

**Joint Shadow Report
on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of
Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)**

**To be presented to the UN Committee on the Elimination of
Discrimination against Women**

**Prepared by 29 civil society organizations working on
gender equality and women's empowerment in Georgia**

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Acronyms and abbreviations

CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CEDAW Committee	Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
GEC	Gender Equality Council
HIV	human immunodeficiency virus
HPV	human papillomavirus
IDP	internally displaced person
Inter-Agency Commission	Inter-Agency Commission on Gender Equality, Violence against Women and Domestic Violence
Istanbul Convention	Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence
LGBTQI	lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex
MP	Member of Parliament
OB/GYN	obstetrics and gynecology
PDO	Public Defender's Office of Georgia
SRH	sexual and reproductive health
SRHR	sexual and reproductive health and rights
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UPR	Universal Periodic Review

Introduction and general methodology

The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women with alternative information regarding women's rights as determined under the Convention, measures taken by the Government of Georgia and progress achieved. The report covers the period referred to in the sixth periodic report submitted by the Government of Georgia to the Committee.

The UN Harmonized Guidelines on Reporting¹ and the concluding observations on the combined fourth and fifth periodic reports were consulted during the drafting of the report.

The initial draft of report was prepared by NGO Women's Information Center. The draft report was discussed and validated with civil society organizations via a series of consultation meetings. The final report incorporates inputs from a total of 29 civil society organizations, which are as follows:

1. Women's Information Center
2. Center for Development and Democracy
3. Woman and Reality
4. Partnership for Human Rights
5. Women's Consultation Center "Sakhli"
6. IDP Women Association "Consent"
7. Fund "Sukhumi"
8. Civic Activism and Equality Center
9. Association "DEA"
10. Local Self-Government Resource Center of Racha-Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti
11. Guria Youth Resource Center
12. Kvemo Kartli Women Association "Women and Environment"
13. Batumi Education Development and Employment Center
14. Rehabilitation and Development Charity Center "Tanaziari"
15. Women's Council of Georgia
16. Association "Mercury"
17. Young Feminists
18. Women's Initiatives Supporting Group
19. Association "Imedi" – IDP Women's Movement for Peace
20. Anti-Violence Network of Georgia – Mtskheta-Mtinati Committee
21. Woman and Development
22. International Advisory Center for Education of Georgian and German Women
23. Equal Opportunity for Equality
24. We 4 Education
25. Women Initiative Groups "Chorchana"
26. Women Initiative Group "Elva"
27. Community Fund "Nefa"

¹ Compilation of guidelines on the form and content of reports to be submitted by states parties to the international human rights treaties, HRI/GEN/2/Rev.6, 3 June 2009, available at <https://undocs.org/en/HRI/GEN/2/Rev.6>.

28. Georgian Institute of Politics “Support of Youth Oriented on Changes in Georgia” – Thematic Working Group “Women’s Economic Strengthening” created within the Emerging Leaders School
29. Association “HERA XXI”

The report was developed with technical and financial support of UN Women and the Government of Norway².

Paragraph 7 – Parliament

The role of the Parliament is significant in the full-scale implementation of the Convention. The Gender Equality Council of the Parliament of Georgia (GEC), which, according to article 12 of the Law of Georgia on Gender Equality defines key priorities of the state policy on gender issues, is responsible for approving the gender equality strategy and monitoring the performance of the bodies accountable to the Parliament of Georgia in the field of gender equality. In addition, GEC is responsible for raising awareness of all state entities about the Committee’s concluding observations and general recommendations and provide monitoring for their implementation in order to ensure that concrete, consistent and timely steps are taken.

The Parliament of Georgia failed to adopt the long-term State Strategy on Gender Equality. There is only the State Concept on Gender Equality adopted in 2006,³ which is very generic in nature and is profoundly outdated. According to the 2018-2020 Action Plan of the GEC, it was planned to renew the State Concept by the end of 2018. In 2018 the GEC presented the draft of the renewed concept to stakeholders but failed to adopt it. The document has not yet been approved as of June 2021.

Recommendations

- Ensure that the GEC takes concrete steps in order to improve the awareness among the Members of Parliament and the public about CEDAW, its Optional Protocol and the Committee’s concluding observations and general recommendations.
- Ensure that the Parliament of Georgia develops and adopts National Strategy on Gender Equality outlining to inform effective and evidence-based national planning on gender equality and women’s empowerment.
- Reform GEC into standing Gender Equality Parliamentary Committee so that it has relevant resources and authority to effectively monitor implementation of gender equality agenda in Georgia.

² The report was developed with UN Women support within the framework of the “Good Governance for Gender Equality in Georgia” project funded by the Government of Norway

³ Resolution of the Parliament of Georgia on approval of the State Concept on Gender Equality of Georgia, available at <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/44014?publication=0>.

Paragraphs 8 and 9 – Visibility of the Convention, the Optional Protocol and the Committee’s general recommendations

It is important to underline that the Government of Georgia has conducted a number of public awareness-raising interventions on women’s rights, gender equality, violence against women and domestic violence in partnership with development partners and local civil society organizations. The trainings and information campaigns are held for different target groups within the framework of this cooperation. Targeted trainings have been introduced for various target groups. A gender equality training has been institutionalized for judges under the High School of Justice. However, these initiatives are largely donor driven and budgetary resources are scarcely allocated for such initiatives.

