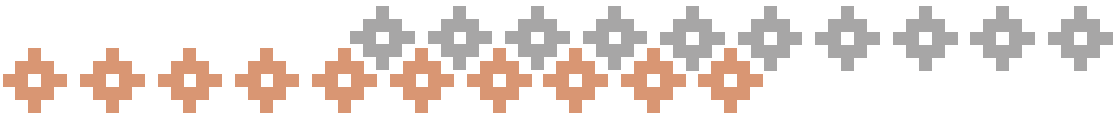
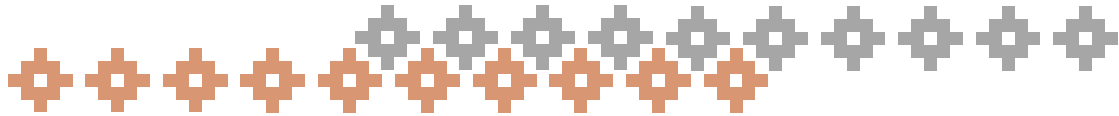


Profile of Women from Rural Areas





Profile of Women from Rural Areas



“Profile of Women from Rural Areas”, 2016

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This analytical note is part of a **series of profiles related to women and girls** that belong to certain underrepresented groups from Moldova, who are coming from disadvantaged socio-economic or geographical backgrounds (*migrant women, women from rural areas, Roma women and women who are victims of violence*), those with special health conditions (*women with disabilities, women living with HIV or elderly women*) or who are less in certain sectors (*women in elected and appointed positions, women in decision-making positions and women involved in the economic and business sector*).

The purpose of these profiles is to inform the public, based on evidence/data, about the advantages, capabilities and potential of women's groups that have been analysed and the contribution they can make to the development, their interaction environments, the opportunities that they benefit from or are deprived of, as well as the limitations and obstacles they face. The profiles include a factual analysis of the described vulnerable group (by its subpopulations) and its comparison with the opposite group (invulnerable) of women (sometimes also with the corresponding group of men). Quantitative and qualitative data from various available official (official and administrative statistics) and independent sources (studies, surveys) were combined and used.

The document is intended for decision makers, policy makers, civil society and the general public and aims at increasing the understanding of data and exemplifying the use of the multi-dimensionally disaggregated statistical data with a view to identifying the intervention measures necessary to promote equality, inclusion and cohesion, non-discrimination and acceptance of the underrepresented groups of women.

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“PROFILE OF WOMEN FROM RURAL AREAS”, author MARIA VREMIS, UNDP & UN WOMEN, 2016.

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Abbreviations

NBS	-	National Bureau of Statistics
HBS	-	Household Budget Survey
MDG	-	Millennium Development Goals
ILO	-	International Labour Organization

Introduction

By ratifying the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), ILO Convention, etc., Moldova has taken on international and national commitments to promote gender equality. The Legal framework for equality between women and men in line with international commitments has been adjusted; the National Programme on Ensuring Gender Equality 2010-2015 (PNAEG) and its action plans has been developed¹. However, Moldovan society continues to remain a patriarchal one, and the traditional relations between genders are particularly pronounced in rural areas. The discrepancies are observed not only between men and women, but they are also visible with regard to women in rural and urban areas.

This analytical note seeks to observe what the situation of women from rural areas is, how strong the impact of the traditional aspects of society on their lifestyle is, how they can influence the development of the areas they live in and, ultimately, the development of society. The importance and contribution of women from rural areas to the development of society was internationally appreciated by the establishment of the International Day of Rural Women by the UN General Assembly².

¹ Law No. 5-XVI on ensuring equal opportunities for women and men (2000), National Programme on Ensuring Gender Equality in Republic of Moldova for 2010-2015, etc.

² <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N07/471/93/PDF/N0747193.pdf?OpenElement>

I. Presentation of the group of women from rural areas

The UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (latest report on the Republic of Moldova: 2004) mentions women as one of Moldova's vulnerable groups and among the main factors of their vulnerability being mentioned both the economic and social ones. Unemployment and the wage gap between women and men are mentioned as the main factors of economic order, and among social³ ones – human trafficking and domestic violence. The same report highlighted, among women, in particular, women from rural areas as being the most affected by social and economic problems in the country.

The vulnerability of rural women is explained by the area, conditions in which they live, but also by a number of stereotypes, standards accepted by society, and also by the existing traditionalism on the distribution of roles in the family and in society between women and men, which persist particularly in rural communities.

The effects on society of a recognized vulnerable group may be major when it constitutes a significant share in the total population and in the Republic of Moldova, rural women constitute nearly 30% of the total population of the country and 51% of the resident population in rural areas (Table 1).

Table 1. Resident population in rural areas, at the beginning of year, 2011-2015

	Rural			Total in the country	
	Both sexes	Women	% of total rural	Both sexes	% rural women
2011	2,078,734	1,063,359	51.15%	3,560,430	29.9%
2012	2,073,775	1,060,302	51.13%	3,559,541	29.8%
2013	2,067,332	1,056,493	51.10%	3,559,497	29.7%
2014	2,054,638	1,049,656	51.09%	3,557,634	29.5%
2015	2,047,894	1,045,685	51.06%	3,555,159	29.4%

Source: NBS, <http://statbank.statistica.md/>

The persistence in society of discriminatory attitudes towards women, confirmed by the research conducted in the field⁴, the stereotypes of Moldovan society, according to which the husband is the head of the family, and the woman plays a major role in

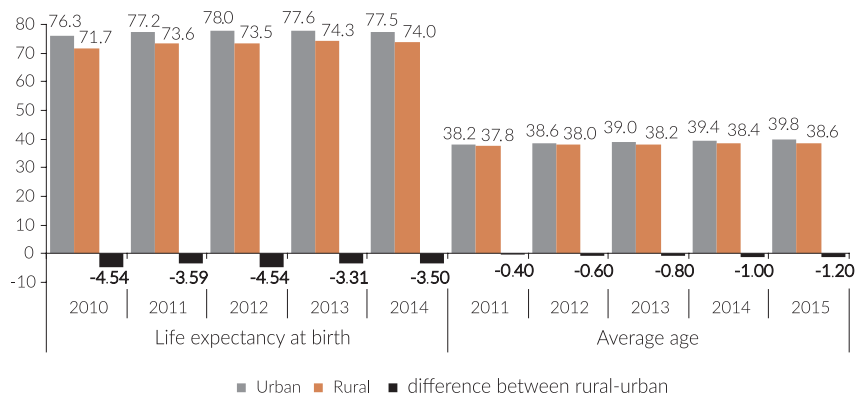
³ Report for Moldova, 2014 http://descentralizare.gov.md/public/publicaons/671268_md_april_2010_jild.pdf

⁴ Moldovan people's perceptions on the phenomenon of discrimination: sociological study, Soros Foundation – Moldova, January 2011.

domestic (household) activities, including taking care of and the education of children, and the living conditions worse in villages compared to cities reflect on the situation of rural women.

