



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations

NATIONAL GENDER PROFILE OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL LIVELIHOODS

The Republic of Moldova



**COUNTRY
GENDER
ASSESSMENT
SERIES**

**EUROPE AND
CENTRAL ASIA**

NATIONAL GENDER PROFILE OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL LIVELIHOODS

COUNTRY GENDER ASSESSMENT SERIES

The Republic of Moldova

Required citation:

FAO. 2022. *National gender profile of agriculture and rural livelihoods – The Republic of Moldova*. Country Gender Assessment Series – Europe and Central Asia. Budapest. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb9555en>

The designations employed and the presentation of material in this information product do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) concerning the legal or development status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. The mention of specific companies or products of manufacturers, whether or not these have been patented, does not imply that these have been endorsed or recommended by FAO in preference to others of a similar nature that are not mentioned.

The views expressed in this information product are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of FAO.

ISSN 2710-1622 [Print]

E-ISSN 2710-1630 [Online]

ISBN 978-92-5-136073-6

© FAO, 2022



Some rights reserved. This work is made available under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 IGO licence (CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO; <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/igo/legalcode>).

Under the terms of this licence, this work may be copied, redistributed and adapted for non-commercial purposes, provided that the work is appropriately cited. In any use of this work, there should be no suggestion that FAO endorses any specific organization, products or services. The use of the FAO logo is not permitted. If the work is adapted, then it must be licensed under the same or equivalent Creative Commons licence. If a translation of this work is created, it must include the following disclaimer along with the required citation: "This translation was not created by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). FAO is not responsible for the content or accuracy of this translation. The original [Language] edition shall be the authoritative edition."

Disputes arising under the licence that cannot be settled amicably will be resolved by mediation and arbitration as described in Article 8 of the licence except as otherwise provided herein. The applicable mediation rules will be the mediation rules of the World Intellectual Property Organization <http://www.wipo.int/amc/en/mediation/rules> and any arbitration will be conducted in accordance with the Arbitration Rules of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL).

Third-party materials. Users wishing to reuse material from this work that is attributed to a third party, such as tables, figures or images, are responsible for determining whether permission is needed for that reuse and for obtaining permission from the copyright holder. The risk of claims resulting from infringement of any third-party-owned component in the work rests solely with the user.

Sales, rights and licensing. FAO information products are available on the FAO website (www.fao.org/publications) and can be purchased through publications-sales@fao.org. Requests for commercial use should be submitted via: www.fao.org/contact-us/licence-request. Queries regarding rights and licensing should be submitted to: copyright@fao.org.

Cover photographs: ©FAO/Buletin Dorin Goian

Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	VII
ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS	IX
CURRENCY EQUIVALENTS	XI
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	XIII
1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1. Why is gender relevant to sustainable agriculture and rural development?	1
1.2. FAO in the Republic of Moldova	1
1.3. Scope and purpose of the Country Gender Assessment	3
1.4. Methodology	4
1.4.1. Data sources and gender statistics	4
2. COUNTRY OVERVIEW	7
2.1. Administrative and territorial divisions of the Republic of Moldova	7
2.2. Macro-level view of gender equality	8
2.3. Policy and institutional profile	10
2.3.1. International commitments on gender equality	10
2.3.2. National law and policy	11
2.3.3. Institutional mechanisms responsible for gender equality	13
2.4. Demographic profile	15
2.4.1. Population, sex ratios and household composition	15
2.4.2. Depopulation and migration	16
2.4.3. The older population in rural areas	17
2.4.4. Minority groups	18
2.5. Socioeconomic profile	19
2.6. Health	22
2.7. Education	24
2.8. Gender-based violence	31
3. GENDER ISSUES IN RURAL HOUSEHOLDS AND FAMILY FARMING	35
3.1. Characteristics of the labour market in rural areas	35
3.2. Land tenure and agricultural holdings	39
3.2.1. Farm ownership and management	40
3.3. Gender roles, leadership and empowerment	44
3.3.1. Rural women's role in leadership and decision-making	45
4. GENDER AND AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FORESTRY	49
4.1. Crop production and horticulture	49
4.2. Livestock and livestock products	52
4.3. Fisheries and aquaculture	54
4.4. Forestry	55

4.5. Agricultural extension and rural advisory services	56
4.6. Irrigation and other productive inputs	58
4.7. Entrepreneurship	59
4.8. Access to finance	62
4.9. Access to agricultural subsidies and anti-crisis measures	63
5. RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND GENDER IMPACTS	67
5.1. Housing conditions and durable goods	67
5.2. Energy sources	68
5.3. Water and sanitation	69
5.4. Roads and rural transport	71
5.5. Information and communication technologies	72
5.6. Social infrastructure	74
6. FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION	77
6.1. Climate change adaptation and disaster risk management	79
7. RECOMMENDATIONS	81
7.1. For FAO	81
7.2. For Government and national institutions	82
REFERENCES	85

TABLES

Table 1. Priorities and areas of cooperation for FAO and the Government of the Republic of Moldova	2
Table 2. Gender Inequality Index values for the Republic of Moldova, compared with regional values, 2019	9
Table 3. Resident population of the Republic of Moldova, by sex and area of residence, 2019	15
Table 4. Life expectancy at birth, by sex and area of residence, 2018	22
Table 5. Number of agricultural holdings, total and average area per holding, by sex of the head of the holding and legal status of the holding, 2011	42
Table 6. Average size of male- and female-headed holdings, by legal status	43
Table 7. Status of subsidies paid by the National Fund for Agriculture and Rural Development to female applicants related to crop production or horticulture, 2021	52
Table 8. Average number of livestock, by species and sex of the head of the holding, 2011	53
Table 9. Status of subsidies paid by the National Fund for Agriculture and Rural Development to female applicants related to livestock production, 2021	54
Table 10. Access to selected agricultural machinery and equipment, by sex of the head of the holding, 2011	59
Table 11. Number and size of legal enterprises and proportion operating in the agriculture sector, 2020	60
Table 12. Unique applicants of agricultural subsidies, by sex, 2020	64
Table 13. Households in possession of selected durable goods, by area of residence, 2019	67
Table 14. Access to energy sources in rural and urban housing stock, 2019	68
Table 15. Water sources in rural and urban housing stock, 2019	69
Table 16. Access to water supply and sanitation in rural and urban housing stock, 2019	70
Table 17. Access to information and communication technologies in rural and urban households, 2019	72
Table 18. Nutritional status for children and adults, by sex, 2016	78

FIGURES

Figure 1. Global Gender Gap scores for the Republic of Moldova, by dimension, 2021	9
Figure 2. Resident population of rural areas, by sex and age group, 2019	18
Figure 3. Rates of absolute poverty and extreme poverty for rural and urban populations, 2015–2020	20
Figure 4. Absolute poverty rates, by sex of the head of household, 2015–2020	21
Figure 5. Enrolment in vocational and higher education in the 2020/2021 academic year, by sex	26
Figure 6. Students in post-secondary vocational institutions in the 2020/2021 academic year, by sex and in a sample of fields of training	27
Figure 7. People who are not in employment, education or training, aged 15–29, by sex and area of residence, 2020	27
Figure 8. Students in secondary vocational institutions enrolled in agriculture-related subjects in the 2020/2021 academic year, by sex	28
Figure 9. Students in post-secondary vocational institutions enrolled in agriculture-related subjects in the 2020/2021 academic year, by sex	29
Figure 10. Students in higher education institutions enrolled in agriculture-related subjects in the 2020/2021 academic year, by sex	29
Figure 11. Level of agricultural education of female and male holders, 2011	30
Figure 12. Women who reported ever having experienced gender-based violence, by type of violence and settlement, 2018	32
Figure 13. Reasons for economic inactivity for the rural population, by sex, 2020	35
Figure 14. Employed rural population, by type of economic activity and sex, 2020	36
Figure 15. Structure of the employed population, by employment status and sex, 2020	38
Figure 16. Hours per day that female and male respondents spend on agricultural work during the agricultural season, for small and medium farms, 2013–2014	39
Figure 17. Structure of the agricultural holdings without formal legal status, 2011	41
Figure 18. Share of female and male heads of agricultural holdings, by legal status of the holding, 2011	42
Figure 19. Share of agricultural land headed/managed by women and men, by legal status of the holding, 2011	43
Figure 20. Use of own production by smallholders (non-legally registered holdings), headed/managed by women and men, 2011	44
Figure 21. Time spent in unpaid work in hours per day, by sex and location, 2012	45
Figure 22. Dynamics of women's representation in elected office in the Republic of Moldova, 2011 and 2019	46
Figure 23. Main crops sown on arable land for agricultural holdings, by sex of the head of the holding, 2011	50

Figure 24. Share of female and male holders who had participated in a training course in the field of agriculture, by legal status of the holding, 2011	57
Figure 25. Distribution of entrepreneurs, by main type of business activity and sex, 2018	61
Figure 26. Access to information and communication technologies, by sex of the household head, 2017	73

BOXES

Box 1. Classification of “rural” areas in the Republic of Moldova	7
Box 2. Definition: Informal employment	37
Box 3. Definition: Contributing family worker	38
Box 4. Agricultural producers in the Republic of Moldova	41

Acknowledgements

This Country Gender Assessment was researched and written by:

Elisabeth Duban, independent gender expert

Valentina Bodrug-Lungu, Director, Public Association "Gender Centru"

Eugenia Ganea, national gender expert, Public Association "Gender Centru"

Overall technical guidance was provided by Dono Abdurazakova, Senior Gender and Social Protection Advisor to the FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia (FAO REU) and Anna Jenderedjian, Gender and Social Protection Specialist, FAO REU. The process of developing and finalizing the report was overseen by the FAO Representation in the Republic of Moldova, specifically by Tudor Robu, Assistant FAO Representative, and Tatiana Timofti, Project/Administrative Assistant.

Special thanks are extended to the representatives of the following organizations that participated in interviews and provided invaluable information and materials for this Country Gender Assessment:

1. Agency for Intervention and Payments in Agriculture (AIPA)
2. Agricultural Producers Association "Teragonord"
3. Ministry of Labour and Social Protection
4. National Association of Rural, Ecological and Cultural Tourism of the Republic of Moldova
5. National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova
6. National Agency for Rural Development (ACSA)
7. Platform for Gender Equality
8. And, additionally, individual female entrepreneurs from rural areas of the Republic of Moldova

FAO is also grateful to the experts who participated in a validation workshop (29 November 2021) and reviewed a draft of this report. Their comments and additional recommendations improved this Country Gender Assessment overall.

Abbreviations and acronyms

ACSA	National Agency for Rural Development	JMP	WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene
AIPA	Agency for Intervention and Payments in Agriculture	MAFI	Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women	MARDE	Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment (former)
CGA	Country Gender Assessment	MDL	Moldovan leu
CPF	Country Programming Framework	MHH	male-headed household
EDGE	Evidence and Data for Gender Equality	NEET	not in employment, education or training
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	NGO	non-governmental organization
FAO REU	FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia	NFFM	National Farmers Federation
FHH	female-headed household	NNRAS	National Network of Rural Advisory Services
GBV	gender-based violence	ODIMM	Organization for Small and Medium Enterprises Sector Development
GDI	Gender Development Index	OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
GDP	gross domestic product	SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
GII	Gender Inequality Index	SME	small and medium-sized enterprise
GMI	guaranteed minimum income	STEM	science, technology, engineering, mathematics
HDI	Human Development Index	UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
ICT	information and communication technology	USD	United States dollar
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development	WUA	water users' association

Currency equivalents

As of 1 February 2022

Currency Units

– Moldovan leu (MDL)

– United States dollar (USD)

MDL 1.00 – USD 0.05

USD 1.00 – MDL 17.75

Executive summary

For the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), it is imperative to address gender gaps and inequalities, otherwise goals such as ending hunger and extreme poverty will not be achieved. Rural women are the “backbone of rural economies”, making up a large proportion of the rural workforce and serving as managers of natural resources, even if their contributions are often unrecognized in national policy (FAO, 2020a, p. 3). FAO is committed to investing in and empowering rural women and girls not only to ensure that they benefit equally from reforms around agriculture and rural development but also to maximize their contributions in these sectors.

This Country Gender Assessment (CGA) for the Republic of Moldova reflects FAO’s commitment to promoting gender equality, while integrating a gender perspective into its operations. The CGA report focuses on the intersections of gender, agriculture and rural development, and presents a snapshot of critical gender-based inequalities and their consequences for agricultural production and rural livelihoods in the Republic of Moldova. The assessment includes recommendations on enhancing agriculture and developing rural communities with a gender-sensitive perspective, taking into consideration gender roles and differences between women and men in access to productive resources, inputs and information.

The process of conducting this assessment was facilitated by the availability of gender statistics for a number of themes and indicators. Notably, data collected through the first General Agricultural Census of the Republic of Moldova (2011) was analysed from a gender perspective, providing valuable baseline information. Nevertheless, the assessment process was complicated by a lack of data disaggregated by sex and other characteristics that would give an intersectional perspective. Gender statistics are seldom further disaggregated by settlement type (rural or urban), or by age and ethnic minority status, as well as other characteristics. This situation raises challenges for analysis based on the principle of leaving no one behind. Additionally, administrative data managed by

line ministries or other authorities for key indicators, such as landownership, are neither consistently provided to the National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova nor accessible publicly. A further challenge is the fact that the full consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on gender equality are not yet known, although assessments suggest that those who were in vulnerable situations before the health crisis were severely affected and new groups have been pushed towards vulnerability. However, the CGA does provide a picture of significant gender gaps in terms of the rural population’s access to educational and employment opportunities and social services. In the area of agricultural production, women have much more limited access to and control over vital resources, including land, extension and advisory services and irrigation.

National law and policy: The Republic of Moldova has a legal and policy base that reflects commitments towards gender equality and the prohibition of discrimination. The Action Plan to implement the Strategy on Ensuring Equality between Women and Men in the Republic of Moldova (2017–2021) recognizes the specific situation of women and girls in rural areas and calls for gender-sensitive sectoral policy in areas such as agriculture, food security, regional development and climate change. Processes for mainstreaming gender into state policy are in place, and gender equality objectives are mentioned in some sectoral strategies relevant to this CGA, such as the National Strategy on Agriculture and Rural Development (2014–2020). At the time of conducting this CGA, a new National Strategy on Agriculture and Rural Development for 2021–2030 was being elaborated. Gender considerations are less well integrated, if at all, into targeted strategies and programmes, such as those that address the provision of rural extension services or climate change, for example.

Difficulties in achieving more consistent gender mainstreaming are attributed to a lack of awareness among policymakers of why the process is necessary, as well as some weaknesses in the institutional

mechanisms that have authority for ensuring gender equality. According to national legislation, there are nine bodies that form the institutional mechanisms at the central level (in the national parliament, government and independent bodies) and at the local level. Gender coordination groups work within line ministries, and gender focal points are placed in local public administration authorities. Despite this extensive network, the government acknowledges that several shortcomings affect the function of the institutional mechanisms, ranging from insufficient financial and human resources and lack of training programmes to persistent gender stereotypes. Frequent changes of government, followed by reorganization of public sector institutions have also been detrimental to improving cooperation and coordination between institutions and between the central and local levels. Forward planning by the FAO Representation in the Republic of Moldova includes capacity building for the formulation of gender-responsive and socially inclusive policies in the agriculture sector, and collaboration with the Gender Coordination Group of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry is expected. Other relevant institutions, especially within local authorities, could also be engaged.

Demographic trends: According to calculations of the resident population (a definition that also includes people who are temporarily absent from the country), around 57 percent of the people in the Republic of Moldova live in rural areas. The country is experiencing a demographic crisis in the form of continual population decline, attributed to a decrease in the birth rate and the consequences of international emigration, including labour migration. The population decline is especially acute in rural areas. Large-scale migration, in which people move internally from rural areas to cities or internationally for better economic or educational opportunities, has had profound effects on the population. It has been estimated that the number of labour migrants or people who have household members that have migrated is approaching one million. Almost 75 percent of labour migrants originate from rural areas and patterns of labour migration differ for women and men. Women are more likely to travel to European Union countries where they mainly undertake domestic or care work in private households, followed by service sector work. Men, in contrast, form the majority of migrants from the Republic of Moldova to the Russian Federation, and they usually work in construction, followed by transport and logistics, hotel services, light industry and commerce. For women, there is less alignment of their professional skills with the work they undertake as migrants, and because of the type of work, they spend longer abroad before returning. Men are more likely to find work in the same

field as their former employment and tend to work seasonally. However, these working arrangements leave men more exposed to informal and exploitative working conditions. Women are also affected by labour migration if they are “left behind” by the migrating spouse. For women in rural areas, they then take on the de facto head of household role, which may include running a family farm. Outmigration from rural areas of mainly the working age population and declining fertility and birth rates have resulted in a greater share of older people residing in small towns and villages. Older people who live in rural areas are at high risk of monetary poverty because of their dependence on agriculture and lower pensions, as well as poverty associated with limited infrastructure and services. Among village residents that are over the age of 75, women outnumber men by two to one. Older women in rural areas have a high degree of vulnerability and dependency, as result of their longer average lives, lower pensions and social vulnerability that comes with living alone.

Rural areas, like the rest of the country, have diverse populations, and gender intersects with other personal identities or characteristics. The Government of the Republic of Moldova has reported on the fact that specific groups of women, including Roma women, women living with HIV and women with disabilities, have not benefited from the same advancements as others. Gender analysis in the context of rural development or agricultural policy and programming must include intersectional perspectives that take into consideration women and men in minority groups to ensure that no one is left behind.

Rural poverty: Social and economic policies have contributed to an overall decline in the poverty rate, but area of residence is a strong determinant of household poverty. Rural households are affected disproportionately by both absolute poverty and extreme poverty compared with urban households. The rural population, pensioners and people who are self-employed in agriculture all have disposable income levels that are lower than the national average. Rural households also have a higher dependency on social allowances and income transfers from abroad, in the form of remittances. Older people in rural areas who rely mainly on social allowances for income, followed by individual agricultural activities, are particularly susceptible to poverty. Gender differences are also seen in the absolute poverty rate depending on the sex of the head of the household. The poverty rate is higher when the head of the household is a woman (29.3 percent) compared with when the head of the household is a man (25.6 percent). When a multidimensional view of poverty is considered, covering substandard living conditions, poor access to

basic services, lack of decent work, time poverty and disempowerment, the risk of poverty for women living in rural areas becomes very high.

Access to health care and specialized services: While there are differences in health status linked to area of residence, mainly related to behavioural risk factors, the most pronounced spatial disparities are in access to health services. Although the proportion of insured people has been increasing, the rural population is more likely to be uninsured and to be unable to afford out-of-pocket payments. A further issue affecting the ability of the rural population to access good-quality and specialized health services is the lack of facilities and specialists outside of urban areas. Thus, people living in rural areas tend to rely on general practitioners and have less frequent access to specialist services. Small-scale studies of women in rural communities found that the majority did not have access to health care centres or family practitioners locally and so must travel to urban centres for treatment. Within this group, access to health care is especially compromised for women of pension age in the security zone on the left bank of the Nistru river. National research suggests that women generally are more likely to go without health care, not only because of the costs but also family issues.

A second critical area in which services are lacking for rural areas is in the prevention of and response to gender-based violence (GBV). An estimated 40 percent of women in the Republic of Moldova are survivors of gender-based violence. A 2019 survey by the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OECD) indicated that lifetime experience of physical and/or sexual violence by a partner may be greater in rural than urban areas, but records from the national telephone hotline over the last decade show that the number of calls from rural and urban areas is almost equal. Spatial disparities lie in the fact that many specialized services, such as temporary shelters, centres for victims of sexual violence and programmes for perpetrators of violence, are not only insufficient for the country as a whole but are not easily accessible in rural areas. However, a free telephone trust line for women and girls offers counselling for victims of GBV on a 24/7 basis; it is available throughout the country (a separate local hotline operates in Transnistria). A national coalition also coordinates on advocacy initiatives, public awareness campaigns and service provision. The Republic of Moldova's ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence in 2021, gave new impetus to the implementation of national law and strategy on violence against women in line with European standards. In this context, COVID-19

has raised issues about how to address service and funding gaps in the post-pandemic period. The pandemic shed light on shortcomings in the prevention of and protection from gender-based violence, such as the need to strengthen the specialized coordinated response and referral systems at the community level.

Educational opportunities: The education system in the Republic of Moldova exhibits gender parity in enrolment in compulsory education, but there are important differences in educational quality between rural and urban areas. Despite investment in the education sector, rural schools are less likely to have modern technologies, many have poorly equipped sanitary blocks, and attracting teachers to rural areas where resources are limited and salaries are low is especially challenging. Typically, young people who leave rural areas for technical or higher education do not return, and this results in the rural population having an overall lower educational level than in urban areas. Among women, less than half of those in rural areas have either higher education, specialized secondary or vocational secondary education, compared with 75 percent of urban women.

There are also clear gendered patterns in educational choices after compulsory education. Boys are more likely to leave school after Grade 9 to enter vocational education, whereas girls tend to stay longer in general education. This pattern is related to the fact that young men face pressure to train for employment at an earlier age but also the fact that there are more entry-level jobs available in the local labour market for young men. In terms of educational choices in post-secondary education, women are streamed towards subjects and trades that are traditionally associated with "female professions", such as education, health care, social work, administration, accounting, and financial and other services. In contrast, young men predominate in scientific and technical fields that correspond to higher-paid and in-demand jobs. The lack of diverse educational choices for girls and women and their low enrolment in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects, as well as in information and communication technologies (ICTs), is a general issue for the country. Given the fewer resources available in rural schools, however, girls with interest and aptitude in subjects such as agriculture, mathematics, architecture, engineering and computer sciences require additional support to allow them to engage in non-traditional subjects. Gender stereotypes in education contribute to the high rate of young women who are not in employment, education or training (NEET). NEET rates are high for young people in rural areas, but around a third of women aged 15 to 29 are in the NEET category, with almost the same pattern

in rural and urban areas. This suggests that women face particular difficulties transitioning from education to employment.

Vocational education in agriculture-related fields is an important resource both for farmers to run profitable agribusinesses and for the development of a skilled labour force. In the Republic of Moldova, the agri-educational system has suffered from a lack of investment, and the number of students has declined. In the 2020/2021 academic year, around two percent of all students enrolled in secondary vocational, post-secondary vocational and higher education were studying in an agriculture-related field. Within this group, women represented less than a third of students enrolled in vocational and higher education agriculture programmes, and they tend to be concentrated in courses on horticulture and veterinary medicine. The typical farmer in the Republic of Moldova has neither technical nor higher education in agriculture. According to the General Agricultural Census, less than 20 percent of all farm holders have any form of agri-education. Among women agricultural holders, almost 90 percent have specific education in agriculture; this is the case for about 80 percent of men as holders. There are also gender gaps in the educational attainment of women and men who work in agriculture; men tend to have either secondary professional or specialized education, while women have secondary education only. Gender disparities in agriculture have implications for farmers being able to take advantage of new practices and technologies to increase productivity, as well as for the type of support, through agricultural extension and advisory services, that should be provided to meet the needs of women and men farmers.

The rural labour market and employment: Economic activity rates are lowest for women in rural areas, compared with those for men and for the urban population. Compared with other countries in the Europe and Central Asia region, the gender gap in labour force participation in the Republic of Moldova is small. This is an indication that both women and men have a low level of engagement in the labour market, however. Excluding inactivity because of retirement, women are far more likely to leave the workforce after they are married and have children. Moreover, women's engagement in domestic and care work is a key limiting factor in their ability to take on formal employment, regardless of where they live; and for rural women, the much more limited care infrastructure makes it especially difficult for them to combine employment with their domestic role.

The labour market in the Republic of Moldova exhibits both horizontal (occupational) and vertical segregation.

Women predominate in public sector jobs (in education, health care and social services for example) that provide stable but low-paid work. Men represent the majority of employees in more diverse fields, such as industry, construction, trade and hospitality (hotels and restaurants), and in technical professions that are associated with higher pay in the private sector. In terms of the employment hierarchy, women make up the larger share of entry-level employees, and this is especially common for rural areas. In the agriculture sector specifically, women's formal employment tends to be in "feminized" fields, such as accounting, finance, marketing or in positions requiring education in chemistry or biology, but not in leadership or managerial positions. Gender segregation in the labour market contributes directly to the gender pay gap.

Agricultural labour: A great deal of agricultural labour is informal work, performed by own account workers or contributing family members. Not only is informal work characteristic for rural areas, but when considering agricultural labour in isolation, women's contribution to the sector leans towards informality. Women perform a large share of harvesting, sorting and packing agricultural products on a seasonal and informal basis. Informal work also includes unpaid work, and in rural areas this would typically be the work of family members on farms. While the overall proportion of contributing family workers among the employed population has been decreasing in the Republic of Moldova, women still represent a considerably larger share of workers with this status compared with men. Informal employment, by virtue of the fact that it is unregulated, does not provide social protections such as health or social insurance, paid time off, sick leave or maternity leave. Unremunerated work also represents a considerable time burden for rural women. During the peak season, in farming households, men work on average more hours per day in agricultural activities. Women nevertheless report that they dedicate between four and eight hours per day to agricultural work which is, presumably, additional to their other domestic responsibilities. Women's work, on an informal and unpaid basis, is not adequately recognized as a form of employment, and it also does not contribute to their financial independence.

Ownership of land and farming practices: Because land administration and property valuation systems are being improved in the Republic of Moldova, real estate cadastre records about landownership were not available for this assessment. A 2014 estimate indicated that women owned 41 percent of land plots in the state registry. However, because of the dynamism of the market for agricultural land in recent years, the picture could have changed. The Agricultural Census of 2011

indicated that women owned or were managing just over a third of the agricultural holdings in the Republic of Moldova. In fact, the large majority of agricultural holdings are smallholdings that do not have the legal status as farms (they are not registered as such). Women are best represented as holders of unregistered farms – an indication that it is uncommon for women to undertake farming as a profession. Considering the total area of farmed land (in hectares), women have control over 19 percent, a difference of over 1.3 million hectares. Just over half of all agricultural holdings consists of plots around the house and gardens that are small on average. Nevertheless, when comparing female- with male-headed holdings, women's holdings are on average smaller. Women farm on around 70 percent of the average area of holdings headed by men, for holdings without legal status. This gap is an indicator of the barriers women face in accessing a key resource – land – and it also suggests that they encounter additional difficulties procuring financing and inputs that would enable them to farm on larger plots. Customary practices also play a role in women's more limited landownership. Men are favoured as owners, managers and inheritors of land and other property. It is worth noting that women in the Republic of Moldova often have usufruct rights to land (the right of a person to use the property of another person [the owner] for a specific period of time and to derive profits or benefits as if s/he were the owner, as long as that property is not damaged). Usufruct rights are a less secure form of tenure, and it is not only use of but also control over land that is critical for women's economic empowerment.

The agricultural census indicates that there are minimal differences in the patterns of crop production on female- and male-headed holdings, as measured by the arable land that is dedicated to specific crops. However, there are clear divisions of labour along gender lines, with women typically situated in the lower value-added positions of value chains. Women undertake minimally mechanized physical labour, such as sowing seeds, planting seedlings, weeding, harvesting in greenhouses, hand-spraying small plots with pesticides and chemicals, and some selling of agricultural products in small open-air markets. In contrast, men perform labour that depends on mechanization, including spraying large plots with pesticides and chemicals, irrigation and operating farm equipment, as well as transport, processing, marketing, selling and export of plant products. This division of labour reflects gender stereotypes and also solidifies men's position as the main decision-makers on agricultural inputs, production practices, financing and marketing/selling. Some horticultural value chains exhibit lower barriers for women's entry, as well a more

equitable distribution of roles along the chain. The apple growing and processing and berry production value chains are two in which women are represented from the level of family farmers up to commercial processors and exporters. Further gender analysis would be useful to understand where investments can be made into promising but underdeveloped value chains so that women will benefit from new jobs and business opportunities.

According to the agricultural census, male-headed holdings have more heads of livestock on average than female-headed holdings. This is likely a reflection of the larger size of male-headed farming households, that require more animal products for their own consumption and are also able to take advantage of having more family workers. Women and men take on different tasks in livestock production. Women are typically responsible for animal care, such as providing feed and water, as well as milking, processing and selling dairy products. Men, on the other hand, are generally involved in herding, cutting branches for feeding livestock and administering medicine, and for transport and marketing. As is the case with horticulture, men's dominance at the higher-value end of livestock value chains has implications for their ability to manage sales and make decisions on how income will be allocated in the household or invested in improving production.

Access to agricultural resources and inputs: Men and women farmers alike face challenges in accessing resources and inputs. For example, the system for providing agricultural extension and rural advisory services is in need of modernization, and irrigation networks are operational in less than half of the total area of farmland. These general difficulties are compounded for women farmers. Although record-keeping about clients for agricultural extension services is not unified, and so the picture of whether women and men access such services is incomplete, surveys among farmers indicate that women are interested in extension services but have limited contact with extension agents or access to targeted training. Women farmers report that they mainly rely on informal networks for information sharing or the internet for gaining knowledge. Further efforts are needed to develop not only extension services but also gender-sensitive services that address the needs of women as farmers. Additionally, gender gaps are seen in access to agricultural machinery and equipment, including for irrigation. When the agricultural census was conducted, out of a total of 773 holdings that had irrigation machinery, 92 percent of these holdings were headed by men. While women have smaller and more fragmented plots of land, this itself does not explain

their lesser need for irrigation. In fact, climate change and recent droughts in the Republic of Moldova have demonstrated a critical need for small-scale irrigation systems for agriproducers who farm their own land. Women farmers own less than 12 percent of all types of machinery and equipment that were counted in the last census (the exception being mini-tractors). The types of equipment that women farmers are likely to own, such as milking machines as opposed to harvesters and seeders, reflect the type of farming they engage in and the fact that they farm on smaller plots. However, increasing women's access to and use of water and irrigation, and to machinery and equipment, is needed in order to improve their agricultural production. This would then create greater opportunities for women producers to diversify their farming practices and to increase both their incomes and food security more broadly.

Finance is another critical resource for farmers and entrepreneurs who wish to invest in their own production. Women's engagement in entrepreneurship has increased in recent years, yet in 2018, only 33.9 percent of all business owners and managers were women. Around 90 percent of women-owned and managed enterprises are at the micro level (the same is true for 82 percent of men-owned and managed businesses). The business activities in which women and men engage differ from one another and also follow patterns similar to those of the labour market generally. Specifically, only 3 percent of female entrepreneurs and 6.5 percent of male entrepreneurs have agribusinesses. It should be noted, however, that the government's Women in Business programme not only gives priority to women-run businesses, but also to those in rural areas (including in agritourism, handicrafts and non-agriculture-based businesses that would not be eligible for other forms of agricultural assistance). While a small number of the 2020 grant recipients under this programme have businesses in agriculture directly, a larger pool run small enterprises that support rural livelihoods (for example, in agritourism and food production). The importance of such a programme is underscored by the fact that entrepreneurs in the agribusiness sector face specific constraints to accessing finance to purchase land, plant new crops or for capital investments. A key difficulty is insufficient collateral – a problem that affects smallholders alike, but is especially problematic for women who have limited assets and often cannot meet the requirements for bank loans. Women are sometimes discouraged by loan officers in banks, who advise them that they may face difficulties repaying loans.

Registered farm owners can apply for state subsidies to finance their rural-based business or farming

activities. The Agency for Intervention and Payments in Agriculture provides subsidies for specific agricultural and rural activities. In 2020, women represented only around 19 percent of unique applicants for post-investment subsidies. However, through a special programme, advance subsidies are also available for rural or agribusiness start-ups in three categories, one of which is women farmers. Eligible women farmers are entitled to an additional 15+ percent increase over the authorized subsidy amount as a one-time only incentive. In 2020, women were the largest group in this category of applicants, representing 49 percent of the total (or 119 women farmers). However, when the share of women who benefited from the 15+ percent incentive is compared with *all* applicants for subsidies in the same year, women's representation is very low at only 2.7 percent. There are likely to be various factors that prevent women from applying for agricultural subsidies, even when there are funds set aside specially to invest in their farms, and analysis is required to identify and address the specific barriers.

Rural infrastructure: Improving rural infrastructure, referring here to physical and social infrastructure, is a precondition for the development of farming, agribusiness and other types of off-farm enterprise. Infrastructure deficiencies in rural areas affect entire households but also have a disproportionate impact on women and girls because of gender roles and the division of labour. For instance, rural households are less likely than urban ones to own several labour-saving appliances that are especially beneficial to women (such as automated washing machines, vacuum cleaners and microwave ovens). Rural households, while usually supplied with gas, lack certain amenities for a decent and comfortable life, such as central heating and constant hot water. For cooking, rural households rely mainly on liquid or natural gas, but a not insignificant proportion use fuelwood or agricultural waste for cooking with stoves or ovens. Only around half of rural households have access to safely managed drinking water, and less than half of rural dwellings have an indoor bathroom or shower. Limited domestic heating and hot water supplies are felt acutely by women and girls who bear the primary responsibility for heating water for domestic use, for cleaning and doing laundry, for bathing children and for cooking. If women must also collect or prepare fuel for heating and cooking, this increases the time that they spend on these daily tasks.

The quality of rural road and transportation infrastructure also has differential impacts on women and men. Roads and transportation not only link isolated communities to vital services but also connect farms to markets for agricultural products in cities and increase access to non-agricultural businesses based

in rural areas. The majority of villages in the Republic of Moldova are accessible on asphalt roads, but local roads are in very poor condition. The rural population, therefore, does not have reliable access to highways and faces problems transporting products to markets. When considering that female heads of holdings are less likely to own trucks, or have access to cold storage, and may also not be able to transport their goods to market using animal carts or motorbikes, the need for alternative forms of transportation or for more local and regional market hubs becomes clear. Furthermore, ICTs are increasingly vital to agriculture and for rural development. The country has good internet connectivity in terms of speed and cost, and mobile broadband subscriptions are increasing each year. The greatest digital divides are seen along generational and gender lines when the sex of the head of the household is taken into consideration. As e-agriculture develops in the Republic of Moldova, assessing the digital literacy of women and men in rural areas, as well as their access to technologies, will become increasingly important.

Finally, women are greatly affected by the underdeveloped care infrastructure in rural areas. Women take on the larger responsibility for child care and the care of family members who are elderly, have disabilities or have chronic illnesses. Looking specifically at child care and preschool educational institutions in rural areas, the rate of participation of children aged 3 to 6 in early education programmes is only 73 percent. For women generally, the availability of early childhood education determines their opportunities for employment, as seen in the fact that the employment rate for women aged 25 to 49 with at least one preschool-aged child is almost 25 percent lower than the rate for women who do not have preschool children.

Food security and climate change: Because of the low rate of extreme poverty in the Republic of Moldova, hunger is not a critical issue. Nevertheless, while undernutrition has declined, overnutrition is increasing, referring here to overweight and obesity among children and adults. Among children and adolescents, boys have higher rates of overweight and obesity than girls, and the opposite situation exists among adults. Higher rates of overweight and obesity are correlated with levels of income, and for women they also correspond to area of residence. Specifically, the prevalence of obesity and overweight among women are both higher in rural areas than for urban

women, but the same is not true for men. Generally, obesity prevalence among women increases as income decreases, and this would correlate with the economic status of women living in rural areas and the difficulties they face buying nutritional foods.

The Republic of Moldova is highly vulnerable to climate change and related disasters, both of which pose threats to food security. For example, during the droughts in 2007, 2015 and 2020, stocks of agricultural produce ran dry for many rural households, and prices and household expenditure on food and energy grew rapidly. When agricultural harvests and yields are reduced, the available local food supply for the whole population also decreases. Environmental degradation, biodiversity loss, climate change and climate vulnerability all have gender dimensions. Not only are women and men affected differently, but they have different needs and capacities for adaptation. For example, women's role as providers of food, energy and water makes them more dependent on natural ecosystems and more vulnerable to environmental degradation than men. Extreme climate events exacerbate pre-existing gender disparities, such as the risk of poverty, unequal access to resources and limited mobility, that put women in especially vulnerable positions. At the same time, women are important agents for change and their contributions to climate change policy are needed for effective solutions. The Strategy on Ensuring Equality between Women and Men in the Republic of Moldova (2017–2021) points out that a gender perspective has not yet been adequately included in sectoral or climate change policies. Limited research also means that the full scope of the gendered impacts of climate change have not been identified and this, in turn, hinders the development of indicators for the collection of sex-disaggregated data. Moreover, adaptation strategies would benefit from further study to better address social exclusion and improve the efficiency of future interventions.

The CGA concludes with recommendations that are addressed to FAO and a range of government and non-governmental institutions. The recommendations present suggested actions to enhance gender-responsive and socially inclusive public policy, strategies and programming. There is also a need to increase recognition and understanding of rural women's capacities, skills and knowledge that would be beneficial to the development of the agriculture sector and rural communities.

1. Introduction

1.1. Why is gender relevant to sustainable agriculture and rural development?

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) recognizes that without addressing gender gaps and inequalities, goals such as ending hunger and extreme poverty will not be achieved. FAO's commitment to promoting gender equality stems from fundamental human rights instruments on the elimination of discrimination against women and ensuring that women and girls in rural areas benefit equally from rural development. FAO aligns its work with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which itself reflects global commitments to reduce intersecting inequalities and to meet gender-specific targets.

Rural women represent a quarter of the world's population and are vital contributors to rural communities and the economies of their families. Yet all too often, their rights and needs "remain insufficiently addressed or ignored in laws, national and local policies, budgets, and investment strategies at all levels" (Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, 2016, p. 3).

Although their contributions often go unnoticed in policy formulation, rural women are the "backbone of rural economies", making up a large proportion of the rural workforce and serving as managers of natural resources (FAO, 2020a, p.3). Women shoulder most of the burden of unpaid domestic and care work and, in doing so, contribute significantly to food security and nutrition. However, around the world "rural women still face major gender-based constraints that limit their potential as economic agents and their capacity to reap the full benefits of their work" (ibid.).

Persistent gender gaps, meaning the disadvantages that rural women and girls face in accessing essential assets, resources, services and opportunities, combined with gender discrimination, prevent them from reaching their full potential. Thus, closing gender gaps

in agriculture and investing in women and girls serves as a catalyst to "accelerate progress in agriculture, rural development and, ultimately, food security and nutrition" (FAO, 2020a, p. 4). FAO is committed to integrating gender equality into all of its work and aims to transform discriminatory norms and tackle the root causes of persistent inequalities. Likewise, governments must not only consider and acknowledge the specific problems faced by rural women but also take proactive measures to "accelerate the achievement of substantive equality for rural women in all areas in which they are underrepresented or disadvantaged" (Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, 2016, p. 7).

1.2. FAO in the Republic of Moldova

The Republic of Moldova became a member of FAO in 1995. FAO provided technical assistance under its first Country Programming Framework for 2014–2015 and established a country office in Chisinau in 2015. Cooperation between FAO and the Republic of Moldova is outlined in the extended FAO Country Programming Framework (CPF) for the Republic of Moldova 2016–2022. As was done previously, the current CPF was developed in cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry (MAFI)¹ as well as other relevant public authorities, key development partners, civil society organizations and the private sector.

¹ Note that in August 2021, a new Government of the Republic of Moldova came into office and ministerial restructuring took place while this Country Gender Assessment was in preparation. Most relevant to this assessment report, the former Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment (MARDE) became two ministries: the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry (MAFI) and the Ministry of Environment. The Ministry of Economy and Infrastructure became two ministries: the Ministry of Economy and the Ministry of Infrastructure and Regional Development. The Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection was divided into two ministries: the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Research became two ministries: the Ministry of Education and Research and the Ministry of Culture. In the context of these changes, all references to specific ministries used within this report correspond to the title of the ministry at either of the following relevant times: (i) the point at which a particular policy or programme was adopted; or (ii) the ministerial structure in place when this report was published.

The CPF for 2016–2022 responds to emerging needs and priorities. It includes outcomes, outputs and targets that take into account the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on agricultural systems. Designating gender mainstreaming as an area for cooperation is an important development in FAO's strategic vision. The current CPF is aligned with national strategies pertaining to agriculture and rural development as well as to the National Strategy on Gender Equality for 2017–2021, which itself refers to inequalities experienced by the rural population. Gender equality is a cross-cutting theme for the implementation of the current CPF, and two of the three priorities support strategic priority 1 of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework for the Republic of Moldova on governance, human rights and gender equality. The CPF includes several gender-specific targets for priorities 2 and 3 that aim

to increase the gender sensitivity of government policymaking and planning. The core priorities for FAO work in the Republic of Moldova are outlined in Table 1.

A new Country Programming Framework for the period 2023 to 2027 is expected by the end of 2022 and following the approval of a new national agriculture strategy.

The CPF is also supported by FAO regional policy, as outlined in the FAO Regional Gender Equality Strategy and Action Plan for Europe and Central Asia 2019–2022 (FAO, 2019b). The regional strategy sets forth more detailed priorities for regional, sub-regional and country offices in gender mainstreaming and outlines three core areas of work for the Europe and Central Asia region. These core areas, described below, offer additional

Table 1. Priorities and areas of cooperation for FAO and the Government of the Republic of Moldova

Priority area	Main areas of cooperation
(1) Increasing competitiveness of the agrifood sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Improving food safety legal framework and strengthening capacities of phytosanitary and animal disease control services » Enhancing government capacities on food losses and waste reduction and on agrifood promotion policies (development and implementation) and increasing export opportunities for value-added products » Increasing capacity of public sector institutions to design and implement better policies and frameworks for reformation of education, research and extension systems in agriculture
(2) Fostering sustainable agriculture and rural development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Strengthening government capacities for formulation and operationalization of rural development policies in line with European Neighbourhood Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development (ENPARD) requirements » Strengthening government capacities in policy formulation of Integrated Pest Management and farmers' capacities to use such methods for vegetables and berries produced in open fields and/or greenhouses » Enhancing new production technologies and guidelines for berry production for smallholder farmers » Strengthening capacities of the National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova to process agriculture and rural development data and monitor the SDGs » Generating and disseminating knowledge on empowering smallholders, particularly in the livestock sector » Strengthening government capacities for formulation of gender-responsive and socially inclusive policies in the agriculture sector » Assessing COVID-19 impacts on agriculture and food systems and designing response policy measures
(3) Improving capacity for sustainable management of natural resources and disaster risk management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Strengthening governance framework and capacities on conservation and improvement of animal and plant genetic resources and improving animal production technology » Increasing national capacities in implementation of an integrated approach to achieve land degradation neutrality and sustainable management of natural resources » Strengthening the capacities of small-scale farmers to cope with drought and adopting best irrigation practices and modern irrigation technologies » Enhancing capacities of government and local authorities in pesticide waste management and decreasing the volume of obsolete pesticides » Strengthening government capacities on sustainable forestry management as well as on innovative approaches » Developing a National Action Plan on climate change adaptation in the agriculture sector, in consultation with national stakeholders » Improving government capacities in assessing and monitoring of drought impacts on agriculture and supporting the establishment of an early warning monitoring system

Source: FAO. no date. *Country Programming Framework for the Republic of Moldova 2016 to 2022* (unpublished internal document).

guidance for fully incorporating gender considerations into FAO work in the Republic of Moldova.

1. Develop capacity and raise awareness about issues related to gender equality, social protection and rural development. The aim of knowledge generation is to improve the evidence base for policymaking.
2. Economically empower rural women through the development of inclusive and gender-sensitive value chains, diversify income, and create employment and entrepreneurship opportunities for improved food security and rural livelihoods of smallholders in areas affected by land degradation and climate change.
3. Mainstream gender into FAO technical assistance, and in particular provide technical guidance and support for collecting and using sex-disaggregated data to monitor progress in closing the gender gaps in key areas of FAO's mandates, as well as enhance national and regional capacities for better integration of gender concerns in formulating, implementing, monitoring, reporting and evaluating development and humanitarian interventions.

As a member of the United Nations in Moldova, FAO is also one of the implementers of the COVID-19 Socio-Economic Response and Recovery Plan. The plan aims for a "human-rights-compliant, gender-sensitive and effective recovery process, paying attention to populations for whom this emergency has compounded pre-existing marginalization, inequalities, and vulnerabilities", which would include rural populations (United Nations Moldova, 2020b, p. 7). Within the larger joint portfolio, several anticipated projects that involve FAO address the intersections of gender and rural livelihoods. They are noted here because the thematic sections of this Country Gender Assessment provide contextual information about pre-existing gender inequalities that may have been exacerbated during the pandemic and should be taken into consideration during project implementation on:

- » Increasing rural women's economic empowerment;
- » Improving the digitalization of the agriculture sector (with a focus on supporting women farmers in digital marketing);
- » Supporting smallholder farms to overcome the negative effects of COVID-19 and drought (anticipating grants and technical support for smallholders, with an emphasis on women); and
- » Fostering economic opportunities for returning migrants and recipients of remittances.