There is an increase in the number of reported cases on gender-based discrimination to the Public Defender’s Office (PDO). In 2018, the PDO examined 159 cases of alleged discrimination, of which 16 (10 per cent) concerned gender-based discrimination. The increase is mostly attributable to the growth in the number of sexual harassment complaints.

Although public awareness on gender equality has improved and the use of the state services has increased due to government efforts and the active work of civil society, the awareness and use of the services among such vulnerable groups of women as rural women, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, internally displaced persons, migrants, asylum seekers and others, remain low.

Recommendations

- Use the analysis of statistical data as the basis for the public awareness campaign and to identify regional priorities in order to pay special attention to those regions where the reporting is low. It is necessary that the Government of Georgia translate the CEDAW concluding observations, general recommendations and country periodic reports into the state language as well as ethnic minority languages.
- Continue efforts and judicial training on the Convention and its Optional Protocol and ensure other legal professions also undergo systematic trainings on gender equality.
- Allocate budgetary resources to support public awareness campaigns on the rights under the Convention and the procedures of the Optional Protocol.
- Strengthen public awareness efforts by the Government and the PDO on the opportunity to submit individual and collective complaints on gender discrimination to the PDO and its mechanisms.

Paragraphs 14 and 15 – National machinery for the advancement of women

The effective implementation of policies regarding gender equality and women's empowerment in the country mainly depends on the sustainability and effective functioning of gender equality mechanisms. Taking into account the CEDAW recommendations, Georgia implemented reforms in order to improve the institutional mechanisms of gender equality at the legislative, executive and local levels.

During the 2014-2017 period, significant changes took place with regard to establishing and strengthening of gender equality institutional mechanisms. Institutional mechanisms at different levels of government were added to the prior mechanisms based on the legislative changes, such as the GEC (created in 2004 and made into a permanent entity in 2010) and the Gender Equality Department of the PDO (established in 2013).

At the national level, within the executive branch of the Government - The Inter-Agency Commission on Gender Equality, Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (hereinafter the Inter-Agency Commission) was created in 2017. The Inter-Agency Commission is authorized to support the effective work of the state institutions and their coordination on issues of gender equality, violence against women and domestic violence, as well as women's empowerment.

At the national level, within the legislative branch of the Government – the Parliamentary Gender Equality Council is the main entity for defining gender equality policy priorities and monitoring their implementation.

Up to 2021, according to a decree of the GEC (article 7, paragraph 2), the chairperson of the Council was either the Chairman of the Parliament or one of his/her deputies.⁴ In February 2021, a change was made in the decree by the new composition of the Parliament,⁵ according to which the Chair (Speaker) of the Parliament or, as tasked by him/her, one of the members of the permanent GEC, shall serve as a chair of the GEC. As of 2021, this is the first case since 2006 of the GEC being headed not by the Chairman of the Parliament or his/her deputies but by a member of the Council, which reduces authority and leveraging power of the Council.

In 2017, the creation of the Secretariat of the Council was a positive event.⁶ In 2019, the reform of the Rules of Procedure of the Parliament of Georgia established GEC Secretariat and the position of secretary was introduced, which was a positive step forward. However, the secretariat remains under-resourced in terms of human resources and funding. The Council performs its work with the support of donor, international and non-governmental organizations. It is important to allocate relevant funds in the budget of the Parliament to ensure the effective implementation of the Council's authority and work.

It is appreciated that the Council adopted its Communication Strategy and Gender Analysis Methodology and commenced a new initiative – thematic inquiry groups⁷ – although the findings of

⁴ Decree of the Parliament of Georgia No. 41/3 of 16 February 2017.

⁵ Decree of the Gender Equality Council of the Parliament of Georgia No. 1/23/21 of 26 February 2021.

⁶ Transparency International Georgia, *Gender Equality Council: Assessment of Performance* (Tbilisi, 2018), p. 4. Available at https://www.transparency.ge/sites/default/files/ix_mocveva_genderuli_sabchos_angarishi_1.pdf.

⁷ Rules of Procedure of the Parliament of Georgia, Document No. 3875, article 155.

these inquiries were not taken into consideration in the government strategic plans, including the recommendations developed to support women's economic empowerment during the COVID-19 pandemic.

At the regional level – GEC was created in 2014 at the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Adjara, although the appointment of a person responsible for gender equality in the Government of Adjara was not determined by the legislative changes. In addition, persons responsible for gender equality were identified in the administration of the state representatives in all nine regions.

At the local level – Since 2016, municipal GECs have been established based on the legislative changes in the local self-government units, and the persons responsible for gender issues were identified in city halls.⁸ Action plans on gender equality for the periods 2018-2020 and 2019-2020 were drafted in all 64 municipalities. Three municipalities approved strategic documents on gender equality.

