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Markets 4 Meghri

Inception phase

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Gender Equality Report

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Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to address the issue of gender equality in Meghri region. The following document analyses the subject in five sections: Education, Workload and Salary, Expenditures, Mobility and Political Assets. This survey has been conducted in the two towns and eleven villages of Meghri sub-region. 180 persons have been interviewed, 50% men and 50% women, as described in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic Information on Meghri Communities

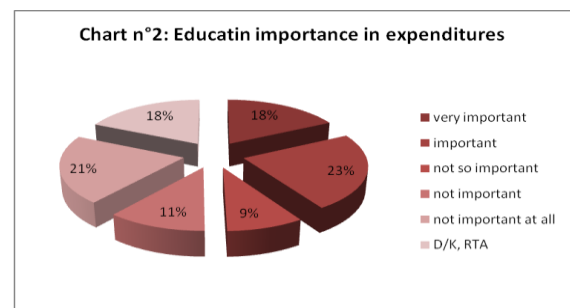
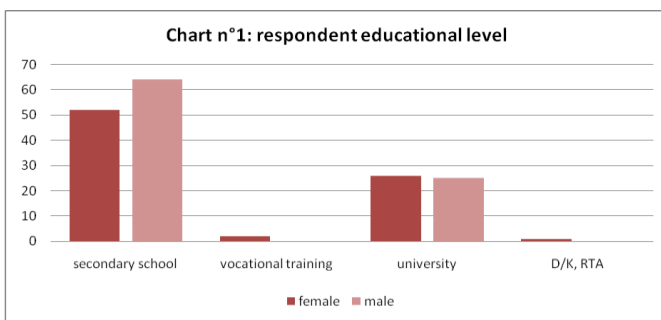
No	Communities	No of households per community	Population per community	No of men	No of women	No of men surveyed	No of women surveyed
1	Agarak	1 218	4 800	2246	2554	15	15
2	Meghri	1200	5 100	2404	2696	15	15
3	Lehvaz	178	609	295	314	8	8
4	Vardanidzor	127	360	164	196	8	8
5	Alvanq	152	453	232	221	8	8
6	Shvanidzor	103	303	159	144	8	8
7	Kartchevan	94	402	190	212	5	5
8	Litchq	65	187	85	102	5	5
9	Nrnadzor	45	175	90	85	3	3
10	Kouris	42	83	37	46	3	3
11	Tashtun	42	132	85	47	3	3
12	Vahravar	32	64	34	30	3	3
13	Goudemnis	27	43	18	25	3	3
		3 325	12 711	6 039	6 672	87	87

This survey has not revealed major imbalances between men and women regarding the purpose of the Project M4M – Markets for Meghri. However, we will see that at some point, involvement of women in the horticulture business will necessitate specific attention.

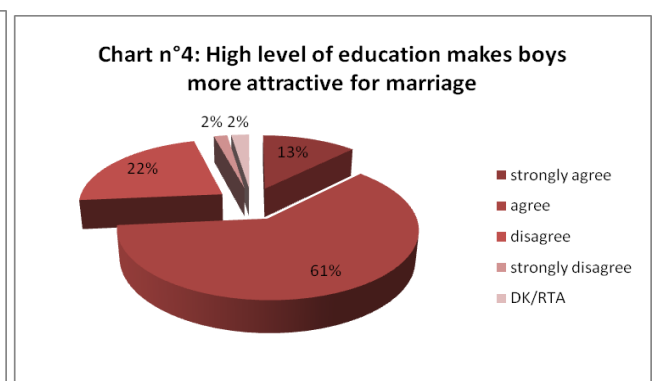
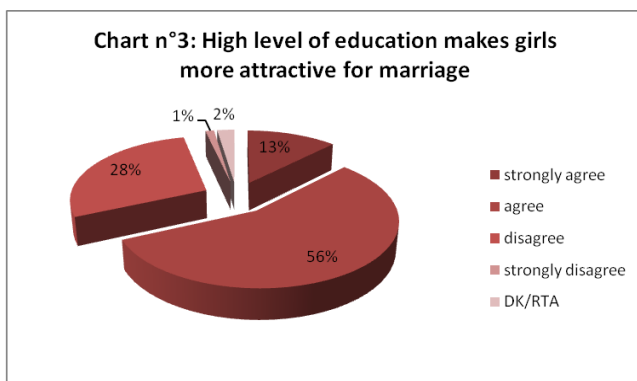
1. EDUCATION

As figures in the chart n°1 confirm, men and women have the same access to high education. The problem of access to high education is more a financial one rather than a gender related.

