



Georgia Gender Analysis

DANISH NEIGHBOURHOOD PROGRAMME

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Critical Rights & Gender Consult



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INTRODUCTION

The objective of the study is to provide a brief analysis of key challenges and opportunities, related to gender equality, women's human rights and diversity in Georgia. The study will include an overview of important stakeholders and will provide a point of departure for planning the next phase of DANEP support.

It is expected that the Georgia Gender Analysis together with the Gender Analysis of Ukraine will inform a call-for-proposal aiming at promoting peer-to-peer cooperation with Danish based organisations, focusing on:

- a) Strengthening the capacity building of women's movement CSOs – including the emerging young feminists and LGBT organisations.*
- b) Supporting legislative reforms aiming at increased gender equality, as well as women parliamentarians, and counsellors' capacity to influence at the central and decentralized levels.*
- c) Supporting youth – and young women in particular - in democratic leadership and (civic) engagement.*

The scope of the Georgia Gender analysis is based on the objective above and entails the following tasks:

1. Identify key challenges and opportunities for gender equality, women's human rights and diversity in Georgia.
2. Identify the latest structural and institutional changes, drivers of change and the drivers of inequality and discrimination with particular attention to underlying power structures.
3. Provide an overview of important stakeholders in Georgia, including governmental agencies, non-governmental organisation and major international partners (donor-programmes). Identify organisations in Denmark with experience in this field and proven capacity as regards facilitation peer-to-peer cooperation between women's movement in Denmark and other countries/regions.

The analysis is carried out by Sarah Forti, Critical Rights & Gender Consult, in September - October 2021 and is based on existing and recent researches and documentation as well as selected online interviews.

1. SUMMARY OF MAIN GENDER TRENDS AND GAPS IN GEORGIA

Georgia has ratified CEDAW in 1994 and its optional protocol in 2002 and over the past two decades, significant progress have been made in Gender Equality. Georgia is in the process of implementing a broad range of international commitments the core of which are the CEDAW, the Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence

(ratified in 2017), Sustainable Development Goals and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Georgia's ambition to become a regional hub provides thus a critical foundation to show leadership in mainstreaming gender across the critical range of thematic areas further analysed below.

However, Georgia is now ranked 74th out of 153 countries according to the Global Gender Gap Index for 2020.¹ According to the scorecard provided in the Global Gender Gap Report for 2020, compared to 2006, the situation in Georgia deteriorated in particular with regard to *women's political empowerment* and *economic participation and opportunity*, while on the contrary, the situation improved in the area of *health and survival*.²

Continued efforts are thus needed to achieve equal economic, social, and *in particular political participation of women*. Women's role and contribution to the development of the country and society is recognized within Georgia by the Government of Georgia. Nevertheless, measures to *narrow the gender gap in formal employment and wages*, overcome gender stereotypes in occupations and support women's access to finance and business development services remains crucial.

The creation of mechanisms to *promote women in political decision-making* is also critical. Women are underrepresented in *decision-making* processes at all levels and in all spheres of public life, e.g. only 36.4% are women in lower and middle management positions in civil service. Even after the introduction of *quotas* for women in Parliament and local elections in 2020, the share of women in the newly elected Parliament only reached 19.3%.

Beyond the deeply rooted gender stereotypes and broad patriarchal conservative values that constitute the main body of silent resistance to gender equality reforms, the main anti-gender trend is crystallised in *homophobic and anti- LGBTQI groups* that are a minority but nevertheless problematic given their hate speech campaigns and influential.

2. KEY GENDER INEQUALITIES AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS ISSUES IN GEORGIA

- *Identify key challenges and opportunities for gender equality, women's human rights and diversity in Georgia*

2.1. GENDER STEREOTYPES AND DISCRIMINATION

Whereas concepts such as 'gender equality' and 'women's empowerment' have often been integral part of Soviet ideology, present day's persistence of a rigidly gendered division of labour in Georgia may appear somewhat contradictory. The participation of both women and men in

¹ http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2020.pdf - Georgia's score of 70.8% is for the first time above the global average of 68.6%.

² Global Gender Gap Index shows that Georgia was ranked 41th in 2006 and 61st in 2020 for economic participation and opportunity; 28th in 2006 and 29th in 2020 for education attainment; 115th in 2006 and 86th in 2020 for health and survival; 59th in 2006 and 94th in 2020 for political empowerment. *Global Gender Gap on Health and Survival* provides an overview of the differences between women's and men's health through the use of two indicators. The first is the sex ratio at birth, which aims specifically to capture *the phenomenon of missing women*, prevalent in many countries with a strong son preference. Second, we use *the gap between women's and men's healthy life expectancy*. This measure provides an estimate of the number of years that women and men can expect to live in good health *by taking into account the years lost to violence, disease, malnutrition or other relevant factors*.

the labour force was vital to Communist ideology in order to demonstrate a strong, self-reliable state with women emancipated from the burden of ‘domestic responsibilities’. Women’s participation into the ‘productive’ sphere was considered both a means to facilitating their economic contribution to society as well as an end in itself towards emancipation.³ During the Bolshevik era, these ideas were concretised with the provision of state-funded communal childcare facilities and a section of the Communist Party—the *Zhenotdel*—which was appointed to focus specifically on ‘women’s affairs’. The media was also mobilized to promote and publicise *the rights of the ‘working women’*.⁴

Yet, there was a disconnect between the State’s support to the inclusion of women in the labour market and ‘productive’ sphere and the actual level of women’s empowerment: though most women were ‘formally’ employed, they were relegated to *lower-paid jobs* often involving domestic tasks. They were also still expected to *undertake unpaid care work* in the home, and this burden grew even heavier when many state-run day-care centres closed due to lack of funding.