While underlining the achievements in the formation of institutional mechanisms, it is important to highlight key gaps in this area:

- Despite implemented reforms, the sustainable functioning of the gender equality mechanisms remains a challenge. This problem is intensified by the ongoing political crisis, which is causing high turn-over of staff state institutions and depreciation of the gender equality agenda in light of other priorities.
- Communication and coordination among the different-level gender equality mechanisms remains weak, and the mechanisms of cooperation are not developed. “Top-down” orders are more frequent and, there are almost no initiatives from the bottom up.
- The Inter-Agency Commission's leadership is constantly changing impeding effective and consistent implementation of gender equality agenda. The Inter-Agency Commission does not have its own secretariat, and there are no budgetary resources allocated to ensure the effective work of the Commission, which is a major pitfall.
- Despite the fact that the Inter-Agency Commission is obliged under its Charter to ensure the coordination of effective gender mainstreaming policies in the executive government, there has been virtually no progress in mainstreaming gender into policy-making and budgetary processes as noted under the recent PDO report⁹.
- The Inter-Agency Commission publishes an annual report each year and disseminates it among the international and local partners. However, the Commission does not have a website where all information about the work of the Commission could be collected. The Commission should build a website and post not only information and documentation reflecting its activities but

⁸ Added in 2016 to the Law of Georgia on Gender Equality, article 13, paragraphs 11 and 12, available at <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/91624?publication=8>.

⁹ Public Defender's Special Report on Gender Mainstreaming. 2021. Available at: <https://www.ombudsman.ge/eng/spetsialuri-angarishebi/genderuli-meinstrimngi-sakartvelos-mier-aghiarebuli-valdebulebebisa-da-mati-shesrulebis-statusis-mimokhilva>

also, as the coordinating body, data and information on the implementation status of national plans for the implementation of gender policy.

- The structure of GEC (council, not a committee) makes it difficult for them to exercise effective authority and perform functions such as effective monitoring of gender equality policy in the country.¹⁰ It is important for the GEC to be reformed to the Gender Equality Parliamentary Committee, which will have all the resources of a parliamentary committee.
- Unfortunately, the GEC fails to be prompt and effective in responding to the discriminatory, sexist hate speech that is part of the statements of decision makers as well as from different groups of society.¹¹
- The studies implemented by civil society actors indicate that the State does not fully report to or inform the public about the implemented gender policy and work performed.¹²
- Politicians and public servants do not have sufficient knowledge and capacity on gender equality and gender mainstreaming. This gap is filled by the non-governmental and international organizations. The Government does not have a consistent policy on the improvement of gender awareness and capacity among public servants.
- Gender equality councils, especially on the local, municipal level, are not equipped with relevant technical and financial resources.
- The process of developing gender equality action plans is not in compliance with the budgetary process. The plans are not based on financial calculations and do not include financial resources, which creates obstacles during the implementation process. Furthermore, indicators are not frequently identified in gender equality action plans on the national and local levels, which is problematic for the assessment of plan implementation.

Recommendations

- Equip gender equality institutional mechanisms at all levels with relevant human, technical and financial resources.
- Increase the communication among the gender institutional mechanisms at the legislative, executive and local self-government levels, and develop effective forms of coordination and cooperation.
- Ensure that adequate budgetary resources are allocated for the implementation national action plans on gender equality and women's empowerment (at national and local levels).

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ NDI and UK Aid, *Gender Equality Council: Assessment of Performance 2017-2020*, p. 13.

¹² Georgian Young Lawyers' Association, *Women in Georgian politics: Study of the environment for women's engagement in political/electoral processes during the 2016-2018 election cycle in Georgia – Part I Analysis of the 2016 Parliamentary Elections* (Tbilisi, 2017), p. 11. Available at <https://gyla.ge/files/news/2008/Women%20in%20Georgian%20Politics.pdf>.

- Improve gender data collection and analysis so that relevant indicators are available for measuring progress and populating indicators of national and local action plans on gender equality and women’s empowerment.
- Improve institutional mechanisms on the regional level through the following: (1) identify the person responsible for gender equality in the Government of the Autonomous Republic of Adjara; (2) install the person responsible for gender equality as a member of the Inter-Agency Commission working group (platform) on violence against women and domestic violence; and (3) establish a branch of the Inter-Agency Commission at the Government of the Autonomous Republic of Adjara.
- Have the State ensure the implementation of targeted measures in order to raise awareness among the decision makers and public servants on gender equality and gender mainstreaming.
- Ensure that the Inter-Agency Commission coordinates effective gender mainstreaming policy so that gender is mainstreamed in all policy-making and budgetary processes.
- Ensure that the GEC implements obligations as determined under the Rules of Procedure and presents an annual report to the Parliament.
- Ensure that the GEC strengthens its supervision of the implementation of recommendations by the responsible entities of the executive government.
- Develop mechanisms of internal communication and decision-making that will allow the GEC to act on and respond immediately to cases of violence against women and gender discrimination.

Paragraphs 16 and 17 – Temporary special measures

A significant achievement made during the reporting period was the constitutional reform implemented in 2017 with the initiative of women’s NGOs¹³ and the Chair of the GEC. A new clause has been added to the Constitution of Georgia enshrining guarantees for substantive gender equality and obliging the State to implement special measures to eliminate inequalities between women and men.