This is confirmed by the fact that adults would like to re-start their studies, apply for vocational or find an internship if they had the money. Indeed, in response to those questions about the direction of expenditures in case of an increased household income, 40% of respondents consider education as a very important or important direction (chart n°2). In response to giving details of their possible expenditures, 22% of respondents answered they would like to continue their studies (17% of women and 26% of men). Results also show that almost 50% of respondents would invest their extra money in university education for their children.



Moreover, it is observable that 69% (chart n°3: 13 + 56 = 69) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that high level of education makes girls attractive for marriage; the same for boys according to the 74% (chart n°4: 13 + 61 = 74) of respondents.



Of course, it is possible to imagine that the social context would promote such a thing – it is better to marry someone with a high level of education so that the person will be able to make a good impression in public. However, both male and female respondents agreed that women should not stop their study and/or job to devote themselves to family life (see the charts n°5 and 6).

Chart n°5: After getting married a woman must stop her studies to devote herself to her family life

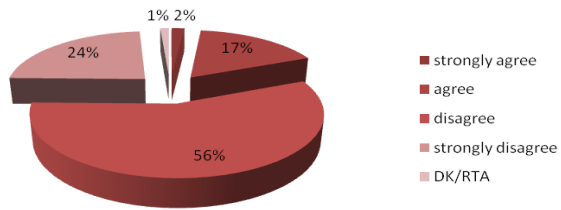
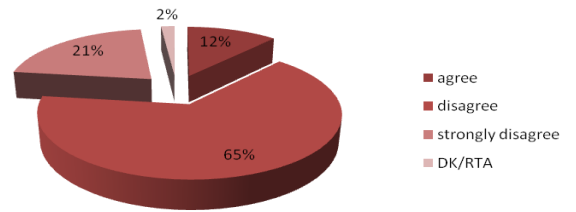


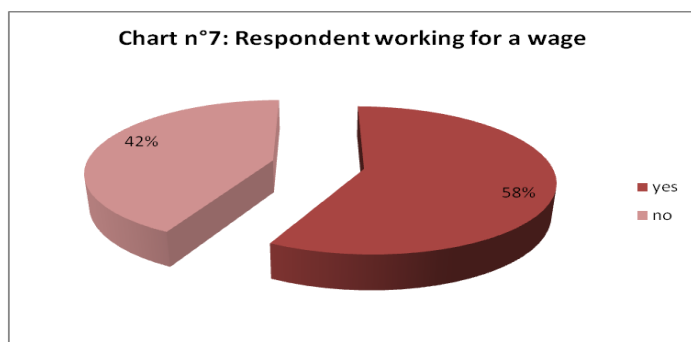
Chart n°6: If a woman is studying or working, she should stop her activity to raise her children



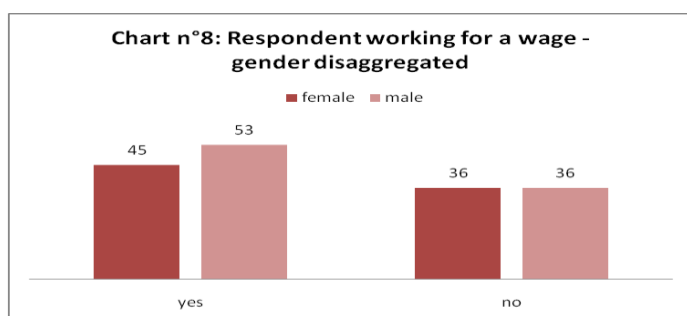
Bad access to higher education is linked to the lack of opportunities.