A number of statistical indicators reveal the socio-demographic differences between rural and urban women. Thus, life expectancy at birth for women in villages is more than three years shorter in villages than for women in cities, and the average age is 1.2 years less, and this gap records tendencies to increase in the last 5 years (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Life expectancy at birth and average age of women from rural areas versus those from urban areas, 2010-2014, %

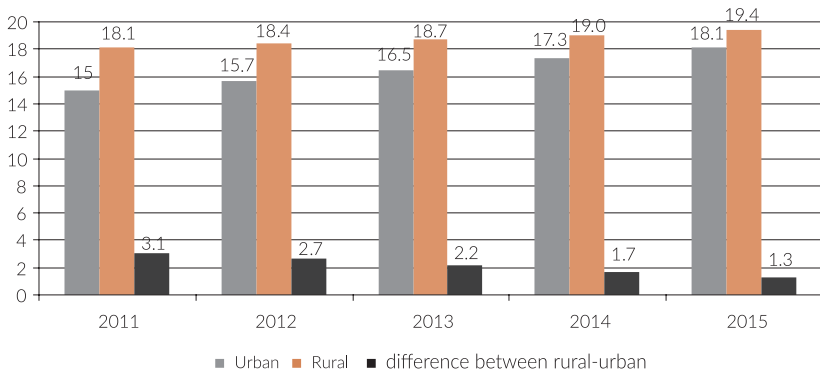


Source: NBS, <http://statbank.statistica.md/>

Even if the birth rates in rural localities is higher than in urban areas (12.0 rural areas versus 9.3 urban areas in 2014), the natural growth rate in villages remains negative (-0.9 rural areas versus 0.6 urban areas in 2014), with the indicator influenced by mortality, which continues to remain at a higher level in villages, respectively among women, constituting 12.9 rural areas versus 8.7 urban areas.

Population ageing is higher in rural areas, the ageing coefficient among rural women continuously ascending (Figure 2), is particularly high and reached 19.4% (as of January 01, 2015), surpassing by 1.3% the respective value recorded for women in cities and by 3.2% the national average value (it was 16.2% on January 01, 2015). Besides, the life expectancy at 60 years for rural women was in 2014 by 2.4 years less than the life expectancy of urban women (18.59 rural areas and 20.99 urban areas).

Figure 2. Coefficient of aging of female population by residence areas, 2011-2015, %



Source: NBS, <http://statbank.statistica.md/>

Reduced access to facilities, poor quality of services, lack of employment opportunities, lack of knowledge and skills application opportunities boost migration from rural localities, including the migration of women. The phenomenon of labour migration, including that of rural women, is known and addressed in different analytical works. Among women involved in labour migration the share of those from rural areas is about 70%⁵. The value of this indicator is particularly significant if only to note that the proportion of women aged 25-59 years (active working age) of total women from rural localities is about 48% compared to 58% among women from cities. Also the demographic dependency ratio (demographic indices) among rural women is particularly high, reaching 70 persons unable to work to 100 persons in working age, compared to 55 persons among urban women and about 52 in total population of the country (Table 2).

Table 2. Demographic indices, 2010-2014, %

	Women		Both sexes
	Rural	Urban	Total
2010	69.18	48.81	50.11
2011	68.86	50.01	50.07
2012	68.95	51.52	50.46
2013	69.30	53.19	51.07
2014	70.10	55.02	51.95

Source: NBS, <http://statbank.statistica.md/>

⁵ NBS, LFS 2014. Population of 15 years old and over, employed or seeking a job, abroad, by destination country, educational level, on age groups, sexes and areas, 2006-2014.

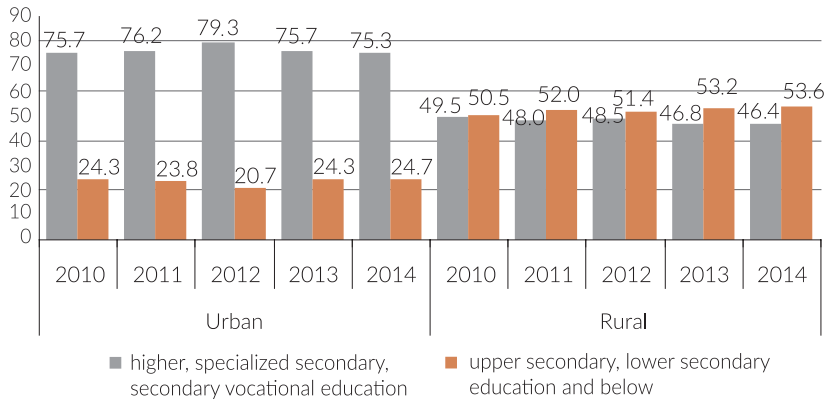
These data confirm the phenomenon of a tendency of women of working age from rural areas towards migration partly to cities – to studies, partly to work, including abroad. The living conditions which are relatively poor in villages, the lack of proper facilities do not help stimulate the return of women, but rather push young people, who reach the age of majority, to leave the villages, a fact which further contributes to the process of an ageing of rural population. Considering that rural women live on average 8.2 years longer than men, and the ratio of femininity for the population aged 65 years and over in the rural area in 2013 was 169.92%⁶, it can be concluded that in villages there is a significant share of single elderly women, who can barely make a living, given the reduced opportunities to generate income needed for subsistence (low pensions, need to process the land, heavy farm works).

⁶ MIA, BMA, Extended Migration Profile of Republic of Moldova, 2008-2013.

II. Social capital, potential of women from rural areas

The general socio-economic potential is directly correlated with the level of education, the health of the population from the area they live. The deterioration of social capital in rural areas of Moldova also has left its imprint on rural women. When analysing this aspect through studies, it appears that the level of women's education in rural communities is much lower than that of women in the cities. Only 46.4% of active rural women have higher education, specialized secondary or vocational secondary education, and in recent years the share has shown a tendency to steadily reduce. This phenomenon is particularly alarming when compared to share of educated women in urban areas, which constitutes over 75% of the active female population of 15 years and over (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Structure of female population aged 15 years and over, by level of education and residence areas, 2010-2014, %



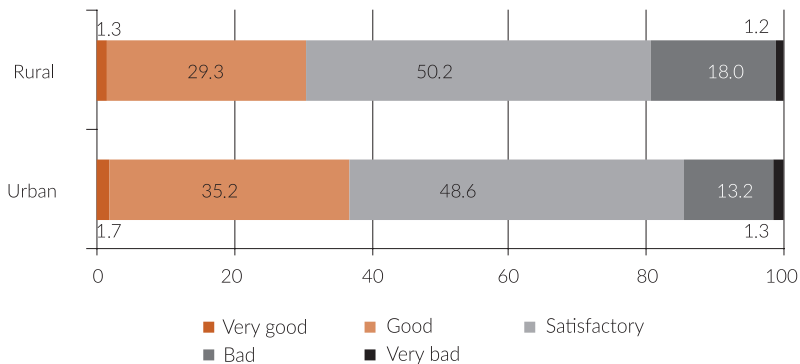
Source: NBS, <http://statbank.statistica.md/>

This in no way reports on the reduced trends of girls from rural areas to study, but it is dictated by the subsequent opportunities to apply knowledge gained during studies in the villages. Thus, the opportunities of rural women for employment, to develop activities that bring revenues, that are lower in comparison with women from cities, continue to amplify the phenomenon of migration of educated women from villages. It is known that, after graduating the secondary level of education, a significant share

of people who leave to study, do not return to the villages after completing their studies. In the last 5 years a greater concentration of young people in urban areas, has been observed especially those aged 25-29 years⁷. It was also observed that in the last five years the rural population reduced by 32,376 persons, and the urban one increased by 26,315 persons, which represents a tendency of steady demographic redistribution between the village and the city.