Legislative changes adopted in 2020 instituting gender quotas in the legislature were another step forward in the achievement of substantive equality and increasing women’s political participation. According to the changes, every fourth candidate in the party list presented by the political subject shall be of a different sex. While this is an important step forward, the quota has so far failed to yield tangible results for ensuring women’s equal participation as women continue to comprise a small share (20.67 per cent) of the Parliament’s composition. In addition, two political parties used the technical glitch in the system, initially nominating women to comply with the gender quota but effectively removing them from the lists upon being elected to the Parliament.¹⁴

¹³ A task force on women’s political empowerment was created by 20 women’s non-governmental and international organizations.

¹⁴ Election Code of Georgia, article 203, paragraph 6: “If an MP of Georgia who was elected under the party list of party independently running in the elections withdraws, his/her seat shall be occupied by the next successful candidate for MP in the party list who is a representative of the same sex, within one month, provided that the candidate gives his/her consent

In addition to gender quotas, there is a financial incentive to encourage women to participate in politics. It is commendable that Parliament improved the notion of financial resources in the amendments to the Organic Law of Georgia on Political Associations of Citizens adopted during the 2011-2013 period.¹⁵ According to the changes adopted in 2020, in order to receive additional funding,¹⁶ a party shall balance its party list so that every third candidate shall be a person of a different sex.¹⁷

Unfortunately, issues of the democratic development of political parties in Georgia, such as the non-transparent system of internal party management and the creation of party lists, remain challenging. The lack of internal party democracy is a significant barrier to women's political empowerment.

Recommendations

- Introduce changes to the Electoral Code to prevent political parties from abusing quota by withdrawing female candidates after the elections.
- Introduce changes to the Electoral Code to ensure that the financial incentives allocated to parties for complying with gender quotas are earmarked for the purposes of strengthening female candidates within the party.

Paragraphs 20 and 21 – Violence against women

Despite considerable progress, violence against women remains a pressing challenge. The national legal framework was significantly strengthened as a result of the ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) in 2017 by the Parliament of Georgia. Ratification of the Istanbul Convention was followed by a number of changes in as many as 25 pieces of legislation, which expanded legal protection of victims.¹⁸ As a result of the legislative reforms, the scope of domestic violence-related legislation has changed; now, along with domestic violence, it has been expanded to also apply to other forms of

on the parliament membership within 15 days after the vacancy. Otherwise, the vacancy shall be taken by the next successful candidate in the list, who is a representative of the same sex. If there is no candidate of the same sex elected to the Parliament of Georgia on the party list, the vacancy shall be taken by the candidate for the next Parliament of Georgia withdrawn from the list of the members of the Parliament of Georgia.”

¹⁵ In 2013, amendments were made to the Organic Law of Georgia on Political Associations of Citizens (article 30, paragraph 7¹) to offer a bonus of 30 per cent of the basic funding if, in the election list presented by a party, at least 3 of every 10 candidates are women. In 2014, based on these amendments, two political parties received additional funding in the local self-government election. In 2016, five political parties followed the women's representation requirements and received funding.

¹⁶ According to the 2020 amendments to the Organic Law of Georgia on Political Associations of Citizens, a party receiving funding based on the parliamentary elections conducted prior to 2028 in accordance with the rule established by article 30 will receive a bonus in the amount of 30 per cent of the amount that shall be allocated according to paragraph 3 of the same article, if the party list presented by a party contains one candidate in each of the three party lists that is of a different sex. The bonus determined under this article shall be used by the party structural unit - work of women organization (this statement was added after the third hearing).

¹⁷ The previous change to the law did not include any quota for women among the 10 candidates, which put women in non-passing position, although the party was still receiving funding.

¹⁸ The package of amendments was drafted with the support of UN Women in the framework of the UN Joint Programme to Enhance Gender Equality in Georgia.

gender-based violence against women. The Agency for State Care and Assistance for the (Statutory) Victims of Human Trafficking provides the victims of domestic violence with the relevant services. The Agency provides victims of violence with access to shelters and crisis centers. It also operates a 24-hour toll-free hotline at 116 006. In September 2018, a risk assessment tool was introduced to ensure uniform response to violence against women and domestic violence and a monitoring mechanism for restrictive orders and a specialized unit for addressing violence against women has been created within the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

The femicide statistics are alarming. According to data from the Prosecutor's Office, 18 women were killed in 2018, 26 women in 2017, and 32 women in 2016. In a written document submitted to the CEDAW Committee by the national institute of human rights protection, the Public Defender underlines that in addition to femicide cases, special attention should be paid to suicides of women that may have been caused by systemic domestic violence.

Sexual violence, generally and in particular between couples (e.g. husband and wife), is still taboo. There are no reliable official statistics with regard to sexual violence. It should also be noted that for women victims of sexual violence, one barrier is the fact that the staff of the National Forensic Bureau, especially those who carry out the identification of incidents of violence and especially sexual violence, are often men.

Along with the insufficient number of state-run crisis centers and shelters, the challenge is the instability of funding for crisis centers/shelters organized by the non-governmental organizations. Women victims of domestic violence who are in an unregistered marriage find it difficult to obtain alimony for their children because fathers renounce their biological children, and conducting a paternity test requires substantial expenses.