2. WORKLOAD AND SALARY

It could be stated that there is no major problem in terms of employment equality. The region is suffering from lack of opportunities and the unemployment rate is quite high – according to the national statistics, the unemployment rate in the country is 7%¹, while the results of the survey show that 42% of respondents do not work for wages (Chart n°7).

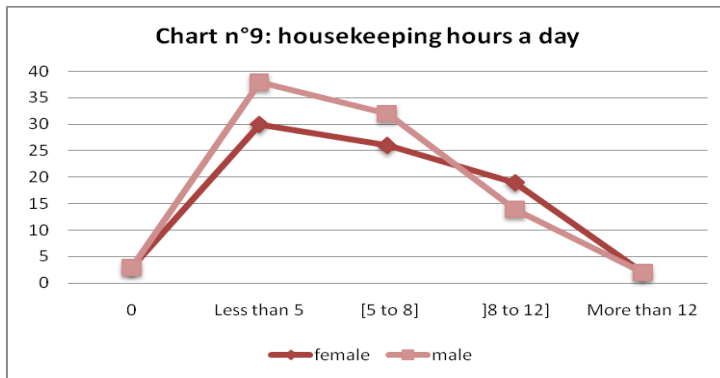


It is worth mentioning that none of these findings show difference between men and women. Among the respondents of this study, 44% of women and 40% of men do not receive salary. Men are mainly employed in the factory and women in administration.

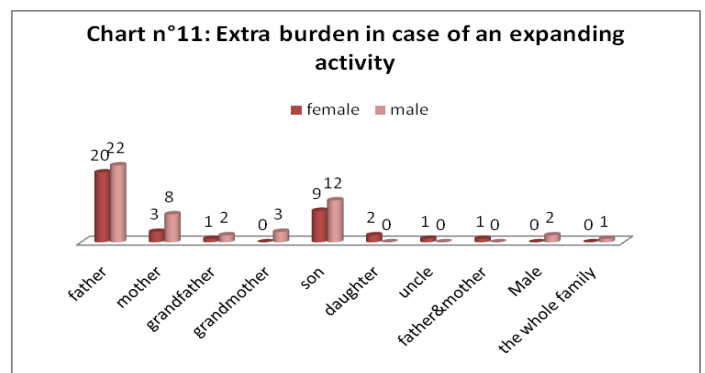
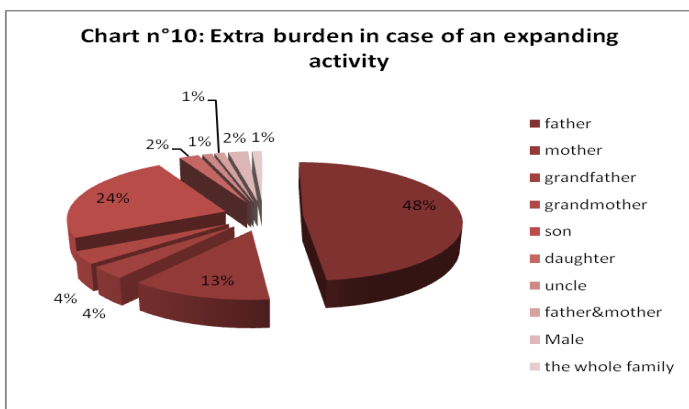


It is also observable that the average hours spent in housekeeping duties per day are almost equal for men and women (see chart n°9).

¹ Figure of 2008 according to an estimation of 2007, from the web site: index mundi : http://www.indexmundi.com/fr/armenie/taux_de_chomage.html



Concerning the changes in women’s workload, survey results show that it should not change significantly even if an expansion of farming activity would require more work. The charts n° 11 shows that almost 50% of respondents consider that the father should be the one carrying this extra burden. Overall, almost 80% of the respondents think that this extra burden should be put on males (father, grandfather, son, uncle, male members of the family). Once more men and women answers are not significantly different (Chart n°10).