Another aspect relates to women's health to their ability to access medical services, where necessary. Statistics show that the access of rural women to medical services is lower in comparison with women from urban areas, the annual average number of doctor visits for women is 3.4 in rural areas in comparison with 4.4 – in urban areas, while about one-fifth of rural women assess their health condition as bad or very bad compared to 14.5% of urban women (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Assessment of health condition by women by residence areas, %

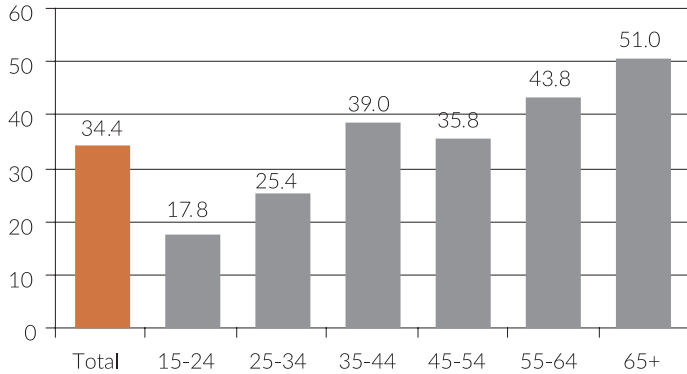


Source: NBS, HBS, 2014.

This relates to the fact that rural women seek medical attention less, even when necessary. Over one-third of all rural women and half of elderly women have no longer see a doctor (Figure 5).

⁷ <http://www.statistica.md/newsview.php?l=ro&id=4480&idc=168>, Young people in Moldova, 2013.

Figure 5. Share of rural women who refused a visit to family doctor (general practitioner) over the last 12 months, by age groups, %



Source: NBS, module Healthcare in RM, 2012.

About one-third of rural women have reported they have limited financial access to healthcare services, and 23.3% of them said they could not afford to pay for such services, while 10.4% – do not have a health insurance policy. It is important to note that, among the 25 to 54 year age group the limited financial access is reported by about 40% of women from such groups. Other reasons for waiving healthcare services relate to the quality of them expressed by about 8% of women who do not trust doctors or the provided services are of poor quality (Table 3).

Table 3. Reasons why rural women have given up visiting the family doctor (general practitioner) over the last 12 months, %

Reason	Total	including age groups, years					
		15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
I thought I would feel better by using drugs (medicines) I already had	59.5	63.9	47.5	44.8	58.0	65.6	72.8
I avoided getting help, given that I could not afford to pay	23.3	10.2	26.2	24.9	24.3	25.5	24.0
I thought I would feel better using herbal treatment	23.2	14.8	16.7	30.5	17.1	26.9	26.7
I thought I would feel better without doing anything	16.5	15.4	32.8	19.7	18.2	12.4	7.3
I do not have health insurance policy	10.4	19.7	14.1	16.6	15.9	3.1	-
The medical institution which provides the necessary services is located far away	4.5	4.9	1.9	-	-	5.5	12.8
I do not trust doctors	3.7	-	5.2	3.1	4.5	3.8	4.3
The services are of poor quality	3.3	7.2	3.7	4.7	1.5	1.1	3.5
I have no residence visa in that locality	0.2	-	-	-	0.9	-	-
Other	2.4	7.6	-	3.1	1.2	1.0	3.1

Source: NBS, module Healthcare in RM, 2012.

The data relates to the fact that over one-quarter of rural women do not have health insurance policy compared to only 15% of urban women. The distribution by age groups shows that the highest percentage of women who do not have a health insurance policy are seen among the 25-54 year age group, but the percentage of rural women is double that of urban women (Table 4). Among rural women, once again there is a tendency of a larger share of those who provide their own medical services.

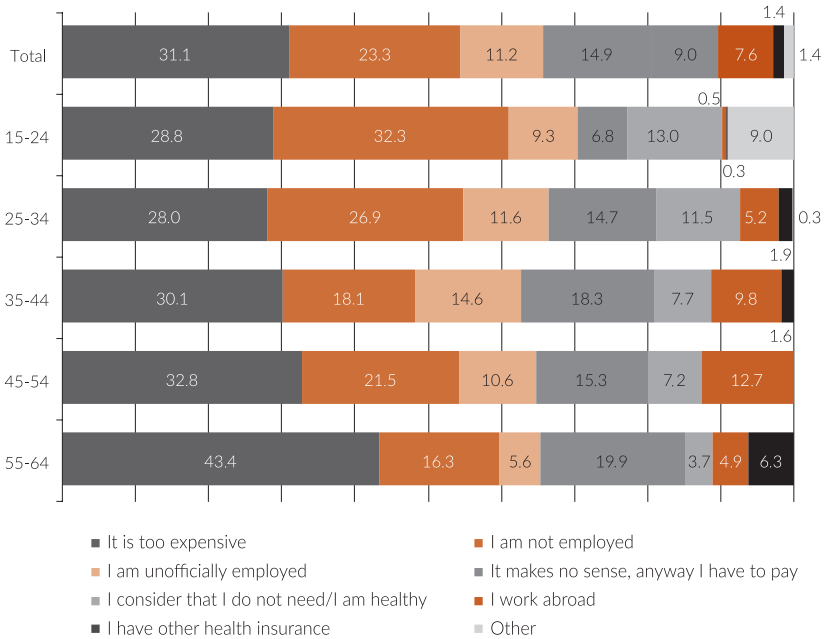
Table 4. Share of women who have health insurance policy, according to age groups, %

Area of residence	Age groups	Yes	including:			No
			by monthly contributions	on own account	free health insurance	
Rural	total	74.4	21.0	2.1	51.4	25.6
	15-24	73.6	9.8	0.5	63.4	26.4
	25-34	46.1	33.5	2.2	10.4	53.9
	35-44	53.5	38.1	4.7	10.6	46.5
	45-54	56.9	40.4	4.4	12.2	43.1
	55-64	89.9	16.0	1.5	72.5	10.1
	65+	100.0	0.6	-	99.4	-
Urban	total	84.9	43.0	2.6	39.3	15.1
	15-24	81.6	22.5	1.5	57.5	18.4
	25-34	70.2	64.7	1.5	4.1	29.8
	35-44	76.6	69.2	4.8	2.6	23.4
	45-54	79.2	65.5	7.2	6.6	20.8
	55-64	95.5	37.9	1.8	55.8	4.5
	65+	100.0	5.7	-	94.3	-

Source: NBS, HBS, 2014.

The reasons that refer to the limited access to healthcare services are different, however, the main reasons invoked are those related to financial issues. Thus, the main reason for the lack of health insurance is its high cost as 31% of women declare, the share of such responses which increases by age. A further 35% of women have given reasons such as they are not employed or are unofficially employed, in this regard, the highest proportion, which constitutes around 40%, can be observed among young people aged 15-34 years. A significant percentage of women, 14.9%, believe that it makes no sense to purchase healthcare insurance on the grounds that, in any case, they shall pay for a visit to doctor (Figure 6).

Figure 6. Distribution of rural women who lack healthcare insurance according to cause/reason, %

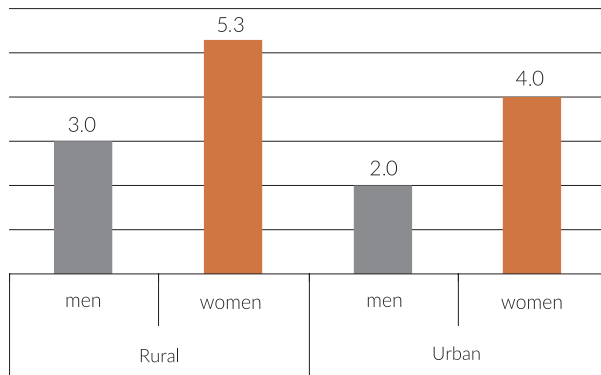


Source: NBS, HBS, 2014.

These data report on the insecurity of rural women’s healthcare, who, because of informal activities or unpaid work in agriculture, are not medically insured, and the procurement of health insurance policy is still not popular among the rural population. In fact, the rural population procures compulsory health insurance policy only when necessary, in the case of serious illness that requires hospitalization for significant treatment or surgery.