1.3. Scope and purpose of the Country Gender Assessment

FAO standards on gender mainstreaming require that country offices periodically carry out a Country Gender Assessment (CGA) that can be used to inform planning (FAO, 2020a, p. 13). Often, a CGA is prepared in parallel with a new Country Programming Framework. For the FAO Representation in the Republic of Moldova, the completion of a CGA is a standalone target that supports an objective of the current Country Programming Framework to strengthen capacities to formulate gender-sensitive and socially inclusive policies relevant to the agriculture sector.

Therefore, this Country Gender Assessment contributes to the knowledge base by presenting a snapshot of gender inequalities that currently have an impact on various aspects of agricultural production and rural livelihoods in the Republic of Moldova. The assessment includes recommendations on enhancing agriculture and developing rural communities, taking into consideration issues such as gender roles and differences between women and men in access to productive resources, inputs and information.

Gender analysis is a key tool of gender mainstreaming to be used in programme design and implementation, as well as in monitoring and evaluation. An additional objective of the CGA is to enhance the integration of a gender perspective into FAO operations. While the full CGA should not replicate programme-specific gender analysis, it provides a framework and background information that can be used to develop more focused analysis projects.

This assessment also serves as resource material for FAO's assistance to national partners, as well as in cooperative work with the Government of the Republic of Moldova and donor organizations. The report may be of use to other UN agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and researchers, alongside diverse professionals in the fields of agriculture and rural development.

In addition to complying with FAO policy, the CGA supports the country's commitments to gender equality as a member state of the Council of Europe² and under the Moldova–European Union Association Agreement (signed in 2014). Within their general strategies to promote gender equality, both the

² The Republic of Moldova joined the Council of Europe in 1995 and ratified the core treaties that guarantee gender equality and freedom from discrimination (the European Convention on Human Rights and the European Social Charter).

Council of Europe and the European Union recognize the multiple barriers that prevent rural women from realizing their rights, such as poverty, unemployment, the disproportionate burden of unpaid care work, isolation from basic services and limited participation in decision-making (see for example, Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, 2011, p. 1 and European Commission, 2020, p. 2). The findings included in this Country Gender Assessment can inform gender mainstreaming of relevant policy and measures recommended by the Council of Europe and the European Union.

This assessment is not only the first to be produced by FAO for the Republic of Moldova, but it is among several CGAs for the Europe and Central Asia region that FAO has conducted since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. The assessment is not intended to provide a full analysis of the impacts of COVID-19 on rural livelihoods and agriculture in the country. However, efforts were made to draw upon impact analyses and policy briefings, produced by FAO and other organizations, to provide information about whether pre-existing gender inequalities have intensified because of the pandemic. These findings should be incorporated into relief and recovery planning to ensure that rural populations, especially women and girls, are not further disadvantaged. In developing strategies to “build back better” after the COVID-19 crisis, efforts should also be made to “build back equal”.

1.4. Methodology

The methodology used to conduct this CGA is recommended by FAO’s internal guidance on preparing a Country Gender Assessment (FAO, 2017). This assessment was conducted through a review and analysis of quantitative data and qualitative information found in statistical compilations and dedicated research, respectively. Several informational interviews were conducted with experts from public institutions in the fields of agriculture and statistics who clarified information and provided additional data that were used in this assessment. Additionally, individual women entrepreneurs from rural areas of the Republic of Moldova were interviewed to verify and supplement the findings of other research.

1.4.1. Data sources and gender statistics

Gender statistics and sex-disaggregated data are necessary for inclusive policymaking on rural development and agriculture. Because they reveal critical disparities that would otherwise be overlooked, gender statistics are the starting point for a Country Gender Assessment.

Significant progress has been made in the collection, production and dissemination of gender statistics in the Republic of Moldova, supported by a legal and regulatory framework. The Law on Ensuring Equal Opportunities for Men and Women (2006)³ requires the National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova to collect and summarize sex-disaggregated statistical data. In parallel, central and local public authorities, as well as other types of organizations, are required to submit sex-aggregated data to the National Bureau of Statistics. The national Strategy for the Development of the National Statistical System and the Action Plan for 2016–2020 includes a special measure on gender statistics under an objective on strengthening statistical services and products that are compatible with socioeconomic indicators for the 2030 Agenda and with international standards (including EUROSTAT). This assessment relied primarily on statistics produced by the National Bureau of Statistics. Wherever relevant and available, administrative data produced by ministries and agencies or from dedicated research projects is also included in the final CGA report.

The National Bureau of Statistics regularly produces gender statistics that are available to the public through online databanks (for example, Gender Pulse⁴). These databanks cover all of the domains of the United Nations Statistical Commission recommended minimum set of gender indicators (demographics, participation in decision-making, education and training, health and economic empowerment) although not all of the 52 suggested indicators. The National Bureau of Statistics publishes specialized analysis and data collections on gender themes, including on entrepreneurship, the information and communication technology (ICT) sector, time use and domestic violence.

Despite the availability of quite extensive sex-disaggregated data, there are gaps in gender statistics that had an impact on this assessment. First, gender statistics are seldom further disaggregated by settlement type (rural or urban), and therefore national statistics do not give a full picture of how gender and spatial disparities intersect. Thus, there is limited data that capture how the lives of rural women and men differ from those of their urban counterparts. Moreover, multiple disaggregation, for example by sex, age, ethnic minority status and other characteristics “limits the integration of intersectional perspectives into the ‘Leave No One

³ No. 5-XVI of 9 February 2006.

⁴ Available at <https://genderpulse.md>.

Behind' ... analysis", especially in the context of the rural population (UN Women, 2021, p. 11).

Second, gender statistics that cover indicators related to agriculture are not produced on a regular basis. However, when the first General Agricultural Census of the Republic of Moldova was conducted (in 2011), the data were analysed from a gender perspective and compiled in a special report (*Women and Men in Agriculture of the Republic of Moldova*). This publication is unique among the countries of the Europe and Central Asia region for which CGAs have been conducted. The agricultural census produced important baseline information on disparities between women and men in terms of their access to assets, inputs and services that can be used to compare the situation a decade later. FAO advises that an agricultural census be conducted every ten years, and a combined population and agriculture census for the Republic of Moldova is planned for 2024. In preparation, the National Bureau of Statistics, with technical assistance from FAO, has piloted a survey of time worked on agricultural holdings to collect sex-disaggregated data for the further development of monitoring indicators for Sustainable Development Goal 2 (on food security and promoting sustainable agriculture).⁵ The regular data collections on agricultural production, generated by the National Bureau of Statistics, are disaggregated by categories of producers (based on the size of their holding) but not by the sex of the head of the holding. Therefore, the gender profile of agricultural holdings in the Republic of Moldova in this assessment is primarily based on the sex-disaggregated data produced from the 2011 agricultural census.

For the agricultural census, the head of the holding refers to the person in whose name the agricultural holding is operated and who is legally

and economically responsible for the activities of the farm – shown in statistical collections as the "manager/head of the holding" (National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, 2013). It should be noted that some available gender statistics are disaggregated by the sex of the head of the household (which could include rural farming households). The "head of household" concept as a statistical unit in surveys differs from that of the head of an agricultural holding. Historically in data collection, the head of household concept presumed that there is a single decision-maker who represents the interests of the household. The primary decision-maker and owner of assets is typically an adult male, unless this person is not present in the household. This approach may obscure situations in which various household members are responsible for decision-making or in which there are multiple economic providers.

In the Republic of Moldova, the general criteria used in national surveys, such as the population census and household budget survey, for identifying the head of a household (when not a single-person household) include highest personal income, age, personal authority, and ownership rights, or tenancy title over the dwelling. The determination of who is the household head is undertaken by the respondent her/himself, as recognized by other members of the household, and according to the above criteria.

FAO, as well as other United Nations and international agencies, have supported several surveys designed to quantify the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in the Republic of Moldova. These are referenced in this report.

Finally, it should be noted that since 1998, some official statistics of the National Bureau of Statistics are presented without data for districts from the left bank of the Nistru river and the municipality of Bender. This notation applies to national data reproduced in this report, unless it is specified otherwise.

⁵ Specifically for Target 2.3, indicators 2.3.1 (the volume of production per labour unit, by size of farming and forestry enterprise) and 2.3.2 (average income of small-scale food producers, by sex).

2. Country overview

2.1. Administrative and territorial divisions of the Republic of Moldova

The Republic of Moldova is divided administratively into territorial units: districts, cities (municipalities) and villages (communes) that are organized on two levels sub-nationally. Level I consists of villages (communes) and cities (municipalities), and level II is constituted by districts (there are 32 in total), the Chisinau municipality and the Balti municipality.

The village (*satul*) is the smallest administrative-territorial unit, and two or more villages can be united to form a single unit known as a commune (*comuna*). Cities are territorial units comprised of urban populations, and municipalities are urban localities with special status. Districts are territorial units that unite cities or villages/communes. With some villages vanishing as people leave the countryside, and the possibility of territorial reform, even the number of rural territorial units is subject to change. As of 1 January 2020, the Republic of Moldova had 107 territorial units that would be considered “urban” (13 municipalities, 53 cities and 41 settlements within cities) and 1 575 that would be considered “rural” (916 villages – defined as those where communal councils are located – and 659 localities which are part of communes). These figures include administrative-territorial units from the left bank of the Nistru river (National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, 2020j).

Much of this Country Gender Assessment is structured around assessing inequalities in rural areas. In the Republic of Moldova, as in other countries, there is a certain fluidity in whether a particular territory would be considered “rural”, “urban” or even “semi/peri-urban”. Because of national specifics, no standard international definition of a “rural” area has been established. FAO recommends that the definition of a rural area be based on “factors relevant in determining or explaining outcomes of interest ... as opposed to referencing outcomes themselves” (FAO, 2018a, p. 15).

Box 1. Classification of “rural” areas in the Republic of Moldova

The National Bureau of Statistics disaggregates data for a number of indicators by “urban” and “rural” areas. In national statistics, a village is classified as an administrative-territorial unit that “includes the rural population united by territory, geographical conditions, economic, socio-cultural relations, traditions and customs, in which most of the labour force is concentrated in agriculture, forestry, fishing, offering a specific and viable way of life for its inhabitants, and which, through modernization policies, will keep its rural specificities”. In contrast, cities are characterized by a labour force that is mainly engaged in non-agricultural activities.

Source: National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova. 2003. Clasificatorul Unităților Administrativ-Teritoriale al Republicii Moldova (CUATAM) [Classifier of Administrative-Territorial Units of the Republic of Moldova]. In: *National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova*. Chisinau. Cited 29 January 2022. <https://statistica.gov.md/pageview.php?l=ro&idc=3856>

Most definitions of rural areas address one or more of the following three dimensions: scarcity of population in a settlement; land cover and land use; and remoteness of the settlement (FAO, 2018a). In the context of gender analysis, the particular dimensions that are included or excluded in the classification of an area as “rural” may not adequately capture the realities of women’s and men’s lives. For instance, considering areas as rural based on their remoteness might be helpful to understand limited access to services, especially when issues of mobility are also taken into consideration. On the other hand, if assessing how women and men are engaged in agricultural production, a remoteness classification might overlook people who engage in farming in peri-urban areas.

Increasingly, the United Nations and other international organizations, including FAO, advocate for classifications that consider the degree of urbanization (that would differentiate between cities, towns, suburban or peri-urban areas, villages, remote rural areas and mostly uninhabited areas, for instance). FAO has proposed a harmonized urban-rural definition that is people-based and uses “a continuum that characterizes settlements based on population size and density” (FAO, 2018a, p. 25). This type of classification is effective for policymaking on improving the well-being of households and communities and would also help to capture gender differences across a spectrum of settlement types.

This report uses the term “rural” in line with the National Bureau of Statistics’ classification⁶ of a village (*satul*): a settlement that is characterized by the majority of the workforce being engaged in activities related to agriculture, forestry and/or aquaculture. Qualitative studies, referenced in this report, tend to use the term “rural” with its commonly accepted meaning, without specifying a particular definition. Additionally, the territorial division of “settlements within cities (municipalities)” (*localități din componența orașelor [municipiilor]*) refers to locations that could be considered semi-urban or peri-urban areas. Indeed, research conducted in the Republic of Moldova has increasingly drawn attention to peri-urban areas as distinct settlement types, although there is not yet an official definition of this term (in either statistics or in the context of policymaking). With the intensification of internal migration from rural areas towards urban areas (to the Chisinau municipality, in particular), it may become increasingly useful to devote attention to defining spaces that do not fit the rural-urban dichotomy, especially when considering issues such as time devoted to unpaid work, access to services or the changing use of land for agriculture in peri-urban areas, for example.

The Republic of Moldova includes two regions with special status: the autonomous territorial unit of Gagauzia, whose legal status was recognised in 1994, and the administrative-territorial units from the left bank of the Nistru river, known as Transnistria. In 1990, the Moldovan Republic of Transnistria proclaimed its independence, but it has not been recognized by any state, and the United Nations considers the territory to be part of the Republic of Moldova. Transnistria is not controlled by the Government of the Republic of Moldova.

This CGA is not intended to cover in detail the gender issues related to the Transnistrian conflict. Yet, it is undeniable that the conflict has had serious impacts on lives of women in the Republic of Moldova. Furthermore, failure to resolve it has meant that latent and unrecognized problems continue on both sides of the river (Institute for Public Policy, 2019). The unresolved conflict in the Transnistrian region has an impact on the overall stability of the country. The United Nations Development Assistance Framework for the Republic of Moldova highlights the fact that “until a lasting settlement is agreed upon, economic growth on both sides of the Nistru river and progress towards supporting human rights will continue to be challenging” (Government of the Republic of Moldova and United Nations Moldova, 2017b, p. 71). In the context of realizing Agenda 2030, the conflict not only challenges territorial integrity, but it also impedes the implementation of structural reforms across the entire territory of the country – a prerequisite for sustainable and inclusive development (Government of the Republic of Moldova, 2020a). The Moldovan authorities are committed to a peaceful, sustainable and all-encompassing settlement of the conflict (ibid.).

2.2. Macro-level view of gender equality

Several indices that measure progress towards gender equality from a high-level perspective indicate that while the Republic of Moldova is a country of generally high human development, critical inequalities persist.

The Human Development Index (HDI) is a measure used by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) that considers a long and healthy life, average years in education and a decent standard of living (income per capita). The Republic of Moldova’s HDI value of 0.750 places it 90 out of 189 countries.⁷ From 1990 to 2019, the HDI value increased by 8.7 percent (UNDP, 2020b).

In order to review how gender inequality affects a country’s level of human development, UNDP uses the Gender Development Index (GDI) which compares the HDI calculated separately for women and men in three dimensions: health, education and economic empowerment (command over economic resources).⁸ The female HDI value for the Republic of Moldova is 0.754 in contrast to the male value of 0.744, or a GDI value of 1.014. The country’s GDI is just above the average for the European and Central Asian countries

⁶ See the Classifier of the Territorial Units of the Republic of Moldova (CUATM) for the full classification.

⁷ In simple terms, HDI scores range from 1.00 (the highest possible level of human development) to 0 (the lowest level of human development).

⁸ The GDI uses the same scale as the HDI.

Table 2. Gender Inequality Index values for the Republic of Moldova, compared with regional values, 2019

	2019 GII value	Maternal mortality ratio (deaths per 100 000 live births)	Adolescent birth rate (births per 1 000 women aged 15–19 years)	Share of seats in parliament (% held by women)	Population with some secondary education (% aged 25 years and over)		Labour force participation rate (% aged 15 years and over)	
					female	male	female	male
Republic of Moldova	0.204	19.0	22.4	25.7	96.6	98.1	40.5	46.0
Europe and Central Asia Region	0.256	19.9	27.8	23.1	79.9	88.1	45.0	70.0
OECD countries	0.205	18.0	22.9	30.8	84.1	87.0	52.1	69.1

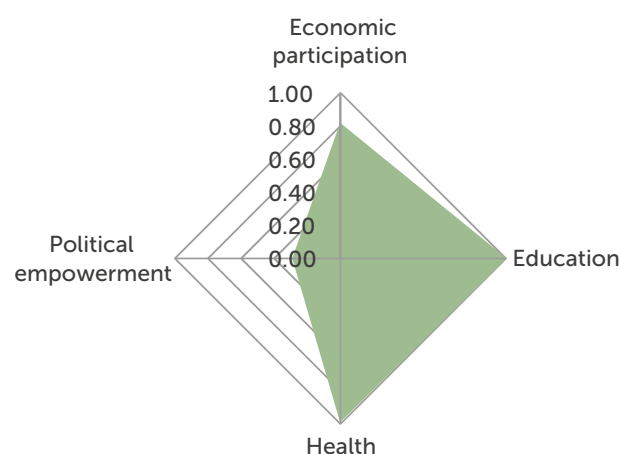
Source: Adapted from UNDP. 2020b. *The Next Frontier: Human Development and the Anthropocene, Briefing note for countries on the 2020 Human Development Report: Moldova (Republic of)*. New York. <http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/Country-Profiles/MDA.pdf>, p. 362, p. 364.

combined with a value of 0.953 (UNDP, 2020b). In terms of the dimensions that comprise the GDI, the greatest disparities in the Republic of Moldova are found in the level of access to economic resources (where women face greater barriers) and in average life expectancy (where men are disadvantaged).

The Gender Inequality Index (GII) is a measure of the loss in potential human development that can be attributed to disparities between female and male achievements in three dimensions (reproductive health, empowerment and economic activity, calculated as a composite of five indicators).⁹ The 2019 GII value for the Republic of Moldova was 0.204, representing a 20 percent loss in human development because of gender inequality (and corresponding to a rank of 46 out of 162 countries). Since 2010, when the GII was introduced, there have been steady incremental improvements in gender equality (in 2010, the GII value was 0.274¹⁰). As Table 2 indicates, the Republic of Moldova has seen positive achievements in the areas of education (as measured by near gender parity in literacy rates) and health (a maternal mortality rate which is close to that of countries with very high human development). Yet labour force participation rates are low for both women and men when compared with the regional averages for Europe and Central Asia

and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries combined.

The Global Gender Gap, developed by the World Economic Forum, measures gender parity in four dimensions (economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment), allowing for a more detailed assessment of progress towards gender equality. In 2021, the Republic of Moldova received a score of

Figure 1. Global Gender Gap scores for the Republic of Moldova, by dimension, 2021

Source: World Economic Forum. 2021. *The Global Gender Gap Report 2021*. Geneva, p. 279.

⁹ For the GII, a value of 0 indicates full equality and a value of 1.00 represents the highest level of inequality.

¹⁰ See UNDP Gender Inequality Index data (1995–2019), available at <http://hdr.undp.org/en/data>.

0.768¹¹ which corresponds to a rank of 28 out of 156 countries (World Economic Forum, 2021). Of the four dimensions, the country is the farthest from parity in the area of political empowerment, but the country also scores lower than the global average for economic participation (see Figure 1).

Looking at Global Gender Gap scores over time and comparing scores from 2006 to those from 2021, near gender parity in health and survival and education has been maintained over the decades. Conversely, progress towards closing gender gaps in the other dimensions has been minimal.

2.3. Policy and institutional profile

2.3.1. International commitments on gender equality

The Republic of Moldova is a party to the UN **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women** (CEDAW) and has submitted six periodic reports on implementation of the treaty, the most recent of which was reviewed in 2020. The convention draws attention to the significant roles that rural women play “in the economic survival of their families, including their work in the non-monetized sectors of the economy” and requires States to ensure that rural women and men participate in and benefit equally from rural development (Article 14). The CEDAW Committee’s general recommendations (for example, general recommendation number 16 [1991] on unpaid family workers and number 34 (2016) on the rights of rural women) expand on the commitments of States parties relevant to this CGA.

The Republic of Moldova has undertaken commitments to advance the agenda of the **Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action**. In its strategic objectives, the Beijing Platform for Action includes a number of references to women in rural areas and in particular their risks for poverty and social marginalization. The Beijing Platform for Action calls on governments to formulate and implement policies that enhance the access of women agricultural and fisheries producers to a range of productive resources.

The Republic of Moldova also supports the principles contained in the **UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas** (2018). Although it is a non-binding document, the Declaration expresses the intention to address multiple forms of discrimination, noting that even though rural women,

“... play a significant role in the economic survival of their families and in contributing to the rural and national economy ... [they] are often denied tenure and ownership of land, equal access to land, productive resources, financial services, information, employment or social protection, and are often victims of violence and discrimination in a variety of forms and manifestations” (United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas, p. 3).

In terms of binding commitments, the Republic of Moldova is not a party (nor a signatory) to the **International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families**. While the treaty is not limited to the rural population, it would increase protections for the large number of migrant and seasonal workers who leave rural areas, as well as the families they leave behind. In its most recent country review, the CEDAW Committee recommended ratification of this treaty (Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, 2020, para. 48).

The **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** is a global commitment to improving prosperity for all through many actions, including combating inequalities, promoting inclusivity, protecting human rights and promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. Many of the **Sustainable Development Goals** (SDGs) have particular relevance for rural populations, such as those on ending poverty (Goal 1), achieving food security, improving nutrition and promoting sustainable agriculture (Goal 2) and providing universal access to clean water and sanitation (Goal 6). Goal 5 on achieving gender equality and empowering women includes one target that refers explicitly to gender equality related to agriculture and rural livelihoods: target 5.A on undertaking reforms to grant women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources. Additionally, other Goal 5 targets, such as ending discrimination against women and girls, recognizing unpaid care work and ensuring full and effective participation in all levels of decision-making, are especially relevant to the lives of women and girls in rural areas. The pledge to “leave no one behind” represents an obligation to consider the situation of women and girls in rural settlements throughout the 2030 Agenda. Gender equality is a critical accelerator for the other SDGs and thus gender equality should be approached as a cross-cutting consideration.

¹¹ A score of 1.00 represents gender parity and a score of 0 represents a complete lack of parity.

The Government of the Republic of Moldova has committed to implementing the 2030 Agenda and is in the process of adapting and integrating the SDGs into national strategic planning. Specific work has been ongoing to define gender-sensitive indicators. After expert analysis and a national review were undertaken in 2020, a list of 129 gender-sensitive indicators was approved, covering 63 national targets for 14 of the SDGs (UN Women, 2021). These indicators fall into two groups: those that are disaggregated by sex and those that reflect specific inequalities that women and girls face in the Republic of Moldova. In addition to Goal 5, the gender-sensitive indicators are concentrated in SDG 1, SDG 3, SDG 4 and SDG 16. Of the 129 indicators, around a third are fully available through existing systems, 42 percent are partially available and the missing elements can be estimated, and 22 percent are missing and will require additional actions to produce them (ibid.). Regarding Goal 5, it was recommended that the gender equality goals and targets be both streamlined in one national policy document and reflected as a cross-cutting issue in the comprehensive National Development Strategy “Moldova 2030” (Government of the Republic of Moldova and United Nations Moldova, 2017a). Experts have also noted that despite the identification of more than one hundred gender-sensitive indicators, methodologies to measure indicators for gender and poverty, women’s access to assets including land, sexual harassment, and gender and the environment and climate change are still lacking (ibid., p. 11).

2.3.2. National law and policy

The legal base for equality between women and men is relatively extensive and is established foremost by the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova (1994). Article 16 (part 2) of the Constitution guarantees equal rights regardless of sex, as well as a number of other characteristics. Separate legislation reiterates the principles of gender equality and non-discrimination in all areas of public and private life:

- » Law on Ensuring Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (2006, amended in 2016)¹²
- » Law on Ensuring Equality (2012)¹³

Together, these laws define important concepts such as “discrimination” (both direct and indirect forms), “equal opportunities” and special temporary measures or “affirmative action” designed to accelerate progress towards equality and to overcome pre-existing discrimination and disadvantage. The Law on

Ensuring Equal Opportunities for Women and Men establishes an institutional framework for monitoring gender equality, at the national and local levels, and requires the National Bureau of Statistics to produce sex-disaggregated data. In outlining the competencies of key governmental institutions, the law supports gender mainstreaming processes (discussed in Section 2.3.3. of this assessment).

The Law on Ensuring Equality prohibits discrimination on the basis of several protected characteristics, including sex, specifying three areas in which discrimination has a particularly negative impact: in employment, education and access to public services and goods. This law establishes the Council for Preventing and Eliminating Discrimination and Ensuring Equality, part of the national mechanism for gender equality.

Policy documents that directly address gender equality

National policy on promoting gender equality is set forth in two documents:

- » Strategy on Ensuring Equality between Women and Men in the Republic of Moldova for 2017–2021 and its Action Plan
- » National Human Rights Action Plan for 2018–2022

The Strategy on Ensuring Equality between Women and Men in the Republic of Moldova for 2017–2021 and its Action Plan build on an earlier National Programme on Gender Equality in the Republic of Moldova for 2010–2015, adopted to put into effect the concluding observations of the CEDAW Committee. Like the National Programme for 2010–2015, the current Gender Equality Strategy espouses an integrated approach to the promotion of gender equality, outlining ten areas for intervention (women’s participation in decision-making; gender gaps in the labour market and wages; social protection and family policies; health; education; climate change; the institutional mechanism; stereotypes and non-violent communication; gender equality in the security and defence sector; and gender responsive budgeting). The Gender Equality Strategy notes many of the challenges that women in rural areas face. For instance, it acknowledges that women in rural areas are disadvantaged because they do not have economic opportunities and “thus, empowering women in rural areas must be one of the key priorities of government policies” (Government of the Republic of Moldova, 2017, para. 12).

Arguably, all of the tasks under the Action Plan to implement the strategy are beneficial to rural women

¹² No. 5-XVI of 9 February 2006.

¹³ No. 121 of 25 May 2012.

and girls, but the plan also includes three actions that target rural women and for which the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry (MAFI) has primary responsibility. Two are under a priority on gender mainstreaming of vocational guidance in order to improve access to non-traditional professions and one is under a priority on climate change. They are:

- » Strengthening the capacity of educational institutions and professional training to meet the needs of the rural labour market and to support policies to diversify and improve agricultural production.
- » Training and capacity development of smallholder farmers to establish small and medium-sized enterprises to increase productivity and to transition to higher value activities in the chain.
- » Implementing gender-sensitive amendments to sectoral policy documents (transport and road infrastructure, agriculture, energy, water supply and sewerage, food security, regional development and construction, health) related to the issue of climate change.

The National Human Rights Action Plan for the period 2018–2022 aims to strengthen human rights protection, including in the area of gender equality. This action plan has a more limited focus than that for fulfilling the Gender Equality Strategy, as it links gender equality mainly to the issues of violence against women and the empowerment of women and girls, with reference to young women’s limited access to non-traditional fields of study and professions. Notably, the National Human Rights Action Plan does not take an intersectional approach and addresses the human rights of people in rural areas as separate from gender inequality, with the exception of objectives to ensure universal access to quality health services (which calls for monitoring to be conducted by sex and living environment) and access to sexual and reproductive health services for women and girls in vulnerable groups (noting the particular needs of rural populations in relation to modern, safe abortion services).

Note that other women-focused national strategies and programmes, on entrepreneurship and violence against women, for example, are discussed in separate sections of this assessment.

Sectoral policy documents that mainstream gender

Other strategic documents that are relevant to this assessment acknowledge differences in the status of women and men and the potentially differential impacts of national policy and programmes.

First, the **National Strategy on Agriculture and Rural Development for 2014–2020** includes a short section that reiterates the Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment (MARDE) commitment to engage in gender mainstreaming in “all policies and programs” through the use of gender analysis and the participation of women in decision-making (Government of the Republic of Moldova, 2014, para. 2.5). The National Strategy itself does not include substantial analysis of gender gaps in agriculture nor does it make use of gender specific indicators related to its expected results (generic indicators for “employees”, “agricultural producers”, “farmers” and “rural migrants” are used). The National Strategy on Agriculture and Rural Development should be read in conjunction with the Gender Equality Strategy. However, if more thorough gender mainstreaming had been applied to the sectoral strategy, it would have brought greater visibility to important gender differences in agricultural employment, positions in value chains and access to agricultural innovations, to name a few. In turn, deeper gender analysis would have allowed for the design of gender-sensitive interventions. At the time of conducting this CGA, a new National Strategy on Agriculture and Rural Development for 2021–2030 was being elaborated.

The country’s long-term and comprehensive National Development Strategy “Moldova 2030” is the road map for implementing the government’s commitments under Agenda 2030; it is also aligned with the European Union Association Agreement. In setting forth ten strategic objectives for sustainable development, the “Moldova 2030” strategy draws attention to the situation of particularly vulnerable groups and the ways in which spatial disparities (living in a rural area) intersect with gender disparities as well as others (such as those based on age or disability). For instance, some of the mentioned vulnerability factors for women include their lesser earning power compared with men, their role in unpaid caregiving and housework, and the risk of energy poverty among women-headed households. Many priority areas of the strategy address improving the lives of the rural population generally and for women specifically (for example, creating an enabling environment for entrepreneurship; ensuring all families have access to early childhood education and care facilities).

Gender is mainstreamed into several other sectoral policy documents, all of which also raise issues connected to challenges for the rural development of the country, including the National Strategic Programme on Demographic Security for 2011–2025; the Programme for Integration of Aging Issues into Policies (2014) and the Action Plan on the Integration

of the Principle of Active Aging for 2018–2021; and the National Employment Strategy for 2017–2021. Notably, the Strategy on Water Supply and Sanitation for 2014–2030 requires a gender perspective to be included in the field of water resources management, “as well as the promotion of more active participation of women in decision-making in this area” (Government of the Republic of Moldova, 2014, section IV).

Policy documents in which gender has not been mainstreamed

Gender mainstreaming is more common in policies pertaining to the social sector, such as those listed above, and less often informs policymaking in fields relevant to agricultural production, the economy or the environment. Even without conducting a comprehensive review of all relevant policy, it is still possible to point to several policy-setting documents in which gender considerations were excluded. For example, the Strategy for the Development of Rural Extension Services for 2012–2022 does not acknowledge gender differences in access to rural advisory services generally, or particular types of services, nor does it include indicators to measure improvements in closing gender gaps. Likewise, the Environmental Strategy for 2014–2023 does not mention potential gender differences in the use or knowledge of environmentally-friendly agricultural practices. Previous policies, such as the Strategy for Adaptation to Climate Change in the Republic of Moldova until 2020 and the National Program for Transition to a “Green” Economy for 2018–2020, did not include gender analysis even though there are potentially important gender considerations (for example, the disproportionate impacts of climate change on women smallholders or women’s potential to adopt ecological farming practices). The result of incomplete gender mainstreaming is an inconsistent approach. While gender considerations are fully incorporated into long-term development strategies, such as “Moldova 2030”, they are often missing from the more targeted policies and plans that guide the implementation of high-level strategies.

The government acknowledges that although the legal and regulatory framework in support of gender equality is in place, a number of challenges to gender mainstreaming remain across all sectors. Authorities are reluctant to take a comprehensive approach to gender equality in sectoral policy documents (Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, 2019). This situation reflects the lack of awareness among policymakers of the necessity of gender mainstreaming. Furthermore, gender mainstreaming depends on the engagement of gender experts at

the policy formulation stage and requires oversight of whether gender considerations are being effectively incorporated in the planning and implementation of sectoral policies and programmes.

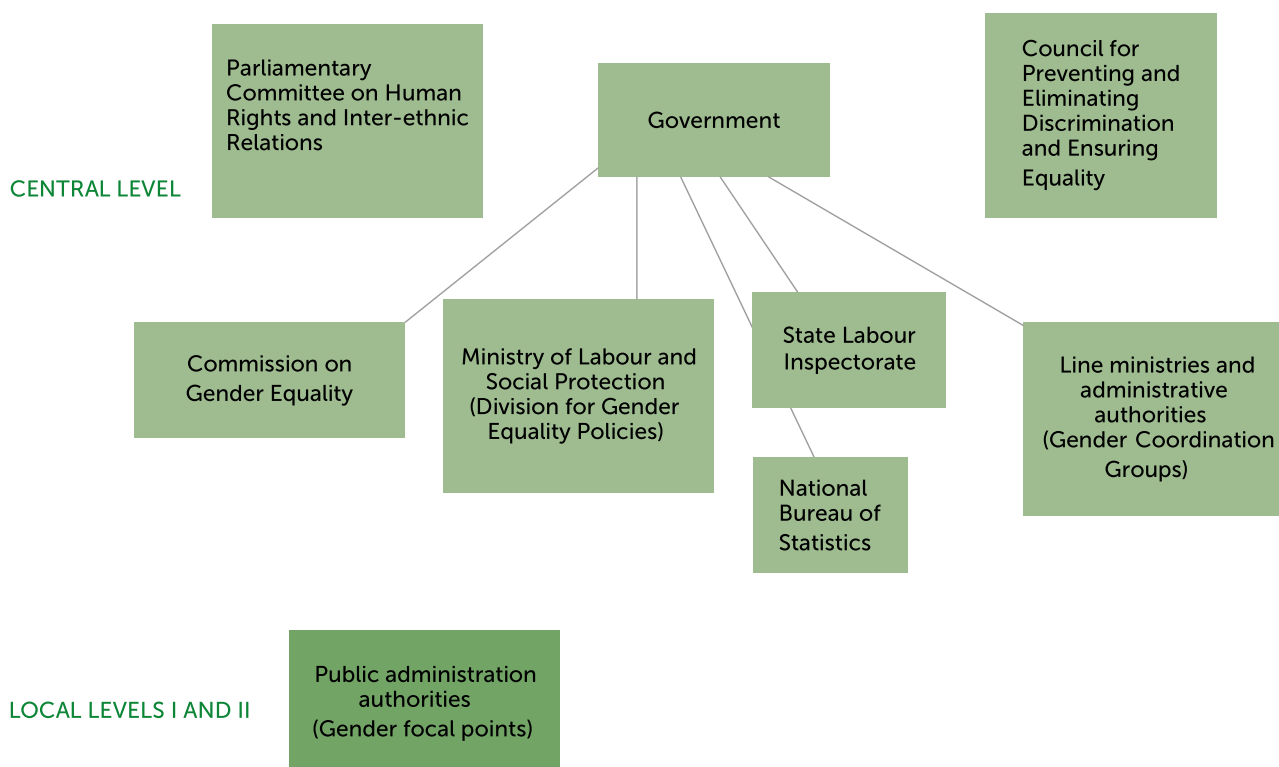
2.3.3. Institutional mechanisms responsible for gender equality

Amendments to the Law on Ensuring Equal Opportunities for Women and Men in 2016 strengthened the national machinery on gender equality at the central and local levels. The law delineates nine “institutional mechanisms” with authority for ensuring equal opportunities for women and men¹⁴: (i) Parliament; (ii) the Government; (iii) a government Commission for Equality between Women and Men; (iv) the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection; (v) the State Labour Inspectorate; (vi) line ministries and other central administrative authorities; (vii) local public administration authorities; (viii) the National Bureau of Statistics; and (ix) the Council for the Prevention and Elimination of Discrimination and Ensuring Equality. These institutions have differing mandates but together form the national machinery, as depicted in the simplified graphic.

Within the parliament, the standing Committee on Human Rights and Inter-ethnic Relations considers issues of women’s and children’s rights. Within the government, three bodies have mandates that cover gender equality: (i) the Commission on Gender Equality, which has the lead coordinating role in gender mainstreaming of public policies and programmes; (ii) a special division of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection on Gender Equality Policies; and (iii) a system of Gender Coordination Groups located within the policymaking subdivisions of line ministries and other central administrative authorities. The head of each relevant public institution coordinates the activities of its Gender Coordination Group, which carry out gender mainstreaming and gender impact analyses.

The National Bureau of Statistics has two functions with respect to promoting gender equality: collecting, processing and compiling sex-disaggregated data and receiving sex-disaggregated data and information submitted by central and local public authorities, and from other relevant agencies and organizations. In this manner, the National Bureau of Statistics depends on a network of other institutions to conduct its work with gender sensitivity in order to produce the required statistics. At the time of conducting this assessment, there was no subdivision of the National Bureau of Statistics dedicated to gender equality issues.

¹⁴ Chapter V, Article 15.



The Council for Preventing and Eliminating Discrimination and Ensuring Equality is an autonomous public body, also at the central level, with a mandate to prevent and protect against discrimination and to promote equality and diversity. The council serves a quasi-judicial role in that it hears complaints from victims of discrimination and issues decisions. Its members are appointed by the national parliament. The council formally collaborates with the People's Advocate (Ombudsperson's office) of the Republic of Moldova, a central-level public authority that operates independently. The People's Advocate does not have a particular department on gender equality, but the institution has prepared reports on discrimination against women for the CEDAW Committee.

The national machinery includes local-level structures, namely gender focal points located in public administration authorities (at the first and second levels). Gender focal points sit within subdivisions with responsibility for policy development, implementation and monitoring, and their main purpose is to ensure gender mainstreaming "in policy, programs, regulatory acts and financial investments" (Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, 2019, para. 136).

One of the objectives of the Gender Equality Strategy for 2017–2021 is the strengthening of the institutional mechanism for gender equality, highlighting the need for a "dual approach" that includes both gender mainstreaming and dedicated public policies for advancing gender equality (Government of the

Republic of Moldova, 2017, para. 44). Thus, anticipated activities under the strategy include institutionalizing a systematic approach to training civil servants while also capitalizing on the competencies of each public sector institution to implement the strategy itself.

While acknowledging that institutional mechanisms are in place, the government has also identified several critical areas of weakness: insufficient financial and human resources (the latter because of frequent staff turnover); the lack of training programmes for members of the Commission on Gender Equality, the Gender Coordination Groups and gender focal points; and limited intersectoral cooperation and persistent gender stereotypes among professionals with responsibilities for gender mainstreaming (Government of the Republic of Moldova, 2017; Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, 2019).

Public sector reforms, which have been ongoing in the Republic of Moldova since 2017, have affected the functioning of the national machinery. Political instability and frequent changes of government, combined with the low priority assigned to staffing and funding for the relevant structures, has meant that many parts of the national machinery have ceased to function. The Division for Gender Equality Policies, of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, and the Council for Preventing and Eliminating Discrimination and Ensuring Equality have continued to operate, albeit without adequate resources or the mandates to cover gender mainstreaming across all public policy (Platform for Gender Equality from Moldova, 2020; Council

for Preventing and Eliminating Discrimination and Ensuring Equality, 2020). The government Commission on Gender Equality has suspended its activities in the context of ongoing reform of the central public authority since 2017 (Platform for Gender Equality from Moldova, 2020).¹⁵ Some Gender Coordination Groups and gender focal points are functional, but this is not the case for every ministry or public administration.

Government restructuring has meant that there have been changes to the government bodies responsible for agriculture and rural development. The previous Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment (MARDE) was divided into the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry (MAFI) and the Ministry of Environment in 2021. At the time that this Country Gender Assessment was conducted, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry was in the process of personnel recruitment and the establishment of a new Gender Coordination Group was expected to begin once the relevant departments had been staffed.

There are considerable disparities between the central and local levels in terms of capacity for gender mainstreaming. The establishment of Gender Coordination Groups has been more comprehensive. Yet, several years after the institutional mechanism was established, the legal obligation to form gender units in local public administrations is “ignored or unknown” and therefore there are almost no resources or capacity for gender mainstreaming at the level of local decision-making (Platform for Gender Equality from Moldova, 2020, p. 6). A system for increasing the capacity of civil servants within the national machinery has not become institutionalized. However, a number of special training events for members of Gender Coordination Groups from the former Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry, as well as gender focal points, have been conducted in recent years, generally initiated and carried out by international development and civil society organizations.

The CEDAW Committee has recommended several actions to strengthen the national machinery, including: ensuring that there is a functional body within the cabinet with responsibilities for the promotion of gender equality; increasing coordination between the local and central levels, and between gender focal points, ministerial groups and the other relevant government entities; and conducting systematic training on women’s rights and gender equality for civil servants, both at the time of induction and regular refresher courses, with monitoring of their progress (Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, 2020). The CEDAW Committee also points out that the gaps in the national machinery are holding back the implementation of national legislation on gender equality and the Gender Equality Strategy.

2.4. Demographic profile

2.4.1. Population, sex ratios and household composition

In 2020, the usual resident population of the Republic of Moldova was 2 640 438 people. Women make up more than half of this total (1.37 million women and 1.27 men). It is worth noting that different population categories have been used for statistical purposes in the Republic of Moldova, and it is important to differentiate between the two. The *usual resident population* (populația cu reședință obișnuită) refers to persons who have continuously lived in the country for most of the previous 12 months, not including temporary absences. This concept is different to the *resident population* (populație stabilă), a previously used definition that also included people who were temporarily absent from the country, for instance labour migrants.¹⁶ Since 2019, the National Bureau of Statistics has produced data for the *usual resident population*, according to the definition as revised in 2014. However, the most recent breakdown of data by both sex and geographic location has only been calculated for the *resident population*.

More than half of the country’s resident population (56.9 percent) lives in rural areas, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Resident population of the Republic of Moldova, by sex and area of residence, 2019

Total		Rural areas		Urban areas	
Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
1 840 277	1 702 431	1 027 403	987 822	812 874	714 609

Source: Generated from National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova. Statistical Databank: Resident population, as of January 1, by years, areas and sex. In: *National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova*. Chisinau. Cited 25 January 2022. <http://statbank.statistica.md/PxWeb/pxweb/en>

¹⁵ In 2020, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection delegated the tasks of the Commission on Gender Equality to the Human Rights Council, which contravenes the Law on Ensuring Equal Opportunities for Women and Men.

¹⁶ For comparison, in 2019 the resident population of the Republic of Moldova was calculated as 3 542 708 people.

Household composition does not vary greatly by location. The majority (around 60 percent) of both rural and urban households consist of one or two persons. While large households are not common, rural households are more likely to include five or more persons: 7.7 percent of all rural households compared with 5.6 percent of urban households (National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, Statistical Databank: Structure of households, by size of households and areas, 2019–2020).

Households headed by women are less common in rural areas than in towns and cities, but they still represent just over a third of rural households. Female-headed households (FHHs) are much more likely to be formed by a single person than those headed by men. Male-headed households (MHHs) are usually family couples without children or with one dependent child. However, women represent the majority of household heads among single-parent households (National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, 2011).

2.4.2. Depopulation and migration

The Republic of Moldova is experiencing a demographic crisis in the form of continual population decline, attributed to a decrease in the birth rate and the consequences of international emigration, including labour migration. An annual population decline of around 1.8 percent is evident across the country, with exceptions for Chisinau and central regions, but it is especially acute in rural areas. The National Development Strategy “Moldova 2030” states that about five percent of the population currently lives in very small and isolated rural communities (of less than 1 000 people), in which a large number of households have been abandoned because of internal and external migration. The 2014 population and housing census showed that 18 percent of the country’s houses and apartments were uninhabited (Government of the Republic of Moldova, 2020b).

Large-scale migration has had profound effects on the population. The number of people who are “either labor migrants themselves, or whose members of the household are such, is approaching the threshold of 1 million people, which exceeds a quarter of the country’s population” (Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, 2019, p. 2). The community of labour migrants is a vital lifeline for thousands of Moldovan households. In fact, the Republic of Moldova is one of the most remittance-dependant countries in the post-Soviet region and globally. In 2019, personal remittances equalled 16 percent of the country’s GDP¹⁷ (World Bank, 2019).

Labour migration is mainly undertaken by the working age population and can be either internal movement from rural areas to cities, especially to Chisinau, or migration abroad (international migration). A significant proportion of young people from rural areas who leave to study in cities do not return to their villages after graduating. Almost three-quarters of all labour migrants originate from rural areas, mainly in the south of the country (ILO, 2017). Economic factors are the key motivators for migrant workers to leave the Republic of Moldova.

The proportion of women and men who emigrate short-term from the country (calculated from border crossing records) is almost equal; in 2019, 47 percent of emigrants – those who left the country for at least nine months before returning – were women and 53 percent were men (National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, Statistical Databank: Emigrants and immigrants based on border crossing data, by age groups, years, indicators and sex). When women migrate, they often do so for the long term. The National Bureau of Statistics estimated that in 2014 women made up 36 percent of all migrants but 44 percent of long-term migrants (UN Women Moldova, 2016).