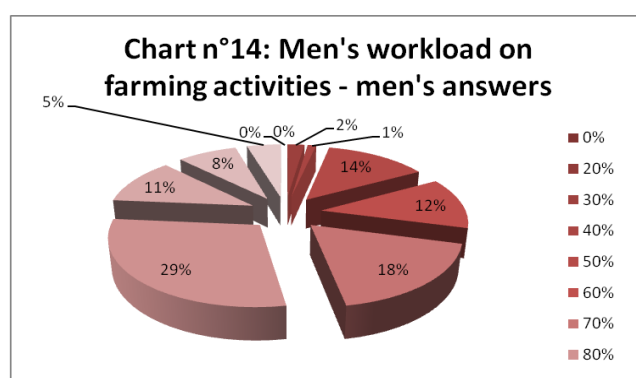
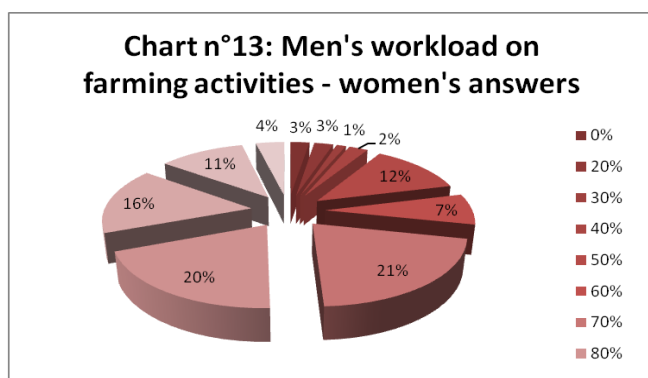
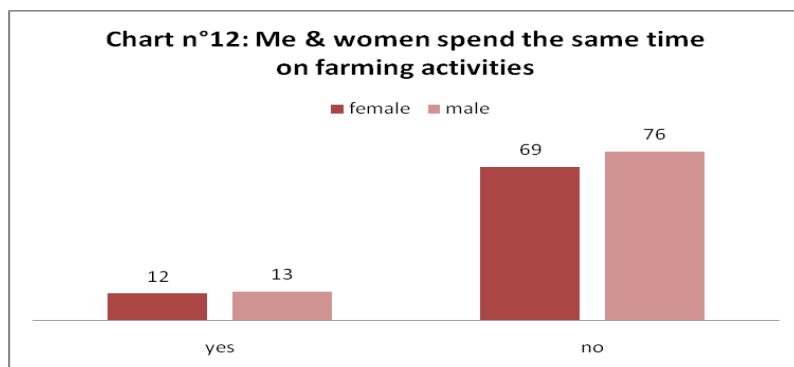


These figures show that women would not like to be part of the farming activities as they are now. However, we can imagine that because they expressed a wish to restart and/or continue their studies they could be interested in administrative activities linked with the farming business of the household (accountancy, income management, etc.). This might be discussed with Meghri Women Resource centre, which offers free vocational training for women from villages.

Nevertheless, it is important to take into consideration that women’s work is undervalued compared with men’s work. According to independent observations, some examples show that it is not a problem to interrupt a woman working in order to interview her but men cannot be interrupted. This is an observation made in Meghri during a series of interviews led by an Armenian woman.

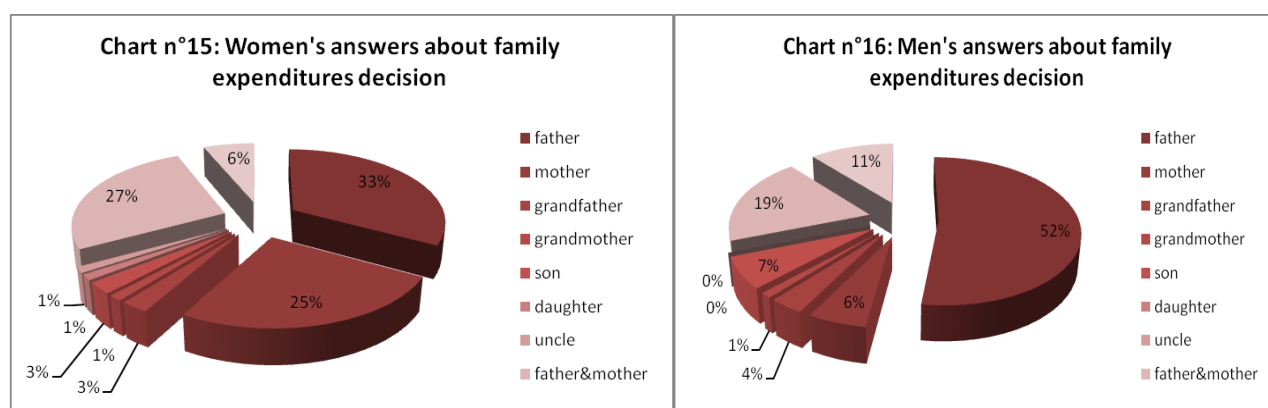
Another observation can be underlined regarding the way people consider farming work (without wage) and housekeeping duty. Both women and men agree that they do not spend equal time on farming activities (chart n°12) and consider that men do more than 70% of the farming work (charts