The socio-economic potential of women and opportunities to engage in development are correlated with the availability of free time, which would be directed toward participation in social life. Housework occupies a considerable part of their time, and the longest time in the household for this purpose is spent by women, particularly by rural women (Figure 7).

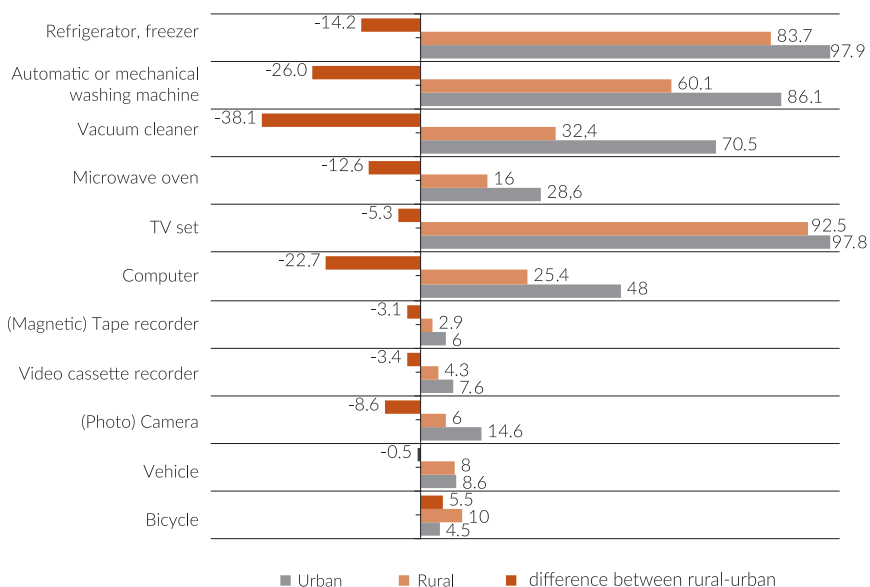
Figure 7. Length of time allocated to household and family care, by residence areas and sexes, hours/day, %



Source: NBS, Time Use Survey, population of 10 years old and over, in 2011.

The availability of household goods, and their presence in the household, as well as providing the necessary comfort for a decent quality of life, also greatly reduces the time spent on domestic work. Households in rural areas are at disadvantage in this aspect, being less equipped with durable goods compared to those in cities. The discrepancies by areas of residence are major, especially in terms of essential goods. About 84% of households in villages headed by women have a refrigerator or freezer, compared to 98% of households in cities, only 60% have a washing machine, compared to 86% of households of same type in cities, less than one-third have a vacuum cleaner, compared to more than two-thirds households headed by women in cities, a computer, which is increasingly used as a means of communication with family members abroad, may be found only in one-quarter households from villages compared to half of those in cities (Figure 8).

Figure 8. Endowment of households headed by women, in urban and rural areas, with durable goods, 2014, %

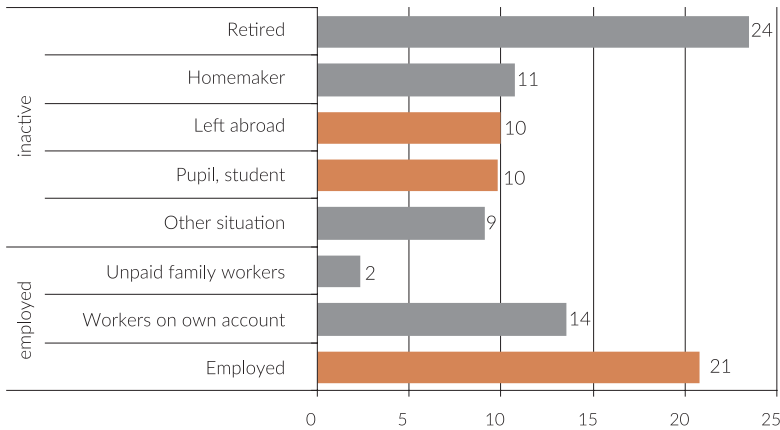


Source: NBS, HBS, 2014.

III. Interaction environment of women from rural areas

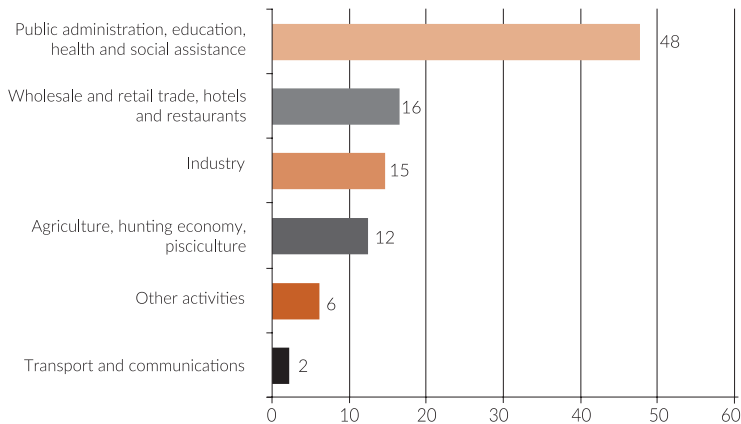
About 60% of all women aged 15 and over who live in rural areas mainly live in a family environment for the reason that they are either retired, or a homemaker, are workers on own account or unpaid family workers (Figure 9).

Figure 9. Active female population aged 15 years and over in rural areas, according to occupational status and category of inactivity, 2014, %



Source: NBS, <http://statbank.statistica.md/>

Figure 10. Employed female population aged 15 years and over in rural areas, according to economic activities, 2014, %



Source: NBS, <http://statbank.statistica.md/>

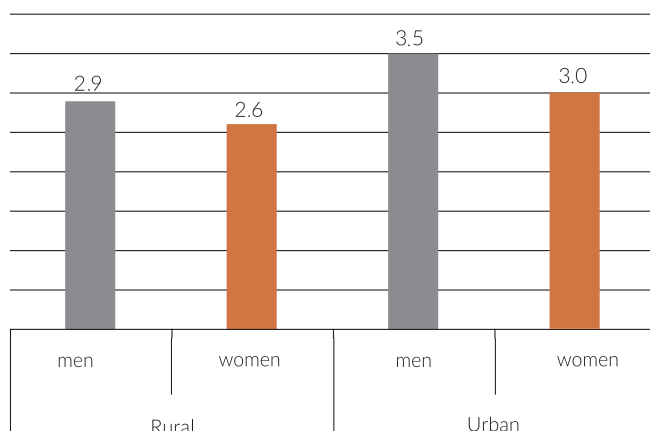
About 21% of active rural women are employed, and their job ensures interaction with the community in general and also with the environment outside the community. Among working women, about 48% are employed in public administration, education, health, social assistance, and 16% – in trade (Figure 10).

The representatives of health and social institutions are people who communicate directly with rural women with children, elderly women, for objective reasons: health problems, appeals to social institutions for support, including social aid (assistance), etc., about 24% of women are retired, while more than 4% of rural households have three or more children under 18⁸.

Rural women who have children interact with local educational institutions (kindergarten, school), by participating in different cultural and educational events within the institution, parental committees, which are mainly represented by women and less by men. According to HBS0 data, about 30% of rural households have at least one child under 18.

Access to cultural events are mostly limited to the traditional ones in the local community and they have less access to cultural institutions such as theatres, concerts and other events which take place in specialized places in nearby cities, district centres. Rural women daily allocate 2.6 hours on average on their social life (including time spent with family), entertainment and culture (Figure 11).

Figure 11. Time allocated for social life and entertainment, by sexes and residence areas, %



Source: NBS, Time Use Survey, population of 10 years and older, in 2011.