More than half of labour migrants (55 percent) were employed before leaving the Republic of Moldova. Of those with employment, the largest group worked in agriculture (43.4 percent), followed by construction (13.3 percent), wholesale and retail trade (11.6 percent) and other professions (ILO, 2017). These figures, however, do not include subsistence agriculture (which is not defined as a form of employment). If such work were included, the average employment rate of migrants would increase overall. Education and employment data show that men are more likely to find work abroad in the same field as their former employment (for example as drivers, electricians, mechanics and construction workers). The majority of men migrate for construction work, followed by work in transport and logistics, hotel services, light industry and commerce. Women migrant workers are on average better qualified than male migrant workers, but there is less alignment of their skills in so much as they are not able to match their former work (for example as doctors, teachers, nurses or public servants) with the jobs available to them in host countries (UN Women Moldova, 2016). Women mainly undertake domestic or care work in private households, and a smaller number are engaged in service sector work in hotels and restaurants, followed by commerce.

Women represent the main group of migrants from the Republic of Moldova travelling to the European

¹⁷ The remittance value is based on International Monetary Fund balance of payments data and World Bank and OECD GDP estimates.

Union for work (primarily Italy, followed by Germany, Spain, France and Portugal); men form the majority of migrants to the Russian Federation.

While they provide critical income to their families in the form of remittances, migrants are also vulnerable to labour exploitation. The International Organization for Migration estimated that in 2019 around 22 percent of Moldovan labour migrants had precarious working status in countries of destination in the European Union (including, for instance, short-term contracts, working without contracts, and irregular and informal work; Government of the Republic of Moldova, 2020a). Assessments of risks have found that women migrants have better access to social protections (such as health insurance and unemployment insurance), while the incidence of exploitation is higher among men migrants. The fact that men are more often engaged in seasonal migration leaves them especially vulnerable to informal labour arrangements (UN Women Moldova, 2016). When the COVID-19 pandemic struck Europe in early 2020, labour migrants with irregular status (for example, those without formal work contracts) were left without sources of income or access to unemployment and other social benefits in the host countries. Women migrants in Italy (an estimated 45 000 women) who worked in domestic care and often lived with host families lost their employment at the same time as their accommodation. Migrant men working in the Russian Federation also lost livelihoods and faced reduced incomes when construction projects were suspended (Government of the Republic of Moldova, 2020a).

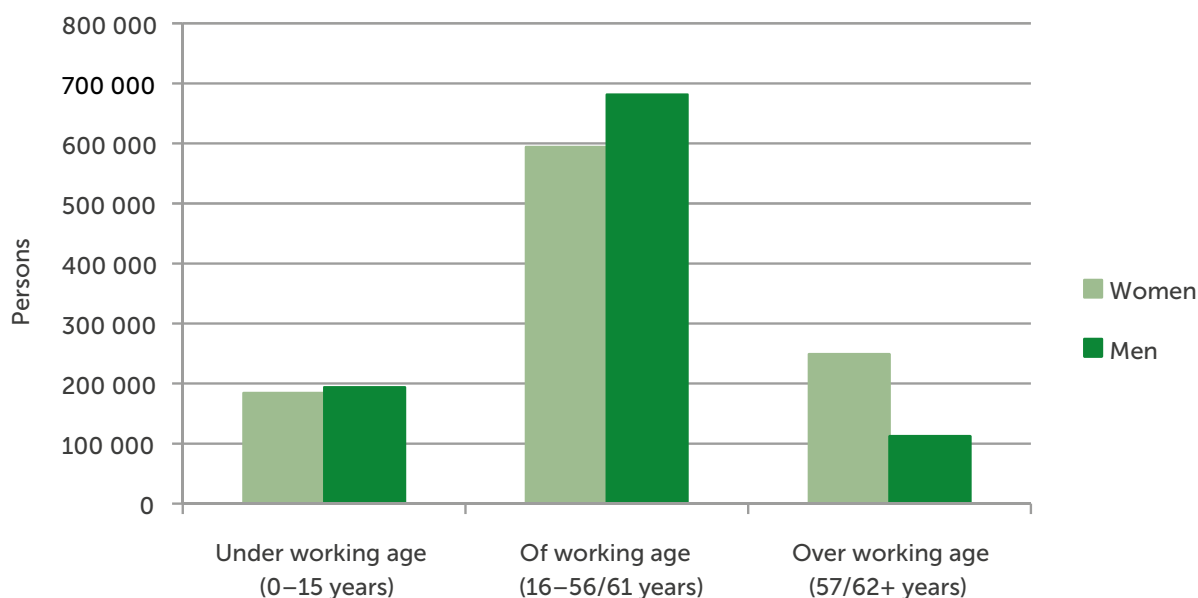
When labour migration is on a large scale as it is in the Republic of Moldova, it affects intra-family dynamics, for example resulting in children who are essentially “left behind”. This phenomenon is more pronounced for rural families. While most migrants have children, it is very rare for parents to migrate as a family. In 2015, it was estimated that 23 percent of rural children under the age of 18 had at least one biological parent working abroad, and for 6 percent of rural children, both biological parents had migrated (UNICEF Moldova, 2016). For children of two migrant parents, 90 percent are raised by their grandparents, and they may not see their parents more than once or twice a year. For women who migrate to the European Union, their average length of stay is almost 2.5 years. Because of the type of work women perform, they are less mobile. In contrast, men labour migrants tend to be employed seasonally, and so they to return to the Republic of Moldova when work is not available, generally after 12 months (Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, 2019).

The erosion of family structures has an impact on all family members. Children who are left behind take on more household responsibilities (especially if their mother has migrated; Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, 2019). Men, who face pressure to migrate in order to fulfil the breadwinner role, miss out on valuable time with their families and in raising children. A larger proportion of women migrants is over the age of 30, and this is due in part to the fact that women tend to migrate once their children are old enough to live with other family members. This also means that a significant number of women are left behind, after a spouse migrates, and they take on the de facto head of household role, which may include running a family farm. Single mothers have drawn attention to the problem of non-payment of alimony (child support) by fathers who work abroad. Such women are often unprotected by the law (NGOs “TarSMI”, Human Rights Information Center (CIDO) and Taraclia Single Mothers Group, 2020).

2.4.3. The older population in rural areas

Migration internally and internationally, and declining fertility and birth rates, have resulted in the Moldovan population having a higher average age than that of neighbouring countries. However, the urban population is younger than the rural population, and thus a greater share of older people resides in small towns and villages. Out of all of the households in the Republic of Moldova consisting only of older people, almost two-thirds are in rural areas (National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, 2021b). This demographic situation presents various challenges. The Republic of Moldova is one of few countries in the Eastern Europe and Central Asia region in which older people are poorer than the average population. Older persons who live in rural areas are at high risk of monetary poverty, because of their dependence on agriculture and lower pensions, as well as poverty associated with limited infrastructure and services (Dávalos *et al.*, 2017).

Because women live longer on average than men in the Republic of Moldova, ageing is also feminized. Older women are concentrated in rural areas. Within the rural population, men slightly outnumber women in the working age group (16 to 56 years for women and 61 years for men), but into older age, the female population outpaces that of the male population. Among village residents who are of retirement age, women outnumber men by two to one (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Resident population of rural areas, by sex and age group, 2019

Source: Generated from National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova. Statistical Databank: Resident population by main age groups, as of January 1, by years, age groups, area and sex. In: *National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova. Chisinau. Cited 25 January 2022.* <http://statbank.statistica.md/PxWeb/pxweb/en>

Older women in rural areas have a high degree of vulnerability and dependency. Their pensions are lower on average (because of shorter formal work histories) which leaves them susceptible to poverty. In 2014, the absolute poverty rate for rural older women was almost twice that for older women in urban areas (UNDP and UN Women, 2016a). With age, women may become increasingly socially vulnerable as they are more likely to be living alone. After age 75, 40 percent of men are widowed compared with 78 percent of women of this age group (ibid.). Here, rural women may have an advantage over their urban peers, as they are more likely to be living in extended families into old age. Still, the overall quality of life is poor for older rural women who usually do not have access to the same household goods, infrastructure and services (including health care) that ease life for women in urban settings.

2.4.4. Minority groups

Gender and other personal identities or characteristics (such as ethnicity, age, ability/disability, residence, socioeconomic status and sexual orientation) interact with each other. Intersectional and multiple forms of discrimination in the context of this Country Gender Assessment refer to situations in which the rights and opportunities of women who belong to minority groups are even more limited than those of either women or men from the majority population. From the point of view of policy development and programming, it is important not only that gender differences be given consideration but also that the implications of how inequalities intersect are understood. Gender

analysis should include analysis based on other minority statuses in order to ensure that no one is left behind.

In reporting on achievements and challenges in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action, the Government of the Republic of Moldova acknowledged that specific groups of women have not benefited from the same advancements, for instance Roma women, women living in rural areas, women living with HIV, women in detention, migrant women, women with disabilities and others (Government of the Republic of Moldova and Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection, 2019).

Considering ethnic groups, the 2014 Population and Housing census in the Republic of Moldova recognized seven distinct groups, in order from the largest population to the smallest: Moldovan, Romanian, Ukrainian, Gagauz, Russian, Bulgarian and Roma. At the time, Roma people made up only 0.3 percent of the population (or 9 323 people), but these figures are considered to be an underestimate because of issues of self-determination or a desire to hide one's ethnicity. Organizations representing Roma people put the figure as much higher: for instance, it has been estimated that there are almost 52 000 Roma women in the country (or 1.5 percent of the total population (Roma Women and Girls Network in Republic of Moldova "Moldsolidaritate", 2020). Roma communities tend to live in concentrated settlements that are isolated from other groups, with an estimated one-third of the Roma population living in rural areas (ILO, 2018). Roma rural households usually have substandard infrastructure, do

not have agricultural lands and are poorly integrated into local labour markets, making them vulnerable to informal working arrangements, poverty and food insecurity.

National policy refers to the situation of Roma women and girls in only limited ways. The Gender Equality Strategy notes that Roma women and girls are vulnerable to gender-based violence. The national Action Plan Supporting the Roma People in the Republic of Moldova for 2016–2020 aims to improve educational opportunities for Roma girls, but it does not consider other specific issues that Roma women and girls encounter. Roma women's organizations in the Republic of Moldova have documented many forms of intersecting discrimination, encompassing access to political office, education, medical services and decent work. Roma women who live in rural areas experience even greater marginalization than other rural residents.

Where it is available, this Country Gender Assessment provides information about the situation of Roma women and girls living in rural areas. Furthermore, the report aims to depict the diversity of the rural population, which can include people with disabilities and as well as other groups. As a first step, this report identifies areas in which disparities exist, with the idea that further analysis of the situation of rural women and men belonging to minority groups can be elaborated in the context of FAO programming.

2.5. Socioeconomic profile

Known as the "garden" of the Soviet Union, what is now the Republic of Moldova was one of the most important producers of high-value horticultural products and wine for the entire region, because of its rich farmlands, agricultural specialists and abundant labour. With its declaration of independence in 1991, the country underwent a significant transition from a centralized economy, with its sole Soviet market, to a market economy. The Republic of Moldova has advanced from the group of low-income countries to that of lower middle-income countries. While agriculture has declined in importance in terms of its share in the country's gross domestic product (GDP), it remains an important economic force, accounting for ten percent of GDP in 2020 (World Bank, 2022).

In recent years, the Republic of Moldova has maintained economic growth. Gross domestic product has increased by about four percent per capita, driven by the construction, agriculture and food industry sectors (Government of the Republic of Moldova, 2020a).

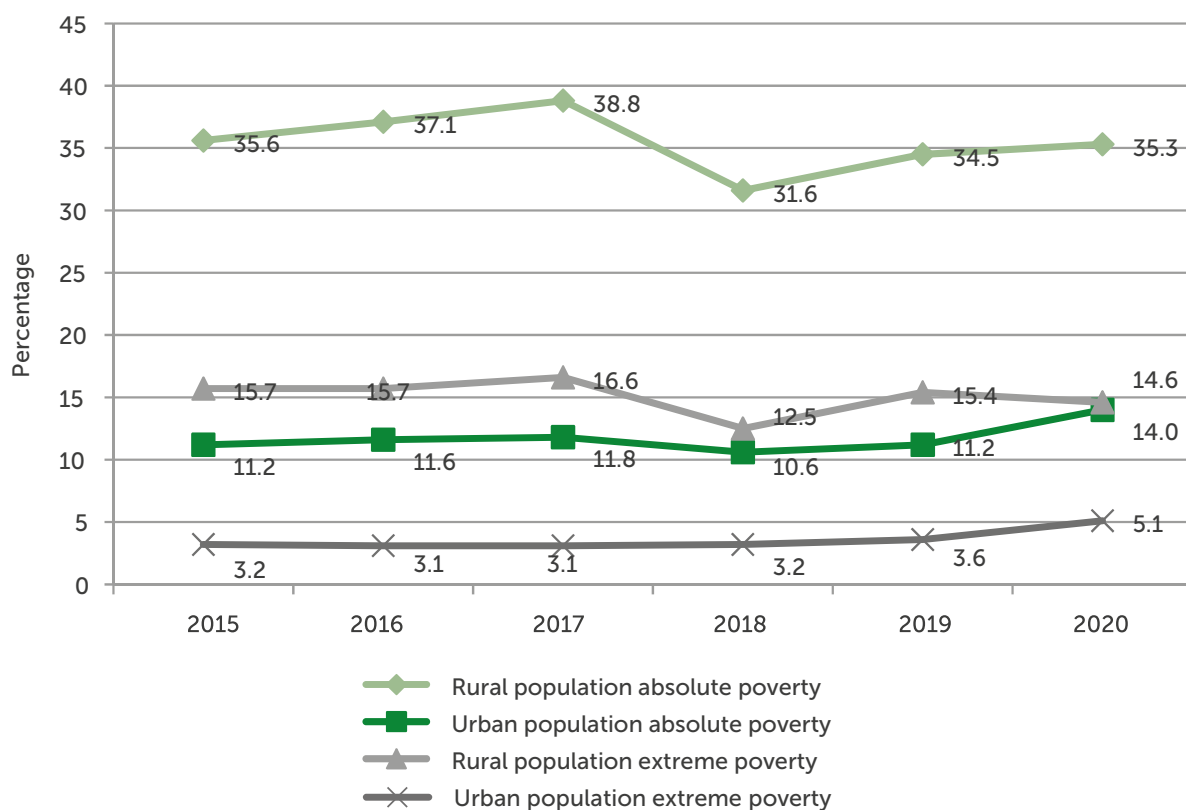
Social and economic policies have contributed to an overall decline in the poverty rate. For the population as a whole, the absolute poverty rate was on the decrease, reaching its lowest point (23.0 percent) in 2018. The extreme poverty rate was also at its lowest in 2018 (8.7 percent), however both the absolute and extreme poverty rates increased in 2020. While poverty rates were on a declining trend, the COVID-19 pandemic has deepened inequalities in a number of dimensions, especially for vulnerable groups. The pandemic not only had an almost immediate negative impact on already vulnerable groups, such as poor households, but it also exposed other groups to new risks. It is important to note that after 2019, the methodology for the Household Budget Survey was modified, which means that while the data from previous years are presented together in this assessment, they should not be directly compared.

Area of residence has long been one of the strongest determinants of household poverty. Rural households are disproportionately more affected by both absolute poverty and extreme poverty than urban households. The gaps between the rich and poor are much more pronounced in urban environments, while a certain level of poverty is more characteristic for entire rural communities (see Figure 3).

Poverty levels also diverge by region. In 2019, the poverty rate in the South region was 40.4 percent compared with only 4.4 percent in Chisinau.

Wages are the main source of income for the population (50.2 percent of income), followed by social benefits (18.7 percent), transfers from abroad (12.4 percent) and income from individual agricultural activities (8.9 percent; National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, 2020d). The rural population, pensioners and people who are self-employed in agriculture all have disposable income levels lower than the national average; in the case of the latter group, it is more than one-third lower (ibid.).

Poverty in rural households reflects the low incomes and wages associated with the agriculture sector, the larger contributions of social allowances (especially pensions) and the high dependency on income transfers from abroad. Remittances make up 16.1 percent of the incomes of the rural population, in comparison with 9.4 percent for the urban population (National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, 2021c). It has been estimated that around a third of rural households would be pushed below the poverty line were it not for remittances (IOM, 2020). The significance of remittance income is worth noting in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. While the

Figure 3. Rates of absolute poverty and extreme poverty for rural and urban populations, 2015–2020

Note: In 2019, the absolute poverty line was on average MDL 2 095.1 per person/month; the extreme poverty line was on average MDL 1 689.7 per person/month.

Sources: National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova. 2020f. Informații statistice cu privire la indicatorii sărăciei în funcție de caracteristicile de bază ale gospodăriilor și ale populației (Anexă) [Statistical information on poverty indicators according to the basic characteristics of households and the population (Annex)] from Nivelul sărăciei în Republica Moldova în anul 2019 [Poverty level in the Republic of Moldova in 2019]. In: *National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova*, 31 December 2020. Chisinau. Cited 29 January 2022. <https://statistica.gov.md/newsview.php?l=ro&idc=168&id=6865&parent=0> [in Romanian]; additional data provided by the National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova.

impact of the pandemic on poverty rates among rural households has not been fully assessed, there are concerns that income and non-income inequalities have increased. A survey conducted among Moldovan labour migrants in ten destination countries (April–May 2020) revealed that half had regularly remitted income home before the health crisis, but 80 percent reported a decrease in the remittances they sent home during the pandemic. Of these, 41 percent stopped transferring money entirely (ibid.). While there were no meaningful gender differences in the ability of men and women migrants to send remittances, rural women were more affected than any other group by the loss of this income source. For rural women, almost a third of their income (29.5 percent) consists of remittances, compared with 16.2 percent for rural men and 15.6 percent for urban women (UN Women, 2020). Given the economic downturns that have followed the global pandemic, there is a high risk that rural women, who were already economically vulnerable, will be pushed below the poverty line. The extent to which rural households generally, and rural women in particular, are able to cope will also depend on the availability of other

sources of income, from employment and social transfers.

The older rural population fares worse financially than the older population that lives in urban areas. Rural households consisting only of older people rely mainly on social allowances for income (allowances make up 65.2 percent of their incomes), followed by individual agricultural activities (contributing 14.2 percent of their monthly incomes; National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, 2021b). Older people living alone spend the largest proportion of their monthly incomes on food – half of their income (compared with older people living alone in urban areas and with households of mixed ages), which suggests that they are at risk of food insecurity.

The gender dimensions of poverty are often not evident when women and men are treated as homogeneous groups in official data. However, as Figure 4 demonstrates, absolute poverty rates are higher for households that are headed by women (29.3 percent) compared with households headed by men

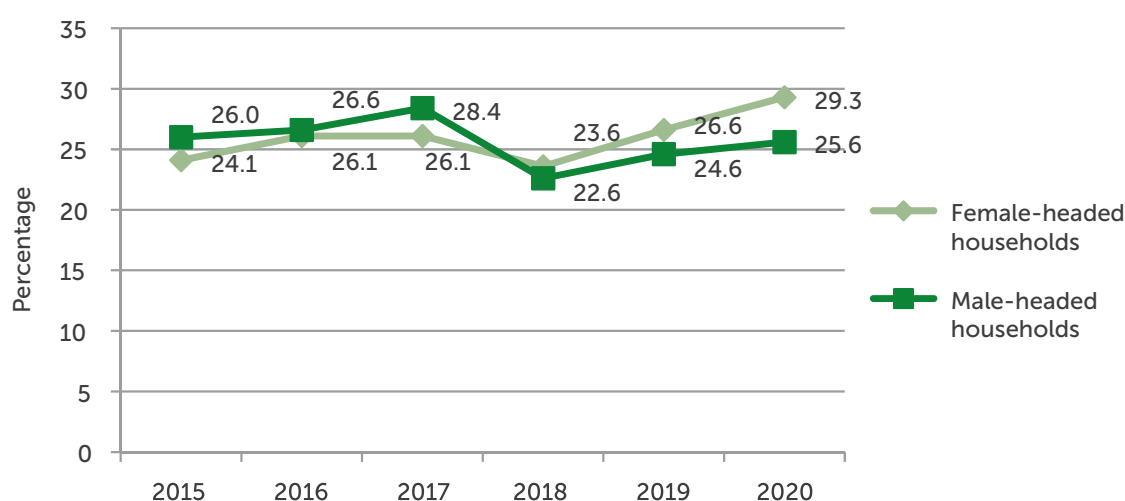
(25.6 percent; National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, 2020f).

For rural households headed by men, a greater share of their disposable income is derived from wages and self-employment (representing around two-thirds of their income) than it is for households headed by women (where these sources account for just under half of their disposable incomes). Most of this income is from wage employment as opposed to self-employment. For MHHs, 17.1 percent of their income is from self-employment in agriculture, and for FHHs, this figure is 10.6 percent. Social protection payments, mainly remittance income, followed by pensions, are a more significant income source for rural FHHs, making up more than a quarter of their disposable income (27.3 percent). For MHHs, social protection payments are a roughly equal share to what they earn from self-employment in agriculture (National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, Statistical Databank: Disposable population incomes, by years, sources of income, areas, sex of household head and unit). The fact that women heading households depend on agriculture for ten percent of their income should not be overlooked as it suggests that they would be a particular beneficiary group for developments in the agriculture sector. In 2020, the amount of their disposable income derived from self-employment in agriculture was just over half of what men heading households earned (MDL 279 on average per month, compared with MDL 467; *ibid.*), which may reflect both the smaller size of women-led households but also their more limited access to various resources, including land and agricultural inputs.

Taking a multidimensional view of poverty, that considers not only monetary poverty but also poverty of living standards and access to basic services, poor quality work, time poverty and disempowerment for example, the risk of poverty for women living in rural areas becomes very high. Rural women in the Republic of Moldova are “four times more prone to absolute poverty, and their unequal economic and social status makes them more exposed” (Government of the Republic of Moldova and Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection, 2019, p. 52). A survey of rural women living on both the right and left banks of the Nistru river found that poverty was a serious concern. More than half (54.8 percent) felt that poverty was a problem “to a large extent or a very large extent” and a similar proportion felt that they had limited possibilities for employment (Institute for Public Policy, 2019, p. 24).

Intersecting factors, such as lower levels of education and the average older age of women in rural areas, also correlate with greater vulnerabilities to poverty. The topic of old age pensions is explored in greater detail in Section 5.6. of this report, but it should be noted that the average old age pension for women is less than that for men, and pensions for employees of the agriculture sector do not cover the subsistence minimum, thus contributing to rural poverty. Risks for poverty are greater among women from minority populations who are in vulnerable situations because of their financial dependence. For instance, around 66 percent of Roma women were estimated to be under the national poverty threshold, which is approximately 30 percent greater than the rate for non-Roma women (UNDP and UN Women, 2016b).

Figure 4. Absolute poverty rates, by sex of the head of household, 2015–2020



Note: From 2019, data are not comparable with those of previous years because of modifications to the Household Budget Survey methodology.

Source: National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova. Statistical Databank: Absolute poverty rate, by sex of household head and years. In: *National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova*. Chisinau. Cited 25 January 2022. <http://statbank.statistica.md/PxWeb/pxweb/en>

Women and men have different subjective views of poverty. Women are considerably more likely than men to assess their own status as poor: 36.1 percent of women but only 24.3 percent of men (Government of the Republic of Moldova, 2020a). This difference likely reflects how women and men perceive well-being and poverty. Perceptions of poverty are influenced by factors such as education level, employment status, household size, including the number of dependents in the household, ownership and control over various assets (land and property, for instance) and an individual's sense of economic dependence or independence, for example.

2.6. Health

The Republic of Moldova has made progress in most of the targets for SDG 3 on health and well-being, for example in reducing the mortality rate from non-communicable diseases, lowering the incidence of HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis and making progress towards preventing suicides and road accidents (Government of the Republic of Moldova, 2020a). Key strategic goals for the country under the 2030 Agenda concern reducing health inequalities, especially in access to health services in rural areas and improving insurance coverage.

In terms of general lifetime health, the average life expectancy at birth in the Republic of Moldova is 69.8 years, which is lower than the average for the Europe and Central Asia region combined and more than a decade lower than the average for the OECD countries (National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, Statistical Databank, Life expectancy at birth, by years, area and sex; UNDP, 2020a). Women's average life expectancy is longer than men's, with a difference of eight years. This gender gap is similar to that seen in other post-Soviet countries of high human development (for example, Georgia, the Russian Federation and Ukraine), but is twice as large as the gap observed in countries of Western Europe (for instance, in Austria, Belgium and Germany the male/female gap in life expectancy is less than five years).

In the Republic of Moldova, both female and male rural residents have shorter life expectancies than urban residents, and the gender gap in life expectancy is also slightly greater for the rural population. A breakdown by both sex and geographic location has most recently been calculated in 2018 for the resident population, as shown in Table 4.

Many of the main causes of death – malignant neoplasms, diseases of the digestive system and diseases of the circulatory system – have the same prevalence among men and women. However, the death rate for some causes is considerably higher for men, namely because of accidents, intoxication and trauma (the mortality rate for men is four times that for women), diseases of the respiratory system (more than twice the rate) and infectious and parasitic diseases (twice the rate; National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, 2020j). The higher mortality rates for men for these causes are closely associated with gender-based differences in professions (and men's greater exposure to occupations that pose health risks) as well as lifestyle differences, such as higher rates of smoking and alcohol abuse among men.

Intersectional data about gender- and location-based differences in health status are limited, but it has been noted that new cases of active tuberculosis are higher among older people, especially among men, and in the rural population. In 2020, around 63 percent of new tuberculosis cases were registered among the 55 years and over population in rural areas (National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, 2021b). Some behavioural risk factors vary by geographic location and gender. Specifically, the prevalence of alcohol consumption and heavy episodic drinking is higher in rural areas for both men and women, tobacco use varies little by location for men but is lower among women in rural areas, while obesity is significantly higher for rural women but a similar prevalence for men in rural and urban areas (WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2020).

One of the key health challenges for the country is lowering the mortality rate among the able-bodied

Table 4. Life expectancy at birth, by sex and area of residence, 2018

Life expectancy at birth (years)					
Rural population		Urban population		Total population	
female	male	female	male	female	male
75.7	67.4	79.2	71.9	77.1	69.1

Source: Generated from National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova. Statistical Databank: Life expectancy at birth, by years, area and sex [Resident population]. In: *National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova*. Chisinau. Cited 25 January 2022. <http://statbank.statistica.md/PxWeb/pxweb/en>

working population, which requires prevention of accidents and promotion of healthy lifestyles as well as early identification and adequate treatment for cardiovascular, oncological and communicable diseases. Improving access to high-quality health services is a pressing issue for rural communities.

Health care is guaranteed through a system of mandatory public medical insurance, which in 2018 covered 88.2 percent of the population (UNDP Moldova, 2020a). The proportion of the insured population has been increasing, but the number of uninsured people is still quite large. Furthermore, out-of-pocket payments are significant, equal to around 43.6 percent of total health expenditure in 2017 (Government of the Republic of Moldova, 2020a). The share of households for which health expenditures were more than ten percent of total household expenditures has decreased, but the system of making informal payments for health services remains and presents a serious barrier to accessing medical care for those in low-income categories (*ibid.*).

While national data on the health insurance coverage rates for rural and urban women and men were not found for this assessment, there is a clear correlation with income levels and wealth. The rural population is less likely to use health services because of insufficient financial means and lack of health insurance. When they do use medical services, people in the poorest quintile and the least insured, and those who live in rural areas, tend to rely on general practitioners and have less frequent access to specialist services (UNDP Moldova, 2020a). One survey indicated that only 40 percent of rural women have health insurance, and of those who do not have it, every second respondent explained that they had not purchased insurance because they did not have money to do so (Institute for Public Policy, 2019). Women who work informally or in unremunerated agricultural jobs do not have access to employment-based health insurance.

A further issue affecting the ability of the rural population to access good-quality and specialized health services is the lack of facilities and specialists outside of urban areas. More than half of the Republic of Moldova's hospitals are concentrated in Chisinau (Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, 2019). A study of women in rural communities found that 60 percent did not have access to health care centres or family practitioners locally and so must travel to urban centres for treatment; this problem is especially acute for women of pension age in the security zone on the left bank of the Nistru river (Institute for Public Policy, 2019). Some women living on the left bank of the Nistru prefer not to make use of

the free health care system, but if they can afford to do so, they purchase health insurance and seek treatment on the right bank of the river. The unmet demand for health care is especially high among certain minority groups, such as people with disabilities and Roma people, and if they are living in rural areas, the issue of accessible and specialized treatment becomes more acute.

Difficulties accessing medical facilities, as well as the cost of health insurance, explain why rural women make infrequent visits to doctors. For the country as a whole, women more often than men go without health care, in terms of both primary and inpatient treatment. Among women, the rate of refusals for inpatient health care is 5.1 percent compared with 2.7 percent for men. Additionally, over a third of women (as high as 36 percent) refuse hospitalization because of family issues. In contrast, only 25 percent of men invoke this reason (Government of the Republic of Moldova and Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection, 2019). Further analysis would be useful to understand what is behind the "family issues" that cause women to refuse treatment, for example, whether it is a reflection of the high cost of treatment, other priorities for the family budget or women's sense of obligation to household responsibilities.

Insufficient health services in rural areas are also attributable to the migration of young health professionals to work in urban areas and abroad that has left staff shortages. While this problem has been somewhat tempered by the overall population decrease because of outmigration (leaving less demand), there are still serious difficulties attracting young specialists to work outside of cities.

The overall impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the health of the population are not yet clear because the situation continues to change. As of November 2021, the number of confirmed coronavirus infections was higher among women than for men, and a greater percentage of women had died from COVID-19. Women represented 59 percent of recorded cases and 53 percent of deaths from coronavirus (United Nations Moldova, 2021). The higher number of cases among women likely reflects their overrepresentation in the health care sector. In May 2020, a quarter of all confirmed coronavirus cases were among health care workers, and the rate was highest for registered nurses (43.7 percent) compared with other staff (doctors, licensed practical nurses and auxiliary personnel; UNDP Moldova, 2020c). The pandemic has also had indirect health consequences. For instance, many individuals who became infected did not require hospitalization but were treated at home. In such circumstances, it

is the female members of the households who most often assume the care responsibilities for people who are ill. Thus, the health burdens of the pandemic have most certainly been gendered.

2.7. Education

The compulsory education system in the Republic of Moldova consists of primary school (Grades 1 to 4), lower secondary education (Grades 5 to 9 in a gymnasium) and upper secondary education (either Grades 10 to 12 in a lyceum or a form of secondary vocational education). Compulsory education ends after Grade 12. After completing either lower or upper secondary education, a student may enter post-secondary vocational training or go on to a degree course at the tertiary level. Note that early childhood and preschool education is discussed in a separate section of this report.

Educational enrolment

The Republic of Moldova has near universal enrolment of girls and boys in compulsory education. Important improvements have also been made in inclusive education that have facilitated access for vulnerable children. However, educational experiences and outcomes differ for some groups of children, by location and along gender lines.

The number of children with special needs or with disabilities mainstreamed into general educational institutions has increased in the country. However, among all enrolled children with special needs or with disabilities, the share of boys is greater than that of girls (boys represented 65.9 percent of enrolled special needs children in the 2020/2021 academic year; National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, 2020c). This pattern points to multiple forms of discrimination (on the basis of sex and ability). It also indicates the prevalence of stereotypes about the potential of girls and women with disabilities and the fact that professional training accessible to women with disabilities is extremely limited (Association of Entrepreneurs with Disabilities from Moldova – “European Abilities without Limits”, 2020). Most educational institutions are still not sufficiently adapted in terms of the physical space, access to technologies or specialized staff, and schools in rural areas have even fewer resources to accommodate children with special needs.

Roma children have dramatically lower participation rates in primary and secondary education compared with their non-Roma peers (54 percent gross enrolment for Roma children contrasted with

90 percent for non-Roma children; Government of the Republic of Moldova, 2020a). Roma girls in particular face difficulties completing their education. Their lower attendance rates and tendency to drop out have serious consequences for their future lives. Only 63 percent of Roma women, between the ages of 16 and 24 years, are literate compared with virtually all non-Roma women of the same age group (Council of Europe, 2018). The reasons for the low attendance rate of Roma children include household poverty, the lack of birth certificates needed for school enrolment and language barriers. Outside pressures and gender norms also contribute to Roma girls’ lower level of education. Roma families tend to prioritize boys when making decisions about allocating resources, and girls are kept out of school because they are expected to help with domestic chores and child care at home. Early marriage for Roma girls is an additional cause of school dropout (ibid.). In one survey, more than half of Roma women who had not completed compulsory education reported that they wanted to continue their studies but had no opportunities to do so (Roma Women and Girls Network in Republic of Moldova “Moldsolidaritate”, 2020).

The quality of rural education

Demographic changes, specifically migration (from rural to urban areas as well as abroad) and the declining birth rate, have resulted in an overall decrease in school enrolment, with a marked trend for rural schools. As of the 2020/2021 academic year, out of a total of 1 241 general primary and secondary education institutions, three-quarters are located in rural areas. Yet of all pupils in the Republic of Moldova, only 47.1 percent are enrolled in rural schools (National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, Statistical Databank: General schools and students, by types of institution and area, 2000/01–2020/21, published 2021).

The unequal distribution of educational services affects the quality of education in rural parts of the country. Despite significant investment in the education sector, many schools have poorly equipped sanitary blocks (in rural schools, toilets are usually located outside the building. This arrangement is neither safe nor sensitive to the hygiene needs of girls and women). Rural schools are less likely to have modern technologies, such as teaching labs or educational software, making it difficult for graduates to compete with their urban peers. Limited transportation means that it is challenging for rural residents to access educational facilities. Rural households have lower incomes in general, and thus face difficulties covering the fees associated with schooling (as well as informal payments that they may be required to make). All of these disparities contribute

to a rural-urban divide and “generate inequalities and unfairness in education which is more severe in rural areas” (UNDP Moldova, 2020a, p. 36).

It is typical that young people who leave rural areas to study do not return once they have completed their education, and this contributes to the overall lower educational level of the rural population compared with the urban population. This phenomenon is particularly noticeable when considering women’s educational levels. Less than half (46.4 percent) of women living in rural areas (aged 15 and older) have either higher education, specialized secondary or vocational secondary education, compared with three-quarters of women in urban areas (UNDP and UN Women, 2016c). The teaching profession is a “feminized” sphere: at the primary and secondary level, 87.4 percent of teachers and 91.8 percent of the total management staff are women (National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, 2020c), but the pool of qualified staff to teach basic subjects in rural primary and secondary schools is small. Furthermore, attracting teachers to rural areas where resources are limited and salaries are low is difficult. Teaching is perceived as “a socially vulnerable professional category” in the Republic of Moldova (UNDP Moldova, 2020a, p. 35). More than half of all teachers have 20 or more years of teaching experience, indicating that they are a highly-qualified group but also that the profession is ageing. With challenges in attracting and retaining recent graduates for posts in rural schools, there is considerable turnover in newly-qualified teaching staff.

In March 2020, the Moldovan authorities suspended in-person education for kindergartens, school and universities and introduced a system of online/remote schooling in order to contain the spread of COVID-19. While the full impact of the pandemic on access to education has not been fully analysed, it is theorized that educational disruptions were more severe in rural areas. Before the pandemic, internet connectivity rates were lower in rural areas, and rural households were less likely to have access to electronic devices. (This topic is discussed in more detail in Section 5.5. of this report). Children who were most at risk for disrupted education during the pandemic were those that were socially marginalized previously, including rural children, those from households with low incomes, with several children enrolled in school at once (if the family could not afford multiple devices, for example), children with disabilities (especially those requiring specialized education) and children prone to absenteeism or dropout. The gendered impacts of the transition to remote learning are unclear at this point, but pre-existing gender disparities in access to education were likely exacerbated. For instance, girls more often

reported limited or lack of free time and rest than boys during the period of remote learning (40 percent of girls and 29 percent of boys; UN Coordinated Education Task Force for COVID-19 in Moldova, 2020). This difference can be explained by girls being required to help with domestic chores by virtue of being at home rather than at school.

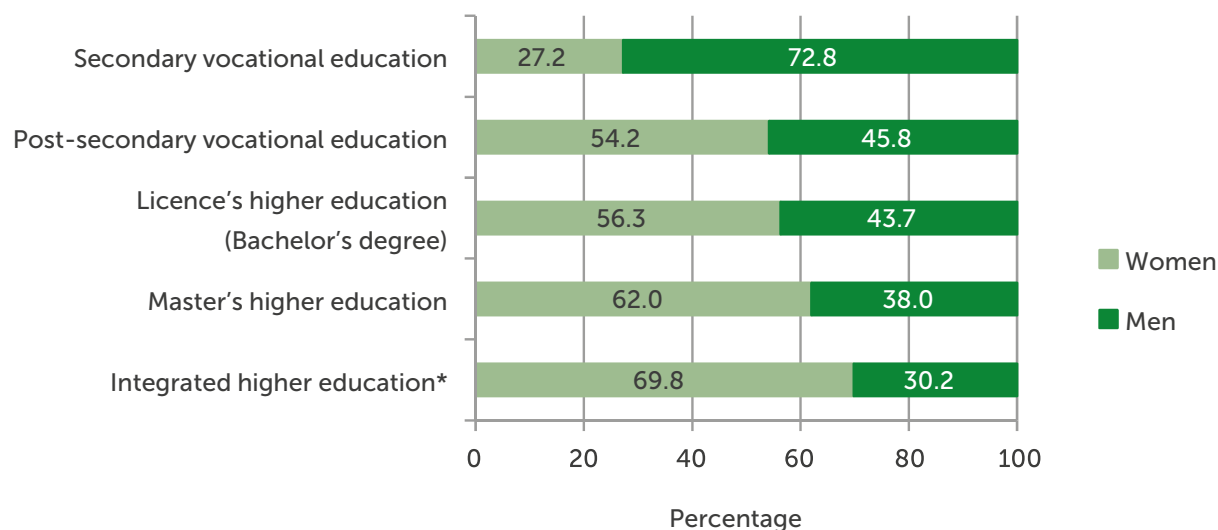
Gender stereotyping in education

Gender stereotypes in education are apparent in school attendance rates, in the streaming of boys towards vocational education and in the areas of study that young women and young men pursue.

School attendance is a separate question from enrolment. National data cover the number of out-of-school children, as opposed to the proportion of those attending and not attending school. In 2020, among all out-of-school adolescents and youth of secondary school age, 54.1 percent were girls (UIS, 2020). National data on school attendance are not disaggregated by settlement type, but rural children and children from poor and disadvantaged families are the most likely to attend school irregularly. While children drop out of school, or are absent for long periods, because of illness, the greater proportion of girls who are out of school is usually an indication that they are required to help at home. It is also common for boys to be kept from school to work on family farms or in family businesses in rural areas.

The proportion of boys enrolled in school declines after Grade 9 because they more frequently leave school at this time when entering secondary vocational education. Girls tend to stay longer in general education. Figure 5 illustrates this tendency. This pattern of educational enrolment is more prevalent in rural areas. In the 2020/2021 academic year, girls represented just over 58 percent of children enrolled in Grades 11 and 12 in rural schools, and 55 percent of those in urban schools (National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, Statistical Databank: Students in general schools, by area, grades and sex, 2000/01–2020/21, published 2021).

The large number of young men who enter secondary vocational education, as compared with young women, suggests, on one hand, that they face pressures to leave school at an earlier age in order to train for employment. On the other hand, they have greater employment opportunities either because the entry-level jobs that are available on the local labour market are geared towards young men or because they can find work through labour migration. The fact that young men (aged 18 to 24) leave the educational

Figure 5. Enrolment in vocational and higher education in the 2020/2021 academic year, by sex

Note: *Integrated higher education applies to programmes in medicine and pharmacy, veterinary medicine and architecture.

Source: Generated from National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova. Statistical Databank: Education. In: *National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova*. Chisinau. Cited 25 January 2022. <http://statbank.statistica.md/PxWeb/pxweb/en>

system earlier than young women of the same age (20.6 percent of young men but only 13.1 percent of young women) is another indication both that young men are able to find unskilled work but also that they encounter specific challenges to obtaining higher education or training (genderpulse.md, 2020a).

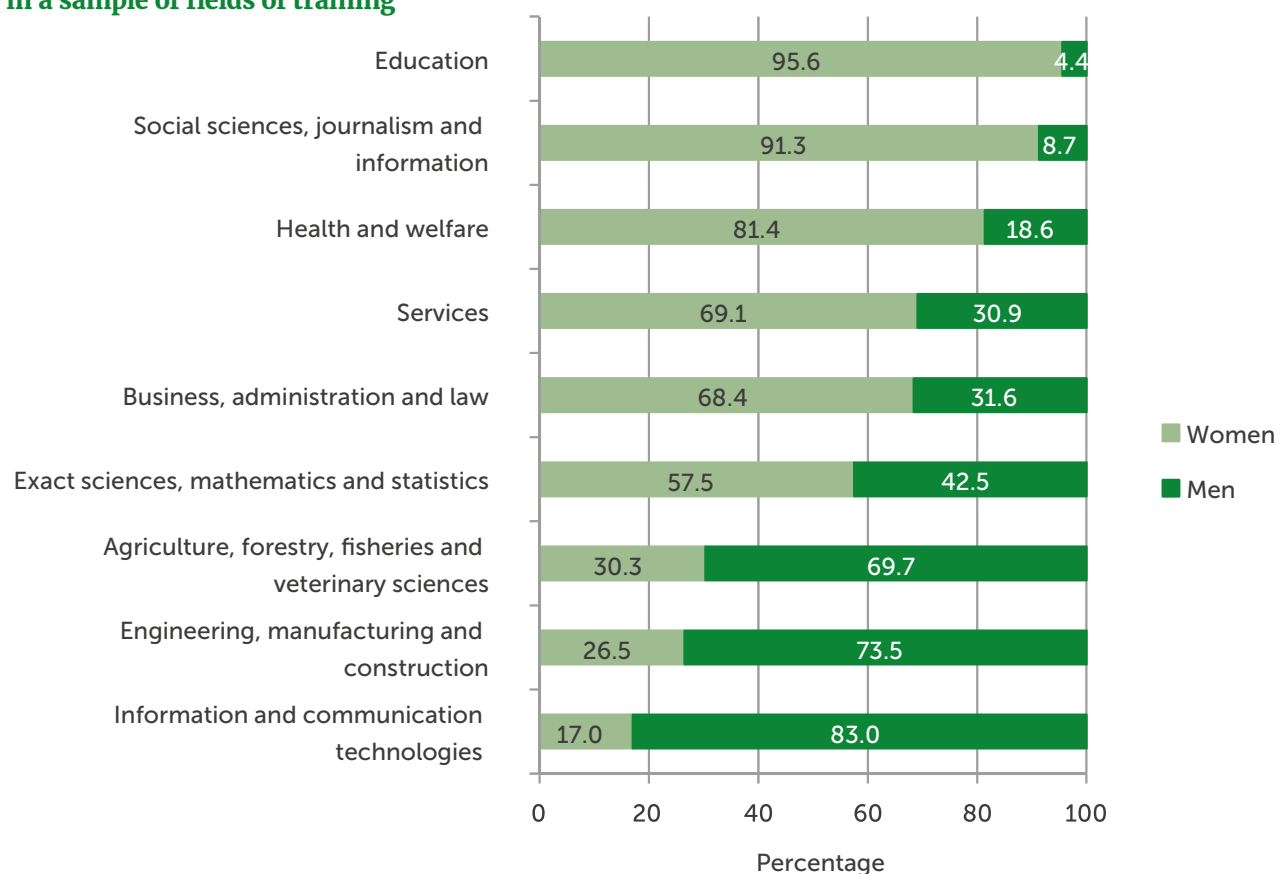
If young women of the same age group have the resources to do so, they spend on average more years in education, as indicated by the fact that they represent considerably more than half of students enrolled in advanced degree courses in tertiary education, as shown in Figure 5.

The educational choices of young women and men exhibit a distinct asymmetry that results in patterns of gender segregation in academic subjects. Focusing on post-secondary vocational education where there is near gender parity in enrolment, young women are nevertheless encouraged to study subjects and trades that are traditionally associated with "female professions". Women are concentrated in the following academic subjects: education, health (including social work), business, administration and law (including accounting, financial services and secretarial work) and services (most often in the beauty, hospitality and tourism sectors). In contrast, young men predominate in scientific and technical fields, such as engineering trades, manufacturing and processing, construction, information and communication technologies (ICTs), as well as in transport services. Men's fields of study correspond to higher paid and in-demand jobs (see Figure 6).