n°13 and 14); however, this figure does not include all the processing tasks, which means that women’s work might be undervalued. Therefore, a man working in his farm without earning any wage will consider himself and be considered by the others as a farm worker and he will fill-in the box regarding occupation. However, a woman working at home, processing all the products from the farm will be considered as unemployed.



3. EXPENDITURES

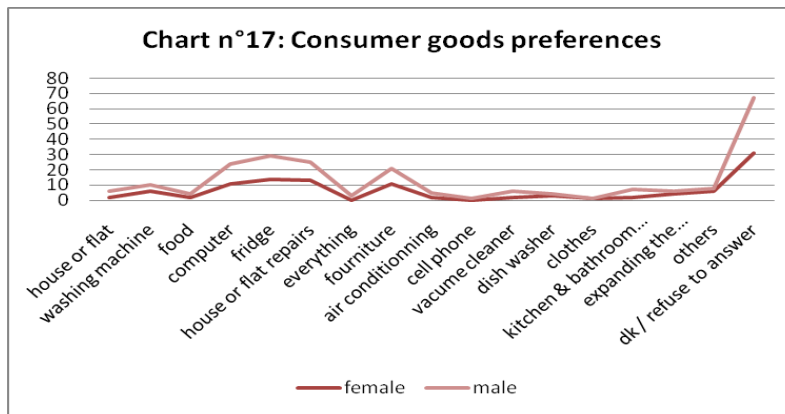
According to the survey, fathers of Meghri region are the main breadwinners of the households, but the difference is not significant: 60% of men are earning a wage or salary while for women the rate is 56% (chart n°8). However, men are apparently not making all the decisions in terms of expenditures. The figures actually show that according to men, they are themselves the decision makers – 53% of the male respondents think that they are the decision makers, 93% of them think males of the family are involved in taking the decision (this figure include fathers', grandfathers', sons', uncles' and couple's decision). According to 60% of women, women (mothers, grandmothers, daughters, parents, adults) are involved in the household expenditures' decision-making. [See charts n° 15 and 16]



Observations show that social control² exerted over the whole population can lead to the kind of answers found out. Men's embarrassment of questions about private life or opinion on the household situation is commonly observable. In addition, if they are with other males it usually happens so that being in a group they will give almost the same answers. Hence, the suggestion of giving more credit to women's answers seems to be preferable.

Moreover, female respondents are not suggesting being the only one to take the decision: 33% of them think the father is making the decision, 25% think about themselves and 33% declare they are making the household expenditures decision with their husband or the other adults of the household (figures on chart n°15). This balanced point of view leads to think they are more trustworthy. In addition, one should not ignore the fact that traditionally, in most of the societies, women are the keepers of the household and manage the expenditures, the children, etc.

² **Social control** refers generally to societal and political mechanisms or processes that regulate individual and group behaviour, leading to [conformity](#) and compliance to the rules of a given [society](#), [state](#), or [social group](#).