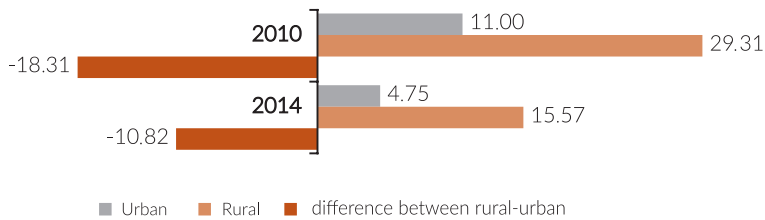
⁸ <http://statbank.statistica.md/pxweb/Database/RO/04%20NIV/NIV03/NIV03.asp>
Structure of households by number of children in household and areas, 2006-2014.

IV. Opportunities that rural women benefit from, or are deprived of

Women's poverty, economic opportunities for women related to employment and income generation opportunities are areas of interest in promoting equality between women and men. In the case of rural women in Moldova the disadvantages in this respect are especially visible.

In general, in the Republic of Moldova, rural poverty is more pronounced than in urban areas, and the absolute poverty rate among women is 15.6% in rural areas in comparison with only 4.8% among women from cities. In recent years a steady reduction of poverty has been observed, and, along with its reduction, the reduction of the gap between rates of poverty in villages and cities can be observed. For women the difference between the poverty rates by residence areas in 2010 was of 18.3 percentage points, reducing to 10.8 percentage points by 2014. (Figure 12).

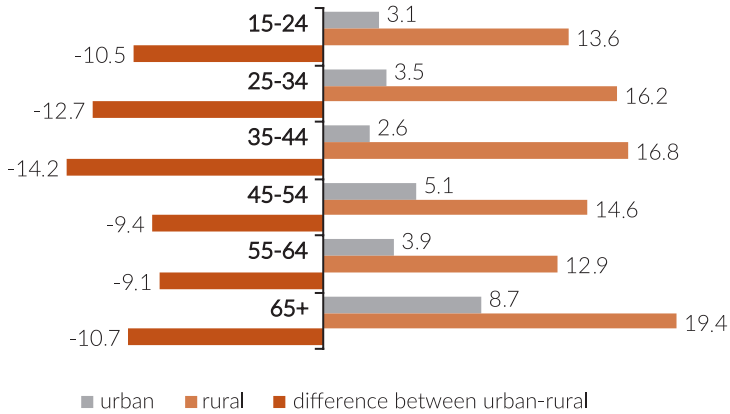
Figure 12. **Absolute poverty rate among women by residence areas, 2010, 2014, %**



Source: NBS, HBS, 2010, 2014.

Age seems to be one of the factors leading to rural women's vulnerability in terms of living standards. Elderly women from rural areas appear to be more affected by poverty, but also younger women aged 25-44 (Figure 13). The discrepancies in the opportunities to earn income in cities versus the lack of such opportunities in villages are obvious and the differences between the poverty rates of such groups are particularly significant. It is also worth mentioning here the vulnerability of children, because these women are of childbearing age, and potentially have children.

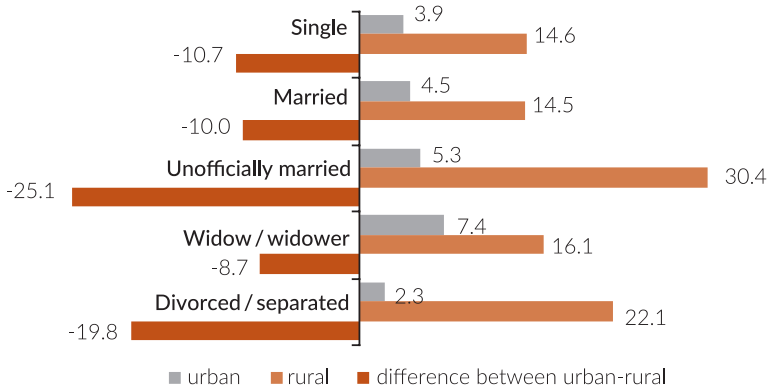
Figure 13. Absolute poverty rate among women by residence areas and age groups, 2014, %



Source: NBS, HBS, 2010, 2014.

Another factor leading to the vulnerability of rural women in terms of the possibility of not finding themselves in a state of poverty is their family status. It is noted that women who are cohabitating, divorced or separated from their life partners are particularly at risk of poverty (Figure 9). Unofficial marriage (cohabitation) in villages is different from that in cities. In cities, partners do not make their family status official, based on and guided by the tendency to assert themselves in their occupations as a professional in his/her field of activity, to achieve financial stability and to ensure himself/herself with decent living standards, necessary comfort, etc. In villages the rule of making the family status official is strictly observed, and cohabitation is noticed in cases of disadvantaged couples, people with certain social vices (with a tendency to not work, alcohol abuse), hence the higher risks of poverty among women with this respective family status, and the absolute poverty rate is 30% (Figure 14).

Figure 14. Absolute poverty rate among women by residence areas and marital status, 2014, %

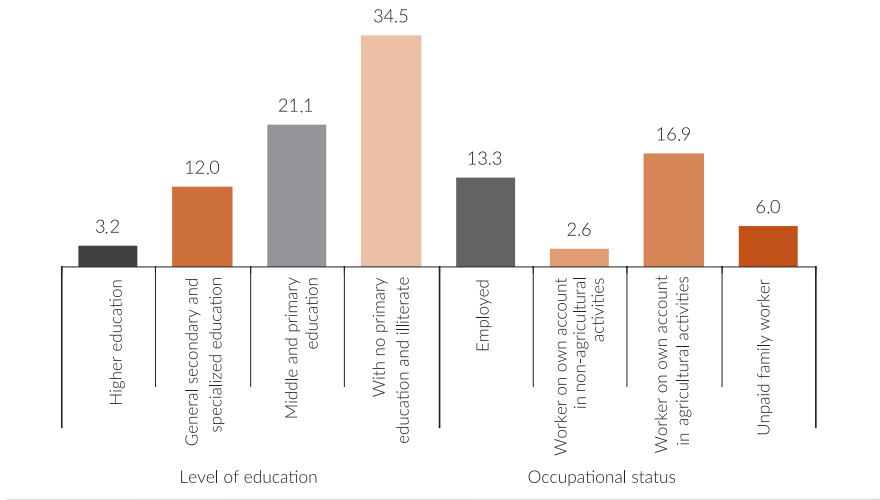


Source: NBS, HBS, 2010, 2014.

The vulnerability of rural women as regards living standards is also perceived in terms of their level of education. For women in villages, living standards depend significantly on the level of education, respectively, the lower the education level, the higher the poverty risk is, poverty rates being more than double in the case of groups of women with low education compared to women who have at least general secondary education and specialized education. This also leads to a higher poverty rate among women in rural areas, where, as mentioned above, the percentage of women with at least specialized studies constitute more than half of the total thereof, compared to over two-thirds of women in the cities.

The revenues from agricultural activity do not provide a living that is above the poverty line. The data thus confirm the assumption that there are limited opportunities to obtain the necessary income for subsistence for people who are self-employed in agriculture. The highest rate of absolute poverty (16.9%) is observed among this group, if the occupational status of rural women is taken into account (Figure 15).

Figure 15. Absolute poverty rate among rural women, according to education level, occupational status, 2014, %



Source: NBS, HBS, 2010, 2014.

The poorly developed business environment in Moldovan villages does not offer significant opportunities for people to actively engage in the labour market, and this reflects particularly upon women. The particularly low employment opportunities for women in villages are reflected on their occupations. Thus, the employment rate among women aged 15 and above in rural areas is 36.2%, which is lower than in cities where the figure is 38.6% for women of the same group⁹.