The CEDAW Committee commented on the lack of diverse educational choices for girls and women and their low enrolment in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects as well as in ICTs. The Committee recommended that further action be taken to eliminate prevailing stereotypes that deter women and girls from enrolling in such fields and to encourage them to choose non-traditional fields of study and career paths (Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, 2020).

It does not appear that gender stereotypes about "appropriate" fields of study for women are any more ingrained in rural communities but are in fact common across the country. When asked to categorize specific fields as most and least suitable for girls' future careers, young women aged 14 to 18 in rural and urban areas gave remarkably similar answers, identifying beauty services, education, public administration and the food industry as the most "suitable" and construction, agriculture and transport as the least (Magenta Consulting, 2014, p. 40). In expressing their personal interest in particular subjects, however, rural women were less interested than their counterparts in STEM subjects, such as agriculture, mathematics, architecture, engineering and ICTs. Additionally, they expressed stronger dislike for computer science classes at school than those living in urban areas, and they were considerably more likely to mention that information technology is "not a subject for girls" than their urban peers (39 percent of rural girls held this opinion; *ibid.*, p. 45). Differences in attitudes suggest that rural schools lack resources (financial, technical, human) to engage girls in non-traditional subjects. As a positive

Figure 6. Students in post-secondary vocational institutions in the 2020/2021 academic year, by sex and in a sample of fields of training



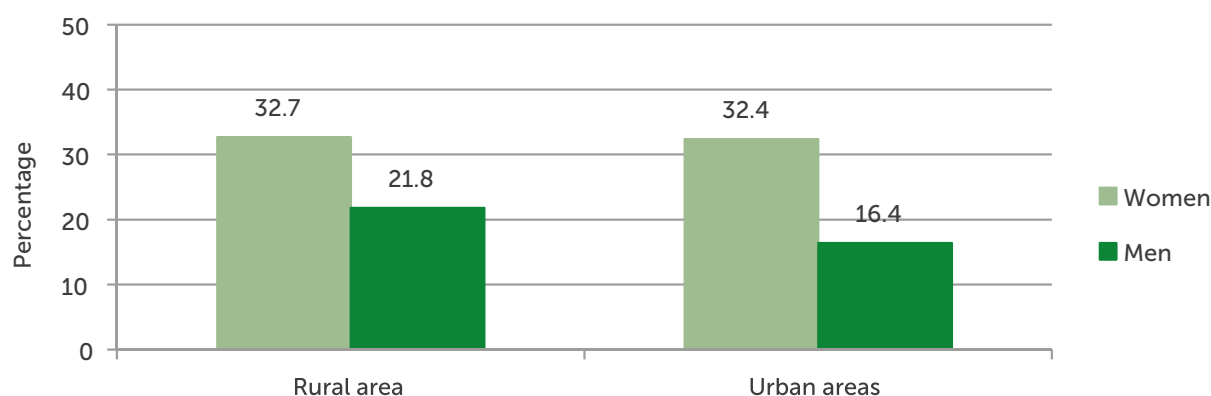
Source: Generated from National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova. Statistical Databank: Students in post-secondary vocational education, by sex, by general field and field of training, 2016/17–2020/21. In: *National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova*. Chisinau. Cited 25 January 2022. <http://statbank.statistica.md/PxWeb/pxweb/en>

point, the presence of NGOs and the organization of special events in villages has resulted in an increase in young women's interests in and opportunities to study ICTs and STEM subjects after school. It is very likely that if other initiatives, such as mentoring, internship programmes, scholarships and grants, were increased for rural girls and women, it would help to overcome negative attitudes (including those held by family members and school guidance counsellors who do not

support non-traditional career choices for women) and the costs of pursuing education in urban centres.

One consequence of gender stereotypes in education is the high rate of young women in the Republic of Moldova who are not in employment, education or training (NEET), despite the fact that on average they have more years in education and obtain higher-level degrees. Generally, the rate of young people (aged

Figure 7. People who are not in employment, education or training, aged 15–29, by sex and area of residence, 2020



Source: Generated from National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova. Statistical Databank: NEET group, aged 15–29 years old, by level of education, statistical regions, area, years and sex. In: *National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova*. Chisinau. Cited 25 January 2022. <http://statbank.statistica.md/PxWeb/pxweb/en>

15 to 29) in the NEET category is high in the Republic of Moldova and greatest for young people in rural areas, suggesting that they face particular difficulties transitioning from education to employment. Still, the share of women aged 15 to 29 who are considered NEET (compared with the total in this age group) is close to a third for women living in rural and urban areas. Thus, it appears that gender is a greater determinant of NEET status than location (see Figure 7).

The prevalence of young women in the NEET category shows that women's overall high level of education is not necessarily a predictor of future employment. This, in turn, reinforces the notion that women's limited educational opportunities leave them especially unprepared for the job market. It is also noteworthy that the NEET age cohort corresponds to the time that women marry and have children. The topic of how limited access to affordable child care shapes women's educational and work opportunities, especially for women living in rural areas, is covered in Section 5.6. of this assessment.

Education in agriculture and of the rural population

Of particular relevance to the topics covered in this Country Gender Assessment, vocational education in agriculture-related fields is an important resource that is needed for farmers to transition from subsistence farming to profitable agribusinesses, even on a small scale. A skilled rural labour force is needed to develop both the farm and non-farm sectors of the economy.

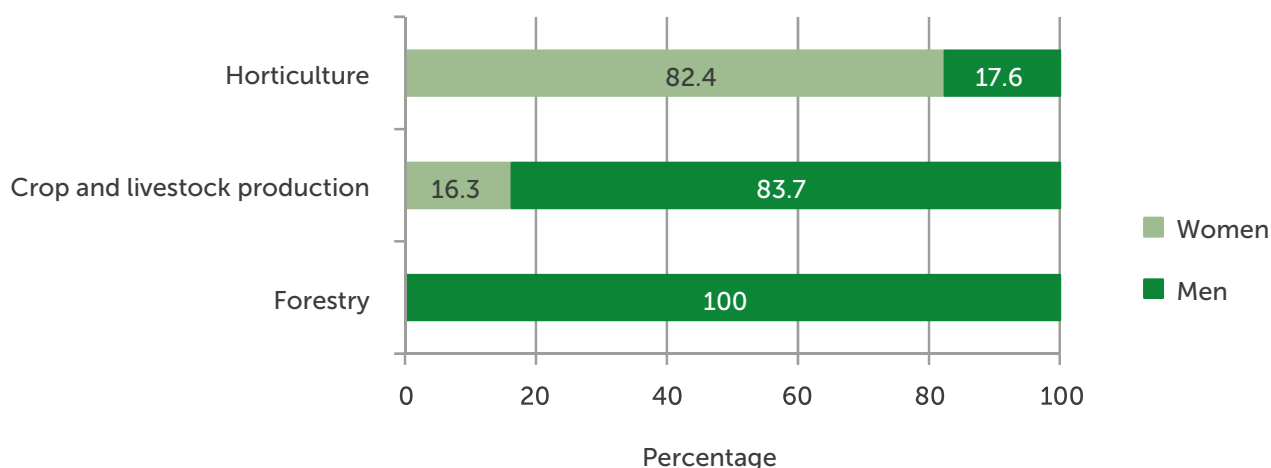
The Republic of Moldova has eight technical vocational education institutions under the management of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry, specialized in the fields of horticulture and agricultural technologies,

viticulture and winemaking, veterinary medicine and agrarian economics and agribusiness (MAFI, 2022). The majority of students in these institutions are from rural areas. Higher education in agriculture is provided by the State Agrarian University of Moldova. Note that in this report, the topic of rural advisory and agricultural extension services, characterized as a form of education and training for farmers, is discussed in Section 4.5.

The agri-educational system in the Republic of Moldova has suffered from a lack of investments. Public funds are insufficient to cover the necessary infrastructure repairs, modernization of equipment and professional training (FAO, 2020b). A lack of young, internationally-trained teachers, few practical teaching opportunities (for example, internships, demonstration plots or laboratories) and limited investment into innovation has led to an overall decline in the number of students in agri-educational institutions. In fact, it has been proposed that the State Agrarian University be closed and its branches be included in other higher educational institutions (ibid.).

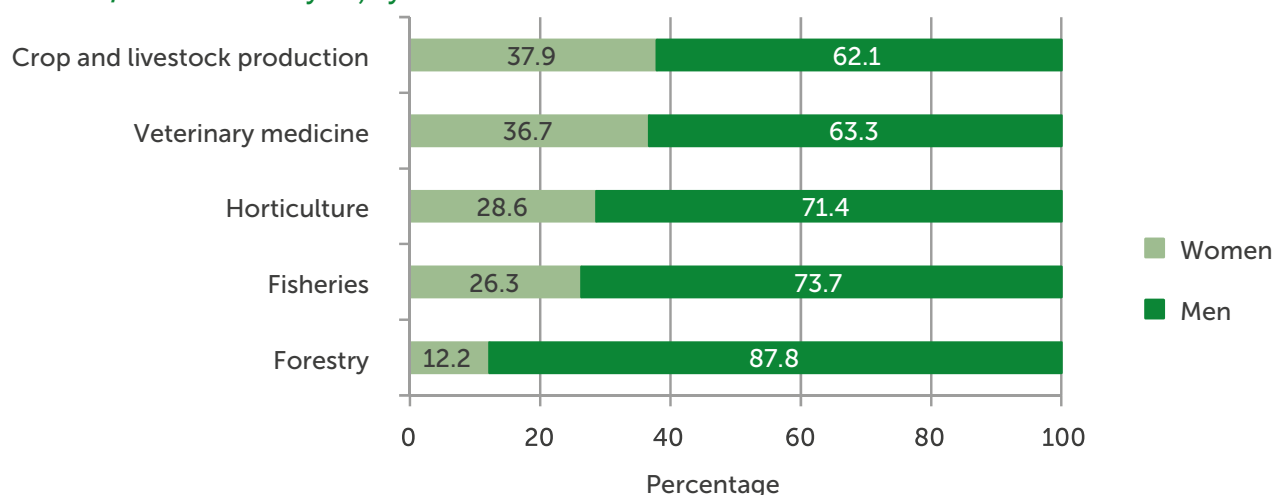
Compared with other academic subjects, around two percent of all students enrolled in secondary vocational, post-secondary vocational and higher education in the 2020/2021 academic year were studying in an agriculture-related field. This trend has been evident for several years (data generated from National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, Statistical Databank: Education). Women represent less than a third of students enrolled in vocational and higher education agriculture programmes. Within agriculture-related studies, women are also concentrated in courses on horticulture and veterinary medicine and have very low representation in forestry-related subjects (see Figures 8, 9 and 10).

Figure 8. Students in secondary vocational institutions enrolled in agriculture-related subjects in the 2020/2021 academic year, by sex



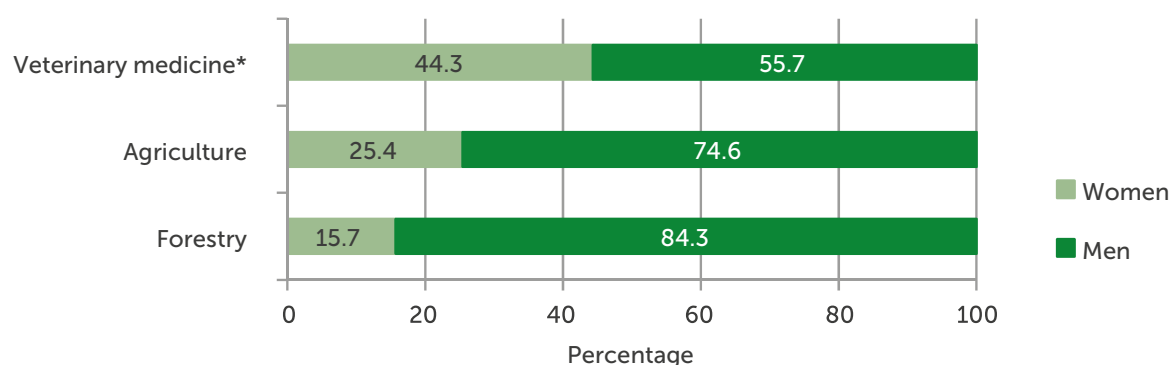
Source: Generated from National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova. Statistical Databank: Students in secondary vocational education, by field of training and sex, 2016/17–2020/21. In: *National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova*. Chisinau. Cited 25 January 2022. <http://statbank.statistica.md/PxWeb/pxweb/en>

Figure 9. Students in post-secondary vocational institutions enrolled in agriculture-related subjects in the 2020/2021 academic year, by sex



Source: Generated from National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova. Statistical Databank: Students in post-secondary vocational education, by sex, by general field and field of training, 2016/17–2020/21. In: *National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova*. Chisinau. Cited 25 January 2022. <http://statbank.statistica.md/PxWeb/pxweb/en>

Figure 10. Students in higher education institutions enrolled in agriculture-related subjects in the 2020/2021 academic year, by sex



Note: *Data on agriculture and forestry are combined enrolment in Bachelor's and Master's degree programmes, while data for veterinary medicine is an integrated higher education course.

Source: Generated from National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova. Statistical Databank: Students in higher education institutions, by fields of study and cycles, 2017/18–2020/21. In: *National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova*. Chisinau. Cited 25 January 2022. <http://statbank.statistica.md/PxWeb/pxweb/en>

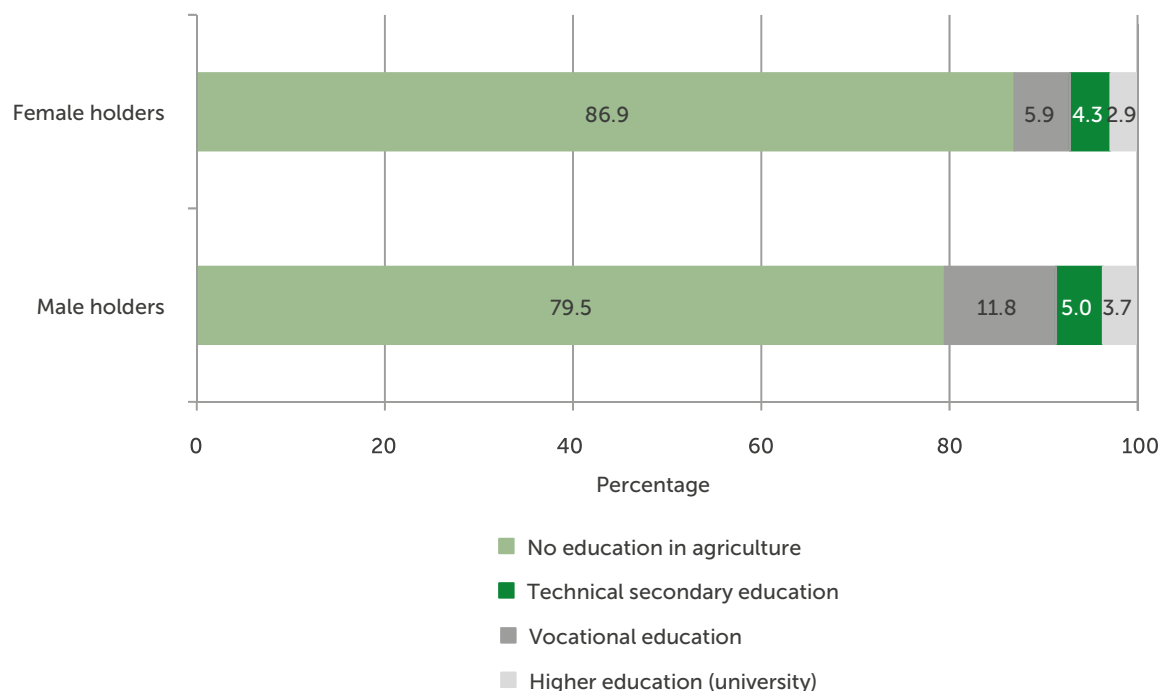
The streaming of women into some agriculture-related subjects, namely horticulture, more often than livestock production, fisheries or forestry, means that women as farmers and entrepreneurs face more limited opportunities. In terms of scientific research, fewer agri-related fields are benefiting from women's contributions.

Educational backgrounds of farmers in the Republic of Moldova

The typical farmer in the Republic of Moldova does not have technical or higher education in agriculture. According to the General Agricultural Census, less than 20 percent of all farm holders have any form of agri-education, and if they do have education, it is most often at the secondary vocational level (FAO and National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova,

2014). Farmers, however, tend to have a decade or more of practical experience. When comparing women and men farm holders, their educational backgrounds differ. The majority of female and male holders do not have specific education in agriculture, but the proportion of women in this group is slightly larger at almost 90 percent. Only 6 percent of women holders have vocational education (in contrast to almost 12 percent of men holders; *ibid.*). Levels of technical secondary or higher education in agriculture are similar for women and men (see Figure 11).

Farmers who head legal entities (registered farms) have higher levels of education than those who farm without legal status (a category that can include family farms and some rural households, as discussed in greater detail in Section 3.2.1. of this CGA), which is to be expected given the difference in farming as a profession

Figure 11. Level of agricultural education of female and male holders, 2011

Note: The data shown are combined for agricultural holdings with and without legal status.

Source: FAO and National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, 2014. *Women and Men in Agriculture of the Republic of Moldova*. Budapest and Chisinau.

or for subsistence. Nevertheless, even among farmers who manage legally-registered agricultural holdings, a surprising 42.9 percent of women farmers have no education in agriculture, compared with 29.7 percent of men farmers (National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, 2013). The reasons behind the lack of specialization among women is most likely a reflection of educational and career guidance that steers young women towards traditional fields and young men towards agriculture.

Given the overall large number of women and men engaged in small-scale farming (here referring to farms without legal status), the lack of formal agri-education means that smallholders likely have only limited knowledge of improved farming practices that would increase their productivity. Women's low level of vocational education also suggests that training programmes should be specially tailored to make up for this gap.

Level of education is closely correlated with diverse opportunities for employment in rural areas, especially for women. In simple terms, the lower the level of education, the more likely a rural woman will work in agriculture. Over 90 percent of women with primary education only, or with no formal education, work in agriculture, compared with ten percent of women with higher education (National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, 2013). Most rural women with higher or specialized secondary education work in the

public sector. Women who have attained higher levels of education may also have access to employment opportunities in industry, wholesale and retail trade, hospitality and tourism (hotels and restaurants). However, over 30 percent of rural women with specialized secondary education, and more than 40 percent with vocational secondary education, work in agriculture – an indication of overall job scarcity in rural areas.

Comparing the educational backgrounds of women and men who work in agriculture (but who are not farmers/farm managers), a gender gap is apparent. Most men working in this sector have either secondary professional or specialized education, while the educational background of most rural women is secondary education. The gap reflects the fact that a large number of less-educated women work as seasonal labour during harvest time or in post-harvest handling and processing (Chemonics International Inc., 2017a). Among young people, educational attainment is lower and the gender gap is greater; 71 percent of young men, but 80 percent of young women, working in agriculture have only lower or upper secondary education. Lack of education correlates closely with high rates of poverty. For instance, among rural women living in absolute poverty, around a third (34.5 percent) have no primary education (UNDP and UN Women, 2016c). Education generally, but especially education that meets the demands of today's labour market or can help to enhance agriculture production, is a critical factor in creating opportunities for rural women.

2.8. Gender-based violence

The Strategy on Ensuring Equality between Women and Men in the Republic of Moldova for 2017–2021 recognizes that gender-based violence impedes progress towards gender equality. Gender-based violence (GBV) can take many forms, including psychological, physical and sexual violence, perpetrated by a family member, intimate partner or by others. The Gender Equality Strategy draws attention to the specific forms of domestic violence, sexual violence and rape, sexual harassment in the workplace and educational institutions, and human trafficking.

The Government of the Republic of Moldova has strengthened the legal and policy base to combat GBV. The Law on Preventing and Combating Violence in the Family (adopted in 2007 and amended most recently in 2018¹⁸) defines domestic violence, grants the police powers to issue protection and emergency restriction orders and sets forth state obligations (on social services, legal aid and financial compensation). By ratifying the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (the Istanbul Convention) in October 2021, the government committed itself to harmonizing its law and policy with European standards. The National Strategy to Prevent and Combat Violence against Women and Domestic Violence for 2018–2023 and the Action Plan for 2018–2020 for its implementation are a roadmap for addressing the four pillars of the Istanbul Convention (prevention, protection, prosecution and policy integration). Coordination of relevant policy is carried out through an inter-ministerial coordination council on preventing and combating domestic violence. The groundwork has also been laid for national referral systems in which multidisciplinary teams assist victims of domestic violence and human trafficking.

The National Strategy to Prevent and Combat Violence against Women and Domestic Violence draws attention to the fact that those who are most exposed to domestic violence are “women in rural areas, with low levels of education, the unemployed or those engaged in unpaid agricultural activities” (Government of the Republic of Moldova, 2018, para. 10).

It has been estimated that “at least 40 percent” of women in the Republic of Moldova are survivors of GBV, a figure that has not changed in the last decade (Government of the Republic of Moldova, 2020a, p. 9). When prevalence survey data for women in urban and rural areas are compared, living in a rural

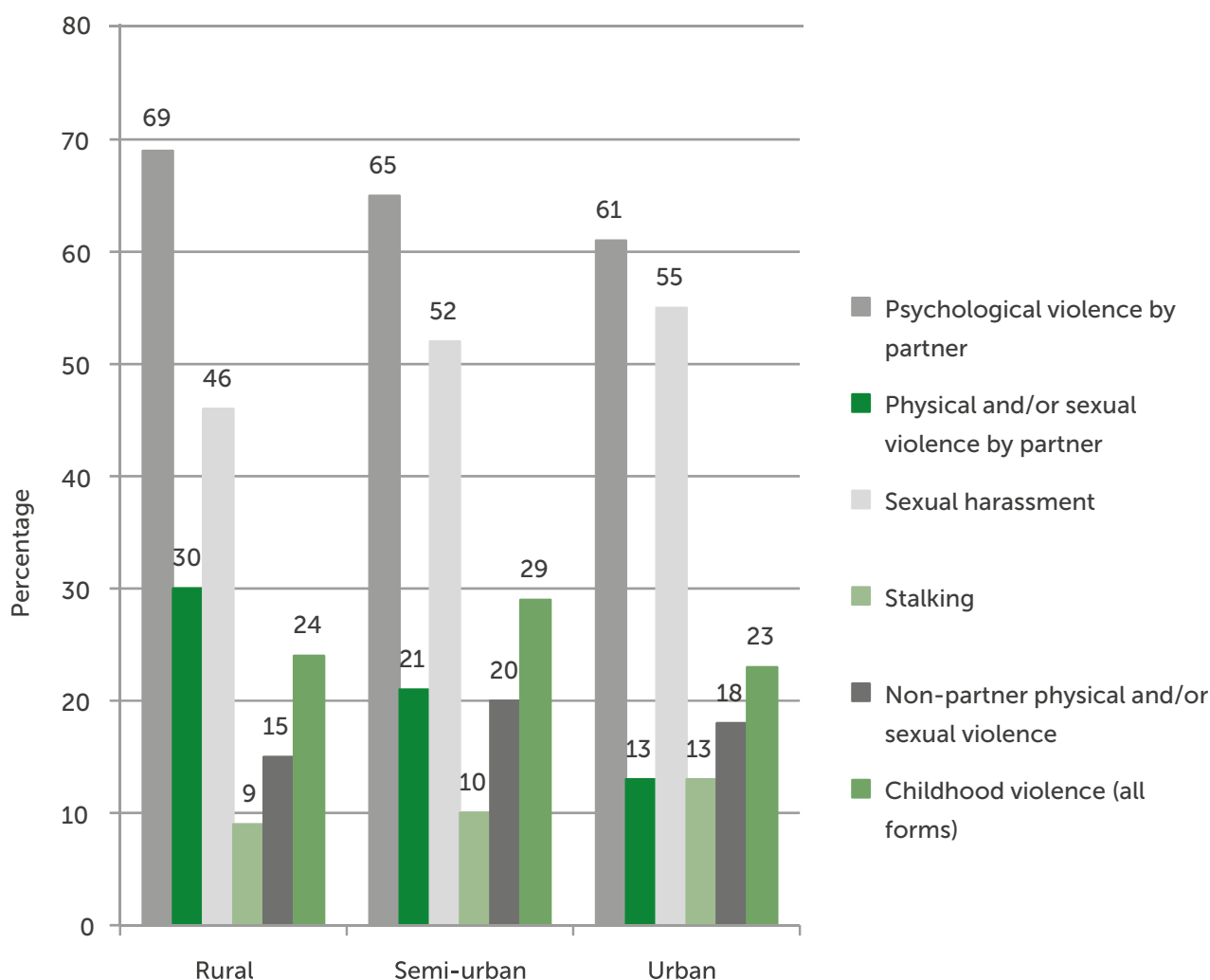
area is associated with the risk of specific forms of GBV. Rural women report having been subjected to violence by a previous or current partner more often than women in urban areas. According to a survey conducted by the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, 30 percent of women living in rural areas of the country indicated that they had experienced physical and/or sexual violence by a partner compared with 13 percent of women in urban areas (OSCE, 2019). Likewise, rural women were more likely to report lifetime experiences of psychological violence by a partner than their urban counterparts. Figure 12 provides a more detailed breakdown of the prevalence of various forms of violence against women in different areas of residence.

This survey data is not necessarily an indication that GBV occurs more frequently in rural areas. In fact, La Strada Moldova, which operates the national trust line for women and girls, cautions against reproducing the myth that domestic violence is a problem limited to rural communities. A review of the organization’s trust line records over the last decade shows that almost every other call (45 percent) is from a rural area (La Strada Moldova, 2020). Living in a rural area and the risk for GBV intersect as a result of more complex factors – those that exacerbate violence and those that assist survivors to escape violent relationships.

In the Republic of Moldova generally, attitudes towards GBV, stigmatization of victims and the notion that women bring violence on themselves, explain why more than half of surveyed women (55 percent) hold the opinion that domestic violence is a private matter that should be handled within the family, while 45 percent feel that victims themselves often provoke violence (OSCE, 2019). Few women report domestic violence to law enforcement or health services because of feelings of shame and fear, limited information about available channels for assistance or about legal remedies, mistrust of the authorities and not understanding what constitutes GBV and that it is illegal. For many women, both rural and urban, experiences of violence are considered a “normal” part of an intimate relationship. Patriarchal attitudes and conservative values about “acceptable” roles for women and men are said to be stronger in rural communities, and this explains why violence committed by a partner also appears to be more common in rural areas.

At the time of conducting this assessment, there were 7 public institutions (multifunctional Maternal Centres) and 12 non-governmental organizations that provide support services, including temporary shelter, to survivors of GBV and their children at the

¹⁸ Law No. 45-XVI, 1 March 2007.

Figure 12. Women who reported ever having experienced gender-based violence, by type of violence and settlement, 2018

Source: Adapted from OSCE. 2019. *OSCE-led Survey on Violence Against Women: Moldova – Results Report*. Vienna, p. 64.

local, regional and national levels. An additional three NGOs operate in Transnistria. There are, however, no specialized support centres for victims of sexual violence. Four centres that work with perpetrators of violence have been established. A free telephone trust line for women and girls that provides counselling for victims of GBV operates around the clock, seven days a week. A separate local hotline operates in Transnistria. One of the strengths of the response system for domestic violence in the Republic of Moldova is the existence of a national coalition (Life without Domestic Violence, made up of 23 NGOs and public institutions) that collaborates on advocacy initiatives, public awareness campaigns and service provision (for survivors and programmes for perpetrators).

The existing support services, especially shelter places, are still not sufficient to meet the standards for

service provision outlined by the Council of Europe¹⁹ (Women's Law Center and UN Women Moldova, 2016). Furthermore, a critical issue for rural women who have experienced GBV is their isolation from support services. With the exception of the national telephone trust line, centres that assist survivors and work with perpetrators of violence are all in urban locations (mainly in Chisinau, Drochia, Balti, Causeni and Ocnita).

Rural isolation also makes it difficult for survivors of GBV to access health care facilities or legal services.

¹⁹ In brief, the standards require: one centre providing non-residential services to survivors of gender-based violence per 50 000 women and one family space in a women's shelter per 10 000 inhabitants; and one specialized centre providing support to survivors of sexual violence for every 200 000 inhabitants (see Council of Europe. 2018. *Combating violence against women: minimum standards for support services*; and Council of Europe. 2011. *Explanatory Report to the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence*).

According to one assessment, among women who had serious physical and psychological health consequences from domestic violence, only one of four women from rural areas visited a doctor, compared with three of four survivors in urban areas (Women's Law Center and UN Women Moldova, 2016). Special legal protections for victims of domestic violence and human trafficking are mandated by law (the latter have the right to receive free legal aid, provided by the state, and the former are exempt from paying state tax in court proceedings when applying for protective orders), but there are only four offices that provide state-guaranteed legal assistance (in Chisinau, Balti, Cahul and Comrat). A few NGOs provide free legal assistance to victims of domestic violence, but they do not have the capacity to meet the needs of all survivors (La Strada Moldova, 2020a). The network of paralegals is inadequate for the country as a whole, and there are severe shortages in rural areas.

For many women, the expenditures associated with social services, health care and legal remedies are prohibitive. Out-of-pocket expenses (for medical services; related to gathering evidence [i.e. for forensic medical exams]; for legal assistance; and for transport to and from relevant institutions) reaches many thousand Moldovan leu (MDL) on average, and these costs are higher for rural women, effectively making assistance avenues unreachable (Women's Law Center and UN Women Moldova, 2016). The fact that rural women reside far from vital forms of psychological, medical, legal and informational support, by virtue of the lack of local service providers and costs, means that early identification and intervention into cases of violence are not likely to occur, and thus there is a greater risk that GBV will be repeated or will escalate.

The CEDAW Committee has recommended that adequate human, technical and financial resources be allocated so that all survivors of GBV have access to support services (Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, 2020). This commitment to protection from GBV should be understood through an intersectional lens, meaning that special attention should be devoted to overlapping situations of vulnerability, affecting women living in rural areas, as well as Roma women, women with disabilities, and both young and older women, for example.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought about additional challenges. Government-imposed lockdown measures to contain the coronavirus meant that women and girls were exposed to greater risks of being isolated with abusive partners or family members while being further cut off from support services that they would ordinarily be able to access. In a pattern similar to that seen in other countries, the average number of calls to

the police and domestic violence cases registered by the police increased in the first four months of 2020, compared with the same period in previous years (UN Women, 2020). The dynamic of calls to the national trust line differed slightly. An initial decrease in contacts when the state of emergency was declared was followed by an uptick as lockdown continued, and an overall 24 percent increase in calls in the second half of 2020 compared with the first half (La Strada Moldova, 2020b). The overwhelming majority of domestic violence survivors contacting the trust line (82 percent) were women.

During the quarantine period, the number of calls from urban areas, including Chisinau, exceeded calls from rural areas by 18 percent. The specifics of the rural lifestyle in the Republic of Moldova explain this difference. Rural households usually consist of separate buildings (a house and annex) and so family members would not have been confined to a small space. Additionally, the lockdown periods occurred at a time when most rural families were engaged in agricultural work which naturally creates "distance between the victim and offender for a long period of the day and weakens the tensions between family members" (La Strada Moldova, 2020c, no page number). Some groups of women were in greater risk, with limited or no means of seeking assistance, including women with disabilities (especially if their regular support services were suspended) as well as older women (some of whom were isolated with more than one aggressor within the same household, such as a partner and other adult family member; United Nations Office for the Republic of Moldova, 2020b).

Social services for survivors, including temporary shelter, were suspended during the state of emergency. Domestic violence prevention and response was de-prioritized in general, and surveys suggest that women had incomplete information about which services remained operational. A socioeconomic impact assessment, conducted in August/September 2020 revealed that while 84 percent of respondents knew where to press charges in cases of domestic violence, only 53 percent were aware of where they could receive counselling services (UNDP Moldova, 2020c). Specifically concerning Transnistria, around 40 percent of women survey respondents who had requested help from specialized NGOs on domestic violence had been "redirected by local officials, who ... during the crisis, had other priorities and were focused on fighting the coronavirus" (ibid., p. 253).

It should be noted that the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection, working with NGO specialists and development organizations, published a set of

recommendations for responders in GBV cases (police, social workers, medical staff) and survivors to ensure that protection would be provided even during the health emergency (that is, apartments could be used for emergency shelter, and online psychosocial and legal support was offered; Ministry of Health, 2020). It could not be determined for this assessment to what extent women survivors in rural and remote areas particularly made use of these services. In the post-pandemic recovery period, sustained support, including financial

support, for NGO service providers will be critical to ensure continuity of service and also to reach those survivors who are likely to come forward as restrictions ease. There is a general consensus that the COVID-19 pandemic exposed pre-existing shortcomings in the prevention of and protection from GBV and that establishing specialized coordinated response and referral systems at the community level is greatly needed.

3. Gender issues in rural households and family farming

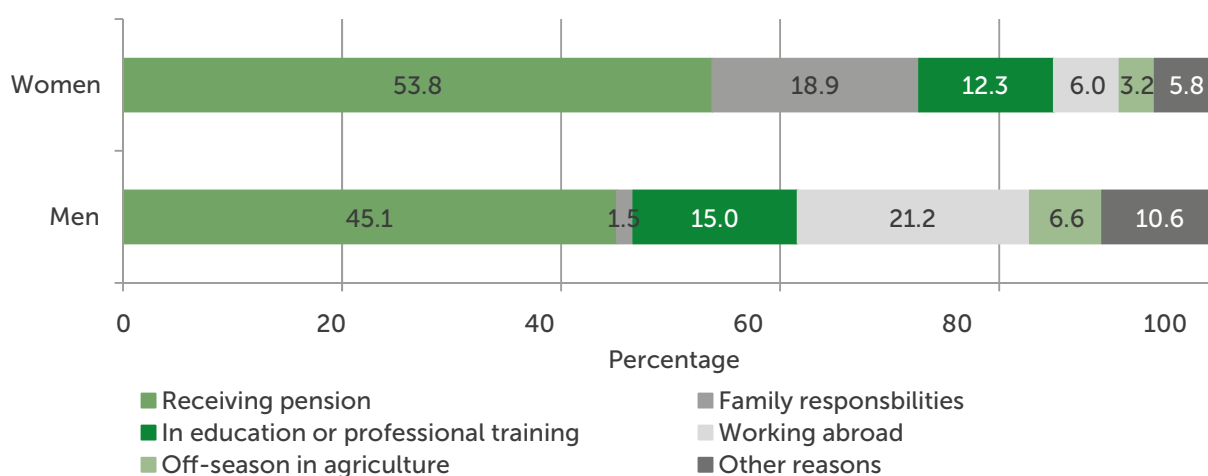
3.1. Characteristics of the labour market in rural areas

Gender disparities are evident in the Moldovan labour market as a whole but are especially pronounced in rural areas where the economically active population is smaller. Out of the working population in 2020, 32.8 percent of women and 40.2 percent of men living in rural areas were economically active, compared with 41.1 percent of women and 52.8 percent of men in urban areas (National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, Statistical Databank: Activity, employment and unemployment rates, by marital status, rates, years, sex and area). The gender gap in labour force participation in the Republic of Moldova is small compared with other countries in the Europe and Central Asia region, but this is not an indication of equality. Instead, it demonstrates that both women

and men have a low level of engagement in the labour market. The employment rate for rural women is 31.8 percent, and for rural men it is 38.7 percent. Here, the spatial disparity in men’s employment is especially noticeable. The employment rate for men living in urban areas is 50.1 percent. Women, however, are similarly underemployed regardless of location (the employment rate for urban women is 39.6 percent).

For both women and men, periods of economic inactivity foremost correspond to retirement or receipt of a pension for other reasons. However, if retirement is set aside, clear gendered patterns appear in the reasons that women and men become economically inactive. Women are far more likely to leave the workforce after they are married and have children (this is especially common for women in partnerships with children under the age of 17) as they take on the primary

Figure 13. Reasons for economic inactivity for the rural population, by sex, 2020



Note: Data for the following categories are combined under the heading “other reasons”: illness, not wanting to work and other, unspecified, reasons.
Source: Generated from National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova. Statistical Databank: Inactive population aged 15 years and over, by main reason for not working, age groups, level of education, years, sex and area. In: *National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova*. Chisinau. Cited 25 January 2022. <http://statbank.statistica.md/PxWeb/pxweb/en>

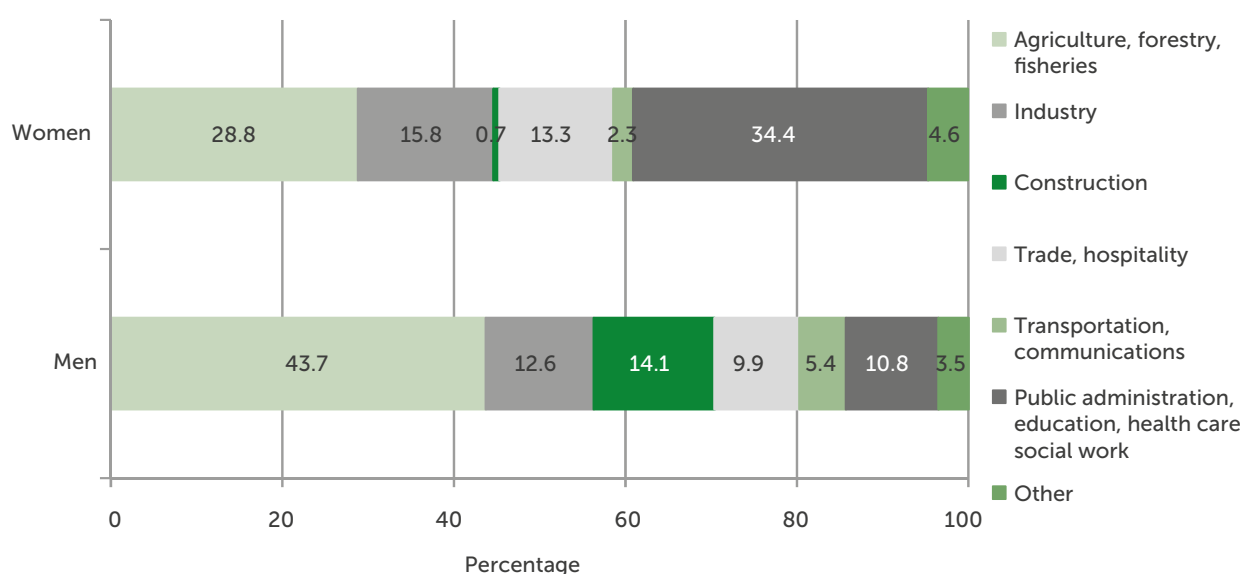
caregiving role. Excluding retirement, men are most often out of the labour force when they are working or looking for work abroad. An almost equal share of women and men in rural areas is outside of the labour force when in education or professional training. People become economically inactive because of periods of illness, lack of desire to work, or for other, unspecified, reasons. Men are more likely to be out of work because of illness or, possibly, because they have opportunities to earn income from non-employment sources such as property (National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, Statistical Databank: Inactive population aged 15 years and over, by main reason for not working, age groups, level of education, years, sex and area). Patriarchal gender roles are commonplace. Women's engagement in domestic and care work is a key limiting factor in their ability to take on formal employment. Men are expected to fulfil the "breadwinner" role, resulting in a high level of outmigration from rural areas where work is scarce (see Figure 13).

The labour market in the Republic of Moldova exhibits horizontal (occupational) and vertical segregation, both of which reflect gender discrimination and notions that particular jobs are more appropriate for women or for men. Women predominate in public sector work (such as education, health care and social work), where they represent 70.7 percent of all employees. In contrast, men represent 94.5 and 70.1 percent of employees in construction, and transport and communications, respectively (National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, Statistical Databank: Employed

population, by status in employment, occupations, economic activities, sex and area, 2019–2020). Concerning rural employment, as would be expected, the combined sector of agriculture, forestry and fisheries is a major employer of both women and men; close to half of all employed men and just under a third of employed women have formal work in this sector. After agricultural work, men's employment patterns are somewhat more diverse, as they also find jobs in industry, construction, trade and hospitality (hotels and restaurants) in close to similar measure. Working women in rural areas are most likely to have public sector jobs (in public administration, education, social work and health care) than in any other field. Technical professions, such as in transport and communications, are associated with higher pay than public sector work.

Vertical segregation refers to the fact that women tend to occupy lower positions within the employment hierarchy. Women make up the larger share of entry-level employees (service workers and shop and sales assistants), and this is noticeable in rural areas (of all rural employees at this level, 77 percent are women). Women are well-represented in technical and professional posts yet still hold only 42 percent of senior positions (National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, Statistical Databank: Employed population, by status in employment, occupations, economic activities, sex and area, 2019–2020). Each village has institutions such as the mayoralty, a school, kindergarten and a house of culture, offering about 40 public sector jobs. Whereas most of these institutions

Figure 14. Employed rural population, by type of economic activity and sex, 2020



Note: The category of "other" includes jobs in finance and banking, market services, insurance, scientific activities, administrative services, culture and recreation.

Source: Generated from National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova. Statistical Databank: Employed population, by status in employment, occupations, economic activities, sex and area, 2019–2020. In: *National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova*. Chisinau. Cited 25 January 2022. <http://statbank.statistica.md/PxWeb/pxweb/en>

are managed by men, women hold executive positions where they are “in charge of the maintenance of these institutions, thus representing a low-skilled labour force” (NPAM, 2020, p. 6). Part-time work is more common in rural areas, and women are more likely than men to work less than full-time hours.

Women’s formal employment in the agriculture sector is concentrated in jobs that are traditionally associated with “female” work – in accounting, finance and marketing or in positions requiring backgrounds in chemistry or biology with large food producers. Few women in agriculture have leadership or technical positions (Chemonics International Inc., 2017a). A key factor in the overall low employment rates in rural areas are the low wages in agriculture when compared with other sectors of the economy. In 2014/2015, agricultural wages were around 60 percent of the national average (FAO, 2020b). The overall low pay of this sector is also evident in the fact that the gender pay gap in agriculture, forestry and fisheries is smaller than the average wage gap across all economic activities. Nevertheless, the 2020 wage gap in agricultural activities of 11.1 percent (meaning women earned 11 percent less than men working in this sector) is concerning, as is the overall gender wage gap of 13.7 percent (National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, Statistical Databank: Gender pay gap, by economic activities, 2013–2020). The gender pay gap is especially high in financial and insurance activities (44.6 percent) and in information and communications (38.0 percent) and has in fact widened over time. Surprisingly, women earn less on average than men, even in sectors in which they are widely employed, such as health care, social work and hospitality (accommodation and food services). Only in the spheres of education and administrative activities/support services do women receive on average higher salaries than men. The gender pay gap illustrates that women remain underrepresented in highly-paid and in-demand sectors, and that they predominate in low-paid and “feminized” sectors of the economy. Low wages and limited jobs have created stable patterns of poverty in rural areas, for the entire population but especially for women.

Informal employment

Informal employment is more common for men in the Republic of Moldova, but informality is quite high among women as well. According to ILO estimations, the overall informal employment rate is 28.5 percent for men and 21.7 percent for women (ILO, no date). Informal employment is characteristic for rural areas. In 2020, of all people employed informally in the country, 82.5 percent were working in rural areas. And of the

Box 2. Definition: Informal employment

Informal employment includes:

- » own account workers working in informal sector enterprises;
- » employers who work in informal sector enterprises;
- » members of informal production cooperatives;
- » contributing family workers, employed in formal or informal sector enterprises; and
- » employees in formal or informal sector enterprises, or in households, who meet at least one of the following criteria:
 - » the employer does not pay social contributions for them;
 - » they do not benefit from paid annual leave;
 - » in case of illness or injury, they do not benefit from paid sick leave.

Source: National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, no date. *Labour Force Survey. Main Indicators. Metadata.* Chisinau, p. 3.

employees, 63.1 percent were men (National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, Statistical Databank: Employed population, by age groups, type of the unit, type of the job, years, sex and area [Informal employment]). Agriculture and construction are the economic sectors most exposed to informality, which explains why men are overly represented in this type of work, especially in rural areas.

When agricultural work is considered in isolation, however, it becomes clear that women’s contribution to the sector leans towards informality. A very large share of women undertakes informal seasonal work, such as harvesting, sorting and packing agricultural products. By one estimation, “approximately 80 to 90 percent of these seasonal jobs are filled by women who are largely over 40, from small rural areas, with lower levels of education” (Chemonics International Inc., 2017a, p. 8). Rural women who work as day-labourers earn only a small income that is typically paid at the end of the day and is not formally accounted for or declared. Experts maintain that farming enterprises do not conclude employment contracts with women workers based on the view that “due to lack of knowledge, [the women] will accept work under any conditions in order to earn a few [leu]” (NPAM, 2020, p. 6).