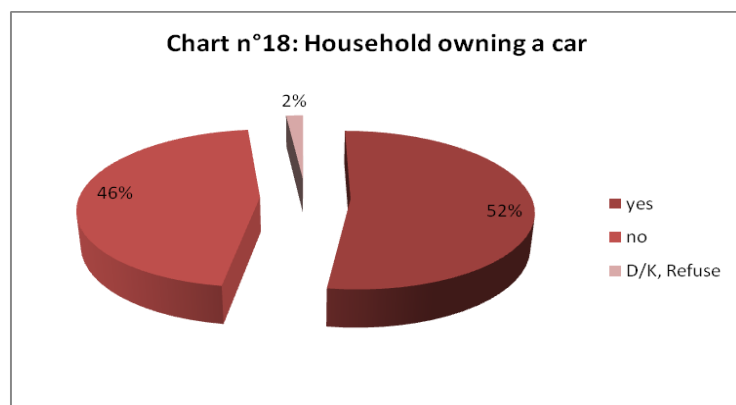


Furthermore, regarding answers from both men and women respondents, if the household income becomes more, the orientations that expenditures will take are the same (see chart n°17), which leads to think that they would agree in terms of expenditures for the household.

Despite this analysis that shows no real problem in the household expenditures' decision making, it would be wrong not to mention the fact that once more, social control and informal talks between men probably exclude women from certain decision.

4. MOBILITY

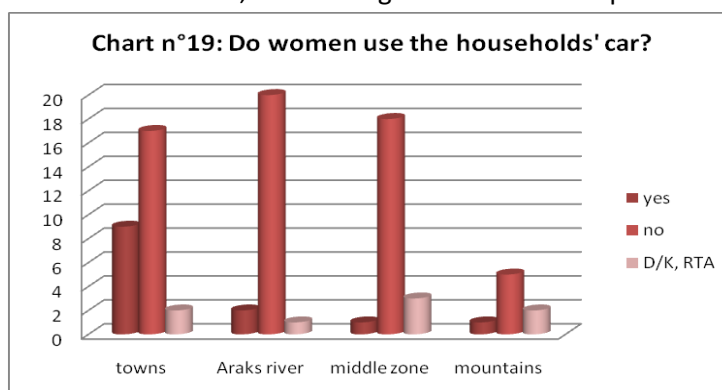
52% of the household interviewed, own a car (chart n°18). However, women, except from rare cases, do not drive. The rare exceptions concerned 13 women out of 81 – among them 9 come from the two towns (Meghri and Agarak)³.



In rural areas, the lack of mobility influences women even more, considering the conditions of public transportation. Indeed, if in towns most of the respondents think that there is no lack of public transportation, in rural areas both men and women agree there is one, though, according to the results, men feel this lack in a smaller proportion.

Women have limited access to mobility,

which, in these isolated areas, means that they are not going out of the village often. According to observations, Armenia is a country where a woman driving is not a well-accepted phenomenon. The Syunik region is not an exception and only a great change in mentalities could make a difference. The M4M – Markets for Meghri project does not aim at this, although a special attention should be paid to this. Indeed, if men have to move more because or thanks to the project, then women, as they are mainly dependent of their husband, should not suffer from their absence and still be able to move. There could be a break in women's involvement in agricultural business if they are not able to go to market place for instance.



³ See chart n°19.

In addition, men talked a lot about investing in agro-machinery as a direction their expenditures might take with higher income. Again, these investment made should not exclude women.

5. POLITICAL ASSETS

Political power

Below are the excerpts of provisions from the Constitution of the Republic which have a major impact on the general population of the country. And relevant implications are eligible also for Meghri population.

- The people exercise their power through free elections and referenda, as well as through state and local self-governing bodies and public officials as provided by the Constitution.
- The multiparty system is recognized in the Republic of Armenia. Parties are formed freely and promote the formulation and expression of the political will of the people.
- The right to property is recognized and protected in the Republic of Armenia.
- The state shall ensure the protection and reproduction of the environment and the rational utilization of natural resources.
- Citizens, regardless of national origin, race, sex, language, creed, political or other persuasion, social origin, wealth or other status, are entitled to all the rights and freedoms, and subject to the duties determined by the Constitution and the laws.
- Every citizen is entitled to social security during old age, disability, sickness, loss of an income earner, unemployment and in other cases prescribed by law.
- Everyone is entitled to the preservation of health. The provision of medical care and services shall be prescribed by law.
- Every citizen is entitled to education. Education shall be free of charge in state secondary educational institutions. Every citizen is entitled to receive higher and other specialized education free of charge and on a competitive basis, in state educational institutions. The establishment and operation of private educational institutions shall be prescribed by law.