The application of acquired skills and knowledge remains a challenge for women from villages. In most rural areas there is a tendency for women to find employment in fewer sectors than men. Generally, three types of economic activities are available in rural localities, which are agriculture, the social sector and trade, the latter being mainly present in small trading units. Thus, almost half of rural women are employed in agriculture, about 27% – in public administration, education, health and social assistance, and 11% – in trade (Figure 16). In the agricultural sector, it is women who mainly are employed in subsistence agriculture, which is the main source of food and income in many rural communities. In fact, a large number of rural women who have independent activities, focus mainly on the food production for consumption in their household.

⁹ <http://statbank.statistica.md/pxweb/Database/RO/O3%20MUN/MUN01/MUN01.asp>.

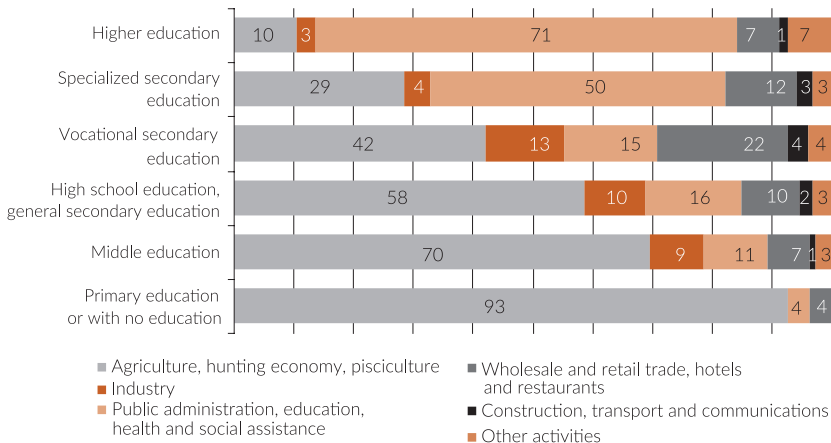
Figure 16. Structure of employed female population aged 15 years and over by residence areas and economic activities, 2014, %



Source: NBS, <http://statbank.statistica.md/>.

Certain tendencies in employment according to women’s level of education can be observed. Almost three-quarters of rural women with higher education and half of those with specialized secondary education work in public administration, education, health and social assistance, the next field of activity in terms of popularity being agriculture, which employs 10% of women with higher education, about 30% of those with specialized secondary education and over 40% of women with secondary vocational education.

Figure 17. Structure of employed rural female population of 15 years and over by level of education and economic activities, 2014, %

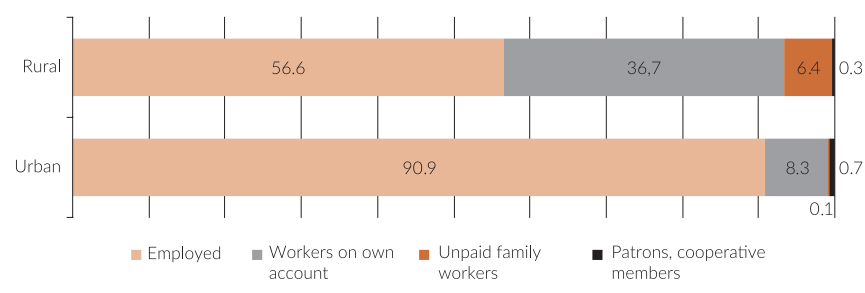


Source: NBS, <http://statbank.statistica.md/>

tion level. Activity in agriculture is correlated to education levels – the lower the level of education is, the higher the share of women working in this area. (Figure 17). It can also be noted that one-fifth of women with secondary vocational education work in trade.

Just a bit over half of rural women are employed, compared to 90 percent of women in cities (Figure 18). The other women in villages, considered employed, work on their own account (self-employed) (36.7%) or as unpaid family workers (6.4%), which means that they mostly work the household's plots of land. It should be noted that, mostly rural women are employed in agricultural activities along with men, in addition to the activities and occupations they have as homemakers.

Figure 18. Structure of employed rural female population of 15 years and over by occupational status and residence areas, 2014, %

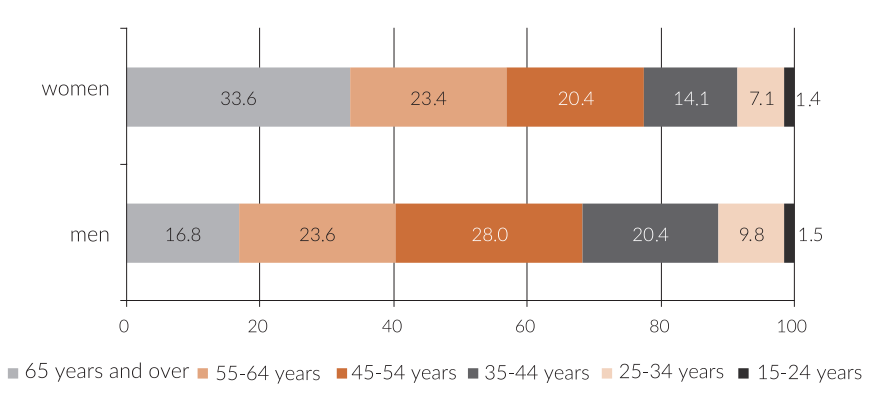


Source: NBS, http://www.statistica.md/public/files/Recensamint/Recensamint_agricol/Femei_barbati_agr/Femei_barbati_agric_rom.pdf

Plots of agricultural land are assets available to rural women, especially to those who are older. In the Republic of Moldova, about 36% of agricultural holdings (farms)¹⁰ are headed by women and 64% – by men. The age distribution of women who run farms shows that 57% are immediately pre-retired or retired, of which one-third are over 65., and only one-fifth are young people under 44. In comparison, the group of men who are 65 years and older, the heads of agricultural holdings (farms), is half the number (Figure 19).

¹⁰ http://www.statistica.md/public/files/Recensamint/Recensamint_agricol/Femei_barbati_agr/Femei_barbati_agric_rom.pdf. Agricultural Census 2011: The agricultural holding (farm) is an independent techno-economic unit (with or without a legal status) with single management and carrying out agricultural activities by using agricultural areas and/or livestock farming or activities for maintaining agricultural lands in good agricultural and environmental conditions, either as main activity or as secondary activity.

Figure 19. Distribution by age groups of persons who run agricultural holdings (farms), by sexes, 2014, %



Source: NBS, http://www.statistica.md/public/files/Recensamint/Recensamint_agricol/Femei_barbati_agr/Femei_barbati_agric_rom.pdf.

The women administer an area of farmlands much smaller than men, which constitutes only 19% of the total. The average size of a agricultural holding (farm) managed by woman is smaller in comparison to those managed by men, 291.53 ha and, respectively, 382.33 ha for those with legal states, and 0.86 ha and 1.21 ha for those with no legal states. Thus, of the average size of the agricultural holdings (farms) managed by men, those managed by women constitute 76.3% – for those with legal status and 71.1% – with no legal status. And with reference to the activities of aviculture and livestock farming – the average number of heads of livestock in those managed by women is lower than in those managed by men¹¹.

Essential disparities also exist with regard to the ownership of equipment and agricultural machinery; women own less than 12% of the total. Also, in over 88% of agricultural holdings (farms) run by women, the agricultural production is intended only for personal consumption, compared to 83.9% of those headed by men. Thus, the potential for women to obtain adequate income from agricultural holdings (farms) they run is reduced and it refers, in particular, to elderly women, for whom, ultimately, such holdings (farms) might come as an additional burden on this group of women.