Informal work is correlated with low and unstable wages, and its unregulated nature presents risks to both

men and women. Women often find informal work preferable because it can be flexible and, therefore, allow them time for their domestic responsibilities. But informal work leaves women unprotected in terms of health insurance, sick leave, pregnancy and child care leave, and their labour is not counted towards their pensions. Indeed, as is discussed in a later section of this report, women's old age pensions are lower on average than men's and, based on current calculations, do not cover the subsistence minimum.

In assessing sectors that were the most affected by the COVID-19 health crisis, the International Labour Organization (ILO) identifies agriculture to be at low to medium risk but trade and hospitality to be high-risk sectors. Notably, women who had been working in the informal sector represent a slightly larger proportion of the high-risk group of workers. This finding reflects their presence in sectors and activities that were suspended during quarantine periods, in addition to other factors such as their lower levels of financial stability even before the pandemic (ILO, no date).

Unpaid work

Informal work encompasses unpaid work by family members. In rural areas, such unpaid work is performed by family workers on household or family farms. One of the most significant gender differences concerning rural employment is the high reliance on women informal workers who would be classified as contributing family workers.

The ILO estimates that the proportion of contributing family workers among the employed population has been decreasing in the last few years, suggesting that

Box 3. Definition: Contributing family worker

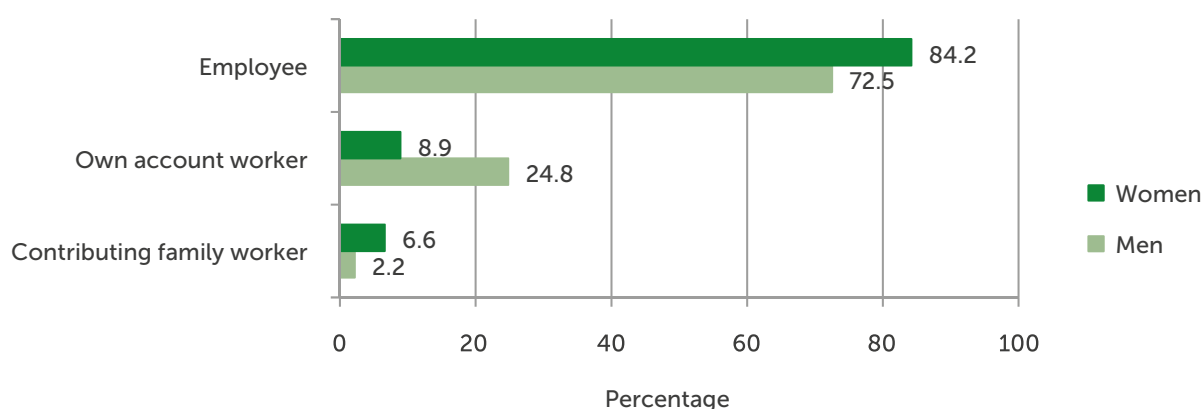
A contributing family worker is the person carrying out an activity within a family economic unit, headed by a family member or by a relative, for which he/she does not receive remuneration in the form of a salary or payment in kind. The agricultural farm is considered such a unit. If several persons from a household are working within their farm, one of them – generally the household head – is considered the own account worker and the others are considered to be contributing family workers.

Source: National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova. no date. *Labour Force Survey. Main Indicators. Metadata.* Chisinau, p. 2.

more women are moving into paid jobs outside the household. Still, the share of employed women with the status of contributing family worker remains more than twice that of men. Similarly, it is much more common for men to take up self-employment in running their own business or to have freelance status (an own account worker). An individual farmer would fall within this category.

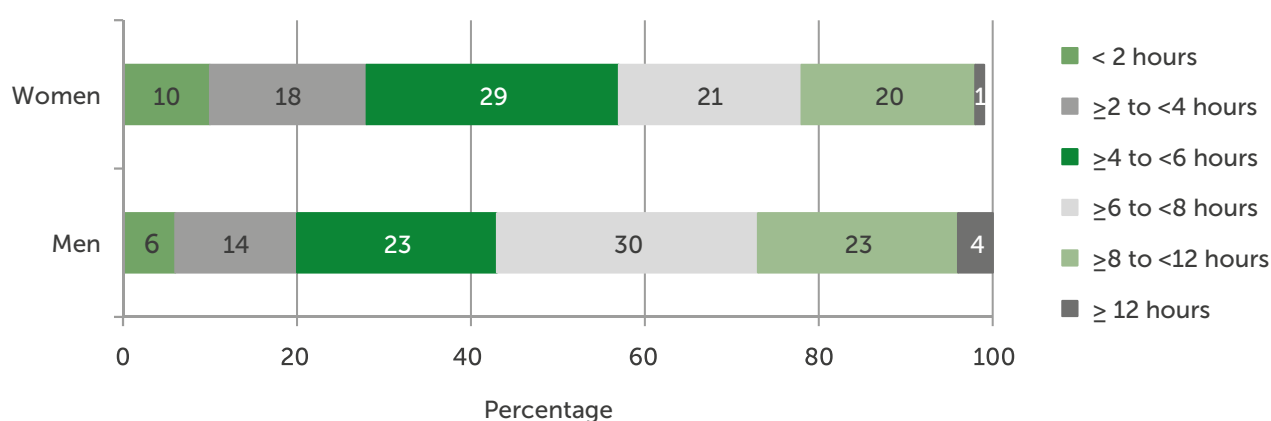
Note that the work that women undertake as a contributing family worker, while not remunerated, is not the same as unpaid domestic and care work (housekeeping, cooking, caring for children and so forth). The latter types of work are considered women's responsibilities and part of their "natural" role; they are

Figure 15. Structure of the employed population, by employment status and sex, 2020



Source: National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova. Statistical Databank: Structure of employed population, by status in employment and by sex, 2019–2020. In: *National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova.* Chisinau. Cited 25 January 2022. <http://statbank.statistica.md/PxWeb/pxweb/en>

Figure 16. Hours per day that female and male respondents spend on agricultural work during the agricultural season, for small and medium farms, 2013–2014



Note: Data as in the original source.

Source: Mathematica Policy Research. 2015. *Evaluation of the Transition to High-Value Agriculture Project in Moldova: Baseline Findings from the 2013–2014 Farm Operator Survey*. Oakland, p. 103.

tasks that are done regardless of whether they also undertake work on family farms or in family businesses.

There has not been dedicated research towards understanding the time burden of women's role as contributing family workers on family farms, but a survey of small and medium farms that included questions about the intra-household division of farm labour provides a general picture. During the peak agricultural season, men in the household work on average almost an hour more per day in agricultural activities than women; amounting to around 5.8 hours per day for men and 5.1 hours for women (Mathematica Policy Research, 2015). Although they perform fewer total hours of farm work, still half of the surveyed women reported that they devote roughly between four and eight hours per day to agricultural activities at this time of year. Presumably, this agricultural work is additional to their domestic activities (see Figure 16).

Contributing family workers do not automatically benefit from health or social insurance. Only workers with formal employment contracts or who independently procure a health insurance policy (poliță) in the first quarter of the calendar year and/or contribute to social insurance funds are eligible.

In national policy, the National Employment Strategy for 2017–2021 recognizes that rural women are held back from employment by their care responsibilities (citing issues such as lack of child care and flexible working options for young women) and yet the strategy does not acknowledge women's unpaid contributions to family farming nor the benefit this brings in terms of agricultural production. Legislative amendments have been proposed that would benefit day labourers who perform unskilled work on a temporary or seasonal basis and contributing family workers, through a

"voucher" system that would mean that agricultural enterprises would have records of all employed workers (UNDP Moldova, 2020c). At the time of conducting this assessment, the concept of a voucher system has been drafted but has not yet been approved by any executive authority.

3.2. Land tenure and agricultural holdings

More than 70 percent of the territory of the Republic of Moldova is agricultural land (2.5 million hectares, of which 54.4 percent is arable; National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, 2020i).

Gender equality in the ownership and control over land not only contributes to economic security, but it also has "positive multiplier effects for the achievement of a range of ... SDGs including poverty reduction (Goal 1), food security (Goal 2) and the welfare of households, communities and countries (Goals 3, 11 and 16, among others)" (FAO, 2018c, p. 2). Women's access to land is essential to their economic empowerment, which, in turn, can support business start-ups, facilitate political participation, increase food security and decrease dependency in cases of domestic violence. FAO is the UN "custodian" agency for indicators 5.a.1. and 5.a.2. of SGD 5 (on women's ownership of agricultural land and women's equal rights to landownership), and thus it has a leading role in building capacity on establishing national registries, indicators and statistics on women's landownership.

After the Republic of Moldova gained independence, the country underwent significant land reform in which formerly state-owned agricultural lands were transferred to private ownership, and over a million rural residents gained land plots. When land was

privatized, individuals received agricultural land that was divided into three parcels (of arable land, orchards and vineyards), totalling approximately 1.5 hectares. This method of land distribution continues to influence the agricultural landscape today, which consists of a large number of very small and fragmented individual family farms and few large corporate farms. Fragmentation means that smallholders' parcels of land are typically not contiguous.

Data about the initial distribution of privatized land between women and men were not found for this assessment. However, the criteria for the receipt of land suggests that distribution was equitable (for instance, women made up a large number of former collective farm members; people who worked for agricultural enterprises were eligible to receive land; and women qualified with a five-year shorter work history than men – only 20 years). Moldovan legislation protects the equal rights of women and men to own land and property and, notably, ownership of assets purchased or constructed by spouses during the marriage is recognized as belonging to both parties, even if only one of them is entered into the real estate registry (World Bank, 2014). This provision is especially beneficial for married women, as traditional practices often mean that the husbands are the only registered owners of land and other assets.

According to official data, 41 percent of land plots in the state registry were owned by women in 2014, with a breakdown of 39 percent rural lands and two percent urban lands (World Bank, 2014). Understanding the situation of landownership today is complicated by the fact that the country is in the process of improving the quality of its land administration and property valuation systems, enhancing the transparency of the property taxation system and implementing a real estate cadastre throughout the country that will ensure ownership registration.²⁰ These efforts also involve addressing gaps in the national cadastre system that do not allow for the collection of sex-disaggregated data on property ownership. It is anticipated that upgrading the ICT system will result in the collection of sex-disaggregated data that can then be analysed and used for policymaking.

In recent years, the market for agricultural land has been very active (attributed to investments in the irrigation infrastructure), and in 2020, the Territorial Cadastral Services registered a total of 60 290 agricultural land sales, followed by 43 411 registrations of ownership acquired through inheritance, and 34 664

through donation, exchange or by other means (leasing, mortgaging, and so forth; Public Service Agency, 2020). The dynamism of the market suggests that the sex-disaggregated data on landownership that were available several years ago may no longer be indicative of the present situation. In the absence of current gender statistics, 2011 census data about women's and men's ownership of farms is the best indicator of whether women or men have secure tenure to agricultural land.

3.2.1. Farm ownership and management

Agriculture in the Republic of Moldova is dominated by small-scale farming. When the General Agricultural Census was conducted, there were 902 214 agricultural holdings in the country. The vast majority (99.6 percent or 898 768 holdings) did not have legal status (meaning they were not formally registered as farming enterprises). However, most were operational in that their lands were being used for crops, horticulture or livestock (94 percent or 848 637 holdings; National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, 2013). Note that in the agricultural census, holdings without legal status include "registered peasant households (farmer)/entrepreneur and other types of households" (ibid., p. 137). Box 4 provides a further discussion of how agricultural producers are defined in the Republic of Moldova.

As a result of privatization, rural households usually have access to three types of land: household plots (located around the house), small land plots (known as "gardens" that are located away from the home) and large land plots. Research suggests that people who are not using their large land plots do not view themselves as farmers, although in reality there are few differences between households that are earning income from agriculture and dedicating time to this work using their large land plots and those that do the same on only household and garden plots (Piras, 2016). The only available sex-disaggregated data about smallholders are for the heads of agricultural holdings. The head of a holding is defined as the person in whose name the agricultural holding is operated and who is legally and economically responsible for the activities of the farm or who is managing the holding. In other words, people who could be characterized as "farmers" are the holding owner and/or manager. Data are lacking that would capture information about women and men who would not be considered farmers under this definition but who nevertheless undertake many of the same activities.

²⁰ These efforts are currently supported by the World Bank Group under the Land Registration and Property Valuation Project for 2019–2023.

Box 4. Agricultural producers in the Republic of Moldova

For statistical purposes, three categories of agricultural producers are defined in the Republic of Moldova: agricultural enterprises, peasant farms and rural households.

Agricultural enterprises are legal entities that carry out agriculture as a primary or secondary activity. They are legally registered holdings and can include, for example, agricultural cooperatives, joint stock companies, limited liability companies and state enterprises.

There are two types of **peasant farm**: legally registered farms²¹ and individual farmers operating without registration. Both types carry out agricultural activities on their own land plots and can be considered semi-subsistence in nature. Some peasant farms are more commercially oriented than others, but a common characteristic is their reliance on family labour.

Rural households also carry out small-scale agricultural activities on household plots or nearby gardens (small plots of land received through privatization processes) almost entirely for subsistence. Some households earn additional income through renting out their land plots. Households that engage in agricultural production do not have legal status.

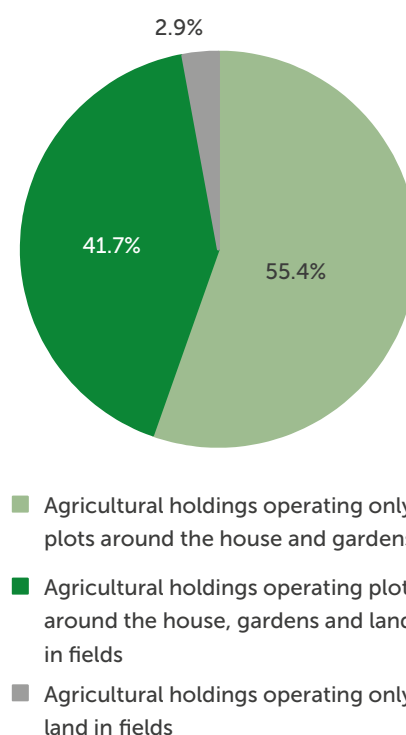
The National Bureau of Statistics regularly conducts surveys of “small agricultural producers”, a category that includes peasant farms (with legal registration), individual farms (without registration) and rural households that farm up to ten hectares of land. FAO (2020b) classifies this same grouping as **smallholders or family farms** in its assessments. The terms are used in this report with equivalent meanings.

Sources: National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova. Main indicators in agriculture. In: *National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova*. Chisinau. Cited 21 February 2022. <https://statistica.gov.md/pageview.php?l=en&idc=351&id=2245#idc=429&>; FAO. 2020b. *Smallholders and family farms in the Republic of Moldova. Country study report 2019*. Budapest, pp. 15–16.

Of legally registered agricultural holdings, the majority (57.6 percent) are limited liability companies, followed by other (undefined) types of holdings; only six percent are agricultural cooperatives (National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, 2013). In total, these legal entities operate on more than half of the total utilized agricultural area of the country. The average size of agricultural holdings with legal status is 345.62 hectares of utilized agricultural area. In contrast, agricultural holdings that do not have legal status would be considered smallholders or family farms in that most are operating on land around their houses in addition to other small plots (see Figure 17). The average size of these holdings is only 0.83 hectares of utilized agricultural area.²¹

The sex-disaggregated data produced by the agricultural census provide a very useful picture of women as owners of agricultural land, both in legal entities and in family farming. In general, women represent a minority of farmers of any type (referring here to the recognized head of the holding, regardless

Figure 17. Structure of the agricultural holdings without formal legal status, 2011



²¹ The Law of the Republic of Moldova on Peasant Farms (No. 1353–XIV, 2000, amended 2017) defines a peasant farm as an individual enterprise that is legally registered but with the status of a natural person.

Source: National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova. 2013. *2011 General Agricultural Census in the Republic of Moldova. Main results*. Chisinau, p. 55.

Table 5. Number of agricultural holdings, total and average area per holding, by sex of the head of the holding and legal status of the holding, 2011

	Total agricultural holdings	of which are:	
		with legal status	without legal status
Number of holdings, of which are:	902 214	3 446	898 768
Female-headed	327 689	494	327 195
Male-headed	574 525	2 952	571 573
Total area (in hectares), of which are:	2 243 540.02	1 272 666.01	970 874.01
Female-headed	425 324.14	144 017.48	281 306.66
Male-headed	1 818 215.88	1 128 648.53	689 567.35

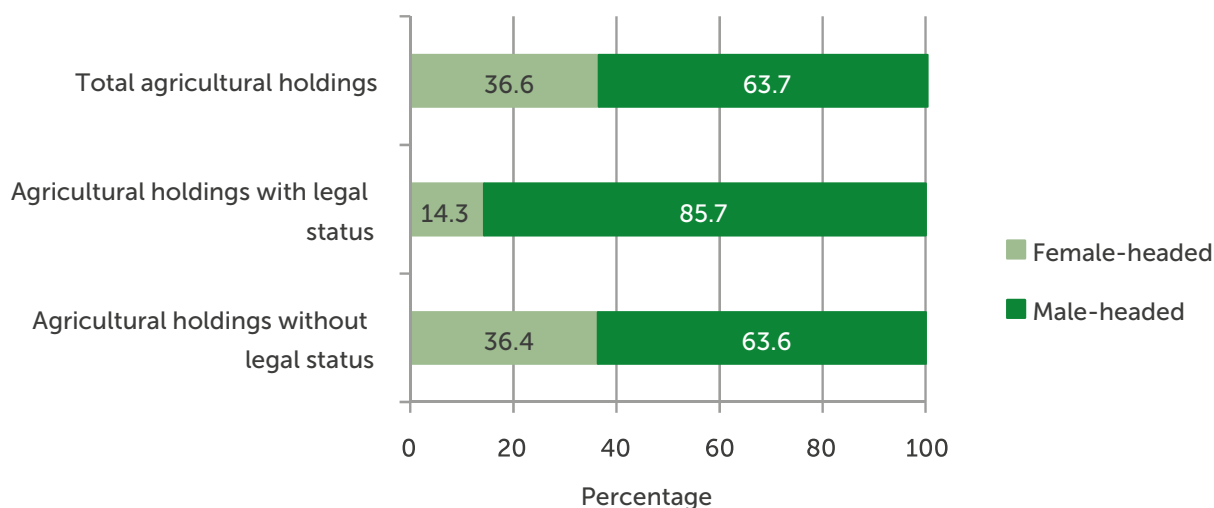
Source: National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova. 2013. *2011 General Agricultural Census in the Republic of Moldova. Main results.* Chisinau, p. 43.

of whether the farm has legal status). Women own or manage just over a third of the agricultural holdings in the Republic of Moldova (see Table 5). Women make up a larger proportion of farmers without legal status (36.4 percent). This figure is considerably lower than the number of women who take part in agricultural production, as part-time or seasonal labourers, or as unpaid family workers.

Although the overall number of registered farms is small when considering the total number of holdings, women represent only a fraction of heads of holdings with legal status (14.3 percent in 2011). Where women are best represented as holders of unregistered farms, an indication that it is uncommon for women to undertake farming as a profession.

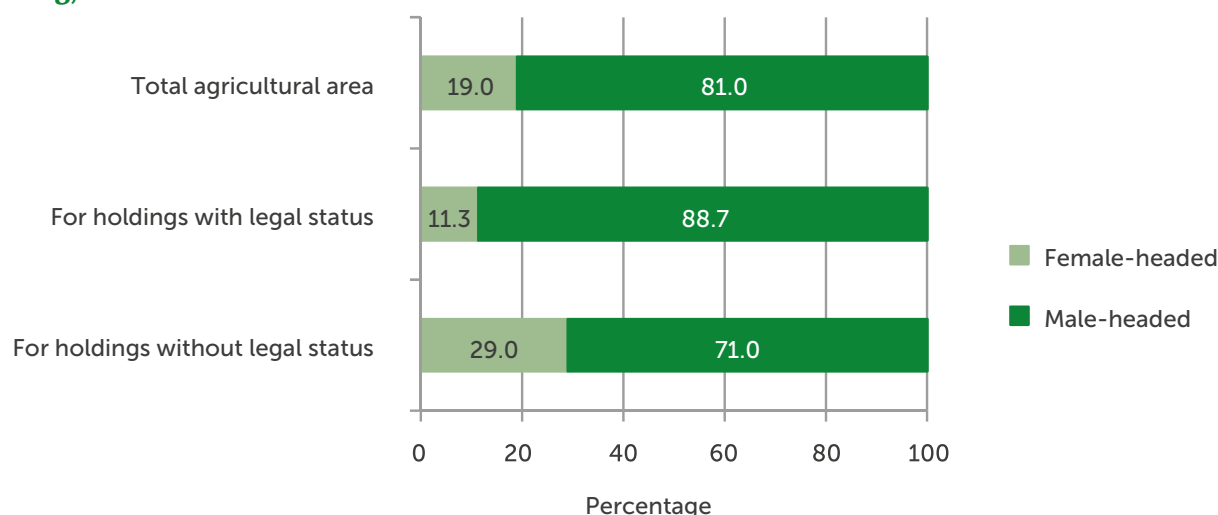
Although women head just over a third of agricultural holdings, considering the total land area, they have control over only 19 percent of the land. This represents a difference of over 1.3 million hectares (see Figure 19). For holdings without legal status, which is where most women are represented as farmers, women own less than a third of agricultural lands. These data indicate that in the Republic of Moldova, title and tenure over agricultural land remains with men. Women do not have equal access to these lands despite there being no legal barriers that would impede their ownership.

The individual land plots that make up holdings are small on average, as described above. Yet when female- and male-headed holdings are compared, the average size of women's holdings is considerably smaller (see Table 6). The gap is greater for holdings

Figure 18. Share of female and male heads of agricultural holdings, by legal status of the holding, 2011

Source: National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova. 2013. *2011 General Agricultural Census in the Republic of Moldova. Main results.* Chisinau, p. 43.

Figure 19. Share of agricultural land headed/managed by women and men, by legal status of the holding, 2011



Source: National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova. 2013. *2011 General Agricultural Census in the Republic of Moldova. Main results.* Chisinau, p. 43.

Table 6. Average size of male- and female-headed holdings, by legal status

Average size of holdings (in hectares)		
	Female-headed	Male-headed
Holdings with legal status	291.53	382.33
Holdings without legal status	0.86	1.21

Source: FAO and National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova. 2014. *Women and Men in Agriculture of the Republic of Moldova.* Budapest and Chisinau.

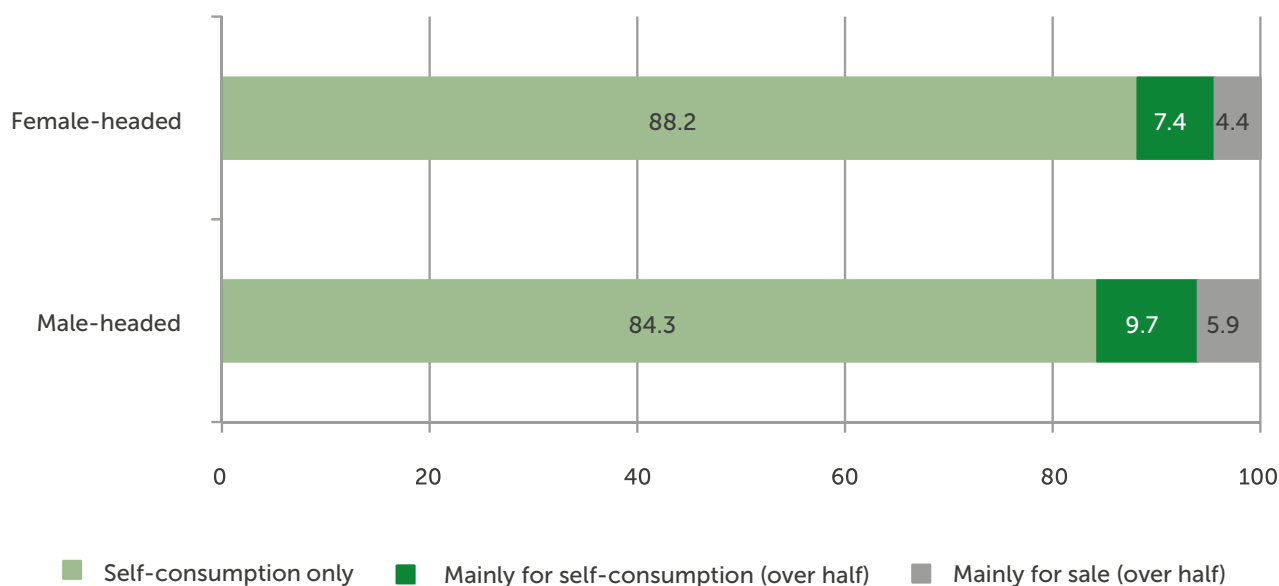
without legal status, where the area that women farm (0.86 hectares) is only around 70 percent of the average area of holdings headed by men (1.21 hectares; FAO and National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, 2014). This gap indicates women's more limited access to a key resource – land – but also implies that women farmers face constraints in procuring agricultural inputs that then limit their ability to farm on larger plots.

Even within an agricultural landscape that consists of numerous fragmented family farms, the plots that women farm tend to be more dispersed. There does not appear to have been any dedicated analysis of the situation, but land reform and consolidation initiatives “have tended to reinforce [the] bias against tenure for women” (dTS, AGROinform and DAI, 2011, p. 16). Because of the women's disadvantaged position in terms of financial and other resources, they are less able to obtain consolidated land plots. In contrast, “when land is sold, or consolidated via plots exchange, normally ownership rights go to men who usually have more resources to acquire it (i.e. control of equipment)” (ibid., p. 20). Sex-disaggregated records of buyers and sellers of agricultural land would be useful

to understand the overall dynamics, and specifically the trends in women's representation as owners of agricultural land, as either decreasing or increasing.

Other reasons for women's more limited landownership include the fact that customary practices favour men as owners, managers and inheritors of land and other property. A woman typically moves to her husband's family, thus in essence giving up rights to land she would inherit from her own family. The preference for sons over daughters as inheritors of land and other property “leads to a gradual implicit bias towards male ownership of land” (Chemonics International Inc., 2017a, p. 9). Other factors, such as gender stereotypes, women's lower economic status and more limited access to agricultural inputs, also influence women to sell, transfer or donate lands to other family members. Such practices would account for the asymmetry in landownership today (especially compared with the theoretically equitable distribution of land at the time of privatization).

Studies have noted that women in the Republic of Moldova do have usufruct rights to land. Usufruct rights refer to the right of a person to use the property

Figure 20. Use of own production by smallholders (non-legally registered holdings), headed/managed by women and men, 2011

Source: National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova. 2013. *2011 General Agricultural Census in the Republic of Moldova. Main results*. Chisinau, p. 124.

of another person (the owner) for a specific period of time and to derive profits or benefits as if s/he were the owner, as long as that property is not damaged. Usufruct rights convey the entitlement to possession of the property but not the rights to dispose of the property through sale, lending, bequest or mortgage.²² Thus, usufruct rights are a less secure form of tenure. The importance of formal landownership is often overlooked when people are able to make use of land freely. But, in fact, land is a critical asset for rural residents in that ownership and control over agricultural land leads to greater control over the use of the land and of its products. The implications of women's more limited ownership of agricultural land are to constrain their access to other important economic resources, not only in relation to the products that come directly from the land, but also in the form of potential sale or rental income, access to financing (if land title is required for collateral) and as the basis for start-up enterprises.

It is important to note that there are almost no differences in the practices of female and male smallholders in terms of whether their products are used mainly for self-consumption or for sale. Women and men who are the heads of holdings without legal status use over 80 percent of their production only for household consumption; the remainder is destined for a combination of sale and self-consumption, as demonstrated in Figure 20. (As would be expected,

virtually all of the heads of holdings with legal status dedicate more than half of their production to sales).

The contributions of smallholders and family farms is vital in that they generate 63 percent of the country's total agricultural production and contribute both to rural employment and to the biodiversity of rural areas (FAO, 2020b). Although they are in the minority, and operate on smaller plots of land, women holders are nevertheless engaged in agricultural production for the same important reasons as men: mainly to sustain their households and, secondarily, to earn income. Thus, initiatives aimed at increasing the potential of smallholders that focus on improving access to affordable land in order to scale up production must better identify the barriers that are constraining women's access to land. Policy and programming should not be based on assumptions that women and men smallholders are operating with equal land resources, even though they may be engaged in very similar agricultural practices.

3.3. Gender roles, leadership and empowerment

The Strategy on Ensuring Equality between Women and Men in the Republic of Moldova for 2017–2021 notes that traditional gender roles and stereotypes perpetuate inequality and discrimination. The CEDAW Committee likewise highlighted the “persistence of patriarchal attitudes and discriminatory stereotypes concerning the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and in society” when issuing recommendations

²² See Article 604, *Civil Code of the Republic of Moldova*, No. 1107-XV, 6 June 2002.

for the Republic of Moldova (Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, 2020, para. 20). The rigidity of gender roles and persistence of stereotypes affect the lives of women and men alike, limiting the opportunities for personal and professional development.

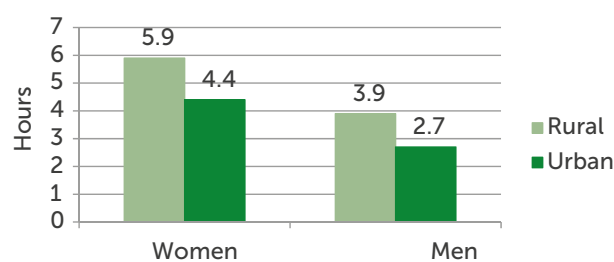
Perceptions about traditional gender roles are prevalent throughout the country, but such views tend to be more intense in rural areas. A patriarchal model is the norm for rural families, and society assigns women “only limited roles related to the birth and care of children, husband, household [and] land cultivation for their own consumption” (NPAM, 2020, p. 10). Men are expected to earn a living for the family, spend more time than women in paid work, and play a limited role in unpaid domestic and care work. Women are expected to manage the domestic sphere, and therefore they take on this role even if they are also employed outside the home or work on family farms.

Women devote 66 percent of their total working time to unpaid work (equivalent to 4.9 hours per day), and men allocate 46 percent of the working day to unpaid work (or 2.8 hours per day; UNDP Moldova, 2014). The distribution of unpaid work among women and men is similar to that seen in many countries, but Moldovan women devote slightly more time to unpaid work than the average in OECD countries. Furthermore, unpaid work is invisible and not recognized as work at all, yet the estimated value of all unpaid work performed by Moldovans is roughly equivalent to the entire GDP (ibid.).

The time burden on rural women is more intense than it is for men and for women in urban areas. Women living in rural areas spend an average of two hours per day more than urban women in unpaid work, but they devote from one to over three hours more per day compared with rural and urban men, respectively (see Figure 21). Rural households are less likely to own labour-saving devices that make domestic chores easier and poor infrastructure requires women to spend additional time tending to household chores (such as gathering fuelwood), as described in Section 5.1. of this report. Because there are fewer opportunities for paid labour in rural areas (additionally, priority may go to men for such jobs), and farming households depend on family labour, women’s time is spent performing tasks related to the upkeep of the house and to agricultural production.

The fact that rural women lack free time has serious consequences for their abilities to engage in income-generating activities, education and training opportunities, and even in leisure.

Figure 21. Time spent in unpaid work in hours per day, by sex and location, 2012



Source: UNDP Moldova. 2014. *Analytical Brief 7 – The Importance of Unpaid Work in Moldova*. Chisinau.

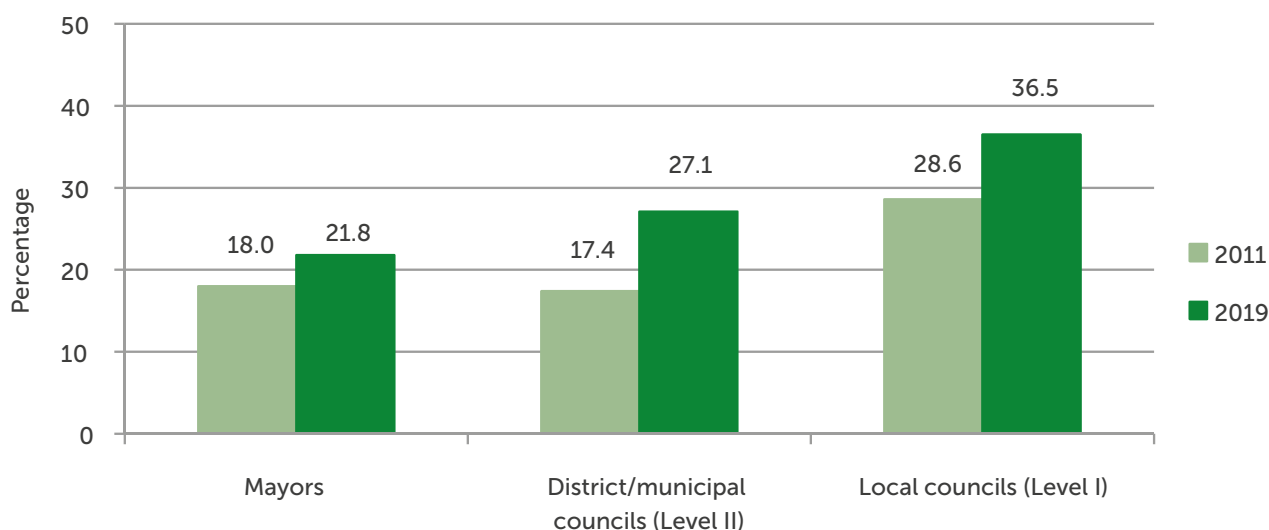
3.3.1. Rural women’s role in leadership and decision-making

When rural women are not represented in decision-making, from political leadership at the national and local levels, to professional organizations and even decisions within households, their voices are not heard on issues that have an impact on them directly.

Women’s political leadership has been gradually increasing in the Republic of Moldova at the national and sub-national levels. As of 2021, 24.8 percent of seats in the national parliament were held by women, a significant increase from 7.9 percent in 2000 (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2021). In local elected offices, women’s representation has improved with each election, as illustrated in Figure 22. The positive change is attributed to a gender quota, introduced into the Election Code in 2016, that requires 40 percent minimum representation by either sex on candidate lists for parliamentary and local elections.

While the goal of the quota has not yet resulted in 40 percent representation in office, women now occupy more than 36 percent of seats on local (village) councils. Women face fewer obstacles to engaging in decision-making at the community level. They benefit from public trust and lower stakes than in higher-level offices, and the disadvantages that women candidates face (for example, limited funds to run campaigns and less political support than men) are less decisive at this level of office. Initiatives to support women in politics²³ and to empower those running for elected office have also contributed to the changes. After participating in training, 8 women were elected as mayors and 90 as local councillors. For the first time in the history of the country, 7 Roma women registered on party lists

²³ The Women in Politics initiative was implemented by UN Women and UNDP in partnership with civil society organizations and funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency. The Roma Women in Politics programme was launched in 2019, a partnership between UN Women and the National Roma Centre.

Figure 22. Dynamics of women's representation in elected office in the Republic of Moldova, 2011 and 2019

Source: Adapted from UNDP Moldova. 2020b. *Local General Elections 2020. Gender Perspective*. Chisinau. https://www.md.undp.org/content/moldova/en/home/library/effective_governance/analiza-din-perspectiva-egalitii-de-gen-a-alegerilor-locale-gene.html, pp. 34–36.

or as independent candidates in the 2019 elections; and 2 Roma women were elected as local councillors (Government of the Republic of Moldova and Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection, 2019).

With the important exception of the female head of state, the President of the Republic of Moldova, women have much lower representation in executive office than in the legislative branch. Out of 32 districts, there is only one female chairperson (Alegeri.md, 2019). Women's presence in both elected and appointed office decreases as the hierarchy of office increases. Women's representation at the local level is a very important means for them to influence decision-making over issues that directly impact on their communities and livelihoods. However, because of their absence at the central level, the voices of rural women have limited influence over national strategic planning and policy setting.

The gender quota does not apply to appointments in executive offices, and women's representation as line ministers has been variable, and at times positive, after government changes. Until 2011, women constituted only five percent of the Cabinet of Ministers. However, the proportion of women increased to half of the cabinet in 2021, and as of early 2022, women represented just under a third of cabinet members (namely, the Prime Minister, heads of the Ministry of Health, Ministry of the Interior and Ministry of the Environment, and the Governor of the Gagauz territorial unit; Government of the Republic of Moldova, 2022).

Additional avenues for rural women to exercise leadership can be found through membership in

agricultural unions and producers' associations. While there are producers' associations representing major areas of agricultural production in the Republic of Moldova (of nut producers, berry farmers, beekeepers, dairy farmers and pig farmers, to name a few), it is not common for Moldovan farmers, either men or women, to be members. Only 0.4 percent and 0.2 percent of farms headed by men and women, respectively, were members of such associations according to a sample survey (Mathematica Policy Research, 2015).

Information was not found for this assessment, either from MAFI or specific agricultural associations, about membership numbers or a gender breakdown of members and leadership. Still, women seldom join agricultural associations and are thus underrepresented in the types of organizations that offer support to small-scale farmers. For instance, producers' associations can be beneficial for the pooling of resources and inputs, in sharing information and delivering extension services to members, and facilitating access to markets, all of which can help to achieve economies of scale. When special initiatives have been undertaken in the country to improve women's participation in producer groups, through explicit outreach and engagement strategies, the results have been positive. For example, when the National Federation of Agricultural Producers from Moldova (AGROinform) – an NGO – began to recruit more women, their membership rate increased from 17 percent in 2008 to 38 percent in 2017, including not only women smallholders but also owners of large farms and businesses (Chemonics International Inc., 2017a). Other projects in the Republic of Moldova have demonstrated that the establishment of agriculture

groups that have activities to build the confidence of women farmers, expand their professional networks and provide tailored technical and capital assistance are successful in engaging women and supporting them to “overcome some of the implicit constraints that affect women’s participation in agriculture” (ibid., p. 10). Associations with little or no female membership, on the other hand, often lack awareness and understanding of the benefits that gender balance and diversity in membership brings.

Rural women are more likely to be engaged in women-led or women-centred civil society organizations. Generally, women are most active in NGOs in the social sector²⁴ as leaders and staff members. Although MAFI publishes a list of 122 NGOs working in the field of agriculture, by speciality,²⁵ no gender-specific information is included. As tends to be the case with the sector generally, most of the leaders of professional agriculture-focused NGOs are men. While they may be few in number, there are however Moldovan NGOs with missions that cover rural women’s livelihoods and women as farmers. For instance, the National Farmers Federation (NFFM), an organization that focuses on “women’s economic empowerment through facilitating access for rural women to financial resources (grants and subsidies), markets [and] knowledge transfer through encouraging them to participate in trainings and workshops”, also undertakes advocacy work in the form of reports submitted to the CEDAW Committee (National Farmers Federation, 2020, p. 1). Grădina Moldovei is a woman-led NGO that works to promote agroecology and the rights of smallholders/family farmers (peasant farmers).

Rural women and men also volunteer to improve their communities, and a greater proportion do so than in the urban population (50 percent of rural women and 43.9 percent of rural men; National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, 2015). Rural residents tend to provide voluntary help related to traditional gender roles, in housework and child care for women and home repairs for men. Almost 60 percent of surveyed rural women, and 46.4 percent of rural men, work voluntarily for the “benefit of the community” (ibid., p. 15). Both women and men undertake voluntary agricultural work – men considerably more often than women (43.1 percent of men and 25.4 percent of women; ibid.). Rural women’s volunteerism is significant as it demonstrates that despite their low representation

in politics, and the constraints on their time, they nevertheless find ways to be active and engaged in community life.

Finally, women’s engagement in intra-household decision-making is no less important than participation in public affairs. There appears to be little research on this topic. But one survey found that farm operators, as did other respondents in farming households, reported that decisions on where and which crops to cultivate, and when and where to sell such crops, are most often made jointly between men and women in the household. Yet when such decisions are not made jointly, men are somewhat more likely to be the sole decision-makers (Mathematica Policy Research, 2015). The only area in which there is a clear pattern of men’s sole decision-making concerns irrigation. It could be useful to look more deeply into other indicators of women’s empowerment and agency concerning farming practices (in farming households with two spouses), such as who makes decisions in the household about how income from the sale of agricultural products is used.

²⁴ This finding is based on a review, undertaken for this assessment, of NGOs listed in an online catalogue: <http://ong.md/index.php/catalog>.

²⁵ See <https://madr.gov.md/ro/content/lista-organiza%C8%9Biiitornege-vernamentale-pe-domenii-de-activitate>.

4. Gender and agriculture, fisheries and forestry

The agricultural census provides sex-disaggregated data and information about key gender gaps in agricultural productivity, but the census covers just over 900 000 agricultural holdings in the Republic of Moldova in 2011 (around 320 000 of which were headed by women). It does not capture information about the many rural households that engage in farming in less formal ways. Additionally, a very large share of smallholders and family farms engage in farming for self-consumption and thus may not keep accounts of agricultural outputs. This makes it difficult to track gender-based gaps in indicators such as crop yields and harvests, or income derived from the sale of agricultural products. Nevertheless, it is clear that gender-based differential access to assets, resources and inputs have led to differences in farming practices which themselves have impacts on agricultural productivity. Women face a number of particular constraints that stem from biases and discrimination. Information about these gender gaps should inform policy formulation and planning so that future interventions are not only inclusive of all farmers but also targeted and effective at removing barriers that women encounter.

4.1. Crop production and horticulture

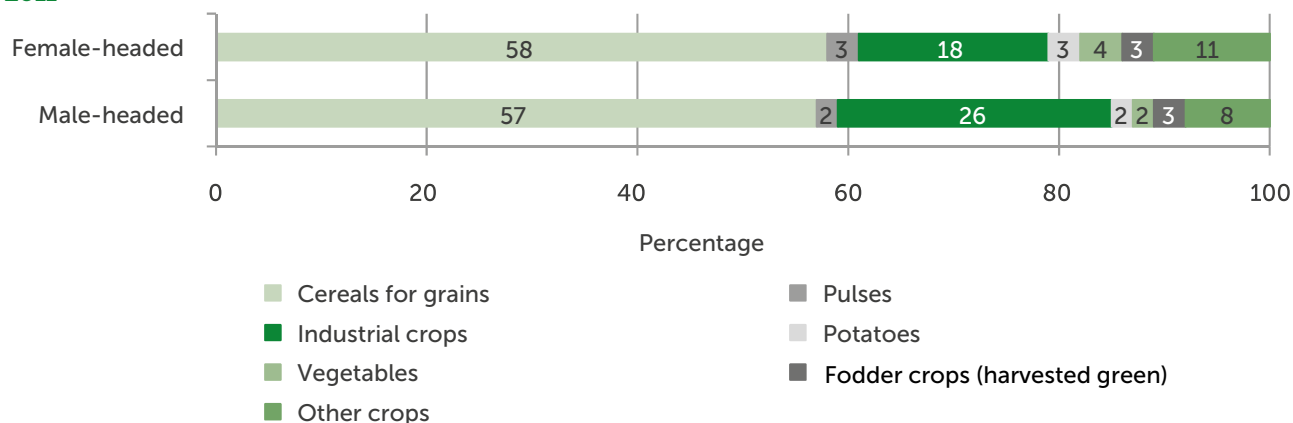
Plant production accounts for the largest share of agricultural production in the Republic of Moldova, contributing 67.8 percent of the total revenue generated by agriculture in 2020 (National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, Statistical Databank: Agricultural production by agricultural branches and categories of producers, 1990–2021). Around 60 percent of total plant production is from smallholders and family farms (FAO, 2020b).

Much of the arable land in the country is devoted to cereals and industrial crops. Large-scale agri-enterprises specialize in the production of low-value crops (including cereals, oil seeds [sunflower, rape] and industrial crops [sugar beets, soybeans]).

Because there is greater availability of machinery in agricultural enterprises, they produce most of the fodder crops. Smallholders and family farms also dedicate a significant share of sown areas to cereals and leguminous crops, followed by industrial crops. Additionally, small-scale farms are the country's main producers of labour-intensive, high-value-added crops (for example fruits, nuts, grapes, open field vegetables, pumpkins and squash [bostan crops] and potatoes) that are mainly used for self-sufficiency, but the limited surplus is also sold for cash.