The work on the behavioral correction of perpetrators is weak in the violence prevention system. In 2017, only 67 individuals underwent a violence management rehabilitation programme.¹⁹

One of the challenges remains the intolerant attitude towards LGBTQI groups. Despite some progress in recent years and, most notably, the adoption of the Law of Georgia on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination in 2014, members of the LGBTQI community continue to be victims of violence, discrimination and pressure from the public as well as specific institutions, including medical institutions and employers. Hate-motivated crime and hate speech on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity often go unreported, without relevant response and punishment. It is important to note that LBT women are twice as vulnerable to such violence. Despite this reality, in most cases, victims avoid reporting incidents due to the fear of secondary victimization by law enforcement, of being forced to come out and of the disclosure of personal information about them. Transgender people, for the same reasons, also rarely turn to the police, even though the rate of violence against them is alarmingly high.

¹⁹ Human Rights Secretariat, *The Report on the Implementation of the Action Plan for 2018-2020 on the Measures to be Implemented for Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence and Protection of Victims* (2018). Available at <http://myrights.gov.ge/uploads/files/docs/3660EVAWანგვანო2018.pdf>.

Recommendations

- Introduce a separate article on femicide, as a gender-motivated crime, to the Criminal Code.
- Raise public awareness about sexual violence, including via introducing sex education programmes for youths and for newly formed families.
- Ensure accessibility and the sustainability of crisis centers and shelters for victims of violence by allocation of funds from state and local budgets.
- Ensure the National Forensic Bureau has female employees in order to improve the process of identifying cases of sexual violence.
- Provide paternity tests for free for women victims of violence.
- Work with the perpetrators to develop and broaden programmes oriented towards changing violent behavior.
- Develop effective inter-agency cooperation to eliminate discrimination against LGBTQI groups.

Paragraphs 24 and 25 – Participation in political and public life

The low participation of women in political life remains one of the main challenges to gender equality in Georgia. The introduction of a gender quota has led to obtaining 30 mandates (20 per cent) for women in the parliamentary elections, which is lower than the critical mass and the world average.²⁰ However, protracted political crisis and the refusal of opposition parties to enter the Parliament of Georgia have led to de facto 16 women (16 per cent) in the Parliament. Women comprise 33 per cent of the Cabinet of Ministers. Out of 11 ministers, four are women.²¹ None of the state representatives (governors) appointed in the regions are women.

According to 2020 data, women comprise 30.5 per cent of civil servants and 33.2 per cent of those in management positions.²² The number of women in the Ministry of Internal Affairs and its subordinated entities is especially low. At the end of 2020, the number of women in the Ministry was 17.3 per cent among the employees and 6.5 per cent among high-ranking officials.

Most striking are the low rates of female participation at the local government level.²³ Instead of local self-government becoming a relatively broad arena for women politicians to start their political career, female representation at the local level lags behind the national figure. As a result of the 2017 local elections, women made up only 13.46 per cent²⁴ of the members of the local legislature (*sakrebulo*),

²⁰ Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2020 data, available at <https://data.ipu.org/women-averages>.

²¹ As of April 2021; see

http://gov.ge/index.php?lang_id=GEO&sec_id=27&mod_id=0&info_id=0&new_year=0&limit=0&date=&new_month=&entrant=1<http://gender.geostat.ge/gender/index.php?action=Influence%20and%20Power>.

²² Civil Service Bureau, *Civil Service Employment Statistics* (2020). Available at <http://www.csb.gov.ge/media/2765/> Public-Service-Bureau-2019-Statistical-data-on-gender-geo.pdf.

²³ The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women expressed concern over the lack of women in the local legislature in its concluding remarks in the combined fourth and fifth periodic reports (paragraph 24).

²⁴ Central Election Commission, Election Administration of Georgia, “Gender statistics of local self-governing elections”, 2017. Available at <http://cesko.ge/statistic/>.

which is slightly higher than the result of the previous local elections in 2014 (11.6 per cent). Women are even less represented in local self-government bodies. Among the 64 mayors elected as a result of elections in 2017, only one is a woman, representing 1.56 per cent of the elected mayors.

Recommendations

- Ensure that gender equality is promoted in the civil service across all levels is promoted, including via integrating gender equality issues in the public administration and civil service reforms;
- Ensure that the Ministry of Internal Affairs, as the most gender-unbalanced agency, sets an effective policy to achieve gender balance among its employees, which is needed to ensure equal access to public service for women and men as the Ministry is one of the most important implementers of state policy against violence against women and domestic violence.

Paragraphs 32 and 33 – Rural women

The national action plans on gender equality and women's empowerment continuously omit initiatives serving the needs of rural women. State policies on promoting agricultural and regional development lack gender analysis and often disregard rural women as rights holders and beneficiaries.²⁵

Gender-disaggregated data are insufficient to assess how the state policies in the field of agricultural development affect rural women. On the one hand, the national-level statistics are insufficient, but on the other hand, neither disaggregated municipal-level agricultural data nor rural statistics are available.