Because of low incomes and pensions, it appears that Social Aid programme is required especially by people in rural areas. Of the total number of requests submitted in the last two years (2013 and 2014), only a fifth were submitted by families living in urban

¹¹ Idem.

areas, although about 40% of Moldova's population lives in cities. Of the total requests made in rural areas 84.4% were accepted and 83.7% were accepted in urban areas. The main source of income for families receiving social assistance, are pensions. At the end of 2013, the profile of the social support applicant was characterized as being a rural woman, who was over the age of retirement, a pension beneficiary, with a maximum education of secondary studies. The annual average size of social aid for persons in villages is 25% higher than for those in cities, which speaks of low incomes in rural areas.

In general, it is noted that there is a redistribution of the origin of the main income of women from rural areas, if analysing the dynamics of the main sources of income of rural women. In 2010, for 26.5% of rural women, the main source of income was agricultural activities: a self-employed agricultural activity and paid work in the agricultural sector. In 2014 the percentage decreased, constituting only 17.9%. At the same time, the share of women for whom the main source of income is pensions and income from transfers from abroad increased (Table 5). It refers to the reduced profitability of agricultural activity, the dependence on funds received from foreign transfers, which, together with low pensions, increases the vulnerability of rural women.

Table 5. Distribution of women aged 18 and more, according to main source of income, 2010, 2014, %

Main source of income	2010		2014		difference 2014/2010	
	urban	rural	urban	rural	urban	rural
Agricultural activity on own account	1.9	21.3	1.5	13.6	-0.5	-7.7
Paid work in agricultural sector	0.6	5.2	0.4	4.3	-0.2	-0.8
Activity of entrepreneurship, crafts, free professional	3.8	0.8	2.4	1.2	-1.4	0.4
Paid work in non-agricultural state sector	16.8	13.8	16.8	12.5	0.0	-1.3
Paid work in non-agricultural private sector	25.4	7.9	25.8	7.5	0.3	-0.4
Scholarships	1.3	1.0	0.9	0.7	-0.3	-0.2
Pensions	27.9	36.5	31.7	40.8	3.8	4.2
Social payments	5.3	4.1	4.9	4.8	-0.5	0.7
Maintenance	9.4	3.7	6.0	2.7	-3.4	-1.0
Transfers from abroad	4.9	5.5	8.5	11.5	3.6	6.0
Another source of income	2.7	0.3	1.2	0.4	-1.5	0.1

Source: NBS, HBS, 2010, 2014.

Another challenge for rural life, especially for rural women, who carry the burden of household, is the access to infrastructure: water, sewage, heating and other facilities necessary for a decent standard of living. Official statistics show that, in 2014, water supply services (water line) were provided to 30.7% of the country's localities (85.9% of the number of cities and 28.6% of the number of rural localities). Thus, only about 1.6 million people benefit from being connected to the water mains, which is 44.4% of the total country's population¹². However, even if there is a water pipeline in a locality, not all people can afford to connect to it, particularly because of high costs required for connection, and women are those who frequently cannot afford such expenses. A recent study by the Swiss Water and Sanitation Project in Moldova (ApaSan)¹³ confirms this assertion. Of the 27% of respondents who were not connected to the water line built in the locality, they invoked high costs as the reason for not connecting, and respectively, expressed their wish to connect, but 50% of women versus 36.8% of men noted that the fee for connection is too high, or the cost for water is high – reason invoked by 11.8% of women compared with 8.3% for men. The same study notes that more than half of rural women opt to connect to the sewerage system.

¹² <http://www.statistica.md/newsview.php?l=ro&idc=168&id=4809>. Activity of water supply and sewerage systems in 2014.

¹³ Water supply and sanitation in rural households. Results of sociological survey conducted by CBS-AXA, 2015. The survey was conducted in seven districts of the country and included 26 localities where water supply systems were built by ApaSan support. In total there were interviewed 1037 persons aged 15 and more, among them 51.5% men and 48.5% women.

V. Capability and possibility of rural women to participate in development

International bodies involved in promoting equal opportunities between men and women call for a 50 men to 50 women ratio to be achieved in decision-making institutions at all levels. In the Republic of Moldova, according to the committed MDGs targets, as well as following the Recommendations of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe¹⁴, reaching a threshold of 40% of women's involvement in the social and political life is promoted. The figure is considered a level that can influence the decision-making process and influence the actual decisions¹⁵. The explanation comes from the fact that experiences, knowledge, way of thinking, the nature and visions of men and women differ, which should not lead to discrepancies and discrimination, but ensure equal opportunity between men and women.

In accordance with Law No. 5 on ensuring equal opportunities between women and men (2006), gender equality means equal rights, equal opportunities in exercising rights, equal participation in all spheres of life and equal treatment of women and men¹⁶.

From the efforts made at all levels in this regard allow it can be observed that some progress on women's participation in social and economic life, and in the decision-making process, have been recorded in Moldova¹⁷, and these tendencies are also observed in relation to women in rural areas.

As mentioned, rural women constitute a significant share of the population in the country, so their involvement in community development where they live, and, consequently, also to the development of the country, is inevitable. The traditionalism of Moldovan society, which is particularly prevalent in rural areas, assigns differentiated social roles according to gender, respectively women are responsible for housework, childcare and care of the elderly, housekeeping, and participate less as members of public organizations, political parties, such activities being attributed largely to men.

¹⁴ Rec (2003) 3. The full document may be accessed here: [https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?Ref=Rec\(2003\)3&Language=lanEnglish](https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?Ref=Rec(2003)3&Language=lanEnglish), 2003.

¹⁵ The Draft Law No. 101 proposed to establish the minimum share of representation of women of 30% to increase the chances thereof in involving into politics. At the initiative of the Government, by the Draft Law No. 180, it was proposed to establish the minimum share of representation of women in public and political life of minimum 40%. Both projects were approved in the first reading in Parliament but did not pass the second reading.

¹⁶ <http://lex.justice.md/index.php?action=view&vie8.4.13w=doc&lang=1&id=315674>

¹⁷ A comprehensive analysis is presented in the Profile of women in elected and appointed positions.

Despite existing challenges regarding the opportunities to contribute to development, women are involved in decision-making and leading process through community-level groups, women's organizations and other forms of collective commitments. For example, tendencies to positive dynamics regarding the share of women elected to positions of mayors have been observed from 18.2% in 2007 to 18.5% in 2011 and 20.6% in 2015, also as members of local councils 26.5% in 2007 compared to 28.6% in 2011 and 30.0% in 2015¹⁸.

The participation of women as agents of development in the localities where they live has been registered. For example, rural women's participation in the implementation of community development projects is confirmed by a number of reports of the Units for Implementation of infrastructure projects, directed to rural localities.

About 50% of rural women carry out volunteer activities, compared to 43.9% of men who live in villages. Among urban women, this ratio is only 38.4%¹⁹. The most popular types of volunteer activities are those for the community benefit (59.2%), helping other families in housework (31.5%), help given to institutions and organizations of various types in the community (25.4%).