The agricultural census indicates that there are minimal differences in the patterns of crop production on female- and male-headed holdings, as measured by the arable land that is dedicated to specific crops (see Figure 23). The most significant difference is the fact that female-headed holdings produce industrial crops on 18 percent of their arable land, while male-headed holdings use 26 percent of their arable land for this purpose (FAO and National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, 2014). The fact that women use a smaller share of land for industrial crops is related to factors such as their more limited access to machinery and equipment and the fragmentation of their land plots. Female-headed holdings are slightly more involved in producing vegetables.

Dedicated studies of selected value chains indicate that there are gender-based differences in the work that women and men perform in crop production and horticulture. Women are typically found in the lower value-added positions of value chains, most often associated with on-farm plant production. Women most often undertake minimally mechanized physical labour, such as sowing seeds, planting seedlings, weeding, harvesting in greenhouses, hand-spraying small plots with pesticides and chemicals, and some selling of agricultural products in small open-air markets (Chemonics International Inc., 2017a). In contrast, men perform labour that depends much

Figure 23. Main crops sown on arable land for agricultural holdings, by sex of the head of the holding, 2011

Source: FAO and National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova. 2014. *Women and Men in Agriculture of the Republic of Moldova*. Budapest and Chisinau.

more on mechanization, including spraying large plots with pesticides and chemicals, irrigation and operating farm equipment. Men also have greater engagement in the transport, processing, marketing, selling and export of plant products. This division of labour reflects stereotypes about differences in women's and men's physical abilities and skills (for instance, women are seen to have more dexterity and attention to detail but less physical strength) as well as men's greater access to resources, not only in terms of equipment but also networks and contacts with wholesalers, processors and exporters. The higher-value work performed by men also solidifies their position as the main decision-makers on agricultural inputs, production practices, financing and marketing/selling.

Women perform most of the seasonal informal labour in harvesting crops, and sorting and packing agricultural products. Further along the value chain, women process plant products, very often in on-farm processing. When working for larger processing plants, women tend to perform either remedial line work in processing and packing or work in administrative roles (accounting, finance or marketing), but they are rarely in management or technical jobs that are associated with higher salaries.

Smallholders in general have limited access to cold storage facilities and post-harvest handling equipment, which means that much post-harvest processing is done by women at home; a proportion of the products is sold locally but most are preserved as food for the household. Women farmers and entrepreneurs, however, have even less access to cold storage and post-harvest handling equipment. This means that they "face challenges with higher spoilage rates and have fewer opportunities for upgrading to higher-value segments [of the horticultural value chains] such as

processing and export" (Chemonics International Inc., 2017a, p. 17).

While the gendered division of labour is characteristic for horticultural value chains, as is men's dominance at the higher-value ends, some types of value chains offer women a wider range of entry points than others. For instance, for stone fruit, table grapes and open field vegetable value chains, women dominate at the stages of seasonal harvesting, packing, line processing and petty sales, while men tend to occupy management and export-oriented roles. The nuts value chain (walnuts, almonds and hazelnuts) is male-dominated. While both women and men harvest nuts (labour that is mainly manual), women represent most of the workers in nut processing facilities (up to 90 percent). However, there are almost no female members of the Republican Union of Nut Growers Associations (110 of 130 members are men; Chemonics International Inc., 2017b).

Women are represented more equitably along some value chains. For example, women work at all stages of the apple growing and processing value chain, starting from the level of family farmers and smallholders, up to medium and large commercial producers, processors and exporters (Chemonics International Inc., 2017b). Nevertheless, men form the majority of industry leaders, middle management and exporters in this sub-sector. Berry production (for example strawberries, raspberries and currants) is a value chain in which women play a significant role – they represent between 70 and 75 percent of the workforce along the chain (ILO, 2021). Although they perform most of the seasonal harvesting, women are also represented along the chain from berry growers to managers of processing companies. Women's role has been increasing in this sub-sector, and because berry growing requires relatively small land plots, there are

lower thresholds for women to establish and manage berry farms. With investment into primary production, and improvements to the cold chain and post-harvest handling infrastructure, as well as irrigation and extension services, the export potential for berries is also high (Chemonics International Inc., 2017a).

Finally, the cultivated medicinal and aromatic plant sub-sector is not well-developed but has been identified as another value chain that offers women the potential to be involved in the cultivation, processing (for example, distillation of essential oils) and marketing of such products if significant investments are made into each of these stages of production (Chemonics International Inc., 2017b). In order for investments to effectively target women's engagement in horticultural value chains, however, further analysis is needed of why women have greater representation along some value chains but remain concentrated at the low value ends of others.

Investment into and subsidies for crop production and horticulture

In 2020, 17.5 percent of the National Fund for Agriculture and Rural Development was allocated to stimulate investment in the establishment and modernization of perennial plantations, and 0.98 percent was dedicated to the production of vegetables and fruits on protected land.

Farmers may apply for subsidies from the National Fund for Agriculture and Rural Development through the Agency for Intervention and Payments in Agriculture (AIPA). A number of these subsidies cover improvements to crop production. Under regulations on agricultural subsidies, women farmers can benefit from a 15+ percent incentive (over the authorized subsidy amount) for specific categories of investments. Three of these categories are for investments into fruit and vegetable production, establishing and improving perennial plantations, and post-harvest and processing infrastructure.

While the overall picture of women's and men's access to agricultural subsidies is discussed in Section 4.8. of this report, it is worth reviewing information about how women are represented as recipients of subsidies related to crops and horticulture. In relation to the overall subsidies for crop production, for which sex-disaggregated data about the applicant are recorded, women represented less than a quarter of all applicants. It is difficult to discern any patterns in the kinds of subsidies that women farmers apply for, although they seem to be slightly more inclined to seek funds for agricultural production (for

example to establish orchards and vineyards) than for post-harvesting and processing support (see Table 7). Of note, it appears that women only applied for subsidies in the categories for which they are eligible for the 15+ percent incentive.

Climate change has increasingly affected crop production in the Republic of Moldova. As a result of severe droughts, crop production in 2020 was only 64 percent of what it had been in 2019. Comparing 2020 to 2019, considerable decreases in the volume of agricultural production were seen in a number of crops, ranging from reductions of over 60 percent (for maize) to more than 20 percent (for wheat, sunflower, fruits, nuts and berries, grapes and vegetables; National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, 2020b). FAO notes that smallholders are at once more vulnerable to climate change but also better at adapting to new conditions than large agricultural enterprises, a topic that is discussed in more detail in Section 6.1. of this report (FAO, 2020b).

The COVID-19 outbreak has also had an impact on agricultural production and processing. The peak lockdown periods occurred in spring 2020 when the planting season had already started for some crops (cereals), but farmers faced difficulty in accessing agricultural inputs, such as fertilizers and seeds. Greenhouse vegetable and berry growers had problems marketing and selling their products when local marketplaces were closed because few small producers sell directly to supermarket chains (United Nations Office for the Republic of Moldova, 2020a). By June 2020, a number of agribusinesses that participated in a survey reported dramatic declines in sales and predicted that they would be close to bankruptcy if the health crisis were to continue (eight percent of survey respondents had applied for insolvency protection at the time of the survey; UNDP Moldova, 2020c). The pandemic has had particularly negative consequences for small-scale producers and poor rural households in terms of lost income. Among smallholders and individual farmers, women were hit the hardest given their smaller land plots and more limited access to agricultural inputs even before the health crisis.

The population of the Republic of Moldova relies heavily on domestic production, and so volatility in agricultural harvests and yields has serious implications for the food security of the entire country. Urban households are far more likely to purchase their food, meaning that they are subject to fluctuations in prices, but they may also be able to access food imports. On the other hand, for rural households, agricultural production is both a source of income and a "safety net" in the sense that they depend on it for their food (FAO, 2020b, p. 66).

Table 7. Status of subsidies paid by the National Fund for Agriculture and Rural Development to female applicants related to crop production or horticulture, 2021*

Subsidized activity/ investments in:	Total number of applicants	Number of female applicants	Share of female applicants	Number of female applicants who were paid in 2020
Production of vegetables and fruits on protected land (winter greenhouses, solariums and tunnels) [1.1]	100	23	23%	16
Establishment, modernization and deforestation of perennial plantations, including vineyards and orchards [1.2]				
– establishment of fruit plantations	340	89	26%	53
– establishment of vineyards	106	26	24%	18
– installation of anti-hail and anti-rain equipment in anti-hail plantations	27	6	22%	3
– deforestation of perennial plantations	505	87	17%	51
– installation of modern support systems in perennial plantations	126	33	26%	14
Development of post-harvest and processing infrastructure [1.6]:				
– construction of cold storage for fruits, grapes and vegetables, and for packing houses	188	51	27%	**
– primary/finished processing, processing, drying and freezing of fruits	78	14	18%	
– primary/finished processing, drying, conditioning, storage and packaging of cereals, oilseeds, sunflowers and soybeans	265	33	12%	

Notes: *The data are correct as of 19 February 2021. The number of female applicants represents those that were approved as of this period. However, in several cases, the payment was still pending at this time.

**Empty columns indicate that payments had not yet been processed when records were reviewed.

Sources: AIPA. 2021b. Raport de activitate a AIPA pentru anul 2020 [AIPA Activity Report for 2020]. Chisinau, p. 6; additional data provided by AIPA for this assessment.

4.2. Livestock and livestock products

Plant production is predominant in the Republic of Moldova, and animal production accounts for just over a quarter of total production (FAO, 2020b). Smallholders generally practise a crop mix of high-value crops and

grains that are used to feed livestock and poultry, meaning that most small farms combine crop and livestock production. This practice itself “implies crop rotations, which leads to better land productivity and preservation of soil fertility” (ibid., p. 20). The contribution of small-scale farming to livestock

Table 8. Average number of livestock, by species and sex of the head of the holding, 2011

Animal species	Average number of heads in female-headed holdings	Average number of heads in male-headed holdings	Gender gap in livestock ownership*
Bovine animals	1.4	1.5	89%
of which are dairy cows	1.1	1.2	96%
Pigs	1.8	2.8	61%
Sheep	8.6	10.8	80%
Goats	1.9	2.5	78%
Horses	1.1	1.1	100%
Rabbits	5.6	6.4	87%
Poultry	16.7	26.7	63%
Beehives (number)	9.6	11.5	83%

Note: *The gender gap refers to the difference in the average number of livestock between female-headed and male-headed holdings, expressed as a percentage of the average number of livestock on male-headed holdings.

Source: FAO and National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova. 2014. *Women and Men in Agriculture of the Republic of Moldova*. Budapest and Chisinau.

production is significant: households are responsible for the production of the majority of the country's milk, eggs and wool. Agricultural enterprises and farms produce the greater share of poultry and a close to equal share of cattle for slaughter.

According to the agricultural census, male-headed holdings have more heads of livestock on average than female-headed holdings, in almost all categories (see Table 8). The greatest disparities are in the number of pigs and poultry owned by each type of holding. There are almost no differences in the number of dairy cows or horses. Notably, pigs and poultry are two of the animal species that holdings own in larger numbers (for instance, the average holding, whether headed by a man or a woman, owns only one dairy cow and one horse). Holdings headed by men are likely to be larger farming households, thus requiring more animal products for their own consumption but also able to take advantage of having more family workers. Additionally, male-headed holdings may be more commercially oriented and therefore keep a greater number of some species of livestock so that surplus products can be sold. Female-headed holdings have more limited livestock ownership by virtue of the fact that they face difficulties accessing many of the inputs needed to raise animals.

As is the case with farming practices generally, women and men have different roles in livestock production on family farms. Women are typically responsible for animal care, such as providing feed, fodder and water, as well as milking, processing and selling dairy products. Men, on

the other hand, are generally involved in herding, cutting branches for feeding livestock, administering medicine and for transport and marketing.

Gender analysis has been applied to only one animal product value chain in the Republic of Moldova – beekeeping and the production of honey and other products (including wax, pollen, royal jelly, propolis and bee venom). The sector is almost entirely made up of individual beekeepers operating at the household level. An estimated 5 000 to 7 000 households keep bees, with an average of around 23 hives, but many have only 10 to 15 hives. Such individual beekeepers are generally characterized as "hobbyists" (Chemonics International Inc., 2017b). Apiculture has been assessed as the "most deeply stratified sub-sector" in terms of the gendered division of labour. Women represent between 6 and 20 percent of beekeepers, and this calculation seems to be borne out by the fact that holdings headed by women have fewer beehives on average than holdings led by men. Leaders in the field note that most women who are engaged in apiculture are registered sellers and not members of any beekeepers' association (Chemonics International Inc., 2017a, p. 20).

At the household level, men have the lead management and decision-making roles and are responsible for constructing apiaries. Women's primary role is in support of men's day-to-day work and in honey packaging. Although there is a strong gender bias in favour of men, beekeeping offers women opportunities to develop enterprises around a product with a high

market potential that can also be conducted on relatively small land plots. Compared with livestock production, beekeeping “involves less physically demanding work and more management thinking, observations, and decision-making”; modern technologies also mean that there are few barriers to women performing the same work as men (Chemonics International Inc., 2017b, p. 30). Apiculture provides an interesting case study of how several barriers intersect. Gender stereotypes about the type of agricultural work that is open to women, women’s lack of investment resources, knowledge and skills and their underrepresentation in relevant associations – when combined – mean that the sector is almost closed to women. Thus, if women are to be assisted to enter this potentially profitable sector, complex support that addresses multiple barriers at once must be provided.

Investment into and subsidies for livestock production

Sex-disaggregated application records for agricultural subsidies in livestock production suggest that women farmers apply for subsidies in this sub-sector more often than they do for subsidies related to plant production. Women farmers can benefit from a 15+ percent incentive (over the authorized subsidy amount) for specific categories of investments, including for investments into equipment for and renovations of livestock farms and to procure breeding animals. The share of female applicants is slightly higher, on average, among farmers requesting subsidies for livestock-related activities than for investments in horticulture (see Tables 7 and 9). In order to understand whether this is a trend, and its significance, further analysis would need to be carried out among women and men agricultural producers about their need for investments in various sectors and any barriers they

encounter to receiving subsidies. As was seen with subsidies related to crop production or horticulture, it appears that women farmers are not applying for investments funds in categories for which they would not benefit from the 15+ percent incentive.

As has been observed with crop production, livestock production has also been affected by changing climate conditions, resulting in an overall decline in output. Droughts in 2020 meant that few farmers were able to secure enough fodder for their livestock. Because smallholders own most of the dairy cows and produce almost all of the country’s milk, processing plants are concerned about shortfalls if farmers have to reduce the number of cows per household because of a lack of feed. The COVID-19 pandemic also had a significant impact on the poultry sector because of emergency measures that were in place in March and April 2020 which is the season for chick production and sales. Loss of revenue over a two-week period in 2020 was estimated at around MDL 112 million (United Nations Office for the Republic of Moldova, 2020a).

4.3. Fisheries and aquaculture

The Republic of Moldova is rich in retained water resources. The country is bordered by two large rivers and contains many artificial water reservoirs and ponds. In FAO’s assessment, fish farming “has the potential to reduce poverty in rural areas. Renting and using small lakes and ponds for growing fish creates jobs, brings income to rural areas and increases the sales of fresh fish in villages” (Zubcov *et al.*, 2013, p. xi).

Aquaculture and fish farming were more intensive during the Soviet period than they are today. While there has been donor support (from the European Union)

Table 9. Status of subsidies paid by the National Fund for Agriculture and Rural Development to female applicants related to livestock production, 2021*

Subsidized activity/ investments in:	Total number of applicants	Number of female applicants	Share of female applicants	Number of female applicants who were paid in 2020
Equipment and technological renovation of livestock farms [1.4]	226	65	29%	31
Procurement of breeding animals and maintaining their genetic background [1.5]	77	26	34%	**

Notes: *The data are correct as of 19 February 2021. The number of female applicants represents those that were approved as of this period. However, in several cases, the payment was still pending at this time.

**Empty columns indicate that payments had not yet been processed when records were reviewed.

Sources: AIPA. 2021b. Raport de activitate a AIPA pentru anul 2020 [AIPA Activity Report for 2020]. Chisinau, p. 6; additional data provided by AIPA for this assessment.

and financial incentives (through AIPA) for improving the processing and marketing of fishery products, the sector as a whole remains underdeveloped. The fishery and aquaculture sector contributed only 0.03 percent to GDP in 2010, and aquaculture provided employment for around 1 978 people in 2017 (FAO, 2019a). In 2010, there were approximately 175 fish production facilities in the Republic of Moldova. More than 100 were small farms that use ponds which are under the ownership of territorial authorities (Zubcov *et al.*, 2013).

National statistics are combined data on fisheries, agriculture and forestry. None of the available data, on employment for example, is disaggregated by agricultural sub-sector (here, fisheries) and sex. Thus, women's role in fisheries and aquaculture in the country is not well understood or reflected in national policy. In the Eastern Europe region, women are generally underrepresented in fish farming, and this pattern is most likely replicated in the Republic of Moldova. Women's employment tends to be in secondary processing and marketing, but this particular sub-sector is not well-developed in the Republic of Moldova. Most locally produced fish are sold alive, chilled or in a partially processed form to supermarkets, small shops and in open markets (Zubcov *et al.*, 2013). Thus, it can be assumed that there are few women employed in fish farming, although more women may be engaged in fish selling in markets.

Key areas that FAO has identified as critical to the development of fisheries and aquaculture in the Republic of Moldova should be considered using a gender lens. For instance, FAO has recommended that state support be given to increase the efficiency of fish enterprises and to provide training, advisory and extension services to farmers who often lack knowledge of fisheries and aquaculture technologies. With proper planning and design, such measures could be used to attract women's entrepreneurship to this sub-sector.

4.4. Forestry

Approximately 11 percent of the territory of the Republic of Moldova is covered by forest, equivalent to 379 300 hectares (FAO, 2020b). The majority of national forest lands (81.1 percent) are state property (managed by Agency Moldsilva and its forest units), and the next largest share is owned by local public authorities, followed by other state institutions. Only 0.6 percent is owned privately (ENPI FLEG Program, 2015).

Forest coverage is quite low compared with other European countries, and forest lands are fragmented. Although the forest sector represents a small proportion of the country's GDP (less than 0.5 percent), local

communities depend quite heavily on forests for fuel, as pastures for grazing and fodder, and as an income source. In fact, after agriculture and remittances, forest products constitute a third source of income for rural communities. Rural households mainly use forests as "a basic resource and then as a gap filter or a pathway out of poverty" (ENPI FLEG Program, 2015, p. 27). Foremost, forests provide fuelwood and tree branches (the forest product that is collected most frequently) that rural households use as an energy source for heating and cooking. As discussed in more detail in Section 5.2. of this report, rural dwellings generally do not have central heating, and many are not connected to a gas supply. Next in frequency of collection and in value are nuts (mainly walnuts) which are used for personal consumption but also contribute to household income when sold. Unlike other forest products, there are established supply chains for the sale of walnuts.

The rural population harvests or gathers other non-timber forest products, such as fruits and berries, mushrooms, rosehips, medicinal plants and flowers. As there is no market for these products, they are seen as low value and used mainly within households. Only occasionally are such products sold along the roadside or in markets for supplementary income. Of note, forest administrators (Agency Moldsilva) also collect and sell forest products and maintain records that allow for the value of these transactions to be estimated. But because the use and sale of forest products by rural residents is not formalized, there are no data about the quantities collected and sold, or about how many people, or smallholders/family farms, are involved in this activity. Without such information the economic importance of these activities is difficult to quantify (ENPI FLEG Program, 2014).

Likewise, there is no detailed analysis of women's engagement in the use/sale of non-timber forest products. Anecdotally, it is known that mainly women and children collect rosehips, forest fruits and other products that are not typically sold. Small-scale forestry (for timber as well as other forest products) is not developed in the Republic of Moldova, but if investments were made in this sub-sector, gender analysis would be very important to uncover whether there are ways to support women to formalize the work that they carry out on an informal basis.

With proper management of the ecosystems, forests also have the potential to provide recreational and tourism opportunities (including in fishing and hunting) that could be sources of income for local communities. Given women's role in the service and hospitality sectors, this could be a growth area for women's entrepreneurship.

In terms of women's formal representation in the forestry sector, out of a total of 2 021 staff in Agency Moldsilva and its branches, 334 (16.5 percent) were women in 2000 (Andreev *et al.*, 2017). Information about the types of jobs that women occupy in the forestry sector is perhaps more useful than the number of female employees. Among the women staff, 61 percent (204 women) worked as accountants, economists or engineers. Very few women were working in management or as foresters (women represented only 33 of a total of 1 015 foresters in 2000; *ibid.*) These employment patterns indicate the prevalence of gender stereotypes and reflect ideas about the kind of work that is "suitable" for women. Women in the Republic of Moldova may play a greater role in community-based initiatives around the protection of forests and conservation of biodiversity than they do in forest sector work.

4.5. Agricultural extension and rural advisory services

The Strategy for the Development of Rural Extension Services for 2012–2022 introduces a modernized model for the provision of advisory services that will enhance knowledge and innovation and improve the lives of rural people. The strategy foresees increasing the flow of information throughout agricultural value chains and providing commercially oriented services. While the strategy provides an overview of the current situation in terms of the number of farms and whether they are commercially oriented or subsistence, it does not include any gender analysis of farm ownership and management, the educational backgrounds of farmers or possible barriers to accessing advisory services for either women or men.

Federations of agricultural producers and farmers, associations of producers and consulting companies all provide rural advisory services, extension services and training. These services are largely financed under donor projects that offer expert advice to farmers. In 2002, the National Network of Rural Advisory Services (NNRAS) was established with state and donor financing. The network is managed by the National Agency for Rural Development (ACSA),²⁶ which was previously the only agency providing free of charge extension services throughout the Republic of Moldova. As of 2021, the ACSA professional network consisted of 35 regional branches (local service providers) and nearly 430 regional and local consultants, of which 31 percent were women. Annually, ACSA consultants provide more than 250 000 services to over 300 000

beneficiaries, including farmers, entrepreneurs and rural residents (information provided by the ACSA for this assessment). One particular activity of the ACSA, the Agricultural Registry for Wine and Vine Activity, included special initiatives for women during the first three years of its implementation (2017 to 2020). The project, which supports Moldovan wine producers to meet international wine traceability and food safety requirements so they can more easily enter European Union and other markets, employed 151 district and local consultants (38 percent of whom were women). Among beneficiaries of informational seminars (4 900 in total), approximately 38 percent of attendees were women (information provided by the ACSA for this assessment).

Other major suppliers of rural advisory services are the National Federation of Agricultural Producers "FARM",²⁷ the National Farmers' Federation of Moldova,²⁸ the National Union of Associations of Agricultural Producers "UniAgroProtect" (an umbrella organization of associations of agricultural producers and businesses in the agrifood sector) and the National Federation of Agricultural Producers of Moldova "AGROinform".²⁹ Each service provider has a specific target group, and some have paid specific attention to female beneficiaries. For instance, AGROinform is a network of 22 regional associations with a total of 6 000 members (agricultural enterprises and family farms) and around 100 permanent employees. Its main activities are lobbying, marketing assistance and business development, but it has also conducted activities in rural areas to "[mobilize] women in alternative income-generating activities through study circles and ... activities within winter schools". AGROinform has an internal lending system that supports such activities (Government of the Republic of Moldova, 2012a).

Paid extension services, including individual consulting on more complex topics, such as feasibility studies, business planning, and assistance in preparing the package of documents (dossier) needed to apply for state subsidies, also exist in the Republic of Moldova. In contrast, there are no educational institutions in rural areas that could deliver lifelong learning, vocational education or re-training in different specialities.

An understanding of the general educational background of women and men helps to assess whether agricultural extension and rural advisory services are accessible. As discussed in more detail in Section 2.7. of

²⁶ More information is available at <https://acsa.md>.

²⁷ More information is available at <https://agrobiznes.md/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Brosura-FARM.pdf>.

²⁸ More information is available at <http://fnfm.md/>.

²⁹ More information is available at <https://www.agroinform.md>.

this CGA, just under half of women living in rural areas have completed higher education, specialized secondary or vocational secondary education, and this number has been decreasing from year to year. A considerable share of rural women has not completed primary education. It is uncommon for farmers to have specialized education in agriculture, but it is especially rare for women who are heads of farms (almost 90 percent of women and 80 percent of men do not have agricultural education in any form, see Figure 11). Lack of education and vocational skills significantly constrain rural women who would like to establish agribusinesses. Tailored extension services, training and support that can make up for gaps in formal education are thus essential to both women and men farmers.

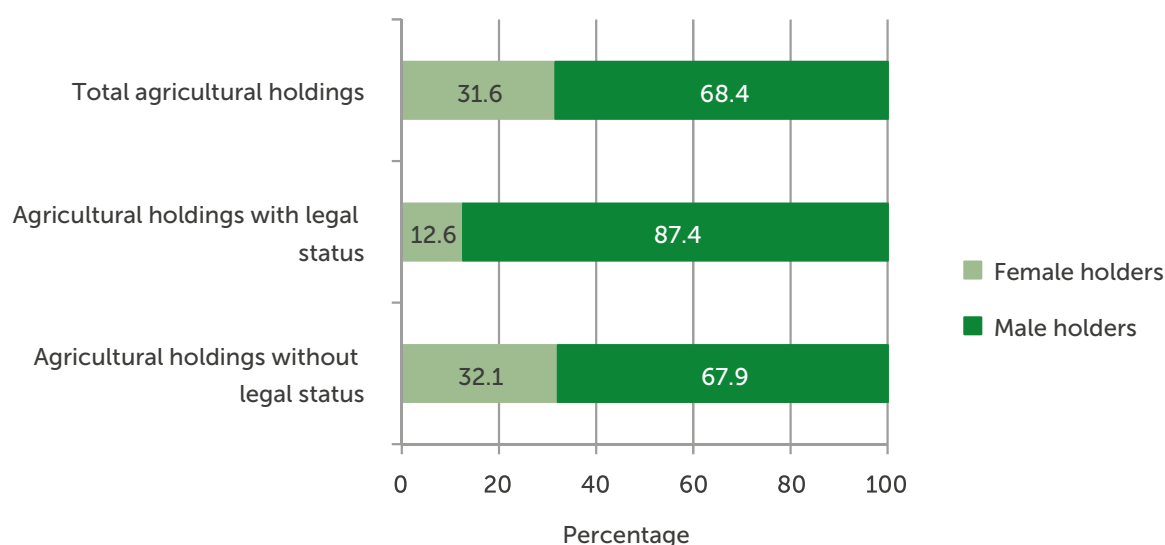
Because extension services are provided by various agencies, there is no unified client database. Surveys do give an indication that farmers are generally in need of specialized training and information, but also that women farmers access existing services less often than men. Of all farm holders who had participated in a training course related to agriculture at the time the General Agricultural Census was administered, less than a third were women (see Figure 24). Women heading farms without legal status (such as family farms) were more likely to have taken part in some form of training. This may be related to the fact that a small percentage of women heads of holdings have a legally registered farm, or it may be a reflection of special donor and NGO programmes that targeted specific groups of rural women. Almost 90 percent of farmers from agricultural enterprises with legal status who had received training were men (National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic

of Moldova, 2013). By way of comparison, out of registered farmers who applied to AIPA for subsidies for consulting and training services in 2020, 33 percent of the applicants were women (AIPA, 2021b) – a figure that is nearly identical to the share that reported having participated in training a decade earlier.

Findings from a farmer survey reveal that of those who had received extension services, the topics that were covered were essentially the same for women and men, meaning there were no significant gender differences in the information that was shared. Among the clients for extension services, most had gained knowledge related to modern technologies of crop production and weed or pest control, followed by the development of value chains for food products and marketing of food products (JICA, 2017). What is perhaps more surprising is the very low number of women who had received extension services in areas in which they tend to have agribusinesses, such as food processing and hygiene and food safety.

Women farmers report that they have limited opportunities to use extension services. Interviewed female agricultural producers said that if they received extension services, it was very infrequent, and the information provided was too general and not sufficiently technical. Because women farmers have limited contact with input suppliers and do not receive clear guidance (for example, on optimal seed varieties or use of fertilizers and chemicals) they usually rely on “informal networks, the internet and their own experiences for validation” (Chemonics International Inc. 2017a, p. 15).

Figure 24. Share of female and male holders who had participated in a training course in the field of agriculture, by legal status of the holding, 2011



Source: National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova. 2013. *2011 General Agricultural Census in the Republic of Moldova. Main results*. Chisinau, pp. 114–115.

Further information is needed to identify the barriers that prevent women from accessing advisory and extension services, beyond the fact that they represent the minority of heads of farms and agri-enterprises. It is not clear, for example, whether logistical factors play a role (for instance, women have limited free time to devote to training; they are not part of networks through which information about services is disseminated; or they are not able to travel to training), the services that are offered do not match the needs of women farmers, or whether gender stereotypes about women not being the key decision-makers concerning agricultural activities constrain them from taking advantage of advisory services.

4.6. Irrigation and other productive inputs

Access to land and to irrigation are interconnected and interdependent. The drought in the Republic of Moldova in the summer of 2020 was one of the most intense in the past fifty years, and it demonstrated vividly that access to small-scale irrigation systems is an increasingly important tool for reducing farm production risks and improving the well-being of small-scale agriproducers who farm their own land.

According to official analysis, the irrigation networks that once covered over 200 000 hectares of farmland are now only operational in 30 percent of the total area, that is 40 000 hectares (Government of the Republic of Moldova, in draft). In the Republic of Moldova, irrigation systems are divided into three components: (i) pumping stations; (ii) distribution channels with small-scale pumps to redirect water courses; and (iii) on-farm distribution equipment. Irrigation facilities and distribution networks are scarce, however, and irrigation costs (meaning the electrical energy costs) are too high for many farmers to afford.

In order to address such deficiencies, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry subsidises the cost of electricity used for irrigation. In 2020, 5.8 percent of the National Fund for Agriculture and Rural Development was allocated to subsidizing irrigation equipment and 0.75 percent was granted to subsidize the cost of electricity. Interest in such subsidies has increased, and an additional 104 applications were submitted in 2020 compared with 2019. The value of requests for subsidies also increased by 64 percent. Out of a total of 334 applications, only 73 were approved for payment in 2020, however, and the rest were moved for payment from the 2021 budget (information provided by AIPA for this assessment).

There is limited sex-disaggregated data or qualitative information concerning women farmers' access to irrigation. According to the agricultural census, out of a total of 773 holdings that had irrigation machinery, 92 percent of these holdings were headed by men. Put another way, although more than a third of all holdings were headed by women, they owned less than eight percent of the irrigation machinery in the Republic of Moldova at the time (see Table 10). Among the 2020 applicants for subsidies for procuring irrigation equipment and to cover the costs of irrigation, no women applied in the first category, and only 11 percent of applicants in the second category were women (AIPA, 2021b).

Because so few holdings headed by women have irrigation machinery, it is to be expected that a small number would apply for assistance to cover the energy costs associated with irrigation. However, it is unclear why women farmers are not taking advantage of subsidies to invest in improving irrigation to a greater extent. The low take-up by women farmers may be a reflection of their smaller plots of land, or the fragmented nature of the land that makes irrigation technically complicated.

Gender roles and expectations are also likely to be exerting an influence here. Irrigation and decisions concerning agricultural water management are usually taken by men. A baseline evaluation conducted by the Millennium Challenge Corporation found that in most farming households, decisions are made jointly by women and men or, if exclusively, then evenly divided between them. The exception, however, concerned irrigation, where men are considerably more likely than women to make exclusive decisions (31 percent compared with 14 percent; Mathematica Policy Research, 2015). Furthermore, farms headed by men are more likely to have a member of a water users' association (WUA) in the household compared with women-headed farms (58 percent and 49 percent, respectively; *ibid.*). Under the 2010 Compact Agreement, the government and the Millennium Challenge Corporation invested in the rehabilitation of irrigation systems and the establishment of additional water users' associations, with a target of 20 percent women's representation in WUA leadership. As of 2014, women represented 34 percent of the administrative council structure of the 11 newly formed WUAs, 51 percent of members of Boards of Auditors and 36 percent of members of Commissions for Dispute Settlement (Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation, 2016). It does not appear that there has been follow-up or long-term evaluation of the impacts of women's participation in WUAs, but it would be important to understand whether there have been positive

Table 10. Access to selected agricultural machinery and equipment, by sex of the head of the holding, 2011

Type of agricultural machinery or equipment	In female-headed holdings		In male-headed holdings	
	Number of machines/equipment	% owned	Number of machines/equipment	% owned
Tractors	2 317	9.4	22 378	90.6
Mini-tractors	191	17.5	899	82.5
Trucks	665	8.7	6 989	91.3
Combines and harvesters	275	9.2	2 725	90.8
Seeders and planters	737	8.7	7 694	91.3
Mechanical cultivators	1 065	8.8	10 980	91.2
Ploughs for tractors	1 245	9.0	12 537	91.0
Irrigation machinery	61	7.9	712	92.1
Milking machines and aggregates	22	11.9	169	88.5
Sprayers and machinery for application of treatments	312	11.1	2 315	88.1

Source: FAO and National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova. 2014. *Women and Men in Agriculture of the Republic of Moldova*. Budapest and Chisinau.

changes in women's access to irrigation in the project sites as a result of special measures to increase women's engagement in water resources management.

Similar to the situation concerning irrigation, there is a sizeable gender gap in access to agricultural machinery and equipment. The agriculture census showed that, overall, women farmers owned less than 12 percent of all types of machinery and equipment, with the only exception being mini-tractors (see Table 10). Women farmers are more likely to own milking machines because milking and milk processing are typically "female" types of farming, but given that women farmers have more engagement in crop production and horticulture than in raising livestock, their ownership of harvesters, seeders, cultivators and ploughs is very low (they own less than 10 percent of each type of machinery). This finding aligns with the fact that women rely on non-mechanized labour and farm on smaller plots, but it is also a significant factor in limiting the type and scale of farming that women can undertake.

Increasing women's access to and use of water and irrigation, and to machinery and equipment, is vital for improving their agricultural production, which, in turn, creates greater opportunities for women producers to diversify their farming practices and increase both their incomes and food security more broadly. As a starting point, there is a need to develop and

measure gender-sensitive indicators on agricultural water management practices as well as to improve the understanding of why gender inequalities persist in access to key inputs. Only then can effective and sustainable policies, programmes and subsidies that aim to close the gender gap be developed and implemented.

4.7. Entrepreneurship

Although enterprise is concentrated in Chisinau, in terms of the proportion of businesses and overall turnover, national strategies identify the development of small- and medium-sized enterprise (SME) as fundamental for the long-term and steady development of the country's regions, cities, towns and rural areas (see, for example, the Small and Medium Enterprise Sector Development Strategy for 2012–2020). The entrepreneurship landscape in the Republic of Moldova is one of numerous very small businesses. According to administrative data for 2020, of 58 063 registered businesses, microenterprises represented 85.3 percent of the total.³⁰ Enterprises in the agriculture sector accounted for only 8.1 percent

³⁰ Medium enterprises are defined as employing up to 249 persons, with an annual turnover of up to MDL 50 million or total assets of up to MDL 50 million. Small enterprises are defined as having up to 49 employees, with an annual turnover of up to MDL 25 million or total assets of up to MDL 25 million that would not be considered microenterprises.

Table 11. Number and size of legal enterprises and proportion operating in the agriculture sector, 2020

	Total enterprises	Total enterprises in agriculture, forestry and fisheries
Legal enterprises	58 063	4 681
including:		
Large enterprises	816	25
Medium enterprises	1 368	162
Small enterprises	6 322	771
Microenterprises	49 526	3 723

Source: National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova. Statistical Databank: Activity and financial position of economic units, by size and activity types, 2015–2020. In: *National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova*. Chisinau. Cited 25 January 2022. <http://statbank.statistica.md/PxWeb/pxweb/en>

of all businesses (and most agribusinesses are in crop and animal production, with very few forestry or fisheries-related businesses; see Table 11).

Considering rural-based enterprises specifically, there are very few large-scale farming enterprises, especially when compared with the large number of smallholders. Large-scale enterprises mainly produce low-value crops, and because of the high level of mechanization needed to cultivate large areas, they employ little labour (FAO, 2020b). The National Strategy on Agriculture and Rural Development notes that there has been a declining trend in the number of food processing enterprises that are needed to improve the overall competitiveness of the agrifood sector. In 2020, there were 1 232 enterprises manufacturing food and beverages, mainly processing wine, meat, fruits and vegetables, dairy, bakery and sugar products, compared with 1 487 in 2010 (National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, Statistical Databank: Activity and financial position of economic units, by size and activity types, 2015–2020; Government of the Republic of Moldova, 2014a).

In order to improve the living standard of the rural population, off-farm income-generating activities are also needed, and these could include “agri-tourism services or non-agricultural micro-businesses aimed at manufacturing and providing services in rural areas in support of the agrifood sector and assisting already existing small and medium agrifood enterprises to increase their business capacities” (Government of the Republic of Moldova, 2014a, p. 51).

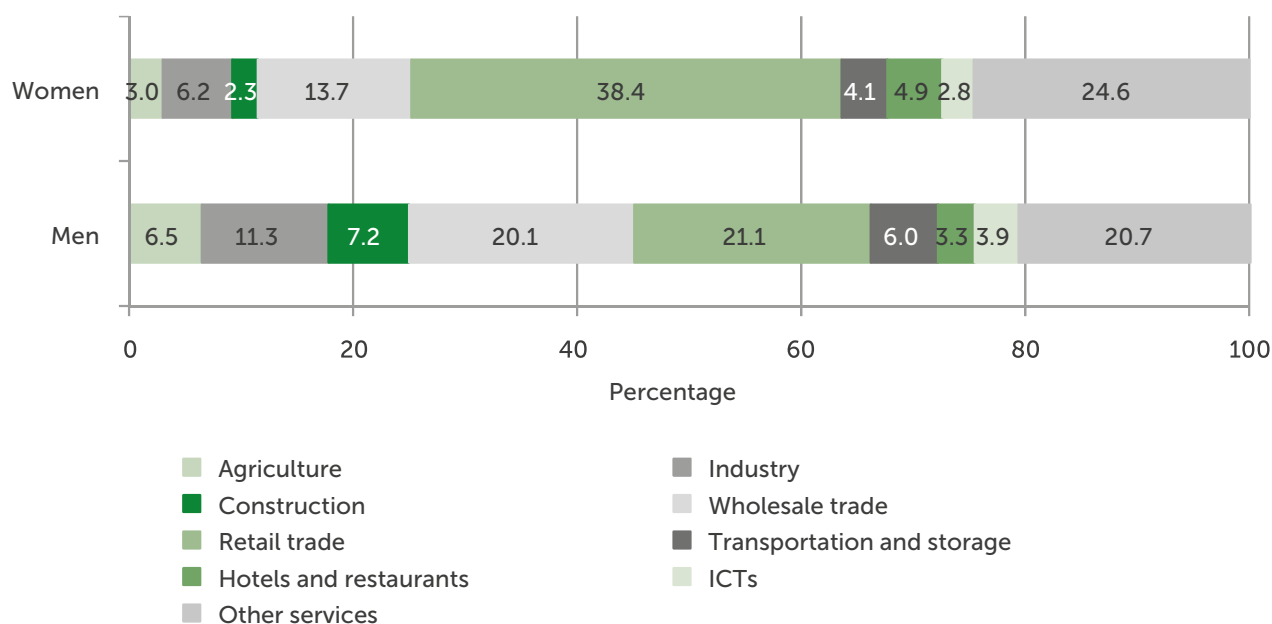
In parallel, the engagement of women in private enterprise is a focal area under the Gender Equality Strategy, sectoral policy on SME development (the Small and Medium Enterprise Sector Development Strategy for 2012–2020 and its Action Plan) and a three-phase national pilot programme on women in business (launched in 2016). To this end, analysis

has been conducted of gender-based differences in entrepreneurship. On a positive note, women’s participation in entrepreneurship has increased over the last few years, yet the potential for further growth in women’s businesses is still underutilized. In 2018, women represented only 33.9 percent of all business owners and managers, specifically 35.2 percent of owners, 25.6 percent of co-owners and 37.1 percent of managers (National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, 2020g).

Within a landscape of very small businesses, women-owned and managed enterprises tend to occupy the micro level more often than those owned or led by men. While 90.3 percent of women in business are at the micro level, the same is true for 82.3 percent of men; only 1.3 percent of women entrepreneurs are running medium and large businesses³¹ (the same is true for 3.3 percent of men; National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, 2020e). Women entrepreneurs in rural areas tend to have businesses at the micro level and are more likely to engage in self-employment (individual businesses) than women in urban areas.

The business activities in which women and men engage differ from one another and also follow patterns similar to those of the labour market generally. Thus, the majority of women’s business ventures are either in personal services or retail trade, followed by hospitality (hotels and restaurants) – sectors that are considered “feminine”. Only three percent of women’s businesses are in agriculture (National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, 2020e). Men-owned and managed businesses have a more diverse profile, covering wholesale and retail trade, construction, transportation and storage, agriculture and ICTs, as shown in Figure 25.

³¹ The cited analysis used the following definition: micro business (0–9 employees); small business (10–49 employees); medium business (50–249 employees) and large business (250 or more employees).

Figure 25. Distribution of entrepreneurs, by main type of business activity and sex, 2018

Source: National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova. 2020g. Principale rezultate ale cercetării “Dezvoltarea Mediului de Afaceri” [The main results of the research “Business Environment Development”], data table from annex. In: *National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova*, 6 August 2020. Chisinau. Cited 29 January 2022. <https://statistica.gov.md/newsview.php?l=ro&idc=168&id=6725>

Correlated to their smaller size, and perhaps also the sectors in which they operate, women’s businesses record around two times lower profits and sales revenue than enterprises owned and operated by men. While women tend to employ other women in their businesses, their average number of employees is 7, compared with 12 for men’s businesses. Despite these rather pessimistic findings, women’s businesses have been growing at a faster rate – an average of 84 percent, whereas men’s business growth rate is 78 percent (National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, 2020e). Of course, business development requires specific supporting conditions. Analysis suggests that on the whole, women and men entrepreneurs identify obstacles to business growth, such as insufficient financing, high taxes, and a lack of qualified staff, ICTs and raw materials, to a similar degree. However, because of the size and nature of their businesses, women entrepreneurs encounter many obstacles to a greater degree.

The government’s “Women in Business program” implemented by the Organisation for the Development of Small and Medium Enterprises (ODIMM³²), recognizes that there are particular challenges both for women in business and for rural-based businesses. Under this programme, priority is given not only to women-run businesses, but also to those in rural areas (including in agritourism, handicrafts and non-agriculture-based businesses that would not be eligible for assistance

under AIPA programmes; Government of the Republic of Moldova, 2016b). The programme has 4 modules dedicated to women in business but participants can also join any of the 11 modules of the ODIMM. The Women in Business program works with entrepreneurs at three phases: initiation or start-ups (for those who will register a business in the next 12 months); new businesses (for those who registered an enterprise less than two years prior); and growing businesses (for those enterprises that have been active for more than two years and are planning to increase turnover and/or employees). Programme participants receive training and are eligible for financing through grants. Out of all grants to women-owned companies in 2020 (72 women in total), 7 percent of recipients had businesses in either agriculture or beekeeping, and other grants were to businesses that would also support rural livelihoods, such as agritourism and food production (vegetable oil, fruit tea, berries, herbs, fruit and vegetables; ODIMM, 2020). In addition to the dedicated programme, ODIMM has a target of 30 percent women within its training drive, including a 30 percent target for women within wider support to young entrepreneurs and returning migrants. For example, under the young entrepreneurs’ programme, 45 percent of those receiving entrepreneurial consultancy services were women, with 43 percent enrolled in entrepreneurship training and 30 percent accessing finance. ODIMM services reach rural areas through a system of incubators and regional services. In 2016, 34 percent of the 132 members of the Moldovan Business Incubators Network were women.

³² More information is available at <https://www.odimm.md/ro/femei-in-afaceri>.

Despite the fact that a range of programmes have been implemented in support of entrepreneurship, it appears that initiatives for the development of female enterprises are not well known in the business sphere; only 15.4 percent of surveyed entrepreneurs knew of such programmes (12.8 percent of men and 20.4 percent of women; National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, 2020g). It is also concerning that a small proportion of women, in comparison with their overall representation in the SME sector, have participated in training or support programmes (23.8 percent of women entrepreneurs compared with 33.9 percent of men entrepreneurs in 2017). Among women who have taken part in training, sole proprietors were the least likely to have attended (*ibid.*). The reasons for the low engagement of women are unclear, but they could reflect unfamiliarity with existing programmes, or limited time and other resources to attend training (especially for business owners operating at the micro or individual levels in rural areas).