Some would argue that the end of Soviet rule and the surge of Georgian nationalism had the *effect of reinforcing gender stereotypes*. For example, the ‘feminine ideal’ is now strongly connected to the notion of ‘motherhood’, itself connected to the ‘*reproductive and domestic sphere*’, along with returning to the traditional and *patriarchal interpretation of gender roles* within the family anchored religious ideology.⁵ Furthermore, the *socialization of girls and boys into traditional gender roles* reproduced gender stereotypes and gender segregations of roles and identities. This was largely echoed by the media, in the educational materials and teaching, which all together, and with a widespread unawareness of gender inequalities, contributed to the further entrenchment of the stereotyped division of gender roles in Georgian society.⁶

Furthermore, during the Soviet rule, the myth that Communism *de facto* eradicated all forms of inequalities (including gender inequalities) actually resulted in a *political denial of domestic violence* and a *concomitant lack of data on the issue*, despite common awareness that it was happening in many families, behind closed doors. This veil of silence was intensified in the Stalinist era from the mid-1930s, *when Soviet-led public narratives about the vital role of the family*, coupled with *Georgian notion of the family as a private space for state resistance*, prevented women from speaking up about *domestic abuse*.⁷ It is only since the *Rose Revolution* that data began to be collected, revealing the existence of physical, sexual, emotional, and economic abuse experienced by Georgian women.

Thus, *contemporary gender equality gaps in Georgia*, as currently highlighted in *global and regional gender gap indexes*, reflect a situation in which women’s roles, opportunities, and rights are often constrained by *post-soviet conservative sociocultural norms and gender stereotypes*. Whilst these are most

³ M. Barkaia. 2018. The Country of the Happiest Women?: Ideology and Gender in Soviet Georgia, In M. Barkaia and A. Waterson, eds. *Gender in Georgia: Feminist Perspectives on Culture, Nation and History in the South Caucasus*. New York: Berghahn Books.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid. N. Sumbadze. 2018. Gender Equality: Still a Disputed Value in Georgian Society. In M. Barkaia and A. Waterson, eds. *Gender in Georgia: Feminist Perspectives on Culture, Nation and History in the South Caucasus*. New York: Berghahn Books.

⁶ E. Japaridze et al. 2016; Implementation of Gender Policy in Georgia: 2016 *Progress Report on National Action Plan of 2014–2016 for the Implementation of Gender Equality Policy in Georgia*. http://www.parliament.ge/en/ajax/downloadFile/72000/Gender_Equality_NAP_report_2016_ENG_Edited_Final_July_2017; and E. Duban (2010), footnote 32. N. Sumbadze. 2018. Gender Equality: Still a Disputed Value in Georgian Society. In M. Barkaia and A. Waterson, eds. *Gender in Georgia: Feminist Perspectives on Culture, Nation and History in the South Caucasus*. New York: Berghahn Books.

⁷ T. Sabedashvili. 2018. The Domestic Violence Challenge to Soviet Women’s Empowerment Policies. In *Gender in Georgia: Feminist Perspectives on Culture, Nation and History in the South Caucasus*, New York: Berghahn Books.

prevalent in rural and remote areas and particularly the conflict-affected and ethnic minorities populated areas, these nevertheless subsist in the urban areas as well.

Furthermore, social narratives of Georgian masculinity that portray men as household heads, decision makers, and providers for their families are increasingly at odds with the realities of male unemployment and the tendency for wives to be wage earners or even the main breadwinners. The frustrations at this perceived 'failure', can easily translate into resentment and jealousy, resulting in emotional and psychological abuse that can also turn into physical and sexual abuse, especially when fuelled by alcohol.⁸ However, deeper underlying factors, relating to gender inequality and linked to conservative and patriarchal ideas about tradition and male power, have the effect of 'normalizing' violence, including abusive remarks as well as physical and sexual abuse, within relationships between men and women.

The widespread and largely unquestioned acceptance of conservative gender roles in Georgia has been illustrated in several pieces of researches.⁹ For example, a nationwide survey found that women are expected to undertake the majority of unpaid care work within the household, which may include food preparation, fetching water and fuel in poorer or more remote households, and looking after young children, often in addition to engaging in paid employment or unpaid farm work.¹⁰ On the other hand, there are fewer examples of men and women sharing care responsibilities.

As a result of these gender stereotypes, women in Georgia are more exposed to social exclusion and discriminatory treatment, *in particular* single mothers, widows, rural women, internally displaced persons as a result of the occupied regions, the disabled, and those of ethnic minorities, which are more often living in poverty. Furthermore, victims of gender-based violence constitute a high-risk group for *femicide*. Georgia has been a source, transit and destination country for *sex trafficking* of women and girls and *forced labour of men, women and children*.