Table 6. Distribution of the number of volunteer activities by sexes and residence areas (volunteers may be involved in one and more activities), 2015, %

Volunteer activity	Urban		Rural	
	men	women	men	women
Work for the benefit of community	61.0	66.0	46.4	59.2
Help given to other families in housework	9.3	27.2	10	31.5
Help (free of charge) given to schools, kindergartens, religious/charity/cultural organizations, NGO's, trade union, city hall, business/firm or party	8.4	13	13.9	25.4
Help given to other families in agricultural works	27.6	11.5	43.1	22.8
Care of children or dependents of other families	5.4	17.1	3.2	16.8
Provision (free of charge) of other types of services	14.4	5.4	13	4.4
Help given to other families in the form of repairs and construction in households/apartments	11.7	2.7	16.9	3.0

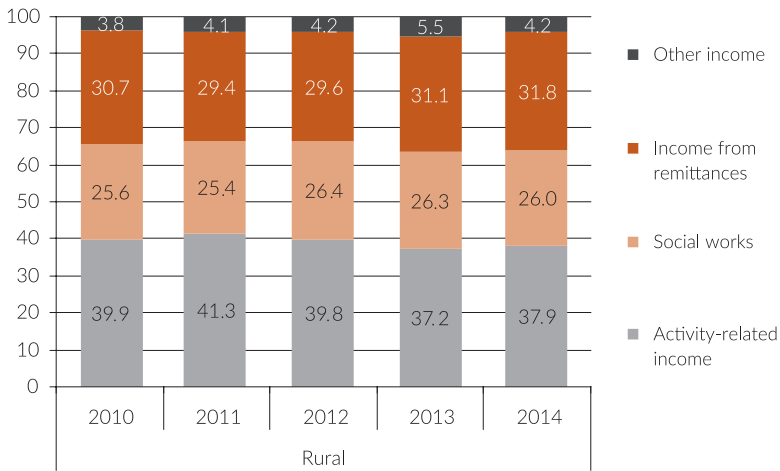
Source: NBS, research on volunteering activity in the Republic of Moldova, 2015.

¹⁸ Women's participation in public and political life in Republic of Moldova. Report prepared within the Facilitation Eastern Partnership of Council of Europe, Daniela TERZI-BARBAROȘIE, May 2013; CEC (2015). Analysis of general local elections of June 14, 2015, in terms of gender principle. http://www.cec.md/files/files/participareafemeilorlaalegerileparlamentuluirepubliciimoldova_9161592.pdf

¹⁹ NBS, Volunteering activity in Moldova, Main results of Statistical research on households of population, "Volunteering activity".

Women's skills are important for obtaining the revenues needed to live, and they may be visible in case of obtaining income from employment (wages, agricultural (farming) and non-agricultural (non-farming) activity). Over the last five years the structure of monthly available income per a person in the households managed by women in rural areas is relatively stable, but their share in total disposable income remains low and is less than 40% (Figure 20).

Figure 20. Structure of monthly average available income per person in households led by women in rural areas, according to sources of income, 2010-2014, %



Source: NBS, HBS, 2010-2014.

At the same time, the tendency of a growing dependence on remittances do not seem to reflect on some major tendencies of women becoming more involved in development, but confirm their vulnerability of having insufficient opportunities to obtain income from employment.

VI. Limitations, barriers, obstacles faced by rural women in society

The imbalances in gender relations concerning rights in accessing and controlling resources and participating in the decision-making process, still persist and are a significant barrier to women's full and equal contribution for sustainable development and concerning the opportunity to benefit from the latter.

In the case of rural women, the limitations/barriers they face when participating in the formation of sustainable development outcomes may be grouped into two categories: (i) socio-economic and (ii) cultural.

Thus, the socio-economic barriers are expressed through: (i) fewer opportunities in finding a job, excluding agriculture, in order to generate revenue for a way out of poverty; (ii) reduced conditions for using acquired knowledge, (iii) a lack of technology, resources therefor and of a favourable investment climate; (iv) the predominance of the male model associated with the entrepreneurial and decision-making success; (v) a low quality of housing because of a lack of utilities and access to goods that would facilitate housekeeping; (vi) reduced access to social services affected by lack of financial resources and underdeveloped/degrading social infrastructure; (vii) the strain of unpaid work in the household as a result of the unfair redistribution of roles in the household which reduces free time for socialization activities, entertainment and meetings that are important in developing individual competitiveness.

In turn, the social barriers are reflected by: (i) stereotyped attitudes based on assuming the role of gender in family and society, the intensity of which remains quite strong, especially in rural communities; (ii) unequal power relations between women and men in family and community, which contribute not only to maintain the economic and decision-making dependence towards men, but also result in diminishing the capacities of women to speak out, expose and lobby against problems, thereby influencing decisions; (iii) myths about reduced the abilities of women to cope; (iv) a superficial approach of the principle of equality between women and men, which is not regarded as a fundamental principle, but taken as an additional right, which can be formalized, if necessary; and (v) the way in which the education system and media now address, approach and promote the culture of gender equality in society.

Conclusions and recommendations

The vulnerability of women in villages is a current issue and the socio-demographic processes which further contribute to the deterioration of human capital in rural areas continue. The ongoing tendency to populate the Moldovan villages with a high share of elderly women, who require special attention from the state structures, has been highlighted.

Although the birth rate is higher in rural areas, the population in villages however is declining mainly because they people of working age, especially those over 25 years have left. The migration abroad, cumulated with the concentration of young people educated in cities, deepens the demographic decline of villages, and the particularly small percentage of women educated in rural areas compared to those in cities confirms this assertion. It is necessary to continue promoting policies to attract young, trained specialists to rural areas. Overcoming such traditional issues and stereotypes is possible through promoting more actively equal opportunities policies between men and women.

The access of rural women to health care services is lower compared to that of urban women, and the major reasons of limited access are related to financial limitations, either a lack of opportunities to pay for services, or a lack of a health insurance policy, which a considerable share of women must purchase on their own because they are not employed, they carry out informal activities or are not paid for agricultural work.

Rural women are less involved in public life both because of traditional reasons and because housekeeping takes a considerable part of their time. Views persist in society that the involvement of women in public life is limited because they are too preoccupied with housework and family and do not have time for much involvement in politics and leading positions. These views are opposed by such claims that men are more able to cope, and women are accustomed with the fact that men hold leading positions, women lack self-confidence and fear major responsibilities.

The standard of living and economic status of women in rural areas depends on their level of education and age. Rural women who have above special secondary education record the lowest incidence of absolute poverty, being mainly employed in social sphere in villages. Older women are facing the highest poverty rate, are dependent on *Social Aid* programme, and, among women leading and managing agricultural holdings (farms) are those of immediate pre-retirement or retirement age constitute about 60%. In general, the main sources of income for rural women are pensions, earnings from agricultural activity and transfers from abroad.

The lack of access to infrastructure, particularly to running water and sanitation systems, remains a challenge for rural areas, and this particularly affects women in villages, who carry the main household tasks. And where there is running water in a locality, not all people can afford the connection to such facilities, due especially to high costs, and women are more often unable to afford such expenses.

With all the challenges concerning the possibilities of contributing to development, records show rural women's involvement in the decision-making process, by means of community-level groups, women's organizations and other forms of collective commitments.

The main limitations faced by rural women are the reduced and low socio-economic opportunities in rural areas, and the continuation of traditionalism existing in the family in communities, which amplifies the vulnerability of rural woman in terms of their participation in public life.

The need for appropriate measures with a focus on rural areas is evident, which are to be oriented towards **increasing the attractiveness *de facto*** of this background by creating favourable conditions for **investment in agricultural modernization and development of small and medium enterprises**, thus contributing to the diversification of the rural labour market offer for women. A particular focus in this regard will be placed on supporting measures to empower and emancipate rural women which would be based not only on providing information and strengthening knowledge, but also on **creating conditions for facilitating access to financial resources** (for example, thematic micro-grants for women in rural areas) for business initiation and development.

An important aspect that needs to be taken into consideration to increase the attractiveness of rural areas is the need to create conditions for **improving the quality of housing**, directing existing resources and attracting external resources to **develop and strengthen the social and communal infrastructure** of rural localities.

Also, to reduce the intensity of the pronounced paternalistic character of the rural community, in the immediate period more active measures on increasing the **role and influence of education, media and civil society** are needed in shaping the culture of gender equality in society and fighting distorted stereotyped visions in this respect, particularly in rural areas.

For notes



For notes



For notes