Under gender equality municipal plans, local self-governments took on the obligation to ensure educational, agricultural and other types of programmes for the economic empowerment of rural women and vulnerable and socially unprotected groups. However, there are no long-term or targeted programmes that will enable rural women to gain knowledge in terms of engaging in business and agricultural activities. The report of the Public Defender shows that the majority of municipalities (70 per cent) have not taken appropriate measures to empower women economically.²⁶

Unfortunately, reproductive services are not readily available in rural areas, and women have to travel long distances to have access to safe abortion. According to the 2018 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) in Georgia, 65.6 per cent of rural women aged 15-49 currently married or in a union are not using any contraceptive method, while 9.2 per cent are using traditional methods. Despite the fact that HPV and breast cancer screenings are available in all regions of Georgia, the main gatekeepers to disseminate information and provide referrals are village doctors. Due to the lack of available transportation, women living in rural areas are left without access to village doctors' counsel and therefore do not obtain needed services. According to focus groups with elderly women, the majority

²⁵ UNDP and the GEC, *Gender Equality in Georgia: Barriers and Recommendations, Volume 2* (2018), p. 39. Available at https://www.ge.undp.org/content/georgia/en/home/library/democratic_governance/gender-equality-in-georgia.html.

²⁶ Public Defender of Georgia, *Assessment of Gender Policy of Local Self-Governing Bodies – with special emphasis on women's economic empowerment* (2020), p. 20. Available at <https://ombudsman.ge/res/docs/2020061711084253805.pdf>.

of them face significant barriers to accessing health-care services. This is mostly due to financial issues, the lack of knowledge and competency on the part of family/village doctors, the lack of means for travel to an appropriate health-care center and the unbearable wait times.

Given the social and economic problems, especially in rural areas, access to abortion services presents financial obstacles for women, requiring additional transportation costs and time for many women. Often, they need to take out loans. The lack of affordability for abortions leads to the use of arbitrary methods to terminate a pregnancy that carry significant health risks.²⁷

Recommendations

- Ensure that national action plans on gender equality and women's empowerment include targeted initiatives for promoting rights and opportunities of rural women.
- Carry about systematic gender analysis and gender impact analysis of state strategies/policies/action plans on rural development and agricultural development.
- Improve availability and analysis of gender data to inform development of local level gender equality action plans
- Develop targeted programmes at the local government level that will enable rural women to gain knowledge in business and agriculture, which will increase their motivation in future.
- Include the provision of contraception in village doctors' essential medicine basket.
- Develop a national communication strategy and action plan on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), and ensure the implementation of the campaigns and programmes to raise public awareness on the importance of family planning, including through modern contraception and the importance of its usage (especially focusing on the regions and rural areas of Georgia).
- Ensure access to family planning services for all by including the provision of contraceptives in the Basic Package of the Universal Health Care Programme of Georgia, particularly for socially vulnerable groups of women, internally displaced persons, students, women with disabilities and young people living in rural areas.

Paragraph 34 – Disadvantaged groups of women

Women with disabilities are one of the most disadvantaged groups in the country.²⁸ Despite separate positive legislative changes,²⁹ the issue of protecting the rights of women with disabilities is problematic, and such women do not enjoy fundamental equal rights. The protection of the rights of women with disabilities living in state care is especially problematic. Women with disabilities living in these state institutions are deprived of the opportunity to raise their children due to the lack of appropriate services. Moreover, the lack of information on family planning and contraceptives for

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Partnership for Human Rights, *Study on the needs of women with disabilities for the future empowerment of women* (2020). Available at <https://bit.ly/3ubbhZl>.

²⁹ In 2017, Georgia ratified the Istanbul Convention. In 2020, Georgia adopted the Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which dedicates a special section to the protection of the rights of women with disabilities.

women with disabilities creates significant obstacles for them to receiving necessary and adequate services. The lack of adaptation in the accessibility of medical institutions also remains a significant obstacle for women with disabilities to receiving family planning services.³⁰

Access to information is one of the most important challenges in protecting the rights of women with disabilities. This is especially important with regard to health and social protection services. Women with disabilities do not have access to medical services tailored to their individual needs. Men with disabilities have better use of health-care and social protection programmes. Women with disabilities use planned medical services in a very limited way.³¹ The main obstacles to family planning and contraception services for women with disabilities are that the women lack information on SRH services and that medical personnel lack knowledge on the specificity of service delivery for women with disabilities. This creates a strong barrier to receiving necessary and adequate services.³²

The existence of a medical model of disability assessment in the country instead of a social model, alongside the problems related to the production of statistics, makes it impossible to create programmes tailored towards the needs of women with disabilities.³³ The lack of disaggregated data production makes it more difficult to identify violence committed against women with disabilities and to respond to these cases.³⁴ Particular emphasis should be placed on the production of statistics on violence and sexual assault, which will accurately record the incidents of sexual assault against women with disabilities and provide an in-depth assessment of the issue.³⁵ Access to shelters, including crisis centers, remains a challenge for women with disabilities because such facilities are only partially adapted for women in wheelchairs, nor do they address the needs of all women with disabilities.³⁶

Women with disabilities are deprived of the opportunity to participate in policy and decision-making processes at the local level. In addition to the lack of state programmes and initiatives, the problem is the low motivation of women with disabilities to be actively involved in public life, which is related to the difficulties with accessibility and public stigma.³⁷

There are homes for elderly people in the country (e.g. shelters for the elderly), but due to bureaucratic barriers, helpless, lonely, retired women are not allowed to take advantage of these shelters.