At a national level, women in Armenia are underrepresented in terms of seats in the official institutions, in 2008 only 5,3% of parliament representative were women (7 out of 131). According to the Global Gender Gap Report, the results are similar for women in ministerial positions. Armenia has never known a female head of state. According to observations made by the OSCE in the Syunik region, “women (...) recognized politics as a men’s world” this report also states that “the patriarchal structure in politics and business, where the male networks hampered women from relevant

knowledge and contacts, was a continuous source of complaints.” However, if we look at the statistics of the Meghri sub-region we could see quite a balanced situation. In the chart n°20 and table n°2 one can notice that there is no major inequality in men and women employment in the local governance sector. Actually, there are more women employees than men. However, according to the same database, women are not employed at managerial positions; it is very difficult to know how their advice is taken into account.

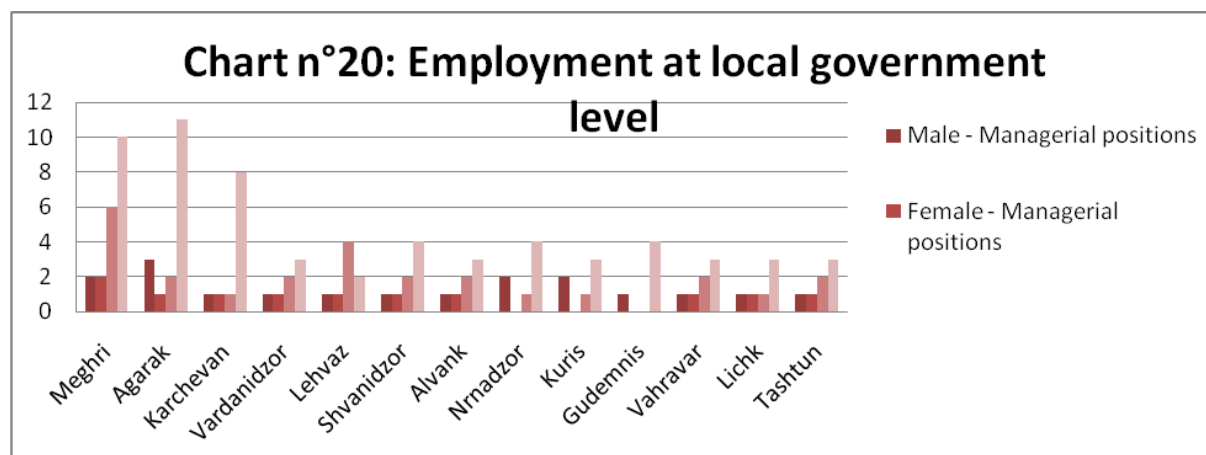


Table 2: Employment data

Community	No. of employees	Male		Female		Managerial positions		Non-managerial positions	
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Meghri	20	8	12	4	2	2	16	6	10
Agarak	17	12	5	4	3	1	13	2	11
Karchevan	11	2	9	2	1	1	9	1	8
Vardanidzor	7	3	4	2	1	1	5	2	3
Lehvaz	8	5	3	2	1	1	6	4	2
Shvanidzor	8	3	5	2	1	1	6	2	4
Alvank	7	3	4	2	1	1	5	2	3
Nrnadzor	7	3	4	2	2	0	5	1	4
Kuris	6	3	3	2	2	0	4	1	3
Gudemnis	5	1	4	1	1	0	4	0	4
Vahravar	7	3	4	2	1	1	5	2	3
Lichk	6	2	4	2	1	1	4	1	3
Tashtun	7	3	4	2	1	1	5	2	3
TOTAL:	116	51	65	29	18	11	87	26	61

Another point to be raised is this; the survey reveals that the involvement in the community life remains a rare phenomenon. Almost 80% of the respondents are not involved at all in any activity of the community (at the community council level or in any NGO or associations). When the people are asked about their reason of non-participation, a large majority answered: "Do not know or refuse to answer" (70% of the respondent), while 7,5% say they are not interested in such activity; among the most frequent answers is 'the lack of trust toward the authorities and the lack of opportunities'. According to observations and researches on the subject, it is possible to think that the lack of involvement is due to a lack of awareness, which is confirmed by a poor access to information (poor local radio and TV services).