Traditional gender norms and stereotypes also influence how *LGBTI* persons are perceived.¹¹ Whilst it is *prohibited to discriminate against LGBTI* people in employment and other key areas under the labour code and the Non-Discrimination Law, progress in aligning these legal rights, with societal change has been rather slow, with the media usually reinforcing negative and misinformed stereotypes and portrayal of different identities and orientations and hate speeches fuelled by anti-gender homophobic groups.¹²

⁸ World Bank Group (2017)

⁹ This was identified as a key challenge by many interviewees from parliamentary offices, government ministries, UN agencies, and NGOs for this report; also see CEDAW Committee. 2014. Concluding Observations on the Combined Fourth and Fifth Periodic Reports of Georgia. <http://www.undocs.org/CEDAW/C/GEO/CO/4-5>.

¹⁰ I. Badurashvili et al. 2008. Gender Relations in Modern Georgian Society. Tbilisi: UNDP and UNFPA. <https://en.calameo.com/books/0007135292c924c76db7f>. A qualitative study conducted in 2010 revealed the extent to which social perceptions often reinforce these gender norms. Male respondents ages 35–59 in a focus group discussion agreed that women were often capable of doing "male" work such as herding cattle, but felt that men could not do "women's" work. One respondent said: "How can it happen? A man cannot raise children, can he? A family should be taken care of, laundry should be washed, meals should be cooked, and a man cannot do it, he cannot wash laundry as it is not in his genes." Another recent study that compared data from 1996, 2008, and 2010 found that many young people ages 15–20 continue to reinforce these gender stereotypes through their own values and perceptions—particularly those living in rural areas with less access to modern technology and ideas. see I. Badurashvili et al. 2008. Gender Relations in Modern Georgian Society. Tbilisi: UNDP and UNFPA. <https://en.calameo.com/books/0007135292c924c76db7f>; L. Tsuladze. 2010. Behind the Scenes: Qualitative Research Results. In *National Research on Domestic Violence in Georgia*. M. Chitashvili et al. Tbilisi: Fountain.

¹¹ N. Gvianishvili. 2012. Transgender Persons in Georgia. *Situation of LGBT Persons in Georgia*. Tbilisi: Women's Initiatives Supporting Group. http://women.ge/data/docs/publications/WISG_situation-of-lgbt-persons-in-Georgia_ENG-wwww.pdf.

¹² N. Gvianishvili. 2018. Being Transgender in Georgia. In M. Barkaia. and A. Waterson, eds. *Gender in Georgia: Feminist Perspectives on Culture, Nation and History in the South Caucasus*. New York: Berghahn Books.

The LGBTQI community in Georgia thus continues to face marginalisation, discrimination and stigma especially from anti-gender groups, and are subjected to various forms of violence and other vulnerabilities and threats to human security and human rights, further amplified by the COVID-19 pandemic.

2.2. GENDER INEQUALITIES IN POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND DECISION-MAKING

Whilst there is general support amongst the public for increasing *women's role in decision-making*, their *actual political representation remains low and face more silent barriers and resistance especially at governmental level*. The number of female parliamentarians has risen from 6.4% in 2008, but was still only 16% in 2017, far below the minimum target of 30% outlined in the Beijing Platform For Action and a mere 23 out of 150 parliamentary seats. Georgia thus ranked 114th of 144 countries for women's political empowerment in the 2017 World Economic Forum's (WEF) Global Gender Gap Index (GGI)¹³ and 123rd of 193 countries in the 2018 Inter-Parliamentary Union's (IPU) global table of women in national parliaments.¹⁴ The latest WEF GGI figures place Georgia in 114th place of 144 countries for women's political empowerment.¹⁵ This means Georgia is well below the global average for most middle-and low-income countries in gender equality indicators, as well as lagging behind other South Caucasus and Central Asia's former Soviet countries such as Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan.

Women are also underrepresented in local government. In executive branches of the government in Georgia, women account for only 15.4% of *Sakrebulo* members.¹⁶ This figure remains unchanged since the 2010 elections. In the local self-government elections held in October 2017, *all elected mayors of municipalities were male*.¹⁷ A *key barrier to women's political empowerment* is the current male dominated culture of political parties and their composition. Recruitment for most parties lacks transparency, while the overwhelmingly male leadership and importance of having internal party connections means that men are often favoured. Furthermore, achieving high office in Georgia is not a guarantee that women will promote gender equality, often for fear it may undermine their credibility. In 2015, members of the Task Force on Women's Political Participation called for the introduction of a zebra quota system that would require every second person on proportional party electoral lists to be female, with an incentive of 30% additional funding for cooperating parties.¹⁸ The proposed revisions were strongly rejected by the majority male Parliament. Smaller parties voluntarily take up this quota system,¹⁹ but not larger parties—including the current ruling party, 'Georgian Dream'. In 2017, the task force led a reinvigorated campaign for a mandatory zebra quota system for proportional party lists, with public support

¹³ World Economic Forum (WEF). 2017. The Global Gender Gap Report. http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2017.pdf. The Global Gender Gap Report benchmarks 144 countries' progress toward gender parity across four thematic dimensions: Economic Participation and Opportunity, Educational Attainment, Health and Survival, and Political Empowerment.

¹⁴ IPU. 2018. <http://archive.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm> (accessed 2 May 2018).