³⁰ Public Defender of Georgia, *Sexual and Reproductive Health and Human Rights: National Assessment – Key Findings* (2019). Available at <https://bit.ly/3hSEvR8>.

³¹ Maka Meshveliani, *Thematic Inquiry on the Accessibility of Health-care Services for Women and Girls with Disabilities* (2019). Available at http://parliament.ge/ge/ajax/downloadFile/133126/Thematic_Inquiry_report_ENG.

³² Association “HERA XXI”, *Research on the needs for and barriers to sexual and reproductive health care among young people and women with disabilities* (2019). Available at <http://hera-youth.ge/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/HERA-RESEARCH-REPORT.pdf>.

³³ Meshveliani, *Thematic Inquiry on the Accessibility of Health-care Services for Women and Girls with Disabilities*.

³⁴ Partnership for Human Rights, *Collection, Processing and Dissemination of Gender Statistics to Combat Gender-based Violence in Georgia* (2019). Available at <https://bit.ly/2T6xOkd>.

³⁵ Tamar Dekanosidze and others, *The Administration of Justice on Sexual Violence Crimes against Women in Georgia* (Council of Europe, 2020). Available at <https://rm.coe.int/sexual-violence-research-eng/1680a17b78>.

³⁶ Public Defender of Georgia, *Monitoring Report on Service Centers (Shelters) for Victims of Violence against Women, Domestic Violence and Trafficking* (2020). Available at <https://www.ombudsman.ge/res/docs/2020122316265135625.pdf>.

³⁷ Public Defender of Georgia, *Assessment of Gender Policy of Local Self-Governing Bodies*.

Another challenge that limits older people's access to health care is stereotypes, prejudices and discrimination against people based on their age. The sexual health and rights of older people tend to be overlooked in society because of the stereotypical belief that older people are no longer sexually active. Health professionals' misconception and lack of knowledge on older people's sexual health can also contribute to delays in appropriate health-care services.

Recommendations

- Ensure that all relevant agencies regularly collect data on women with disabilities when processing data on domestic violence and gender-based violence.
- Ensure that all shelters and crisis centers for women victims of violence become fully accessible to all women with disabilities.
- Train all medical personnel on the appropriate guidelines for communicating with women with disabilities, informing them and providing them with quality medical services that have been developed.
- Adapt medical facilities and OB/GYN offices for all women with disabilities.
- Develop and effectively implement a decentralization plan for large-scale institutions for persons with disabilities to enable women with disabilities to live independently and enjoy the right to a private and family life.
- Integrate interventions focused on women and girls with disabilities in the National Communication Strategy on SRHR, and organize information campaigns on SRH issues for women and girls with disabilities, including on contraception and family planning services.
- Integrate a life cycle approach in service provision at the primary health-care level, considering the SRH needs of older women.
- Acknowledge the diversity within and among older populations, and make sure that policies and interventions take into consideration the needs of vulnerable groups among older people: women, people living alone and in residential care settings, people living with HIV, people living in rural areas, the LGBTQI community, people from underserved ethnic groups and migrants.

Women's economic empowerment

Women's economic empowerment has been integrated as a strategic objective under the Government's Human Rights Action Plan, as well as local level gender equality action plans. Nevertheless, progress in this regard remains slow. A gender audit of government projects reveals significantly low participation rates of women in state programmes,³⁸ as well as a particularly low rate in high-budget

³⁸ For example, in 2019, only 18.3 per cent of the beneficiaries of the "Plant the Future" programme were women. In 2017, the share of female beneficiaries involved in the state programme "Agro insurance" was only 26.1 per cent, while women were only 7.3 per cent of the beneficiaries of the state project regarding preferential agro-credit. Sources: Kristine Margvelashvili, *Women's Economic Empowerment in Georgia: Analysis of Policy and Initiatives* (Tbilisi, Union Sapri, 2017). Available at <http://www.parliament.ge/uploads/other/86/86671.pdf> (accessed on 16 February 2021). Anna Diakonidze, *Parliamentary Inquiry in State Economic Programmes about Women's Participation* (2019). Available at <https://info.parliament.ge/file/1/BillReviewContent/223862>.

programmes with a high share of co-funding. Often, initiated support schemes are general in nature and do not offer initiatives tailored exclusively to women. However, it was found that state agencies and local governments do not often produce comprehensive gender statistics within the implemented programmes.

Policies aimed at the economic empowerment of women are not unified; rather, they occur spontaneously at different levels of government. The country does not have a unified vision or strategy towards the economic empowerment of women.³⁹

Women continue to bear the disproportional burden of care work which constitutes one of the key factors for women's low economic participation. As a result, only 63.3. Per cent of women are engaged actively in the Labor market compared to 83.3 per cent of men.⁴⁰ In 2020, amendments were introduced to the Labor Code expanding the coverage of parental leave. Despite this, major gaps in terms of promoting gender-responsive family policies remain. There is no coherent policy for all employers regarding maternity and paternity leave and benefits and investments in care services remains low, further exacerbating the situation.

