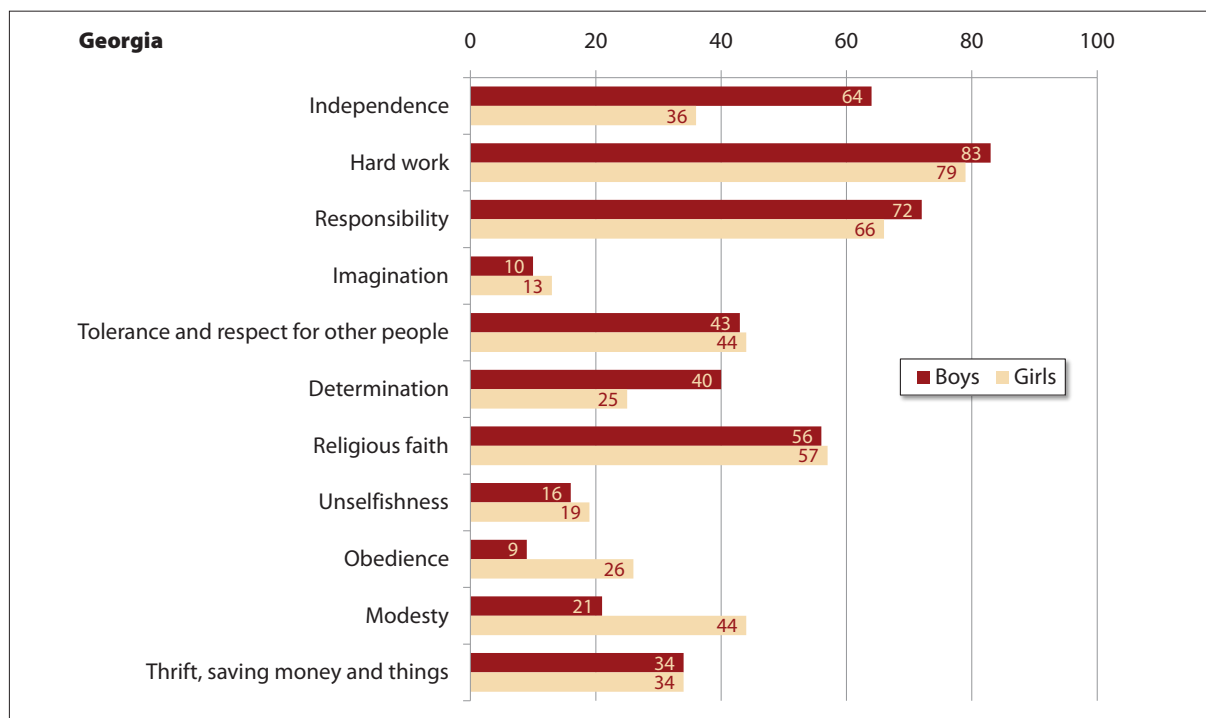
Qualities That Should Be Encouraged In Boys And Girls*



* Only positive answers

Source: Caucasus Barometer 2007, Caucasus Research Resource Centers

Qualities That Should Be Encouraged In Boys And Girls*



* Only positive answers

Source: Caucasus Barometer 2007, Caucasus Research Resource Centers

Qualities That Should Be Encouraged In Boys And Girls*

		Independence	Hard work	Responsibility	Imagination	Tolerance and respect for other people	Determination
Armenia:	Boys	40	87	84	6	69	40
	Girls	11	74	61	11	53	29
Azerbaijan:	Boys	65	81	76	21	37	40
	Girls	25	73	72	25	36	21
Georgia:	Boys	64	83	72	10	43	40
	Girls	36	79	66	13	44	25

		Religious faith	Unselfishness	Obedience	Modesty	Thrift, saving money and things
Armenia:	Boys	55	12	9	16	40
	Girls	17	5	56	76	39
Azerbaijan:	Boys	28	11	8	14	34
	Girls	42	7	26	20	51
Georgia:	Boys	56	16	9	21	34
	Girls	57	19	26	44	34