The COVID-19 outbreak severely affected small businesses that previously had no or very limited digital presence on online platforms or in marketplaces; less than 17 percent of SMEs had integrated digital technologies into their operations before the pandemic. In June 2020, ODIMM launched a digitalization tool³³ to improve entrepreneurs' access to e-commerce. In addition to technical challenges, certain business sectors were disproportionately affected by measures taken to safeguard public health. For instance, around three-quarters of surveyed entrepreneurs in the hospitality (hotels, restaurants, cafes) and tourism industries stated that legal restrictions had "absolutely impacted" on their activities. More than 80 percent of respondents from the agricultural production and processing industry stated that a lack of raw materials and lower employee productivity had "significantly impacted" on their businesses (AmCham Moldova, 2020, pp. 17–18). Given that women's businesses are generally small in scale and operate in some of the most-affected sectors, it can be expected that they struggled to adapt to lockdown conditions. It would be especially valuable to conduct further analysis of the state of women's rural entrepreneurship in the post-pandemic period in order to develop programmes that meet the needs of women entrepreneurs who had to scale back or even close their businesses. Assessment of potential growth areas for rural women, in agriculture-based and non-farming businesses would also be beneficial to tailor business development support and training to their specific needs.

³³ More information is available at <https://www.odimm.md/en/digitalizarea>.

4.8. Access to finance

The availability of financial services (here, referring mainly to credit and to insurance) is essential for the development of both SMEs and farms. Overall, domestic credit to the private sector in the Republic of Moldova is low compared with the Eastern Partnership countries and the European Union average. The government has taken steps to improve access to finance through, for example, diversification of the sources of financing for SMEs and enhancing the system for registering collateral that has been beneficial to SMEs with limited immovable assets.

Banks are the primary source of financing for rural and non-rural SMEs. Not only has the share of women and men who reported having an account with a bank or other financial institution increased, but the share who have borrowed from a financial institution has increased as well. In 2017, 44.6 percent of women and 42.9 percent of men reported having a bank account, an increase from 19.0 percent and 16.4 percent, respectively, in 2014 (Data from World Bank Global Financial Inclusion (Global Findex) Database, Demirgüç-Kunt *et al.*, 2018). The share of women and men who borrowed money from a financial institution also increased during this period, but remained considerably less than those who borrowed directly from family or friends. Generally, women have been borrowing less from family and friends, which could indicate a growing confidence and experience in working with financial institutions. Borrowing patterns among the rural population show a similar tendency towards the use of financial institutions, although there are no data that would show the borrowing patterns of women and men living in rural areas as a distinct group. Among rural enterprises, the rate of borrowing from a financial institution increased by 11 percentage points from 2014 to 2017 (from 8.2 percent to 19.2 percent), which is a positive indicator of improvements in access to credit (*ibid.*).

SME support programmes are offered through every major bank, although they tend to be donor-funded³⁴ and target a very specific segment or use. There are, for example, several types of loans for agricultural activities, with the most common interest rate of around 11 percent (Moldova Agroindbank, no date). Banks often do not accept land as qualifying collateral because of the low liquidity of the land market; the required value

³⁴ The major donors that provided financial support in the agriculture and rural sectors from 2010 to 2020 include the governments of the United States of America and Japan, the European Union, and multilateral organizations such as the World Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, FAO and IFAD.

of collateral is usually 130 percent or more of the loan amount.

Surveys of entrepreneurs suggest that access to credit is a difficulty that both women and men face to a similar degree, although it also appears that women are accessing credit at slightly lower rates when starting a business (based on 2018 research that asked entrepreneurs to calculate the amount of various resources used in their start-ups). Anecdotal evidence suggests that women are sometimes discouraged by loan officers in banks, who advise them that it may be difficult to repay a loan. However, special programmes of Moldovan banking institutions and organizations geared towards female entrepreneurs (for example, through MFI Prime Capital and Moldova Agroindbank³⁵) are an important indicator of the measures that are taken to assist women in accessing finance.

Women and men in the agribusiness sector face specific constraints to accessing finance to purchase land, plant new crops or utilize for capital investments. Critical among these is the issue of insufficient collateral. Unlike large agri-enterprises that own more property and equipment, smallholders/family farms, including female-run small farms, lack such sources of collateral. Furthermore, as noted above, banks do not always accept land as collateral, but for smallholders, especially women smallholders, land may be their only viable asset. A second gender-specific constraint that women farmers have raised is the fact they have difficulty providing the financial information required by banks "because farm expenses are often not separated from household expenses and thus do not meet bank loan application minimum requirements" (Chemonics International Inc., 2017a, p. 16). In this situation, women farmers are more likely than men to seek alternative sources of financing, such as borrowing from friends or family members (*ibid.*, p. 9). Indeed, a small-scale survey of small and medium farms confirmed that male-operated farms were significantly more likely to have received loans than those operated by women (Mathematica Policy Research, 2015).

Other barriers to finance raised by farmers generally include the instability of sales, the high risk of negative climate conditions and the aversion to risky loans, as well as high interest rates and bank fees (JICA, 2017). The overall impact on farmers is a low use of credit, engaging in simple agricultural production or making only small investments to develop their farms.

There are several forms of support to improve farmers' access to finance. For instance, the National Fund for Agriculture and Rural Development has a specific action to encourage loans for agricultural investments (under a sub-measure on stimulating lending to agricultural producers by commercial banks and non-bank financial institutions), but loan officers may not always be aware of the privileges of contracting such loans. In 2020, the Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment with funding from the National Fund for Agriculture and Rural Development, allotted 10.9 percent of the fund to support agri-entrepreneurs to obtain credit from commercial banks (AIPA, 2021b). The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) also supports initiatives to increase access to affordable credit for women and young people by addressing two main bottlenecks: cost of capital and lack of collateral. Within its programming, IFAD provides mentoring support to women and young entrepreneurs (a category that also includes women) to assist them in the formation of investment and working capital (IFAD, 2019).

Few agricultural holdings have agricultural insurance, and this is related to prohibitively high insurance fees, insufficient compensation and difficulties claiming compensation, and farmers' lack of trust in insurance companies. A small-scale study found that a high proportion of women and men engaged in farming stated that they could not afford insurance payments as the main reason they did not use it (79 percent of women and 81 percent of men; JICA, 2017).

In 2020, the Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment, with funding from the National Fund for Agriculture and Rural Development, allocated 0.6% of the fund to support agri-entrepreneurs in covering crop insurance (AIPA, 2021b) and so this may bring about improvements to the situation. Further analysis would also be useful to provide more information on both the affordability of agricultural insurance for women smallholders and whether existing insurance policies meet their needs as farmers.

4.9. Access to agricultural subsidies and anti-crisis measures

Registered farm owners can apply for state subsidies to finance their rural-based businesses or farming activities. From 2010, the Government of the Republic of Moldova, through the Agency for Intervention and Payments in Agriculture, has provided subsidies for investment in: fruit and vegetable production; modernizing plantations, vineyards and orchards; post-harvest and processing infrastructure; establishing

³⁵ Loans for female entrepreneurs through Moldova Agroindbank, for example, are guaranteed in amount of 70 percent by ODIMM and newly procured goods can be pledged as collateral.

Table 12. Unique applicants of agricultural subsidies, by sex, 2020

Farmers	Number of unique applicants	Percentage of applicants
Women	821	18.7
Men	3 571	81.3
Total	4 392	100.0

Sources: AIPA. 2021b. Raport de activitate a AIPA pentru anul 2020 [AIPA Activity Report for 2020]. Chisinau, p. 6; additional data provided by AIPA for this assessment.

agricultural producer groups; developing organic agriculture; irrigation; and consulting and training services, for example.

According to information provided by AIPA, in 2020, out of a total of 4 392 unique applicants for post-investment subsidies, women represented only around 19 percent (see Table 12).

In 2020, the budget allocated for the National Agricultural and Rural Development Fund was exhausted before the end of December and, therefore, a proportion of the total applicants did not receive payments. Out of the total number of applicants, only 46 percent of women and 47 percent of men received a transfer of subsidies, while the remainder were scheduled to receive the funds in 2021. In some cases, applicants do not receive the full amount they have applied for, and there are cases in which some female applicants were paid only 12 percent of the amount they requested from AIPA (information provided by AIPA for this assessment). Further analysis is needed to understand the reasons for awarding less than the full request. This would help to develop targeted assistance for women farmers so that their applications are not rejected and they receive full and equal support for their farm activities.

According to updated information provided by AIPA for this CGA, as of December 2021, 7 415 applications for the post-investment subsidy were paid, out of a total of 7 442 applications submitted in 2020, and 27 applications were still under examination.

Through legislation,³⁶ the government provides special support for certain categories of agricultural producers in order to encourage organic agrifood production, to support small and medium-sized businesses, to attract young people to agriculture and for women in rural areas. Advance subsidies are available for rural or agribusiness start-ups (for three categories: women

farmers, young farmers, and ecological and domestic production). Eligible farmers can benefit from subsidies in the amount of an additional 15+ percent increase over the authorized subsidy amount (equal to MDL 50 million from the subsidies budget). It is a one-time only incentive, available for first-time applicants. Originally the privileged subsidy for the above-mentioned categories of farmers was not limited to one-time only assistance. However, the criteria were amended so that only start-ups can now apply.

Women farmers specifically can apply for the 15+ percent incentive for the following types of investment: in the production of fruit and vegetables; in equipment and for technological renovations of livestock farms; for the procurement of breeding animals; for the development of post-harvest and processing infrastructure; and for the establishment, modernization and deforestation of perennial plantations. Women can apply in any of the categories, as women farmers, young farmers or green farmers.

In 2020, women represented the largest group in this category of applicants that benefited from the incentives. Out of a total of 240 recipients, 119 were women (or 48.6 percent of the total). Young farmers represented 6.7 percent; organic producers were 1.2 percent and producers of domestic products were 42.5 percent of the beneficiaries.

Although women constituted almost half of the beneficiaries in the category of the 15+ percent subsidy in 2020, the share of women beneficiaries should be viewed in a wider context to understand how women are accessing such payments. Of the total number of subsidy applicants in 2020, only 18.7 percent were women (this proportion is close to the share of women heading farms with legal status in 2010 when the agricultural census was conducted, but most likely does not reflect the share of women farmers today). When the share of women who benefited from the 15+ percent incentive is compared with all applicants for subsidies in 2020, women's representation is very low – only 2.7 percent. Because women seem to be making use of the privilege subsidy for start-ups, the question arises as to how in the future women farmers

³⁶ See, specifically Article 22 in Republic of Moldova. *On the principles of subsidizing agricultural production and rural development*. No. 276/2016, as implemented through Government Decision No. 455/2017.

will overcome unequal access to subsidies, and other resources and inputs, that they will need to make investments into their own production.

The reasons behind the low rate of uptake of subsidies by women are not entirely clear. It is possible that the eligibility criteria for the 15+ percent increased subsidy are not known to some applicants. AIPA tracks “women’s” farms or enterprises based on the sex of the owner or manager. However, one member of a cooperative reported that they did not apply for the subsidy for a woman-owned start-up based on the erroneous understanding that “all the co-op members have to be women to get it” (Chemonics International Inc., 2017a, p. 36). It is also possible that neither the advance subsidy for start-up projects nor the post-investment subsidies are sufficient to meet the financing needs of women farmers. In a small-scale survey, for example, out of 29 female farmers, only 31 percent applied for state subsidies, compared with 48 percent of male farmers. The women indicated that only 17.5 percent of their total investment was covered by the subsidy scheme, which is almost half that of the figure indicated by the male farmers of 33.8 percent (JICA, 2017).

Several conclusions can be drawn from this information. First, the budget of the National Fund for Agriculture and Rural Development is limited and can only support a small share of the total agricultural

holdings. Second, the share of women applicants and actual beneficiaries is even smaller when compared with the total number of women-headed holdings and agribusinesses. The second point suggests that there may be various barriers that are preventing women from applying for agricultural subsidies, even when there are funds set aside specifically to invest in them. Analysis is needed to understand whether these barriers are connected to the eligibility requirements, the application process, lack of knowledge of the special incentive or other reasons.

Extreme events, such as drought and the COVID-19 pandemic, have raised the issue of additional subsidies for farmers and food producers. In the past, allocations from the state budget have been increased to support agricultural producers who incurred losses from natural disasters. However, when surveyed in 2020, 94 percent of enterprises in the agriculture sector reported that they had not received any government support during the state of medical emergency (United Nations Office for the Republic of Moldova, 2020b). The same group highlighted their need for fiscal and financial incentives related to existing loans and debts that would help them to weather the health crisis. While discussions of anti-crisis measures for the agriculture sector appear to be ongoing, it seems that the possibility of gender-sensitive measures or funds has not been raised.

5. Rural infrastructure and gender impacts

Improving rural infrastructure, referring here to physical and social infrastructure, is a precondition for the development of farming, agribusinesses and other types of enterprises. A primary benefit is improving the living conditions of rural families. Poor infrastructure, combined with lack of opportunities, are driving the younger generation from the countryside to seek better lives in cities. Without investment into the physical infrastructure, such as the renovation and reconstruction of water supply and sewage systems, rural roads and electricity (particularly the power supply for cold storage outside of residential areas), agriculture will not be an attractive prospect for the working age population.

The Government of the Republic of Moldova has invested in improving the living standards and working conditions in rural areas, mainly through the National Fund for Agriculture and Rural Development (15 percent

of the fund [around MDL 165 million] was allocated for this purpose; see AIPA, 2021a). Over the past decade, donor-funded projects³⁷ have also provided financial support for improvements to the rural infrastructure.

While infrastructure deficiencies affect the whole population, the reason to consider infrastructure through a gender lens is to better understand how such inadequacies have a disproportionate impact on women and girls. Gender roles mean that women and men use key services, such as household energy and water, for different purposes and therefore experience their lack in different ways.

5.1. Housing conditions and durable goods

Individual houses are the dominant form of housing stock in rural areas, and virtually all houses are

Table 13. Households in possession of selected durable goods, by area of residence, 2019

Percentage of households with:		
	Rural	Urban
Refrigerator, freezer	95.5	99.6
Microwave oven	39.6	56.6
Dishwasher	0.7	5.4
Automated washing machine	49.0	87.5
Mechanical washing machine	41.3	8.0
Vacuum cleaner	64.4	88.1
Television	97.2	97.1

Source: National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova. 2020d. *Aspects of the Standard of Living of the Population in 2019 (Results of the Household Budget Survey)*. Chisinau, p. 117.

³⁷ For example, by the International Fund for Agricultural Development, the World Bank, the Millennium Challenge Corporation, the United States Agency for International Development and the European Union (project implemented by UNDP).

privately-owned (National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, 2020d). Housing stock in rural areas is much more poorly equipped with amenities that contribute to well-being, such as reliable sources of energy and clean water, than those in urban areas. Moreover, instability and insecurity erode the living conditions for rural households in the area of the Nistru river. Women in areas bordering the security zone were considerably more likely to report that they had limited access to water supply, sewage services and heating than did rural women on either the right or left bank of the river (41.2 percent of women in the border area reported such problems; Institute for Public Policy, 2019).

Much of the Roma population (not necessarily only those in rural areas) live in unfavourable conditions. The housing is of poor quality, lacking basic infrastructure and overcrowded; families often have unsecured property rights to dwellings and adjacent lands (Government of the Republic of Moldova, 2016a).

While electricity is universally available, rural households are less likely than urban ones to own a number of electrical appliances, as illustrated in Table 13. The majority of rural households are equipped with items that are considered standard for modern living, such as refrigerators and televisions, but rural homes on average are less likely to have labour-saving appliances that are especially beneficial to women (such as automated washing machines, vacuum cleaners and microwave ovens). The fact that rural households have fewer of these appliances explains the heavier burden of domestic chores that falls on rural women, both in terms of time and physical labour.

5.2. Energy sources

In contrast to the large majority of households in the Republic of Moldova, Roma households are less likely to have a regular power supply. In 2013, it was estimated that around 13 percent of Roma households were not

connected to the electricity network, as compared then with only 3 percent of non-Roma households (UNDP and UN Women, 2016b). For this reason, connecting Roma households to electricity, gas and water networks was a dedicated action under the 2016–2020 Action Plan for Supporting the Roma Population in the Republic of Moldova (Government of the Republic of Moldova, 2016a).

Rural households, while usually supplied with gas, lack amenities for a decent and comfortable life, such as central heating and hot water, as indicated in Table 14. Although rural houses are larger on average than urban ones, a smaller area of living space is heated during the winter. Unlike centrally heated urban dwellings, 83 percent of rural dwellings in 2016 were using individual stoves for heating (which burn solid or liquid fuel), followed by another system for burning wood, agricultural waste or coal. Less than one percent used a centralized system (National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, 2016). This situation is especially common for rural households consisting only of older people. In such households, 90.8 percent use a wood or coal burning stove for heating (National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, 2021b).

More than 80 percent of rural houses lack a constant supply of domestic hot water, meaning that they must heat water when it is needed (National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, 2020j). For cooking, rural households rely mainly on liquid or natural gas, but in 2016, more than 12 percent used fuelwood or agricultural waste for cooking with stoves or ovens (National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, 2016). The accessibility of clean energy is similar for Roma households, in which an estimated 35 percent do not have indoor kitchens and 13 percent cook using wood and coal. These patterns are even more common for Roma households in rural areas (UNDP and UN Women, 2016b).

Table 14. Access to energy sources in rural and urban housing stock, 2019

Percentage of housing stock equipped with:		
	Rural	Urban
Electric lighting	100.0	100.0
Central heating	17.3	83.8
Hot water supply	14.8	62.6
Gas supply	88.0	93.2

Source: National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova. 2020j. *Statistical Yearbook of the Republic of Moldova, 2020*. Chisinau, p. 131.

The reliance on biomass energy sources reflects both the poverty level in rural areas as well as the availability of fuelwood, agricultural waste, wood waste and animal waste, all of which can be produced or collected locally. A significant proportion of energy supplies including liquefied gas, coal and fuelwood, are provided to rural households as gifts from children to parents, from neighbours or as donations to vulnerable people.

Limited domestic heating and hot water supplies have an impact on all members of the household, but these shortcomings are felt acutely by women and girls who bear the primary responsibility for heating water for domestic use, for cleaning and doing laundry, for bathing children and for cooking. If women must also collect or prepare fuel for heating and cooking, this increases the time that they spend on these daily tasks. Furthermore, while biomass fuels (such as fuelwood and agricultural waste) are renewable, when used in domestic settings they are unclean sources of energy and increase the risks of indoor pollution. Because they spend more time inside the home, burning solid fuel use puts women's health at risk, as well as that of young children and older people. The Government of the Republic of Moldova has made several policy commitments to increasing the use of renewable sources of energy, such as hydropower, wind energy and solar energy, with the focus on investment into the requisite infrastructure, equipment and technologies (see for example, the Environmental Strategy for the years 2014–2023 and the Action Plan for its implementation). The expansion of clean renewable energy to rural areas could have very positive benefits for poor households and for women within households.

Energy supply and farming

Electricity is an important input for agricultural production, needed to operate machinery and equipment, for lighting on farms, indirectly in the production of fertilizers and chemicals and for irrigation, for instance. A small-scale survey of 90 farming households found that less than half had

access to an electricity connection (41 percent of women farmers and 34 percent of men farmers), and the majority overall (65.6 percent) reported that power cuts impeded their agricultural production, mainly in the harvesting and post-harvesting periods (JICA, 2017).

In recent years, electricity has become increasingly necessary for cold storage facilities in the post-harvest value chain. Farmers growing fruits, grapes and vegetables and those with cold-storage facilities on their farms have frequently reported problems with the electricity supply, mainly linked with bureaucratic procedures from the supplier, the expense of installing power pillars on farms and high electricity costs. Indeed, data analysis indicates that electricity consumption in agriculture has been increasing in recent years and has almost doubled from 2015 to 2019 (National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, 2019). Electricity prices are high and have also been subject to considerable increases. Furthermore, while prices for electricity had only moderate growth, prices for gasoline and diesel fuel increased four times in February 2021. Such an increase may have a particularly negative effect on agriproducers and farmers, especially as the agricultural season begins in spring and requires significant fuel supplies. Insufficient energy supply has implications for farmers' choice of crop, cultivation methods, irrigation and post-harvest production. Women farmers, who are more likely to be engaged in the cultivation of fruits and vegetables, have differing needs in terms of energy supply. Equally important, with improved access to processing facilities or cold storage post-harvest facilities, women farmers and owners of agribusinesses would have greater opportunities to sell their products in the off-season, or to increase their value through processing, thus raising their overall incomes. Additionally, high energy costs contribute to higher production costs that will ultimately lead to an increase in food prices, affecting the most vulnerable in the rural population.

5.3. Water and sanitation

Table 15. Water sources in rural and urban housing stock, 2019

Percentage of housing stock equipped with:	Rural	Urban
	Aqueduct within the dwelling	55.3
Aqueduct outside the dwelling	15.2	3.5
Water source from a central system	52.5	93.2
Water source from a well	46.9	6.5

Source: National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova. 2020d. *Aspects of the Standard of Living of the Population in 2019 (Results of the Household Budget Survey)*. Chisinau, p. 104.

Table 16. Access to water supply and sanitation in rural and urban housing stock, 2019

Percentage of housing stock equipped with:		
	Rural	Urban
Bathroom or shower within the dwelling	42.5	88.9
Private sewerage system of the dwelling	53.0	16.7
Connection to central sewerage system	2.8	78.0
Water closet within the dwelling	32.7	86.2

Source: National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova. 2020d. *Aspects of the Standard of Living of the Population in 2019 (Results of the Household Budget Survey)*. Chisinau, p. 104.

Although the proportion of the rural population with access to water supply has increased, it still remains low, at 71.2 percent in 2018 (Government of the Republic of Moldova, 2020a). Both location and income level are determinants of whether a household has access to a public centralized water system. The poorest members of the rural population are the least likely to be connected to a public system and least able to invest in a private piped water supply from a well. Even when access to a public piped water supply exists, just over half of rural households have an aqueduct within the dwelling (compared with almost all urban households, see Table 15).

The situation is even more dire for Roma households; an estimated 49 percent do not have tap water, or access to a water pipe inside the house, in the yard or in the garden (UNDP and UN Women, 2016b).

Access to drinking water

Access to drinking water has improved in the Republic of Moldova, most notably for the rural population. In 2014, only 56.9 percent of the rural population used safely managed drinking water sources, which had increased to 71.7 percent by 2018 (National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, 2020h). However, the gap between the rural and urban populations remains one of the largest in Europe. According to the World Health Organization (WHO)/United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene (JMP), only 53 percent of rural households in the Republic of Moldova had access to safely managed drinking water, compared with 85 percent of urban households in 2017.³⁸

The quality of rural water is often compromised. An estimated one million people (around one in three,

based on a total population of 3.2 million) "rely on shallow polluted wells for their drinking water, and 80 percent of wells are not compliant with drinking water norms" (for example, the water contains nitrates or has microbiological contamination such as *E. coli*; Smets *et al.*, 2020, p. xiii).

When water is not piped into the dwelling, or water supply is insufficient, the task of collecting water usually falls to women. Prevailing social norms mean that women are expected to take on the majority of household responsibilities that require water. Therefore, the time needed to collect water from an outside tap or well in the garden or neighbourhood adds to the burden of their daily chores, more so in poorer households that are unable to invest in private wells or systems to pipe water into the yard or the house. Almost a quarter (23 percent) of households without a connection to piped water report spending more than 30 minutes on water collection each day (World Bank, 2018). The health impacts on rural women, especially older women, from having to carry buckets of water and manually dispose of wastewater in the yard or garden in all seasons are considerable.

Access to sewer services has changed little in the Republic of Moldova over the past decade, and the gap in access to on-site facilities between rural and urban areas is substantial. Whereas 86.2 percent of urban housing includes indoor flush toilets (or pour-flush) connected to a public sewer system or an on-site facility, this is true for only 32.7 percent of rural dwellings (see Table 16). Virtually all rural households rely on a type of on-site facility and are not connected to a central sewerage system. Using a water-based on-site sanitation disposal and treatment system typically includes soak-away pits and/or a septic tank. Most rural households, however, use outdoor dry pit latrines, often without hand-washing facilities nearby. Indeed, less than half of rural dwellings have an indoor bathroom or shower.

³⁸ Note that discrepancies between JMP estimations and nationally reported data are because of differences in methodologies (e.g. JMP data is derived from national survey data and JMP population estimates) and definitions. The data are accessible from: <https://washdata.org/data/household#/>.

In comparison with the general situation, only an estimated 16 percent of Roma households (which includes those in both urban and rural areas) are equipped with indoor toilets; 20 percent have an indoor shower or bathroom, and 23 percent are connected to either a central sewerage system or a public or sanitary water reservoir (UNDP and UN Women, 2016b).

As noted above in the context of limited access to water, all family members are affected by poor sanitation, conditions that make it difficult to practise good hygiene and reduce levels of comfort in the home. In addition to their primary role in looking after the cleanliness of children and other family members, women and girls also have their own specific hygiene needs. Poor access to sanitation infrastructure therefore has an impact on them in a particularly negative way. Outside of dwellings, poor sanitation and lack of safe toilets and washing facilities is an issue for rural schools as well as public spaces, such as open-air agri-markets where produce is sold. Most open-air markets lack basic sanitation; toilets are in an unhygienic condition and they do not have water-flushing facilities. While both women and men who work in such markets are affected, women more often work as traders, requiring them to be in the market for long periods of time. Ensuring that rural schools and public facilities have safe indoor toilets, running water, soap, and disposal bins for menstrual materials, are not only especially important for the health of girls and women, but are also key to their school attendance and employment, respectively.

A related issue concerns the adequacy of the rural water supply and sanitation facilities to support the development of small non-agricultural businesses in rural areas, especially those that women tend to operate, such as hairdressers, cafes, food preparation/catering services and guest houses. The expansion of access to a clean water supply and improved sanitation services would benefit the rural population overall but would also be especially valued by women entrepreneurs.

Finally, access to water and sanitation is especially crucial during a public health emergency, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Poor infrastructure can worsen the impact of the crisis for rural communities if people are unable to maintain basic hygiene, especially handwashing. There is some evidence that during the pandemic, the time that people spent securing water and fuel for the household increased (to a greater degree for women than for men; UN Women, 2020). This change is likely to be a consequence of increased household needs when more members of the family were at home during quarantine periods and not because of interruptions to water or fuel supplies.

Assessments of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic also provide insights into the situation for vulnerable groups that are not seen in national statistics. For example, surveyed vulnerable women (who do not necessarily only live in rural areas) were less likely than the average rural household to have a toilet inside the house or a sewerage system. Just under a third depended on a public well (31 percent) for water or had a private well in their own yard (27 percent; UNDP Moldova, 2020c). A similar proportion reported that their water supply source was not available some of the time in the period from March 2020 to June 2020, further limiting their access to drinking water. People who were in vulnerable situations before the pandemic, including older women and Roma women, also experienced difficulties purchasing sanitation and protective equipment (for example, face masks, protective gloves, hand disinfectant, detergents and soap) that could have mitigated some of the effects of limited access to a safe water supply.³⁹ Such deficiencies increased the risks of infection and also meant that some women were required to isolate to a greater degree than others.

5.4. Roads and rural transport

Road and transport infrastructure are vital lifelines for isolated communities as they connect them to important services that are not available locally (including banks, health clinics, schools and social services). They also play a central role in rural and agricultural development as they link farms to markets for agricultural products in cities and towns and also increase access to non-agricultural businesses based in rural areas, in the tourism and leisure sectors for example.

The government's Transport and Logistics Strategy for 2013–2022 notes that despite investments into road rehabilitation, around half of national roads are still in poor condition and about 20 percent in bad condition, making the road network among the worst in Europe (Government of the Republic of Moldova, 2012b). Under the strategy, over 6 000 kilometres of local rural roads are scheduled for repair by 2022.

The majority of Moldovan villages are accessible on asphalt roads, but local roads are in very poor condition.

³⁹ For further reading see, for example: UNDP Moldova. 2020c. *Social and Economic Impact Assessment of the COVID-19 pandemic on vulnerable groups and economic sectors in the Republic of Moldova*, p. 122; UNFPA. 2020. *Assessment of COVID-19 Pandemic Risks on the Older Persons in the Republic of Moldova*, p. 13; UN Women. 2020. *Efectele Crizei Provoocate de Pandemia Covid-19 Asupra Populației de Etnie Romă din Republica Moldova [Effects of the Crisis Caused by the Covid-19 Pandemic on the Roma Population in the Republic of Moldova]*, p. 17.

The rural population, therefore, does not have reliable access to highways. The poor condition of local roads also “causes injuries to people and damage to vehicles and transported products, such as fruits, vegetables and milk. This obviously increases transportation costs, but it also adversely affects production quality, quantity and sales prices throughout the supply chain” (FAO, 2020b, p. 70).

According to a survey of farmers, only 3.3 percent reported that the access roads to their farms were paved, 34.4 percent had partially paved roads, and 60 percent reported that the roads to their farms were unpaved (JICA, 2017). When asked specifically about the conditions of the roads that they use to access markets to sell their products, the majority had access on partially paved roads (64.4 percent), followed by paved roads (25.6 percent of respondents) and then unpaved roads (12.2 percent). There were no significant differences between women and men farmers in terms of conditions of the roads they use most frequently, but the survey sample was very small. It would be useful to consider further aspects related to gender and road infrastructure, such as the most common methods used to transport goods to market. For instance, although female heads of holdings are much less likely to own trucks when compared with male heads (as discussed in Section 4.6. of this report), small-scale farmers tend to transport their goods to local markets using animal carts or motorbikes – forms of transport which are generally more accessible to men than women. Furthermore, women living in rural areas who are not farmers by profession may, nevertheless, have home-grown agricultural products that they could sell at nearby markets if they were able to have access to them.

The issue of public transport also has gender dimensions. In their daily lives, rural residents mainly use low-volume roads, and the transport network, which remains in place from Soviet times, is described as “car-centered, with little consideration for people’s actual needs” (Ciobanu and Lungu, 2020). In fact, few rural households have cars (only 23.8 percent)

or adult bicycles (26.6 percent; National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, 2020d). The rural population spends twice as much time travelling by public transport as the urban population (just over an hour a day for rural residents), and this is due not only to lifestyle differences (such as the need to travel to sell agricultural products) but also infrastructure deficiencies (National Bureau of Statistics and UNDP, 2014).

As a general rule, women tend to rely more on public transport and they less often drive private cars. In rural areas, where there are few taxi services and the cost may be prohibitive, women are more likely to use buses or to walk. Poor road and sidewalk conditions, combined with limited transport coverage in rural areas, affects women’s access to medical and administrative services and also presents safety risks for children walking to school and people with reduced mobility or disabilities. Gender-sensitive transport planning can have a positive impact on improving women’s lives and also their ability to pursue economic opportunities.

5.5. Information and communication technologies

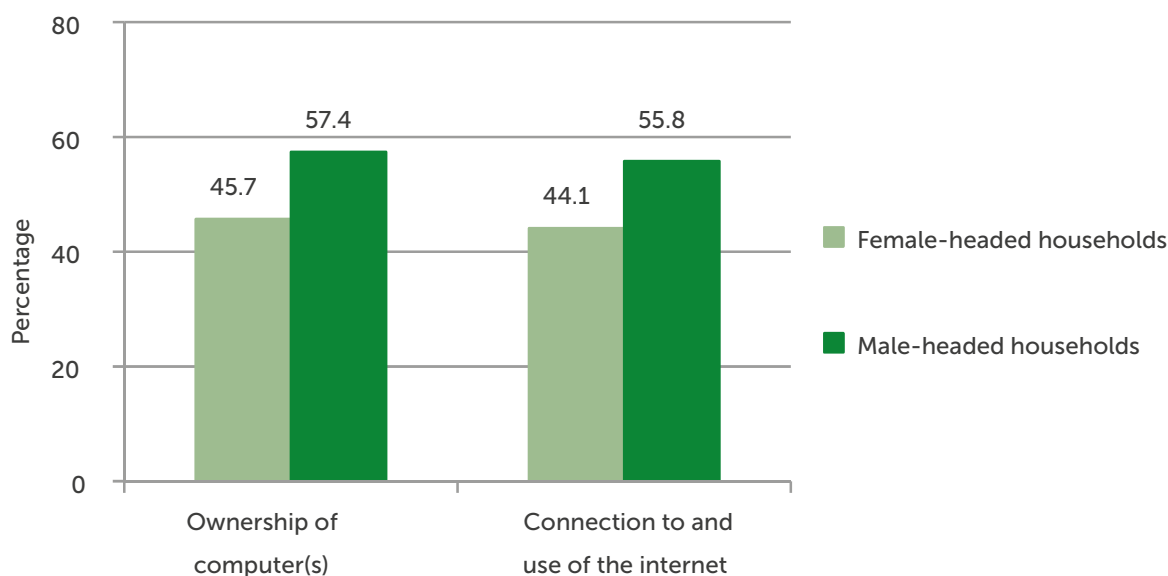
The Republic of Moldova has good internet connectivity in terms of speed and cost. Mobile broadband subscriptions are increasing yearly and a large share of the population uses the internet regularly. Accessibility among households differs, however, with three-quarters of urban households being connected to the internet compared with only half of rural households. Rural households are also less likely to own computers, notebooks or tablets (see Table 17). At the same time, ownership of mobile phones is widespread and there is no significant difference between rural and urban households (National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, 2020d).

There are digital divides in the country along gender and generational lines. The gender digital divide refers to the fact that women and girls tend to use digital technologies less, and for different purposes, than their

Table 17. Access to information and communication technologies in rural and urban households, 2019

Percentage of households equipped with:		
	Rural	Urban
Landline telephone	82.5	74.3
Computer, notebook or tablet	49.6	74.2
Internet connection	51.3	74.8

Source: National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova. 2020d. *Aspects of the Standard of Living of the Population in 2019 (Results of the Household Budget Survey)*. Chisinau, p. 104, p. 117.

Figure 26. Access to information and communication technologies, by sex of the household head, 2017

Source: National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, UNDP, UN Women and SIDA. 2020. Accesul și utilizarea de către populația Tehnologiei Informației și Comunicațiilor (TIC) [Access to and Use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) by population]. Chisinau. https://statistica.gov.md/public/files/publicatii_electronice/Femei_barbati_TIC/5_Accesul_utilizarea_TIC_de_populatie.pdf [in Romanian], p. 9.

male peers. In the Republic of Moldova, households headed by men are more likely to own a computer(s) and have internet connectivity than those headed by women (see Figure 26). Furthermore, the rate of uptake for both of these indicators (measured for 2014–2017) is steeper in households headed by men.

Limited access to information and communication technologies (ICTs) in female-headed households is not necessarily a reflection of personal interest or need but is an indication of a lack of financial resources (the reason given by 53 percent of women). Ownership of computers and connectivity to the internet are affected by income levels, with those in the lowest quintiles less likely to access such technologies.

Women and men use computers and the internet for many of the same reasons, although men are more likely to download software and digital content, to read the news or to make digital payments, while women tend to use such technologies to obtain information on health services and for educational activities (National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova *et al.*, 2020). A more detailed assessment of gendered patterns of use, especially for the rural population, would be useful to inform the development of online financial services, e-government/public services and social services that would be accessible outside of urban areas.

The older generation makes less use of digital technologies. In 2019, only 16.3 percent of people over the age of 60 (with no breakdown by sex) used the internet daily compared with 64.4 percent of

people aged 30 to 44. This pattern is because of a lack of relevant skills, limited access to the technologies themselves, greater financial constraints and the lack of user-friendly e-government platforms for older people (UNFPA, 2020). It can be surmised that older women in rural areas, especially those living on low incomes or with limited formal education, are less digitally literate than other groups. The difference in the average age of women and men agricultural holders is also relevant here. The largest number of male farmers are in the 45-to-54-year age group, whereas the largest number of women farmers are 65 years and older (FAO and National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, 2014).

Information and communication technologies are increasingly vital to agriculture and for rural development. ICTs have the potential to transform the ways in which farmers and entrepreneurs operate in rural areas, through improved access to innovations and knowledge, as well as to financial services and markets. The use of new technologies can increase the reach of networking and advisory services, and can also be used for monitoring and tracking (for example, in the context of disaster risk management, food safety and traceability standards, and pest/disease surveillance). The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated that access to ICTs is especially important for receiving information, for remote learning and working, and for communication. In the Republic of Moldova, several national strategic plans and concepts, for example on technological modernization of the agro-industrial sector, set the groundwork for the development of e-agriculture (ITU and FAO, 2020).

Although information is limited, studies of how farmers are making use of ICTs show promising trends. Among a sample of farmers, both men and women, 81.1 percent reported that the internet was an important source of information for them. Usually, younger members of the household are more open to the use of ICTs and they use the internet and provide information to older members (JICA, 2017). Further anecdotal information suggests that women farmers do rely on information found on the internet, especially in the absence of regular extension services, no less than men farmers (Chemonics International Inc., 2017a).

Still, the fact that ICT use is generally lower among women and the older population, suggests that special measures are needed to increase digital literacy, skills and access to technologies for vulnerable people in rural areas in order to address inequalities. In the context of e-agriculture and entrepreneurship, it will be important to ensure that online registries and e-services, for instance, are accessible to women farmers.

5.6. Social infrastructure

Much of the rural population depends on social payments and transfers. The Ajutor Social Program is the primary channel through which the government distributes social benefits. Ajutor Social is a means-tested cash benefit programme that was introduced in 2009 to address the fragmentation of previous social protection programmes and the inefficiency of public financing. To qualify for benefits under the Ajutor Social Program, applicants must meet three sets of criteria on family income (which have to be below the guaranteed minimum income [GMI]), the employment status of family members and family welfare. The size of the benefit is based on the income gap between household monthly income and the GMI threshold. Implementation is the responsibility of local government, and in villages, applications for Ajutor Social are processed by social assistants within the public administration.

Although the Ajutor Social Program was expanded in the period 2014 to 2017 and coverage increased from 4 to 7 percent of the total population, it still only reached 25.5 percent of the poorest households (World Bank, 2020a). At the time, the benefit payments were considered inadequate, especially for families with children. According to official data, coverage of the poorest people (those in the poorest 20 percent of households) had increased to 20.7 percent in 2018, suggesting that the social assistance system has become more targeted and effective (Government of the Republic of Moldova, 2020a).

For the poorest households, the proportion of household income from salaries, agriculture and other productive sources, as well as remittances, is decreasing while income from social payments (pensions, payments under the Ajutor Social Program and a heating allowance) have increased in relative terms (Government of the Republic of Moldova, 2020a). In 2018, social assistance accounted for 3.4 percent of the income of the poorest 20 percent of rural households (and 2.9 percent for those in urban areas). A World Bank review found that in the most deprived rural areas, 45 percent of families were eligible for either the Ajutor Social Program or for a programme providing heating allowances in winter (the Ajutor pentru Perioada Rece a Anului). Out of these families, 57 percent were in receipt of benefits from at least one of the programmes. In the least deprived rural areas, 39 percent of families received at least one or both of the benefits (World Bank, 2020b). When this assessment was conducted, data or information that would provide a breakdown of the proportion of female- and male-headed households, in rural or urban areas, receiving benefits through either the Ajutor Social or the heating allowance programme were not found.

In general, however, women depend to a greater degree on social benefits and men are more involved in income-generating activities. In 2019, almost every third woman over the age of 18 (32.2 percent) had pensions as their main source of income compared with every fourth man (22.3 percent; National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, 2021a). Women represent the large majority of those who receive benefits under survivors' pensions and retirement/old age pensions; men and women receive disability pensions in equal share.

Women's historically earlier retirement age, as well as their average lower salaries, contribute to a gender gap in old age pensions. Women represent 64.5 percent of retirees, but their share of the total pension fund is considerably smaller. In 2021, the average size of the old-age pension for men in the non-agriculture sector was MDL 2 901.7, compared with MDL 2 105.2 for women (National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, 2021a). The average pension for former agricultural employees was MDL 1 561.9 for men, compared with MDL 1 501.6 for women. The average old-age pension for retirees who had worked in the non-agriculture sector covered the subsistence minimum. However, for those who had been formerly employed in agriculture, the pensions for men covered 91.5 percent of the subsistence minimum and for women only 87.9 percent of the subsistence minimum value (ibid.).

In response to the COVID-19 health crisis, several forms of social protection were expanded, including extending coverage of the Ajutor Social Program to include self-employed people and some other categories of non-contributors. Other policy responses included increasing social assistance benefits for pensioners, families with children and uninsured people. While the package of social protections was undoubtedly beneficial to women in various categories, the policies themselves are not considered gender-sensitive in terms of being formulated to address the gendered impacts of the pandemic (UNDP and UN Women, 2022). Rather than directly responding to the challenges that women and girls faced during the pandemic, the social protection measures bolstered pre-existing social benefits schemes.

Child care and preschool education

The National Employment Strategy for 2017–2021 recognizes that the lack of child care infrastructure in rural areas (the limited places in nurseries and kindergartens) combined with limited flexible working options have resulted in an increase in the number of unemployed young women. When affordable child care or preschool education is not accessible to rural families, it not only affects children's readiness for school, but it also limits the opportunities that women with young children have to engage in paid employment, to take part in training or other development projects, and to participate in local decision-making.

Ensuring access to quality preschool education for all children, but especially for those from vulnerable categories, is a priority of the Ministry of Education and Research. In 2020, there were 1 485 early education institutions in the Republic of Moldova, 352 in urban areas and 1 133 in rural areas (National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, Statistical Databank: Early education institutions, by indicators, area and years). The general preschool enrolment rate is high in comparison with other countries in the region; the rate of participation of children aged 3 to 6 in early education programmes is 85.1 percent (and 54 percent for children aged 2 to 3). There is, though, a considerable discrepancy between rural and urban areas. While in urban areas, the participation rate for children aged 3 to 6(7) is 105 percent,⁴⁰ it is only 73 percent in rural areas (Government of the Republic of Moldova and Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection, 2019). The government has undertaken

various initiatives to increase the access of rural children to early childhood education, through renovations to over 900 kindergartens, for instance (ibid.).

Children in the poorest households are less likely to attend preschool – only around 50 percent. Roma children have particularly low rates of preschool attendance, in part because of traditions to educate young children at home. Enrolment of Roma children in early education was as low as 21 percent in 2011. The consequences for Roma children are very serious and have an impact on literacy levels (a third of Roma children have low levels of literacy at age 6; UNICEF Moldova, 2018).

The reasons that rural children do not attend early childhood education are not entirely related to a lack of affordable facilities. Social surveys suggest that societal expectations play a role. It is presumed that women will take child care leave, and the working mother model is not common. In one survey, the majority of rural women agreed with the statement that “a preschool age child suffers if the mother works”. Only around 12 percent felt that a child would not suffer at all if her/his mother worked. A similar small proportion disagreed with the statement that “it is not good for the man to stay at home and take care of the children while the woman goes to work” (Institute for Public Policy, 2019, p. 96). Among men, it appears that few are aware of activities to involve them in active fatherhood. Only around a quarter of surveyed men (22.6 percent) knew about such initiatives, even though interest among men in taking child care leave appears to be quite high, especially within the younger generation (Women's Law Center and Center for Investigation and Consultation “SocioPolis”, 2015).

The availability of early childhood education can be a deciding factor in whether women return to or enter the workforce. For example, the proportion of women aged 25 to 49 with at least one preschool-aged child who were employed was 23.5 percent lower than that of women in the same age group but without preschool children (39.4 percent compared with 62.9 percent in 2019). For men, having children makes a negligible difference in employment rates, but is a positive factor in their employment (that is, a larger share of men with children work; genderpulse.md, 2020b).

⁴⁰ The participation rate (of 3- to 6-year-olds) of over 100 percent reflects the fact that some children attending early education programmes are over the age of 6.

6. Food security and nutrition

While the Republic of Moldova does not face the problem of hunger in the sense of severe lack of food, SDG 2 (on zero hunger) and its five targets cover a range of issues connected to food insecurity that are relevant for the country, such as undernourishment, malnutrition, low productivity in agriculture and food safety (Government of the Republic of Moldova and United Nations Moldova, 2017a). Food insecurity is addressed under national priorities aimed at fostering good nutrition and healthy diets (for example, under the National Health Policy of the Republic of Moldova for 2007–2021) and on increasing the productivity of the agriculture sector, including in small-scale agriculture. In this second category, the introduction of resilient agricultural practices, sustainable food production and distribution systems, is aimed at decreasing poverty overall which, in turn, will also address food security.