¹⁵ WEF. 2016. *The Global Gender Gap Report*. http://www3.weforum.org/docs/GGGR16/WEF_Global_Gender_Gap_Report_2016.pdf.

¹⁶ GEC of Georgia and UNDP. 2018. *Gender Equality in Georgia: Barriers and Recommendations*. Tbilisi: Parliament of Georgia.

¹⁷ Central Election Committee. 2017. Municipal Elections 2017. <http://cesko.ge/eng/elections/2017>.

¹⁸ Georgia has a mixed parliamentary system where 50% of parliamentarians are elected by majority vote and 50% by proportional party lists.

¹⁹ K. Chkheidze. 2018. Women's Political Representation in Post-Soviet Georgia. In M. Barkaia and A. Waterson. *Gender in Georgia: Feminist Perspectives on Culture, Nation and History in the South Caucasus*. New York: Berghahn Books; and GEC of Georgia and UNDP (2018), footnote 33, p. 50

evidenced by 37,000 signatures collected from citizens. The revisions would have guaranteed at least 25%–30% female representation in Parliament but in March 2018, the Parliament of Georgia again, rejected the legislative proposal.²⁰

2.3. GENDER INEQUALITIES IN EMPLOYMENT, ENTREPRENEURSHIP, LAND RIGHTS AND INHERITANCE

Women and men's equal *participation in the economy* and equal opportunity to economic empowerment is hindered by deep-rooted gender stereotypes and structural factors such as lack of investment in care services, in particular child and eldercare, and social protection; labour regulations that do not support domestic care and maternity leave; and underdeveloped gender-responsive budgeting and gender mainstreaming in economic development policies. *Labour force* participation rate of women was 40.4% for 2020, while that of men was 62%.²¹ Time allocated to unpaid work by women is three times higher than that of men. The *Gender gap in entrepreneurship* (only 32.4% of firms in Georgia have female owner)²² is exacerbated by women's discrimination in inheritance of land and their limited access to financing. *Gender pay gap* in Georgia was 36.2% in 2019.²³ The average monthly wage of women stands at only 63.8% of that of men in 2019.²⁴

Furthermore, occupations are *strongly segregated by gender*, with a much higher share of men in *stereotypically male professions* such as engineering, construction, energy, transport and communications, and gas and water supply. The majority of women are employed in jobs with a caring or service aspect. Women account for around 75% of employees in the healthcare and social sectors, 60% of those working in the hospitality sector, and 84% of schoolteachers.²⁵ Less than 10% of women work in construction, while 23% are employed in transport and communications.²⁶

Many women also work *in the informal sector and in unpaid subsistence farm work*. Farm work undertaken by women includes managing crops and livestock, dairy production, and processing. A study found that, on average, women engage in agricultural work 80 days per year more than men.²⁷ However, this work often goes unrecognized and is undervalued because it is not remunerated, forming part of the unpaid care work women are expected to take on.

Women's entrepreneurial potential faces several hindrances. Only one-fifth of firms have female owners, and 16% of firms have a female top manager. Among other constraints, access to finance is identified as a major obstacle for starting up businesses by female top managers.²⁸ Women

²⁰ The bill was endorsed by three parliamentary committees and was also supported by civil society groups, as well as foreign diplomats. Further discussions are planned in the near future.

²¹ Source: GEOSTAT, <https://www.geostat.ge/en/modules/categories/37/employment-and-wages>, adjusted by the GoG.

²² Source: Government of Georgia, Secretariat of the Inter-Agency Commission on Gender Equality.

²³ Source: GEOSTAT, <https://www.geostat.ge/en/modules/categories/39/wages>

²⁴ *ibid*

²⁵ National Statistical Office of Georgia. 2017. *Employment and Unemployment: Economic Status by Sex*. Tbilisi: Government of Georgia.

²⁶ National Statistics Office of Georgia. 2017. *Men and Women in Georgia: Statistical Publication*. http://www.geostat.ge/cms/site_images/_files/english/health/W&M%20in%20ENG_2017.pdf.

²⁷ A UN Women study found that men engage in agriculture 263.92 days per year compared with 344.25 days for women. UN Women. 2016. *Gender Assessment of Agriculture and Local Development Systems*. Tbilisi.

²⁸ Enterprise Survey (2019).

entrepreneurs often face higher interest rates and struggle to comply with higher collateral requirements to access credit.²⁹

Whilst women are legally entitled to own and inherit land and property,³⁰ *Georgian customary practices usually give privileges to men in property inheritance, ownership, and administration.*³¹ Ownership of core assets is higher for men than for women, and the *biggest gender gap is in ownership of agricultural land*³². Men account for more than twice the number of documented owners of agricultural land compared to women; there is a 13% gender gap in documented dwelling ownership. The preference for passing land and property to sons rather than daughters is particularly high among ethnic minority families.³³ The low level of property ownership for women means they experience challenges in obtaining loans and grants for the purpose of moving beyond micro-businesses, to small and medium enterprises.