This lack of empowerment, raised by the Armenian Prime Minister and the Armenian Council of Feminine Condition in a 2009 meeting, leads to another problem, directly connected to the M4M project. Indeed, if women have the same rights and access to credit and loans or to ownership as men have, the patriarchal system and the poor information network of the region combined with misleading advice would prevent women from using these rights and sometimes even from running some income generating activities.

Participation in elections

Meghri population as well as other citizens of Armenia of over 18 have the right to vote. Particularly they participate at elections of republic's president, national assembly deputies, heads of local administration (mayors of urban communities) and Council of Elders.

The Government of Armenia's stated aim is to build a Western-style parliamentary democracy as the basis of its form of government. However, international observers have been critical of the conduct of national elections in 1995, 1999, and 2003, as well as the constitutional referendum of 2005. The new constitution in 2005 increased the power of the legislative branch and allows for more independence of the judiciary; in practice, however, both branches remain subject to political pressure from the executive branch, which retains considerably greater power than its counterparts in most European countries.

However, the lack of data and transparency on the subject prevent from a comprehensive and realistic analyse about Meghri region.

Participation in local NGOs

At a national level, one cannot but notice the women's omnipresence in Armenian NGOs. This phenomenon can be explained in different ways.

Women are usually more sensitive towards development matters and are more involved in such activities. Women are also more likely to be involved in a work they are interested in than in a work to make a lot of money. However, working in an NGO can also be a means to reaching financial and personal independence from their husband.

Moreover, NGOs often respect the equality criteria toward minority, which is a good way for women to have responsibilities.

There is only one NGO in Meghri region – Meghri Women Resource Centre, an organisation initiated by OSCE in 2007. This centre should work for empowerment of women in two areas - local government and business - and serve as a meeting place for women and with activities according to the local needs and involving local women. In reality this NGO is the cover for some informal meetings and use of internet for personal matters. There is no real actions lead to empower women in Meghri and nobody is going to villages to present women the opportunity opened to them in Meghri. The MWR centre is not working at all around agricultural business and the role of women in this area. However, the centre provides trainings on computer skills, accountancy and English language which, improved, could be useful in an expanding activity. However, even if it is free of charge for women from the villages, the latter ones might have trouble to attend this class due to the lack of public transportation.

For men, despite the informal conversation and meeting there is no structure of common discussions around community topics.

CONCLUSION

The following statement do not aim at drawing a general view over the gender issue in the region, but at underlining the gender issue at the M4M – Markets for Meghri project level. The survey that has been done in Meghri region shows no great imbalances between men and women's workload in terms of housekeeping tasks as well as in terms of occupation hours per day. Nevertheless, according to figures, on a full-time basis, women seem to be more involved in housekeeping tasks and men in outdoors or away from the house occupations. Even on this point, 85% of both men and women agree that they do not spend equal time on farming activities. More than 50% of respondents stated that men are in charge of 70% to 90% of the farming activities. Figures also show that women do not wish to be more involved in farm practices. Indeed, to the question of extra burden, women mainly answered they do not see themselves in charge of the tasks required by an expanding activity.

Results show that most of the respondent would put this extra burden on the father and/or son(s) of the household.

This leads to the conclusion that women are not strongly involved in the horticultural business in Meghri.

However, they could be involved in the administrative part of the farming business, as they show interest to restart studying or vocational training.

Because of the lack of mobility, a special attention should be raised in terms of access to services (for both men and women, even if women suffer more from this lack because of their inability to drive).