* Only positive answers

Source: Caucasus Barometer 2007, Caucasus Research Resource Centers

CHRONICLE

From 4 October to 25 November 2010

4 October 2010	Georgian Foreign Minister Grigol Vashadze visits Armenia
5 October 2010	An Armenian man detained in Azerbaijan in September in unclear circumstances is found dead in his prison cell
7 October 2010	Armenian Foreign Minister Eduard Nalbandian publicly accuses the Azerbaijani authorities of killing an Armenian man found dead in custody in Azerbaijan
8 October 2010	One man is killed and two others wounded in an attack on a mosque in Gudauta in the breakaway region of Abkhazia
11 October 2010	Iranian Defense Minister Ahmad Vahidi visits Baku to discuss bilateral military cooperation between Iran and Azerbaijan and regional security
12 October 2010	Iranian parliament speaker Ali Larijani praises deepening relations between Armenia and Iran during an official visit to Yerevan
13 October 2010	Abkhaz leader Sergey Bagapsh says in an interview with the Russian newspaper Kommersant that Russian state oil company Rosneft will soon start exploration off Abkhazia's Black Sea coast
14 October 2010	The Russian Foreign Ministry says in a statement that Georgia's decision to introduce visa-free rules for Russian citizens residing in the North Caucasus republics is a "provocation"
15 October 2010	A new constitution which will reduce the powers of the President in favor of the Prime Minister is adopted by the Georgian Parliament
18 October 2010	Russian troops withdraw from the village of Perevi at the administrative border between Georgia and the breakaway region of South Ossetia
18 October 2010	Armenian officials in Yerevan deny allegations made by opposition media that Armenian President Serzh Sarkisian entertained close relations with the ringleader of an Armenian–American crime syndicate and "vor v zakone" (thief in law) Armen Kazarian
22 October 2010	Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov accuses Tbilisi of helping Chechen militants
23 October 2010	Opposition leaders from the election bloc Azerbaijan's Popular Front/Musavat refuse to meet with a delegation of election observers from the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) prior to the November parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan and accuse long-term observers from PACE of not being objective in their previous assessments of elections.
24 October 2010	Georgian Prime Minister Nika Gilauri visits China
24 October 2010	Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili participates in the Francophone Summit in Montreux, Switzerland
25 October 2010	Georgian Minister for Reintegration Temur Yakobashvili rejects as "without foundation" the claims of Chechen Republic head Ramzan Kadyrov's that Georgia is providing a safe haven for Chechen militants
27 October 2010	Russian President Dmitry Medvedev hosts Armenian President Serzh Sarkisian and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev for peace talks on the disputed region of Nagorno Karabakh in the southern Russian city of Astrakhan.
29 October 2010	The Azerbaijani opposition says that the ruling authorities are preparing to falsify the November parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan
2 November 2010	The Georgian air company Georgian Airways launches Tbilisi–Tehran direct flights
3 November 2010	Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki signs a visa-free travel arrangement between Georgia and Iran with Georgian Foreign Minister Grigol Vashadze on an official visit to Georgia
3 November 2010	Ukrainian Defense Minister Mykhailo Yezhel visits Georgia
5 November 2010	A group of 13 alleged spies suspected of spying for Russia are arrested in Georgia
7 November 2010	The ruling Yeni Azerbaijan (New Azerbaijan) Party wins a majority during the parliamentary elections held in Azerbaijan
8 November 2010	The Georgian Interior Ministry says that two Armenians have pleaded guilty on trying to smuggle uranium into Georgia

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9 November 2010	The passing of a constitutional amendment to make a referendum binding in case the government wants to increase taxes is delayed in Georgia
9 November 2010	Two deputy ministers of health are dismissed on corruption charges in Armenia
11 November 2010	More than 100 workers in two chemical enterprises protest to demand the payment of their unpaid wages in Armenia's capital Yerevan
11 November 2010	Georgian former foreign minister and leader of the opposition party Georgia's Way Salome Zourabichvili announces that she will temporary quit politics
16 November 2010	Head of the State Committee on Nuclear Safety Ashot Martirosian denies that the uranium seized by the Georgian authorities from two Armenian citizens was stolen from the Metsamor nuclear power plant in Armenia.
16 November 2010	The Armenian parliament passes a bill to raise the minimum monthly wage in Armenia to 32,500 drams (90 US dollars) starting in January.
17 November 2010	Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili meets with European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso in Brussels
18 November 2010	Armenian Prime Minister Tigran Sarkisian praises the "radical" reform proposals received from the agriculture, finance, education, and health ministers in response to his criticism of corruption and his request to dismiss high-level officials on corruption and mismanagement charges in these ministries.
19 November 2010	Armenian President Serzh Sarkisian announces that he will boycott the NATO summit in Lisbon because of the plan to adopt a draft resolution during the summit calling for solutions to the ethnic conflicts in the South Caucasus based only on the principle of territorial integrity warning that the wording of the resolution would complicate efforts to resolve the Nagorno Karabakh conflict with Azerbaijan.
20 November 2010	Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili meets with U.S. President Barack Obama on the sidelines of the NATO summit in Lisbon to discuss the strategic partnership between the United States and Georgia, the U.S. reset policy with Russia and Georgia's NATO aspirations.
20 November 2010	The final declaration of the NATO Lisbon summit reiterates the decision taken at the NATO Bucharest summit in 2008 that Georgia will become a member of the alliance in the future.
22 November 2010	The EU's Special Representative for the South Caucasus Peter Semneby welcomes the release from custody of the two Azerbaijani bloggers Emin Milli and Adnan Hajizada.
23 November 2010	Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili calls for a direct dialogue with Russia during a speech at the European Parliament and declares that Georgia will not resort to force.
24 November 2010	Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili meets with Moldovan acting President Mihai Ghimpu during a two-day visit in Moldova.
25 November 2010	The EU's high representative for foreign affairs and security policy Catherine Ashton welcomes Georgia's non-use of force pledge.

ABOUT THE RUSSIAN ANALYTICAL DIGEST

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