2.4. YOUTH AND GENDER INEQUALITIES

In contrast to primary school, enrolment in tertiary education in Georgia is well below the average for the Eastern Europe and Central Asia region: only 27% of boys and 33% of girls in 2012 attended higher education, compared with an average for the Europe and Central Asia region of 60.5% of boys and 69.9% of girls.³⁴ High tuition fees may be one factor contributing to these low figures. Patriarchal norms may also create a barrier for girls' enrolment in higher education. If parents cannot afford to educate all their children, they prefer to send their sons to university or technical college.³⁵ Among ethnic Azerbaijani communities living in Georgia, parents may place less emphasis on the education of girls, and *some girls leave school as early as ages 13 or 14 to marry.*³⁶

There is currently *little incentive to pursue tertiary education as unemployment is higher among those with higher qualifications.* For example, *the rate of unemployment among young people with vocational training is 8% higher than unemployment rate of young people with only elementary education.*³⁷

A significant challenge in the education system is the implicit gender biases and norms replicated through the curriculum and in the education system for many young people in Georgia. School textbooks often perpetuate gender stereotypes and discriminatory ideas.³⁸ Representations of famous or powerful men far outnumber those of women, who are either invisible in the

²⁹ IFC (2011).

³⁰ Article 21 of the Constitution guarantees equal property rights: "Abrogation of the universal right to ownership, acquisition, alienation or inheritance of property shall be inadmissible" (Chapter One, Article 21.1, Constitutional Law of Georgia. www.parliament.ge/uploads/other/28/28803.pdf).

³¹ N. Dudwick. 2015. "Missing Women" in the South Caucasus: Local Perceptions and Proposed Solutions. *Report 94705*. Washington, DC: World Bank.

³² pilot survey on Measuring the Asset Ownership and Entrepreneurship from a Gender Perspective (2019).

³³ European Centre for Minority Development in Georgia. 2013. *European Needs Assessment of Ethnic Minority Women in Georgia*. Tbilisi.

³⁴ World Bank Gender Data Portal. <http://datatopics.worldbank.org/gender/country/europe-&-central-asia> (accessed 1 February 2018)

³⁵ Millennium Challenge Account Georgia, Social and Gender Integration Plan. 2014. <http://www.mcageorgia.ge/cms/kcfinder/upload/files/Social%20and%20Gender%20Integration%20Plan%20Aug%2027%2C%202014.pdf>.

³⁶ World Bank Group (2016), footnote 11; GEC of Georgia and UNDP (2018), footnote 33; and Georgia–Beijing + 20 (2014), footnote 44.

³⁷ Government of Georgia. 2014. *Socio-Economic Strategy of Georgia "Georgia 2020."* <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/linked-documents/cps-geo-2014-2018-sd-01.pdf>.

³⁸ Country gender analysis (2012).

textbooks or portrayed in traditional domestic roles.³⁹ Furthermore, Gender norms and perceptions strongly influence the choice of subjects for specialist studies.⁴⁰

2.5. SEXUAL AND GENDER BASED VIOLENCE (SGBV) AND HARMFUL TRADITIONAL PRACTICES

SGBV within the domestic sphere, committed by a husband, partner, or other family member is *critical and pervasive in Georgia*. As discussed above, this is an issue which historically has remained behind closed doors. A survey⁴¹ found that approximately 14% of women ages 15–64 reported they experienced physical, sexual, and/or emotional violence by an intimate partner. The study also found that 19% of women and 9.6% of men knew of someone who had experienced domestic violence. The highest rates of reported intimate partner violence were in Tbilisi and Samtskhe–Javakheti, a region in southern Georgia.

Evidence indicates violence is often not an isolated act. 34.7% of women⁴² experiencing intimate partner violence had been injured multiple times (especially those in the 45 to 49-year-old age group).⁴³ A Georgian NGO⁴⁴ conducted a survey where 22% of respondents reported their husbands subjected them to physical violence every week, while 43% said their husbands used physical violence after learning their wives were pregnant.

However, as in many other countries, the true extent of the problem remains unknown because of the perceived stigma attached to formally reporting incidences or seeking assistance following domestic violence. 33% of women and 50% percent of men participating said that ‘family abuse is a private affair and not a legal matter’⁴⁵. Ingrained social taboos, compounded by patriarchal norms about men’s marital rights, make reporting sexual violence particularly difficult in Georgia and mistrust of law enforcement agencies adds to women’s unwillingness to report it. A study found that 82% of female respondents did not report VAW to the police, with 61% worried that reporting it, would stigmatize them.⁴⁶

The Domestic Violence (DV) Law (2006) marked the first-time ‘domestic violence’ was officially recognized as a crime. The DV Law which had been difficult to implement has since been bolstered through the ratification of the *Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (the Istanbul Convention)* in 2014. The signing of the Istanbul Convention places the onus on the government to ensure the adequate provision of *safe spaces and services*, such as post-crisis support and rehabilitation for women survivors of abuse, as well as programs to prevent perpetrators from re-offending. At present, the DV Law recognizes the need for such measures, and both state mechanisms and NGOs provide assistance that includes short-term crisis centres and longer-term shelters. However, *complex criteria for admission*

³⁹ I. Khomeriki et al. 2012. *Gender Equality Issues in Studying Social Sciences: Gender Analysis of Textbooks*. Tbilisi: Centre for Civil Integration and Inter-Ethnic Relations. Quoted in Beijing + 20 (2014), footnote 42; and GEC of Georgia and UNDP (2018), footnote 33.