Recommendations

- It is important that the unified comprehensive approach for the state on women's economic empowerment is developed by the multispectral working group. It is also important for public, private and non-governmental sectors to coordinate work on the issue;
- Please email us for details and send the invoice, according the project time. Ensure that gender mainstreaming is better implemented in economic development strategies/programmes/policies at national and local levels.
- Improve the production of gender statistics within the economic programmes in order to be able to assess the equality of women and men in the state programmes.
- Strengthen support to women entrepreneurs inter alia by developing targeted programmes
- Promote equal distribution of care work between partners and members of the household

Implementation of UN Security Council resolution 1325 (2000)

A number of problems were revealed by the NGO monitoring of the second National Action Plan (2016-2017) in all four priority areas of action: (1) participation; (2) prevention; (3) protection; and (4) effective implementation and monitoring of the National Action Plan on UN Security Council

³⁹ Georgian Institute of Politics "Support of Youth Oriented on Changes in Georgia", Emerging Leaders School (ELS) Thematic Working Group "Women's Economic Strengthening", *Women's Economic Empowerment, Opportunities and Challenges* (2021).

⁴⁰ ILOSTAT, *Modelled Estimates, Labor force participation rate by sex and age* (2016 or latest available data) (accessed September 2017). Labor force data does not consider workers employed abroad.

resolution 1325 (2000).⁴¹ According to the monitoring process, around 71.88 per cent of activities were implemented. The qualitative assessment, however, showed that plan implementation did not have a sufficient impact on the needs of women and girls affected by war and conflict and those who are IDPs. Allocating budgetary resources for the implementation of this National Action Plan remains a major gap.

During the reporting period, the gender equality institutional mechanism was improved – a national working group on resolution 1325 (2000) became subordinate to the Inter-Agency Commission. However, the steps made with regard to implementation of the gender policy by the ministries are not sufficient. Such institutions often take a formal, unsystematic approach and have low levels of motivation. The issue is even more complicated by the replacement of trained staff with new staff, which hinders the effectiveness of the process.

Women's economic empowerment programmes are important to be underlined, although social-economic safety remains a problem for the population. The COVID-19 pandemic and the closure of so-called checkpoints in the conflict-affected villages have further complicated the social-economic condition and security issues of vulnerable groups.

Studies demonstrate⁴² that in recent years, the freedom of movement has been restricted for people living in the occupied territories, the isolation of local communities has been strengthened, the economic situation has deteriorated, and access to quality health care and opportunities for education in native languages has been limited.

One of the main challenges in the effective enforcement of the 2016-2017 National Action Plan was the localization of the plan. The localization process of resolution 1325 (2000) started with the involvement of non-governmental and international organizations, a procedure that is not included in the local gender action plans of 34 municipalities.⁴³ Despite certain progress, the integration of resolution 1325 (2000) into local policy and the full and informed involvement of the civil sector, IDPs and conflict-affected people in this process remain problematic. Despite concrete steps made to localize resolution 1325 (2000), coordination between the executive and local self-governance remains challenging in the implementation process of the resolution.⁴⁴

The number of women in the Georgian delegation participating in the GID in 2020 decreased by 22% compared to 2017 and at the moment composes 18%.

The knowledge of gender equality, the content of resolution 1325 (2000) and its meaning among the representatives of local self-governance are not sufficient.

⁴¹ Women's Information Center, *Independent monitoring of the 2016-2017 Action Plan on Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security* (2017).

⁴² Women's Information Center, *Study on the needs and priorities of people residing in occupied territories and villages around the dividing lines (villages in Gali and Gagra, Zugdidi and Tsalenjikha municipalities)* (2019).

⁴³ Women's Information Center, *GIZ* (2018).

⁴⁴ Women's Information Center, *UN Security Council Resolution 1325 Localization Process Monitoring in Georgia* (Global Network of Women Peacebuilders, 2021).

Recommendations

- Take maximum account of the recommendation received as a result of the independent monitoring by the civil sector and the PDO in the process of developing, implementing and monitoring the action plan.
- Support all measures of the National Action Plan through adequate funding from the state budget.
- Strengthen parliamentary oversight of the implementation of the National Action Plan and the issuance of specific recommendations for the executive government by the GEC.
- Develop an early warning system and appropriate communication strategy for conflict prevention during war and conflict, taking into account the specific needs of women, children, the elderly, people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups.
- Implement a more coherent policy for the development of villages adjacent to the dividing line with the involvement of IDPs and conflict-affected people, including women.
- Have the responsible agencies ensure the improvement of in-depth gender awareness and knowledge of UN Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and its accompanying resolutions, as well as other policy documents among the people involved in the process.
- Ensure that municipalities integrate the issues of UN Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) into the municipal gender equality action plans or approve a separate action plan for the implementation of the resolution, which will be based on a study of population needs. Attention should also be paid to facilitating the localization process of resolution 1325 (2000) in the National Action Plan.
- Improve the coordination between the executive government and representatives of local self-governance , e.g., through the Temporary Government Commission for Responding to the Needs of the Affected Population, which should introduce the practice of hearing and reviewing regular reports from municipal GECs and civil society/women's organizations on the challenges and needs of IDPs and conflict-affected people, especially women and girls.
- The number of women involved in the GID should be ensured by the Government.
- Define clear quantitative and qualitative indicators, as well as activities in the specific period of time, in the municipal action plans in order to make possible a qualitative assessment of the plan and its impact on beneficiaries.