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**Plain Language Statement**

**Relationship Experiences of Women with Disabilities in Georgia**

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Dear participant,

I am Anna Bochorishvili, PhD student at the University of Glasgow. This research is being done in School of Social and Political Sciences in the Department of Sociology for the purposes of a PhD. The research aims to explore what it is like to live with an impairment in Georgia. This study focuses on the experiences of disabled women with a particular emphasis on relationship and friendships.

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done, what it will involve and what will be asked of you. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

**Purpose of the Study**

Disabled people in Georgia have been excluded from mainstream society for a long time. They are excluded from work, housing, education and are denied the right to have families and relationships. In Public Defender’s reports (2015, 2016) the Government of Georgia has been criticised for not having a strategy to develop services for disabled people and to challenge this discrimination.

Whilst disabled people’s exclusion in Georgia is well known, little is known about what it is like to live as a disabled woman and the experience of having an impairment. In Georgia, very little is known about how disability intersects with gender and how it impacts on the ability to form personal relationships and sexuality. These are not considered as an important issue, especially as many disabled people live in poverty and the state does not provide them with basic services. However, if we are to tackle tie exclusion of disabled people the right to personal life is a requirement for full and equal citizenship and the citizenship has been at the centre of disabled people’s fight for equality worldwide. Gender inequality in Georgia is well established but its intersection with disability has not, to date been examined. The aim of this study is to start to fill that gap and through exploring what it is like to live with an impairment in Georgia. It will focus on the experiences of disabled women with a particular emphasis on relationships and friendships.

The expected date of the end of the project is September 2020.

**Taking Part in the Research**

You have been asked to take part in this research because you have been recommended as someone who would be interested in this topic. Taking part in this research project is entirely voluntary. You are free to withdraw the consent and your interview and/or diagram at any time without giving a reason. If you withdraw your data after the interview, the audio file will be destroyed, and consent form will be shredded. The research will give you the space to express your perspectives and discuss your experiences.

**The Interview Process**

The interviews will take place between October 2018 and February 2019. For fulfilling the research purpose around 30 interviews will be conducted with women with physical impairments, over 18 years old who are living in Georgia. It is particularly interested in the experiences of being disabled women in Georgia and thoughts and options about friendships, intimacy, closeness and relationships. The participation will involve participants giving information about their lives and views on issues that are relevant to their lives.

If you decide to take part in this research project, the interview will last around 90 minutes, but it can last as long as you feel comfortable with. Participants can be expect to be asked questions about their self-perception, about their social lives, thoughts about the intimacy and relationships. You are free to provide as much information as you want to and if you do not want to respond to the particular question, feel free to do so. During the interview you will be asked to create a diagram of close relationships (instructions will be given), which will be discussed during the interview, however, you can refuse to create a diagram and only agree on an interview. After the interview you will be kindly asked if I can retain the diagram (If any) for research purposes. Our conversation will be audio-recorded. Your consent will be obtained at the start of the interview in the written form (or verbally recorded before the interview).

**Confidentiality**

All information, which is collected, about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential. Any information about you will have your name and address removed so that you cannot be recognised from it. Also, for ensuring the confidentiality of the data, it will be stored in password-protected computer assessed by only me. The consent forms with your signature on it, during my fieldwork in Georgia, will be stored in my apartment, locked drawer. After returning to Glasgow, it will be stored in a locked storage in my office, at the University of Glasgow. The personal data you provide will be destroyed at the end of the PhD programme including the diagrams. However, I would like to retain scanned copies of the diagrams and copies of research data (without your personal data) for a maximum of ten years after I submit the PhD thesis.

In addition to this, some of your direct quotes and diagrams might be used in the thesis (without revealing your names or other personal information about you), articles and conference papers.

Please be aware, that due to the limited size of the participant sample there is a slight chance that there might be impossible to guarantee an absolute confidentiality: there is a small risk of the information identification. Please note that assurances on confidentiality will be strictly adhered to unless evidence of wrongdoing or potential harm is uncovered. In such cases the University may be obliged to contact relevant statutory bodies/agencies.

**Result of the Research**

The interviews will be transcribed and analysed. After, I will write the thesis based on this data. The results of the research will be used in my PhD (earliest date of submission – September 2020). If you request, I will provide you with the short summary of the research findings at the end of the project. I may also use the data in conference papers, articles or in a book.

**Funder of the PhD Programme**

International Education Centre - Georgia.

**Study Review**

The project has been reviewed and approved by the College of Social Science Ethics Committee at the University of Glasgow. If you have any concerns about the research, you can contact College of Social Sciences Ethics Officer, **Dr Muir Houston, email:** Muir.Houston@glasgow.ac.uk

**Contact Information**

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please contact me: Anna Bochorishvili, email: a.bochorishvili.1@research.gla.ac.uk

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet.

With Many Thanks,

Anna Bochorishvili