⁴⁰ Over 80% of students of arts and humanities, and over 70% focusing on health at tertiary level are female, while around a quarter of women are studying engineering, manufacturing, and construction.

⁴¹ UN Women and the National Statistical Office, nationwide survey on VAW (2017).

⁴² UNEPFA nationwide baseline survey on VAW (2009).

⁴³ M. Chitashvili et al. 2010. *National Research on Domestic Violence against Women in Georgia*. Fountain: Tbilisi.

⁴⁴ N. Kuprashvili. 2010. *Georgia Combating Violence in the Home*, Institute for War & Peace Reporting. http://www.iwpr.net/?p=crs&cs=f&co=361469&apc_state=henpcrs.

⁴⁵ UN Women and the National Statistical Office, nationwide survey on VAW (2017).

⁴⁶ World Bank Group. 2017. *Gender-Based Violence in Georgia: Links among Conflict, Economic Opportunities and Services*. Washington, DC. p viii.

*to shelters and insufficient funding means the urgent needs of many women are not currently being met.*⁴⁷ Implementing the DV Law also requires greater awareness and knowledge of key professionals—including police officers, social workers, healthcare providers, and legal representatives—who have a duty of care for those affected by domestic violence. *Current responses are inadequate:* Police officers continue to treat victims of domestic violence with indifference and often fail to protect women in life-threatening situations, while many social workers lack specific expertise in domestic violence cases.

*Female genital mutilation (FGM)*⁴⁸ and *early marriage* remain concerns for many women and girls who are part of the 13% Muslim population. There are no official statistics, but FGM is reportedly practiced among the Avar community in the Kakheti region of Georgia, and with strong indications the practice is covertly done in other communities. Under the Istanbul Convention, FGM is now criminalized, with potential imprisonment of up to 4 years. However, cultural sensitivities and deep-rooted beliefs make it difficult to enforce this legislation.

Georgia is strongly affected by past and *recent territorial conflicts* of its own and in the neighbouring countries. Women comprise over half of IDPs, and conflict-affected women and men face different vulnerabilities, needs and risks. *Gender-based violence remains prevalent*, and many *women and girls lack information about and access to quality services* for gender-based violence survivors, especially in the breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Access to quality sexual and reproductive healthcare and rights, including family planning, abortions, and pre and post-natal care as well as information and education on sexual and reproductive rights remains restricted, further exacerbated by COVID-19. The situation of women in the breakaway regions, especially in Akhgori and in Gali has been additionally negatively impacted with long-term closure of border crossing points, restricted access to sexual and reproductive healthcare and rights due to the lack of adequate facilities and medical personnel. Finally, *the abortion ban in Abkhazia region continues to put women and girls' lives at risk.*

Concluding remarks:

There are three key themes in which key challenges and opportunities to support for gender equality, women's human rights and diversity in Georgia are most pressing. These are:

- *Toxic gender stereotypes and discriminations based on sex and sexual orientation*
- *Sexual and Gender Based violence and Harmful traditional practice – addressing both survivors and relevant institutional structure*
- *Women's political empowerment and leadership*
- *Women's economic empowerment and ownership of enterprises*

⁴⁷ Law of Georgia on Gender Equality. <https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/download/91624/3/en/pdf>.

⁴⁸ FGM is a practice that involves altering or injuring the female genitalia for nonmedical reasons, and is internationally recognized as a human rights violation. OHCHR, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNECA, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNIFEM, and WHO. Eliminating Female Genital Mutilation—An Interagency Statement. 2008. Cited in GEC and UNDP (2018), footnote 33, p 58.

3. KEY DRIVERS OF CHANGE AND DRIVERS OF INEQUALITIES

- *Identify the drivers of change and barriers/ drivers of inequality and discrimination with particular attention to underlying power structures.*

3.1. DUTY BEARERS: GOVERNMENT OF GEORGIA'S LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY REFORMS

After 2015, the Government of Georgia (GoG) has undertaken significant legal and policy reforms aiming at improving human rights protection standards. Key human rights and gender equality related policy and legislative reforms are highlighted as follows:

- Georgia is a *Member State of all major international human rights treaties*. According to the Constitution of Georgia, an international treaty of Georgia shall take precedence over national normative acts unless it comes into conflict with the Constitution or the Constitutional Agreement of Georgia (Article 4.5).
- *The constitutional amendments introduced in 2017-2018 consolidated the standards of human rights protection*. The constitutional amendments specifically focus on social rights, rights of persons with disabilities (PwDs), child rights, and gender equality. In 2018 amendments to the Constitution entered into force. *The new wording of the Constitution provides a provision concerning the equality of women and men (article 11)*. According to the amendments, the State shall take special measures to ensure the essential equality of men and women and to eliminate inequality.
- Amendments to the Rules of Procedures of the Parliament transformed the *Gender Equality Council into the standing consultative body of the Parliament*.
- In 2017 Georgia adhered to the CoE Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention). To ensure compliance of national legislation with the Istanbul Convention, the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) led the process of development and adoption of amendments to up to *30 legislative acts*. *New crimes, such as forced marriage, female genital mutilation, stalking and sterilisation without consent, were introduced in the CCG*.
- In 2017 the GoG Resolution created the *Commission on Gender Equality, Violence against Women and Domestic Violence*. Its members are deputy ministers, the co-chairs of the Commission are deputy minister of justice and the Prime Minister's Advisor on Human Rights and Gender Equality. *The Inter-Agency Commission on Gender Equality, Violence against Women and Domestic Violence* represents a coordination body as provided by the Istanbul Convention.
- In 2018, the GoG approved *National Action Plan for 2018-2020 on the Measures to be Implemented for Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence and Protection of Victims/Survivors*. The legislative amendments were developed that provided more severe sanctions for perpetrators of sexual abuse, including deprivation of several rights

(including the right to be employed in educational institutions) and creation of a database of persons tried for sexual abuse. Since 2018, free legal aid is available for the victims of violence or DV.