It should also be kept in mind that target 2.3 of SDG 2, in its aims to increase food productivity, highlights women among small-scale food producers who must have secure and equal access to land, other productive resources and inputs, knowledge, financial services and markets, and opportunities for value addition and non-farm employment. SDG 2 is therefore mutually reinforcing with Goal 5 on gender equality (especially target 5.A).

SDG targets for agricultural food systems and the environment have been adjusted to the country context and integrated into policy documents, but there remain gaps in how the intersections of gender, food systems and poverty are addressed. For example, the National Programme on Food and Nutrition for 2014–2020 identified gender-specific issues such as declining rates of exclusive breastfeeding, anaemia (for women) and elevated blood pressure and cholesterol levels associated with poor diet (affecting the healthy lives of both sexes but described as having a greater impact on women). The Gender Equality Strategy for 2017–2021 addresses food security under an objective on climate

change as one of several areas in which sectoral policies must be aligned with gender equality goals.

Because of the low rate of extreme poverty in the Republic of Moldova, hunger is not a critical issue. The global hunger index score for the country has more than halved since 2000, meaning that levels of hunger and undernutrition have declined considerably (IFPRI, 2018). Inequalities and vulnerabilities have an impact on food security and nutrition, and so it can also be useful to look specifically at the nutritional profile of people in rural areas and at women and men separately.

Rural households spent a larger share of their incomes on food in the last quarter of 2020 than urban households⁴¹ (45.6 percent and 39.8 respectively; National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, Statistical Databank: Consumption expenditures of population, by quarters and areas, 2019–2020). The food consumption patterns of rural and urban households also differ. Rural households consume more calorie-dense foods that offer fewer nutritional benefits, such as bread products, oils and sugars/confectionary (National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, Statistical Databank: Main food consumption, by areas, 2019–2020). In contrast, urban households consume more protein-rich products, such as meat, milk and eggs than those in rural areas. Rural residents do consume more vegetables and fish on average, which reflects the role that subsistence farming plays in household nutrition.

While undernutrition has declined, overnutrition is increasing in the Republic of Moldova, referring to rates of overweight and obesity among children and adults (see Table 18). Among children and adolescents, boys have higher rates of overweight and obesity than

⁴¹ Note that figures increased slightly from the same period in 2019, which could be an indicator of the impact of the coronavirus on household expenditures and/or food availability.

Table 18. Nutritional status for children and adults, by sex, 2016

Percentage of children and adolescents (age 5–19)		
	Girls	Boys
Overweight	17.5	19.2
Obesity	5.6	7.8
Percentage of adults		
	Women	Men
Overweight	39.2	38.5
Obesity	15.1	11.1

Source: Development Initiatives Poverty Research Ltd. 2020. *Global nutrition report: nutritional country profile for Moldova*.

girls, and the opposite situation exists among adults. Higher rates of overweight and obesity are correlated with levels of income, and the national rates are similar to those found in lower-middle income countries generally.

Area of residence is correlated with obesity and overweight rates for women but has minimal influence for men. Specifically, the prevalence of obesity among women (measured by the body mass index) is significantly higher in rural areas than for urban women (33.5 percent, compared with 22.9 percent); but obesity rates for men vary little between urban and rural locations. Similarly, for women, the prevalence of overweight is higher for those living in rural areas, but the opposite is true for men (WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2020). Typically, for women, obesity prevalence increases as income decreases, a reflection of the difficulties they face buying nutritional foods.

There is some evidence of micronutrient deficiencies in the Republic of Moldova. The prevalence of anaemia among pregnant women aged 15 to 49 has changed very little from 2000 (from 41.6 percent to 40.1 percent in 2016). Among non-pregnant women, rates of anaemia, while lower, have also not changed over this same period (32.5 percent in 2016; Development Initiatives Poverty Research Ltd., 2020). Target 2.2. for SDG 2 on ending all forms of malnutrition by 2025 pays particular attention to the nutritional needs of adolescent girls, and pregnant and lactating women.

Intra-household decisions about and responsibilities for food preparation and nutrition have a gender dimension. For instance, social research confirms that women in households are the ones who most often buy food, and they have the primary responsibility for preparing meals, in addition to preserving food

(Women’s Law Center and Center for Investigation and Consultation “SocioPolis”, 2015). Thus, food security, viewed through a gender lens, requires thought about whether women have the purchasing power to afford the most nutritious foods for their families and whether they have adequate information and knowledge about nutrition to select optimal foods.

When rural households depend on their own farming for nutrition, they also rely on household income to pay for the inputs needed for food production. Since food crops are consumed, agricultural inputs are funded through income earned in other enterprises or from non-farm activities. Improving food production for the benefit of the household is therefore linked to increasing women’s participation in income-generating activities, as well as in decision-making about how the income will be invested into agricultural inputs.

It is not yet clear whether the COVID-19 pandemic will have long-term impacts on food security, but research suggests that people in the most vulnerable groups strongly felt the impacts of increased food prices and food scarcity during the pandemic. Coping strategies depended on available income, and people in vulnerable groups resorted to spending their savings, buying cheaper food (especially prevalent among older people and poor households), consuming food that had been set aside for the next season, consuming fewer meals per day and eating less per meal (UNDP Moldova, 2020c). Women in vulnerable groups in particular were already spending most of their incomes on food before the pandemic. They also reported a high level of worry about how they would cope with increasing food prices and the limited supply of some food products that occurred when markets were closed and shopping hours were reduced (ibid.).

6.1. Climate change adaptation and disaster risk management

The Republic of Moldova is highly vulnerable to climate change and related disasters. The country's "unique biodiversity is currently threatened by climate change, habitat fragmentation and over-exploitation" (UNDP Moldova, no date). Lack of enforcement of environmental legislation has led to environmental degradation, pollution and unsustainable use of natural resources, but at the same time the country has been highly engaged in climate action. The Republic of Moldova was the fourth country in the world to update its Nationally Determined Contribution to the Paris Climate Agreement and committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions up to 70 percent by 2030, compared with 1990, and by 88 percent conditioned on the availability of technical, financial and technological support.

Climate change has clear impacts on agriculture, water resources, forestry, energy and transport, and therefore rural populations are especially at risk. Most of the Republic of Moldova's agriculture is rain-fed. Thus, rural areas were greatly affected by droughts in 2007, 2015 and 2020, much more so than urban areas. Stocks of agricultural produce ran dry for many rural households, and prices and household expenditures on food and energy grew rapidly.

Environmental degradation, biodiversity loss, climate change and climate vulnerability all have gender dimensions. Not only are men and women affected differently, but they have different needs and capacities for adaptation. On the one hand, women's role as providers of food, energy and water makes them more dependent on natural ecosystems and hence more vulnerable to environmental degradation than men. Similarly, to the extent that climate change has an impact on certain areas, such as horticulture, or dairy production, where women perform most of the labour, they will be disproportionately affected by poor agricultural outcomes. Extreme climate events exacerbate pre-existing gender disparities, such as the risk of poverty, unequal access to resources and limited mobility, that put women in particularly vulnerable positions. On the other hand, women are important

agents for change and their contributions to climate change policy are needed for effective solutions. When a gender lens is applied to disaster risk reduction and women participate in disaster preparedness on an equal basis with men, they can contribute their knowledge and expertise to strategies to address the impacts of climate change.

The Gender Equality Strategy for 2017–2021 and Action Plan on its implementation recognize that a gender perspective has not been adequately included in sectoral or climate change policies and that research on the impacts of climate change and adaptation among different demographic groups has been insufficient. Specific objectives concern improving the gender sensitivity of the policy and regulatory framework and increasing knowledge of the gendered impacts of global warming and climate change among responsible civil servants.

Several climate change projects led by the United Nations and other development partners have been carried out that included gender-specific components. For the most part, the projects had activities on gender analysis and mainstreaming gender into relevant policy materials (for example, in the National Adaptation Planning Roadmap, sector plans, as well as forest and pasture management plans of specific communities), raising awareness of the gender aspects of climate risk management and related to biodiversity (for instance, training for local public authorities and local specialist staff) and some job creation for rural women (specifically linked to the implementation of a biomass heating project). Despite various projects and initiatives, the gender dimensions of energy efficiency, climate change adaptation and mitigation, and disaster risk prevention are still not well understood. Relevant data are lacking, as is the capacity to produce gender analysis. As a result, policies in these areas are gender-blind and risk exacerbating gender inequalities and increasing the vulnerability of poor women and girls. A gender-responsive approach, on the other hand, would not only reduce gender inequalities, for the benefit of women and girls, but would address social exclusion more broadly, improve the efficiency of interventions by targeting women and men, and benefit families and society as a whole.

7. Recommendations

The recommendations contained in the following section are generated from the findings included in this Country Gender Assessment. The recommendations also reflect a consensus call for action, which was a key outcome of a regional conference on Promoting socially inclusive rural development in Europe and Central Asia: Action for the 2030 Agenda, convened by the FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia (FAO REU) with the support of the European Institute for Gender Equality, in Vilnius, Lithuania in 2017 (FAO, 2018b).

Many of the recommendations are addressed to FAO in the context of implementing the Country Programming Framework that prioritizes strengthening government capacities to formulate gender-responsive and socially inclusive policies in the agriculture sector. Additional recommendations are provided to policymakers, with a focus on the state structures with mandates concerning agriculture and rural development, as well as improving the status of women in the Republic of Moldova.

7.1. For FAO

1. In implementing the Country Programming Framework:
 - » Continue to mainstream gender throughout the Country Programming Framework. All priority areas, targets, outcomes, outputs, activities and indicators of the CPF should take gender inequalities and gaps into consideration. In the spirit of leaving no one behind, interventions should not only address the needs and interests of women in rural areas but also take into account the experiences of women belonging to different groups.
 - » Conduct dedicated gender analysis for specific sub-sectors of agriculture (such as dedicated value chain analysis) and consider publishing these gender analyses in order to add to the evidence base in the Republic of Moldova. Research is needed into how COVID-19 has affected the rural population, with special attention to women farmers and business owners.
2. In working with government and other stakeholders:
 - » Base engagement with relevant governmental partners on national strategic plans that include gender equality goals but also initiate activities to eliminate gender inequalities among the rural population related to any identified critical areas.
 - » Provide support in producing, analysing and disseminating gender-sensitive and sex-disaggregated administrative data relevant to agriculture and rural development. Support the development and implementation of a gender-sensitive and intersectional agricultural census/population census with indicators to cover areas for which data on gender gaps are limited at present.
 - » As there is a particular need for sex-disaggregated data and analysis of both ownership and control over land assets, it is recommended that FAO promote the Evidence and Data for Gender Equality (EDGE) methodology to measure asset ownership.⁴²
 - » Continue to provide support to the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry to build internal capacity for gender mainstreaming and gender analysis. Provide technical assistance to improve the development of gender-sensitive indicators, the collection of administrative data and dissemination of gender statistics relevant to agriculture and rural development.
 - » Organize awareness-raising and sensitization activities for relevant state agencies on increasing evidence-based and gender-responsive policymaking aimed at improving the work and lives of rural women and female farmers. Capacity-building should include identifying

⁴² For more information, see EDGE methodology at <https://unstats.un.org/edge/methodology/asset/> and pilot projects by the Asian Development Bank in Georgia at <https://www.adb.org/publications/measuring-asset-ownership-entrepreneurship-gender-survey>.

gender-specific objectives, targets and benchmarks, as well as conducting gender-sensitive monitoring and evaluation.

- » Provide technical assistance to relevant institutions (under the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry, higher education, farmers' associations, and so forth) to improve the dissemination of specialized training and advisory services to farmers, with particular attention to identifying knowledge gaps and barriers that have an impact on women.

3. In raising the visibility of rural women as well as women's role in agriculture:

- » In cooperation with state agencies, use opportunities to profile women's contributions to agriculture as well as the vulnerabilities and capabilities of rural women in the Republic of Moldova. FAO should design and implement awareness and advocacy campaigns to dispel gender stereotypes and highlight the contributions of rural women, including rural women from diverse groups.

7.2. For Government and national institutions

1. In formulating gender-responsive national policies, strategies and programmes for agriculture and rural development:

- » Ensure that national policy and strategies on gender equality are not isolated from wider reform efforts but, rather, that gender-specific and sectoral policies inform each other.
- » Ensure that the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry collects, analyses and reports sex-disaggregated administrative data whenever its implemented activities imply people and the benefits are targeted at people (such as infrastructure, resources, agency and so forth). The ministry should work with the agencies under its direction on data collection to strengthen the evidence base for future policymaking and programming.
- » Make use of the planned population/agricultural census to develop gender-sensitive indicators to measure gender gaps for which there are limited data and in line with commitments under the 2030 Agenda and the relevant SDGs.
- » Formulate gender-responsive policies and programmes based on sectoral analyses, and assessments of existing data. National programmes and plans should include measurable objectives,

concrete targets, benchmarks and gender-sensitive performance indicators to facilitate monitoring and evaluation through a gender lens.

- » Identify lessons learned and good practices in gender-sensitive programming on agriculture and rural development, including from both state- and donor-supported programmes. Expand upon and replicate effective methods for gender mainstreaming in future programming.

2. In supporting programming in the agriculture sector:

- » Within national employment policies, identify ways to quantify the agricultural labour provided by informal and contributing family workers in order to formalize this work in terms of social protections for workers, especially for women.
- » Ensure that land consolidation processes do not disadvantage women. Land consolidation should be understood through a gender lens, which can be achieved by: making sex-disaggregated cadastral and real estate records from state registries available for the production of statistics and regular analysis; dedicated research using methodologies such as EDGE; positive measures to ensure the registration of women as landowners; and initiatives to address persistent gender stereotypes.

3. In supporting programmes aimed at rural development:

- » Create decent work (paid jobs in the formal sector) in agriculture and off-farm sectors of the economy. Aim to diversify employment opportunities for rural women in particular and support the (re)training of women to enter jobs in non-traditional fields.
- » Increase support for women farmers and women who want to start rural-based businesses (both agricultural and non-agricultural). Support could encompass financial and legal support, specialized subsidies, and capacity-building to increase women's entrepreneurship skills and address knowledge gaps. Special measures should be included in post-COVID recovery plans to ensure that rural women farmers and entrepreneurs have access to affordable loans, agricultural subsidies and other needed forms of support.
- » Conduct gender analysis of access to ICTs among the rural population in the context of developing online financial services, e-government/public services and social services, as well as e-agriculture (including advisory services, e-commerce, early

warning information, and so forth). Analysis should identify the ways in which e-agriculture initiatives can make use of women's intellectual capital. Provide training to increase digital literacy and access to technologies for vulnerable people in rural areas, including older women.

- » Support research and study relevant to climate change and mitigation to increase knowledge of the gender impacts and to develop indicators/proxy indicators for the collection of relevant sex- and age-disaggregated data. Increase the knowledge and capacities of key stakeholders to develop gender-responsive initiatives on climate change adaptation and disaster risk management. Improve coordination among government and NGOs in awareness-raising, research and advocacy efforts.

4. In raising the visibility of rural women as well as women's role in agriculture:

- » Use opportunities to promote a non-stereotyped image of women as farmers and in other agricultural professions to raise awareness of their capabilities. Entry points for such activities could include national actions to address gender stereotypes, to close gender gaps in the labour market and to increase girls' and women's access to non-traditional professions.
- » Increase channels for women in rural areas to participate in decision-making and priority-setting by strengthening links between the central and local authorities and between the authorities and women's community-based associations.
- » Engage male leaders and stakeholders in efforts to overcome gender stereotypes in sectors related to agriculture and rural development.

References

- Agency for Intervention and Payments in Agriculture (AIPA).** 2021a. AIPA continuă realizarea Campaniei de informare în rândul autorităților publice locale privind accesarea subvențiilor din partea statului [AIPA continues to carry out an information campaign among local public authorities on accessing state subsidies]. *AIPA*, 27 January 2021. Cited 29 January 2022. <http://aipa.gov.md/ro/content/aipa-continua-realizarea-campaniei-de-informare-in-randul-autoritatilor-publice-locale>
- AIPA.** 2021b. Raport de activitate a AIPA pentru anul 2020 [AIPA Activity Report for 2020]. Chisinau. http://www.aipa.gov.md/sites/default/files/Raport%20de%20activitate_AIPA-2020.pdf
- Alegeri.md.** 2019. Președinții raioanelor din Republica Moldova [Presidents of the districts of the Republic of Moldova]. In: *Alegeri.md*. Cited 29 January 2022. http://alegeri.md/w/Pre%C8%99edin%C8%9Bii_raioanelor_din_Republica_Moldova
- AmCham Moldova.** 2020. *The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the activity of Moldovan companies: reality, expectations and actions*. Chisinau. https://www.amcham.md/st_files/2020/04/30/EN_AmCham%20survey%20report.pdf
- Andreev, A., Cazanțeva, O., Munteanu, A., et al.** 2017. Sectorul forestier și serviciile ecosistemice – ENPI FLEG II în Republica Moldova [Forestry sector and ecosystem services – ENPI FLEG II in the Republic of Moldova]. Societatea Ecologică “BIOTICA”, ENPI FLEG II regional program. Chisinau. <http://www.bioticamoldova.org/library/FLEG2017.pdf>
- Association of Entrepreneurs with Disabilities from Moldova – “European Abilities without Limits”.** 2020. *Limiting Access for Women with Disabilities from the Republic of Moldova to Economic and Entrepreneurial Activity [shadow report]*. Chisinau.
- Chemionics International Inc.** 2017a. *Gender Assessment of HVAA’s Selected Value Chains, Moldova High Value Agriculture Activity (HVAA)*. Washington, DC.
- Chemionics International Inc.** 2017b. *Value Chain Assessment and Selection*. Washington, DC.
- Ciobanu, B. & Lungu, E.** 2020. Local roads bring greater connectivity and support to rural communities in Moldova. In: *World Bank Blogs*, 16 December 2020. Washington, DC. Cited 29 January 2022. <https://blogs.worldbank.org/europeandcentralasia/local-roads-bring-greater-connectivity-and-support-connectivity-and-support-rural-communities-moldova>
- Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.** 2016. *General recommendation No. 34 on the rights of rural women*. CEDAW/C/GC/34. https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/1_Global/INT_CEDAW_GEC_7933_E.pdf
- Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.** 2019. *Sixth periodic report submitted by the Republic of Moldova under article 18 of the Convention, due in 2017*. CEDAW/C/MDA/6.
- Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.** 2020. *Concluding observations on the sixth periodic report of the Republic of Moldova*. CEDAW/C/MDA/CO/6.
- Council for Preventing and Eliminating Discrimination and Ensuring Equality.** 2020. *Alternative Report of the Council for Preventing and Eliminating Discrimination and Ensuring Equality to the CEDAW Committee in relation to the sixth periodic report of the Republic of Moldova*. Chisinau.
- Council of Europe.** 2018. *Study on inclusive education in Europe and in the Republic of Moldova: reasonable accommodation, access to education and non-discrimination*. Chisinau.

Dávalos, M.E., Brown, B., Holla, A., Nguyen, T.C., Seitz, W. & Smolyar, Y. 2017. *A Human-Rights Based Approach to the Economic Security of Older People in Moldova*. Washington, DC, World Bank. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/26039>

Demirgüç-Kunt, A., Klapper, L., Singer, D., Ansar, S. & Hess, J. 2018. *The Global Findex Database 2017: Measuring Financial Inclusion and the Fintech Revolution*. Washington, DC, World Bank. <https://datacatalog.worldbank.org/dataset/global-financial-inclusion-global-findex-database>

Development Initiatives Poverty Research Ltd. 2020. *Global nutrition report: nutritional country profile for Moldova*.

Development & Training Services, Inc. (dTS), National Federation of Agricultural Producers of Moldova (AGROinform) & DAI. 2011. *Assessing Gender Differences and Implications for Growing Moldovan High Value Agriculture*.

Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum. 2019. *Labor Migration and Social Security: A Roadmap. Moldova-EU*. https://eap-csf.eu/wp-content/uploads/Roadmap_MD_ENG.pdf

European Commission. 2020. *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025*. Brussels. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0152&from=EN>

European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument East Countries Forest Law Enforcement and Governance II Program (ENPI FLEG Program). 2014. *Forest dependence based on surveys conducted in three villages of Moldova*.

ENPI FLEG Program. 2015. *Evaluation of Forest Ecosystem Services (FES) in the Republic of Moldova*. <https://www.enpi-fleg.org/docs/evaluation-of-forest-ecosystem-services-fes-in-the-republic-of-moldova>

FAO. no date. *Country Programming Framework for the Republic of Moldova 2016 to 2019* (unpublished internal document).

FAO. 2017. *Guide to prepare a country gender assessment of agriculture and the rural sector* (unpublished).

FAO. 2018a. *Guidelines on defining rural areas and compiling indicators for development policy*. <http://www.fao.org/3/ca6392en/ca6392en.pdf>

FAO. 2018b. *Promoting socially inclusive rural development in Europe and Central Asia: Action for the 2030 Agenda. Conference report – Summary*.

FAO. 2018c. *Understanding Local Customs to Achieve the 2030 Agenda*. Rome.

FAO. 2019a. *Fishery and Aquaculture Country Profiles. The Republic of Moldova*. Rome. <http://www.fao.org/fishery/facp/MDA/en>

FAO. 2019b. *Regional Gender Equality Strategy and Action Plan for Europe and Central Asia 2019–2022*. Budapest.

FAO. 2020a. *FAO Policy on Gender Equality 2020–2030*. Rome.

FAO. 2020b. *Smallholders and family farms in the Republic of Moldova. Country study report 2019*. Budapest.

FAO & National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova. 2014. *Women and Men in Agriculture of the Republic of Moldova*. Budapest and Chisinau.

genderpulse.md. 2020a. Early school leaving rate. In: *GenderPulse*. Chisinau. Cited 13 February 2022. <https://genderpulse.md/en/education/enrollment-in-education/early-school-leaving-rate>

genderpulse.md. 2020b. Employment rate by presence of children aged 0–6 years. In: *GenderPulse*. Chisinau. Cited 13 February 2022. <https://www.genderpulse.md/en/economic-empowerment/labor-force-employment/employment-rate-by-number-of-children>

Government of the Republic of Moldova. in draft. Hotărîre cu privire la aprobarea Planului de acțiuni pentru anii 2020–2023 privind soluționarea unor probleme din domeniul hidroameliorației – *Proiect* [Decision on the approval of the Action Plan for 2020–2023 on solving problems in the field of hydro-improvement – *Draft*]. Chisinau. <https://cancelaria.gov.md/sites/default/files/document/attachments/intr254.pdf>

- Government of the Republic of Moldova.** 2012a. Strategia de dezvoltare a serviciilor de extensie rurală pentru anii 2012–2022 [Strategy for the Development of Rural Extension Services 2012–2022]. Chisinau. https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=48105&lang=ru# [in Romanian]
- Government of the Republic of Moldova.** 2012b. *Transport and Logistics Strategy for 2013–2022*. Chisinau.
- Government of the Republic of Moldova.** 2014a. *National Strategy on Agriculture and Rural Development for the Period 2014–2020*. Chisinau.
- Government of the Republic of Moldova.** 2014b. Strategia de alimentare cu apă și sanitație (2014–2030) [Strategy on Water Supply and Sanitation for 2014–2030]. Chisinau. https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=122590&lang=ro [in Romanian]
- Government of the Republic of Moldova.** 2016a. Plan de Acțiuni Pentru Susținerea Populației de Etnie Romă din Republica Moldova pe anii 2016–2020 [Action Plan for Supporting the Roma Population in the Republic of Moldova for the years 2016–2020]. Chisinau. https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=110246&lang=ro [in Romanian]
- Government of the Republic of Moldova.** 2016b. Programul-Pilot “Femei În Afaceri” [Pilot Program “Women in Business”]. Chisinau. https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=95069&lang=ro [in Romanian]
- Government of the Republic of Moldova.** 2017. Strategia pentru asigurarea egalității între femei și bărbați în Republica Moldova pe anii 2017–2021 [Strategy on Ensuring Equality between Women and Men in the Republic of Moldova for 2017–2021]. Chisinau. https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=99875&lang=ro [in Romanian]
- Government of the Republic of Moldova.** 2018. Strategia Națională de Prevenire și Combatere a Violenței Față de Femei și Violenței în Familie Pentru Perioada 2018–2023 [National Strategy to Prevent and Combat Violence against Women and Domestic Violence for 2018–2023]. Chisinau. https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=101802&lang=ro [in Romanian]
- Government of the Republic of Moldova.** 2020a. *Republic of Moldova Voluntary National Review Progress Report 2020*. Chisinau.
- Government of the Republic of Moldova.** 2020b. Strategia Națională de Dezvoltare “Moldova 2030” [National Development Strategy “Moldova 2030”]. Chisinau.
- Government of the Republic of Moldova.** 2022. The Cabinet of Ministers. In: *Government of the Republic of Moldova*. Chisinau. Cited 29 January 2022. <https://gov.md/ro/profiles/team>
- Government of the Republic of Moldova & Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection.** 2019. *National Level Review on the Fulfilment of Commitments Taken under the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action Beijing+25*. Chisinau.
- Government of the Republic of Moldova & United Nations Moldova.** 2017a. *Adapting the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development to the Context of the Republic of Moldova*. Chisinau.
- Government of the Republic of Moldova & United Nations Moldova.** 2017b. *Republic of Moldova–United Nations Partnership Framework for Sustainable Development 2018–2022*. Chisinau.
- Institute for Public Policy.** 2019. *The Perspective of Women in Rural Areas on both Banks of the Nistru River. Sociological study*. Chisinau.
- International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI).** 2018. *Global Food Policy Report 2018*. Washington, DC.
- International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).** 2019. *Talent Retention for Rural Transformation Project Design Report*. <https://webapps.ifad.org/members/lapse-of-time/docs/english/EB-2020-LOT-P-3-Project-Design-Report-Moldova-e.pdf>
- International Labour Organization (ILO).** no date. *Overview of the informal economy in the Republic of Moldova*. https://www.ilo.org/budapest/WCMS_751315/lang--en/index.htm
- ILO.** 2017. *Migrant Workers: The Case of Moldova*. Geneva. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/---migrant/documents/publication/wcms_613508.pdf
- ILO.** 2018. *Roma Women and the World-Of-Work in the Republic of Moldova*. Geneva.
- ILO.** 2021. *A synergy of growth and employment opportunities. A market systems analysis of the berry sector in the Republic of Moldova*. Budapest.

International Organization for Migration (IOM).

2020. *IOM rapid field assessment of the impact of COVID-19 on the wellbeing of the Moldovan diaspora: an evidence base regarding migrants' coping strategies and contributions*. Chisinau.

International Telecommunication Union (ITU) & FAO.

2020. *Status of Digital Agriculture in 18 countries of Europe and Central Asia*. Geneva.

Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU).

Monthly ranking of women in national parliaments, January 2021 and December 2020. In: *IPU Parline*. Geneva.

Cited 29 January 2022. <https://data.ipu.org/women-ranking?month=1&year=2021>

Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

2017. *Data Collection Survey on Agriculture Sector in Moldova. Final report*. Chisinau. PADECO Co., Ltd. and TASK Co., Ltd.

La Strada Moldova. 2020a. *10 Years of trust. 10 years of help. Trust Line for Women and Girls*. Chisinau.

La Strada Moldova. 2020b. *Trust line fact sheet – 2nd half of 2020*. Chisinau. http://lastrada.md/pic/uploaded/Trustline%20Factsheet_2nd%20half_%202020.pdf

La Strada Moldova. 2020c. When silence becomes deafening: we cannot pretend we don't hear the cry for help of domestic violence victims. In: *La Strada Moldova*, 7 April 2020. Chisinau. Cited 29 January 2022. <http://lastrada.md/eng/articles/when-silence-becomes-deafening-we-cannot-pretend-we-don-t-hear-the-cry-for-help-of-213>

Magenta Consulting. 2014. *Motivations and Barriers for Girls and Women in STEM and ICT Domains*. Chisinau.

Mathematica Policy Research. 2015. *Evaluation of the Transition to High-Value Agriculture Project in Moldova: Baseline Findings from the 2013–2014 Farm Operator Survey*. Oakland.

Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry (MAFI).

2022. Education institutions. In: *Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry*. Chisinau. Cited 28 January 2022. <https://madrm.gov.md/ro/content/institu%C5%A3iile-de-%C3%AEnv%C4%83%C5%A3%C4%83m%C3%A2nt>

Ministry of Health. 2020. Recomandări cu privire la răspunsul la cazurile de violență în familie în contextul COVID-19 [Recommendations on responding to cases of domestic violence in the context of COVID-19]. In: *Ministry of Health of the Republic of Moldova*, 8 April 2020. Chisinau. Cited 19 February 2022.

<https://msmps.gov.md/comunicare/comunicate/recomandari-cu-privire-la-raspunsul-la-cazurile-de-violenta-in-familie-in-contextul-covid-19> [in Romanian]

Moldova Agroindbank. no date. Credite pentru agricultură [Loans for agriculture]. <https://www.a.maib.md/ro/credite-pentru-agricultura> [in Romanian]

National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of

Moldova. Statistical Databank. In: *National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova*. Chisinau. <http://statbank.statistica.md/PxWeb/pxweb/en>

National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic

of Moldova. 2003. Clasificatorul Unităților Administrativ-Teritoriale al Republicii Moldova (CUATAM) [Classifier of Administrative-Territorial Units of the Republic of Moldova]. In: *National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova*. Chisinau. Cited 29 January 2022. <https://statistica.gov.md/pageview.php?l=ro&idc=385&> [in Romanian]

National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of

Moldova. 2011. Gender Statistics, 2011. In: *National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova*. Chisinau. Cited 17 February 2022. <https://statistica.gov.md/pageview.php?l=en&idc=442&id=4348>

National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of

Moldova. 2013. *2011 General Agricultural Census in the Republic of Moldova. Main results*. Chisinau.

National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of

Moldova. 2015. Activitatea de voluntariat în Republica Moldova [Volunteer activity in the Republic of Moldova], Press Release, 2 October 2015. Chisinau. https://statistica.gov.md/public/files/ComPresa/Piatza_Fortz_Munca/Voluntariat.pdf [in Romanian]

National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of

Moldova. 2016. *Energy Consumption in Households, Results of the survey on energy consumption*. Chisinau. https://statistica.gov.md/public/files/publicatii_electronice/Consum_energie_gospoda/Consum_energie.pdf

National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of

Moldova. 2019. Balanța energetică a Republicii Moldova [Energy balance of the Republic of Moldova]. Chisinau. https://statistica.gov.md/public/files/publicatii_electronice/balanta_energetica/BE_editia_2020_rom.pdf [in Romanian]

National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of

Moldova. 2020a. Accesul și utilizarea de către populația Tehnologiei Informației și Comunicațiilor (TIC) [Access

to and Use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) by the population]. Chisinau. https://statistica.gov.md/public/files/publicatii_electronice/Femei_barbati_TIC/5_Accesul_utilizarea_TIC_de_populatie.pdf [in Romanian]

National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova. 2020b. Activitatea agricolă în anul 2020 [Agricultural activity in 2020], Press Release. In: *National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova*, 29 January 2021. Chisinau. Cited 29 January 2022. <https://statistica.gov.md/newsview.php?l=ro&idc=168&id=6897> [in Romanian]

National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova. 2020c. Activitatea instituțiilor de învățământ primar și secundar general în anul de studii 2020/21 [Activity of the primary and general secondary education institutions, beginning of the academic year 2020/21]. In: *National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova*, 24 December 2020. Chisinau. Cited 29 January 2022. <https://statistica.gov.md/newsview.php?l=ro&idc=168&id=6862> [in Romanian]

National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova. 2020d. *Aspects of the Standard of Living of the Population in 2019 (Results of the Household Budget Survey)*. Chisinau.

National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova. 2020e. BNS a prezentat rezultatele studiului privind dezvoltarea mediului de afaceri din perspectiva de gen [NBS presented the results of the study on the development of the business environment from a gender perspective]. In: *National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova*, 6 August 2020. Chisinau. Cited 29 January 2022. <https://statistica.gov.md/newsview.php?l=ro&idc=30&id=6724&parent=0> [in Romanian]

National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova. 2020f. Informații statistice cu privire la indicatorii sărăciei în funcție de caracteristicile de bază ale gospodăriilor și ale populației (Anexă) [Statistical information on poverty indicators according to the basic characteristics of households and the population (Annex)] from Nivelul sărăciei în Republica Moldova în anul 2019 [Poverty level in the Republic of Moldova in 2019]. In: *National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova*, 31 December 2020. Chisinau. Cited 29 January 2022. <https://statistica.gov.md/newsview.php?l=ro&idc=168&id=6865&parent=0> [in Romanian]

National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova. 2020g. Principalele rezultate ale cercetării “Dezvoltarea Mediului de Afaceri” [The main results of

the research “Business Environment Development”], data table from annex. In: *National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova*, 6 August 2020. Chisinau. Cited 29 January 2022. <https://statistica.gov.md/newsview.php?l=ro&idc=168&id=6725> [in Romanian]

National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova. 2020h. *Republic of Moldova. Statistics for Sustainable Development Goals*. Chisinau.

National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova. 2020i. Resursele naturale și mediul în Republica Moldova [Natural resources and environment in the Republic of Moldova]. Chisinau. [in Romanian]

National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova. 2020j. *Statistical Yearbook of the Republic of Moldova, 2020*. Chisinau.

National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova. 2021a. Portretul statistic al femeilor și bărbaților în Republica Moldova [Statistical portrait of women and men in the Republic of Moldova]. In: *National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova*, 5 March 2021. Chisinau. Cited 29 January 2022. <https://statistica.gov.md/newsview.php?l=ro&idc=168&id=6934> [in Romanian]

National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova. 2021b. Vârștii în Republica Moldova în anul 2020 [Elderly population in the Republic of Moldova in 2020]. In: *National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova*, 29 September 2021. Chisinau. Cited 29 January 2022. <https://statistica.gov.md/newsview.php?l=ro&idc=168&id=7137> [in Romanian]

National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova. 2021c. Veniturile și cheltuielile populației în anul 2020 [Income and expenditure of the population in 2020], Press Release. In: *National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova*, 30 March 2021. Chisinau. Cited 29 January 2022. <https://statistica.gov.md/newsview.php?l=ro&idc=168&id=6948> [in Romanian]

National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). 2014. *Analytic Note. How Much Time Do Moldovans Spend Travelling?* Chisinau. https://www.md.undp.org/content/moldova/en/home/library/effective_governance/analytical-briefs--time-use-in-the-republic-of-moldova/analytical-brief-10.html

National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and

the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) & Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA). 2020. Accesul și utilizarea de către populația Tehnologiei Informației și Comunicațiilor (TIC) [Access to and Use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) by population]. Chisinau. https://statistica.gov.md/public/files/publicatii_electronice/Femei_barbati_TIC/5_Accesul_utilizarea_TIC_de_populatie.pdf [in Romanian]

National Farmers Federation. 2020. *Submission from the National Farmers Federation (NFFM) to United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) for the 75th Session regarding the Sixth Periodical Report of Republic of Moldova under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.*

National Paralegal Association of Moldova (NPAM). 2020. *Shadow Report on Observing the Right to Education and Work of Women in Rural Areas in the Republic of Moldova.* Chisinau.

NGOs "TarSMI", Human Rights Information Center (CIDO) & Taraclia Single Mothers Group. 2020. *Joint (Coalition) Submission Towards the 75th CEDAW session (shadow report).*

Organization for Medium and Small Sector Development (ODIMM). 2020. 72 new companies created by women will receive non-refundable grants through the "Women in Business" program. In: *ODIMM*, 18 August 2020. Chisinau. Cited 29 January 2022. <https://odimm.md/en/press/press-releases/4742-72-new-companies-created-by-women-will-receive-non-refundable-grants-through-the-women-in-business-program>

Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). 2019. *OSCE-led Survey on Violence Against Women: Moldova – Results Report.* Vienna.

Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. 2011. Rural women in Europe, Resolution 1806 (2011). Strasbourg.

Piras, S. 2016. Moldovan family farms: social buffer or economic driver? A survey-based assessment (Dissertation thesis). Alma Mater Studiorum – Università di Bologna. Dottorato di ricerca in Scienze statistiche, 28 Ciclo. <http://amsdottorato.unibo.it/7254>

Platform for Gender Equality from Moldova. 2020. *Alternative report on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in the Republic of Moldova.* Chisinau.

Public Service Agency. 2020. Informația cu privire la înregistrările bunurilor imobile, înregistrate de către Serviciile cadastrale teritoriale în perioada 01.01–31.12.2020 [Information on real estate registrations, registered by the Territorial Cadastral Services during 01.01–31.12.2020]. Chisinau. <http://www.asp.gov.md/ro/informatii-utile/date-statistice/cadastrul-bunurilor-imobile/arhiva>

Roma Women & Girls Network in Republic of Moldova "Moldsolidaritate". 2020. *Alternative report on the implementation by the Republic of Moldova of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in the Republic of Moldova.*

Smets, S., Midgley, A., Mao, Z., Vladicescu, V., Neumann, J.E., Strzepek, K. & Pricop, F. 2020. *Moldova: Water Security Diagnostic and Future Outlook.* Washington, DC, World Bank. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/34809>

Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation. 2016. Information based on the Questionnaire on gender equality and Questionnaire on development cooperation submitted by Special Rapporteur on the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation, Submission for Gender Equality Report. <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/WaterAndSanitation/SRWater/Pages/GenderEquality.aspx>

United Nations Coordinated Education Task Force for COVID-19 in Moldova. 2020. *Education and COVID-19 in Moldova: Grasping the opportunity the learning crisis presents to build a more resilient education system.* Chisinau.

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas. Adopted: United Nations General Assembly, 17 December 2018. UNGA A/RES/73/165.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). 2020a. *Human Development Report 2020. The next frontier: Human development and the Anthropocene.* New York.

UNDP. 2020b. *The Next Frontier: Human Development and the Anthropocene, Briefing note for countries on the 2020 Human Development Report: Moldova (Republic of).* New York. <http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/Country-Profiles/MDA.pdf>

United Nations Development Programme in Moldova (UNDP Moldova). no date. Climate risks,

biodiversity loss & energy dependence. In: *UNDP Moldova*. Chisinau. Cited 29 January 2022. <https://www.md.undp.org/content/moldova/en/home/climate-change-environment-energy.html>

UNDP Moldova. 2014. *Analytical Brief 7 – The Importance of Unpaid Work in Moldova*. Chisinau. https://www.md.undp.org/content/moldova/en/home/library/effective_governance/analytical-briefs--time-use-in-the-republic-of-moldova/analytical-brief-7.html

UNDP Moldova. 2020a. *Inequalities in Urban and Rural Moldova: Beyond incomes and averages, looking into the future of inequalities*. Chisinau.

UNDP Moldova. 2020b. *Local General Elections 2020. Gender Perspective*. Chisinau. https://www.md.undp.org/content/moldova/en/home/library/effective_governance/analiza-din-perspectiva-egalitii-de-gen-a-alegerilor-locale-gene.html

UNDP Moldova. 2020c. *Social and Economic Impact Assessment of the COVID-19 pandemic on vulnerable groups and economic sectors in the Republic of Moldova*. Chisinau.

United Nations Development Programme and United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UNDP & UN Women). 2016a. *Profile of Elderly Women*. Chisinau.

UNDP & UN Women. 2016b. *Profile of Roma Women and Girls*. Chisinau.

UNDP & UN Women. 2016c. *Profile of Women from Rural Areas*. Chisinau.

UNDP & UN Women. 2022. COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker, Policy details for Republic of Moldova. In: *Data Futures Platform*. UNDP. Cited 13 February 2022. <https://data.undp.org/gendertracker/>

UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS). 2022. Out-of-school children, adolescents and youth. In: *UIS Data for the Sustainable Development Goals*. Cited 13 February 2022. <http://data.uis.unesco.org/#>

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). 2020. *Assessment of COVID-19 Pandemic Risks on the Older Persons in the Republic of Moldova*. Chisinau.

United Nations Children's Fund Moldova (UNICEF Moldova). 2016. *Children in the Republic of Moldova Situation Analysis 2016*. Chisinau.

UNICEF Moldova. 2018. Moldova has one of the highest preschool enrolment rates, Press release. In: *UNICEF Moldova*, 18 April 2018. Chisinau. Cited 29 January 2022. <https://www.unicef.org/moldova/en/press-releases/moldova-has-one-highest-preschool-enrollment-rates>

United Nations Moldova. 2021. *COVID-19 Response and Recovery Monthly Bulletin, November 2021*. https://moldova.un.org/sites/default/files/2021-12/UN%20Moldova%20Covid-19%20Response%20and%20Recovery%20Monthly%20Update-%20November_2021.pdf

United Nations Office for the Republic of Moldova. 2020a. *COVID-19 Impact on the Agriculture and Food Value Chains*. Chisinau.

United Nations Office for the Republic of Moldova. 2020b. *COVID-19 Socio-Economic Response and Recovery Plan*. Chisinau.

United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women). 2016. *Fact sheet on women migrant workers from the Republic of Moldova*. Chisinau. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2016/1/fact-sheet-on-women-migrant-workers-from-the-republic-of-moldova>

UN Women. 2020. *Assessment of COVID-19 impact on gender roles*. Chisinau.

UN Women. 2021. *Republic of Moldova Country Gender Equality Brief*. Chisinau.

Women's Law Center & Center for Investigation and Consultation "SocioPolis". 2015. *Men and gender equality in the Republic of Moldova*. Chisinau.

Women's Law Center & UN Women Moldova. 2016. *Report on Costing of Domestic Violence and Violence against Women in Moldova*. Chisinau. <https://moldova.unwomen.org/en/biblioteca-digitala/publicatii/2016/01/report-on-costing-of-domestic-violence-and-violence-against-women-in-moldova>

World Bank. 2014. *Moldova Land Governance Assessment Framework (LGAF), Final Report*. Washington, DC.

World Bank. 2018. *Moldova Country Note – Review of Rural Water and Sanitation Services* (unpublished). Washington, DC.

World Bank. 2019. Personal remittances, received (% of GDP). In: *World Bank DataBank*. Washington, DC. Cited 13 February 2022. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/BX.TRF.PWKR.DT.GD.ZS>

World Bank. 2020a. *Moldova Emergency COVID-19 Response Project (P173776)*. https://msmps.gov.md/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Moldova_Emergency_COVID-19_Project-PAD-1.pdf

World Bank. 2020b. *Review of the Ajutor Social Benefits Delivery to Improve the Uptake of the Poor*. Washington, DC.

World Bank. 2022. Agriculture, forestry, and fishing, value added (% of GDP) – Moldova. In: *World Bank DataBank*. Washington, DC. Cited 13 February 2022.

<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NV.AGR.TOTL.ZS?locations=MD>

World Economic Forum. 2021. *The Global Gender Gap Report 2021*. Geneva.

Please change to: World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Office for Europe. 2020. *Gender and noncommunicable diseases in Republic of Moldova. Analysis of STEPS data*. Copenhagen.

Zubcov, E., Curcubet, G., Bilechi, L., Domanciuc, V., Usatii, M., Barbaiani, L., Kovács, É., Moth-Poulsen, T. & Woynarovich, A. 2013. *Review of fishery and aquaculture development potentials in the Republic of Moldova*. FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Circular No. 1055/3. Rome, FAO.

Other FAO Country Gender Assessments in this series:

(available at <http://www.fao.org/europe/resources/gender/en/>)

National Gender Profile of Agriculture and Rural Livelihoods: Bosnia and Herzegovina. (2021)

National Gender Profile of Agriculture and Rural Livelihoods: Serbia. (2021) – also available in Serbian

National Gender Profile of Agriculture and Rural Livelihoods: Ukraine. (2021) – also available in Ukrainian

Gender, agriculture and rural development in Uzbekistan. Country gender assessment series (2019)

Gender, agriculture and rural development in Georgia. Country gender assessment series (2018)

Gender, agriculture and rural development in Armenia. Country gender assessment series (2017) – also available in Armenian

Gender, agriculture and rural development in Albania. Country gender assessment series (2016) – also available in Albanian

National Gender Profile of Agricultural and Rural Livelihoods: Kyrgyzstan. Country gender assessment series (2016) – also available in Russian

National Gender Profile of Agricultural and Rural Livelihoods: Republic of Tajikistan. Country gender assessment series (2016) – also available in Russian

National Gender Profile of Agricultural and Rural Livelihoods: Turkey. Country gender assessment series (2016) – also available in Turkish

**COUNTRY
GENDER
ASSESSMENT
SERIES**

**EUROPE AND
CENTRAL ASIA**

ISBN 978-92-5-136073-6 ISSN 2710-1622



9 789251 360736

CB9555EN/1/05.22