- The *National Human Rights Strategy (2014-2020)* and relevant governmental action plans (2014-2015, 2016-2017, 2018-2020) represent crucial documents for the protection of human rights in Georgia.
- In 2018, the GoG approved National Action Plan of Georgia for *Implementation of the UN Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security for 2018-2020* and National Human Rights Action Plan for 2018-2020 that includes a dedicated chapter "Gender Equality and Women Empowerment". The 2018 amendments to CCG *introduced gender discrimination as an aggravating circumstance of a crime*.
- In February 2019, the amendments to the Law of Georgia on Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination introduced *the definition of sexual harassment*. The 2019 amendments *to the labour legislation regulated sexual harassment in labour relations*.
- *At the local self-government level, gender equality councils were created, and gender advisors are appointed in municipalities*. Since 2015, gender equality advisor has been appointed in the Tbilisi Mayor's Office.
- As of March 2020, 5 out of 11 members of the GoG are women; out of them, 2 are vice-Prime Ministers.

3.2. RIGHTS-HOLDERS: ACTIVIST WOMEN'S NGOS – AS DRIVERS OF CHANGE

The recent advances in gender-responsive legislation listed above, government mechanisms, and public awareness can largely be attributed to the lobbying of Georgia's civil society groups, who use the media and other methods to campaign for issues, such as VAW, sexual harassment, and women's political representation.

Although there are more than 80 active NGOs, working on women's rights, solidarity between these organizations is not always sufficient to jointly lobby government around a shared gender equality and women's rights platform.⁴⁹ The seeds of a national women's movement are present, but they are currently most evident among young, urban women. There is an identified need for greater social mobilization that reaches beyond Tbilisi to other regions of Georgia, manifested both through local actions and national solidarity to ensure that the gender equality agenda continues to make progress and to mitigate against the risk of backlashes and anti-gender trends.

The list of the main women's rights organisations are further detailed in Section 4.

3.3. ANTIFEMINIST ORGANISATIONS – AS DRIVERS OF EXCLUSION AND DISCRIMINATION

⁴⁹ T. Sabedashvili. 2007. *Gender and Democratization: The Case of Georgia, 1991–2006*. Tbilisi: Heinrich Böll Foundation. https://ge.boell.org/sites/default/files/gender_and_democratisation_eng.pdf.

In recent years, the main resistance to gender equality has come from anti-gender discourses that are overtly ultra-nationalist and ideas described. Various political groups use their digital media platform to create distorted oppressive views of women and queer group in society. Antifeminism is often used as a strategy to strengthen the groups political position and make diverting public attention from socio-economic conditions. Some of the most well-known are :

- ALT-INFO: radically antifeminist, aiming at normalizing right-wing and fascist rhetoric. They appeal to the concept of ‘family purity’ and strive to create hostile attitude towards women and queer liberatory movements.
- GIRCHI: Stands on right-wing libertarian position where freedom is viewed from a strictly individualistic perspective and does not recognise various forms of systemic oppression (sexism, misogyny of opinion, queer phobia – attention is always focused on the freedom of speech of one group and does not include oppressed groups.
- POSTV: it is a media platform funded by the ruling party, which aims to package regressive policies with vague intellectual and left-wing socialist positions and to form a ideological group of supported.

Anti-feminism in Georgia, like in other country such as Ukraine is deliberately directed against women’s movements and their fundamental values where these threatens the privileges and power of men. Their main arguments are:

- Feminism has gone too far because equality already exist (e.g. strongly opposed to gender quotas).
- Conservative and traditional patriarchal values are upheld as being fundamental to the nationalist and patriotic heritage – and thus should not be questioned. (e.g. talking about sexual violence is perceived as a way to repress men and form the basis of slander).
- Pressure and barriers to feminist policies become ‘necessary’ to protect the nation from pervasive and loose ethical influences. (e.g. abortion, LGBTQ groups)

4. KEY STAKEHOLDERS

- *Who are main national CSOs and international partners/ donors – and major programmes addressing gender/women?*

4.1. MAIN MULTILATERALS & BILATERALS ACTORS

4.1.1. KEY BILATERAL ACTORS

The major gender equality programmes supported by bilateral donors that share sub-themes of interest to Denmark’s focus are as follows:

- *The Netherlands* promotes gender equality in Georgia by providing support to local CSOs and by supporting women entrepreneurs, in the following areas of priority: i) *Decreased occurrence of all forms of violence against women and girls* in public and private life - Ensuring Freedom from All Forms of Gender-Based Violence will constitute major component of this programme, including support to national state actors; ii) *Strengthened women's voice, agency, leadership and representative participation in decision-making processes in public, private and civic sphere* - Advancing Equal Participation and Leadership; iii) *Reinforced women's economic rights and empowerment, and female entrepreneurship* - Strengthening economic and social rights and empowering girls and women; iv) *Women's meaningful participation and leadership in peace- and state-building* - Integrating the Women, Peace and Security agenda. Specific objectives, indicators and concrete financial contributions allocated to these projects depends on the relevance and quality of proposals by local CSOs, which the Netherlands chooses to support.
- *Sweden* supports at least two programmes that will have gender equality as their principal objective (Gender Marker 2) over the period 2021-2027: i) The UN Joint programme on Gender Equality in Georgia, implemented jointly by the UNDP, the UN Women and the UNFPA ii) Georgian CSOs are supported through Kvinna till Kvinna and RFSU these focus amongst other on UPR and CEDAW reporting, Women and Peace and Security, Women's economic empowerment, women's political participation and sexual and reproductive health and rights. Sweden welcomes and is looking for like-minded donors to co-fund its programmes.
- *Switzerland* – as two gender focused projects: i) *the Regional project on Women's Economic Empowerment in the South Caucasus*. The main objective of this project is to contribute to ensuring that women, particularly poor and socially excluded, in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia are economically empowered and participate in relevant decision-making processes. This long-term project has been implemented in two phases: 2017-2021 and 2021-2024, with an overall budget of CHF 7.4 million, and with Austria being a co-donor of this project. Switzerland's primary implementing partner for Georgia and for the South Caucasus region is UN Women. ii) *Project on Improving Economic Empowerment and Resilience of Women Dairy Producers in Abkhazia and Samegrelo Regions* The overall goal of the project is to improve economic empowerment and resilience of women dairy producers in Abkhazia and Samegrelo regions.

4.1.2. KEY MULTILATERAL ACTORS

- The main Gender UN Joint programme on Gender Equality in Georgia (also funded by Sweden), is implemented jointly by the UNDP, the UN Women and the UNFPA with the overall objective of strengthening capacities of the Government at both central and local levels and across the executive, legislative and judicial branches, engaging civil society and raising public awareness about gender equality. The main focus areas are threefold

and cover i) *women's social and economic empowerment*, ii) *women's political participation*, iii) *gender-based violence and sexual and reproductive health and rights*.

- *Cooperation with the EU Member States, other EU actors and civil society.* The EU and its Member States are coordinating their actions and dialogue in the form of regular (at least once a year) meetings on *gender equality organised and co-chaired by the EU and Sweden*. The main goal of these meetings is to share information, discuss and exchange views among the EU Delegation, the EU Member States, European International Financial Institutions, European Economic Area countries and the UK. So far, joint implementation of any gender equality actions was not considered due to different programming, contracting and implementation cycles of the EU and its Member States.
- In Georgia *donor coordination on gender equality is led by the UN Women*, while different thematic task forces are co-chaired by the UN and national partners. In the regular task force meetings on specific thematic aspects related to gender equality, wide range of international and local partners interested and working on gender equality are invited. Currently there is a tripartite Gender Programme with UN WOMEN, UNFPA and UNDP.
- The *EU Delegation* During 2021-2023 the EU i) provides *technical assistance to Georgian Government* in its reform work *on gender equality in the framework of a regional project Reform Helpdesk* managed by the DG NEAR, implemented in the framework of the regional programme EU4Gender Equality of which Georgia is one of beneficiary countries. Since the beginning of 2021 the EU has started providing technical assistance to Georgian Government in its reform work on gender equality in the framework of a regional project Reform Helpdesk managed by the DG NEAR, implemented in the framework of the regional programme EU4Gender Equality of which Georgia is one of beneficiary countries. ii) provides support *on Eliminating Domestic Violence and Gender-Based Violence* iii) supporting greater *women's political participation at national and local levels* focusing on improving/heightening women's political participation at national and local levels due to big gender imbalances in politics in Georgia. The recent introduction of quotas for women candidates demonstrates the readiness of Georgia for change. iv) supporting *Strengthened capacities of national authorities to pursue gender equality* through national policies advancing equal participation and leadership and support to national gender machineries and state actors. Indicative budget of the programme would be in the range of EUR 4 to 6 million. Indicatively the programme implementation would start beyond 2023. The programme is implemented mainly at national level, however, specific activities are carried out at local community level. Indicatively the programme is implemented through cooperation with international organisations, service contract(s) and competitive call for proposals for grants to CSOs.

4.2. MAIN CIVIL SOCIETY STAKEHOLDERS

The organisations that work in areas of interest to Denmark and with whom collaboration through peer to peer cooperation should be further explored are:

- **Women's Information Center** is one of the first organisations which started working on gender issues and improving women's status in Georgia. Its main priorities are to provide assistance, undertake advocacy and raise awareness of women from different regions, internally displaced persons and ethnic minority women. The organisation actively lobbies and advocates for the inclusion of gender issues in legislative and executive bodies.
- **Women's Fund in Georgia** Aim at i) promoting feminism, protecting women's and girls' rights and ii) supporting women's movements and organisations. Amongst funders are: UN Women, UNDP, and Kvinna till Kvinna, Embassy of Sweden, USAID, The Netherlands.
- **Union Sapari** is a women's rights organisation in Georgia established in 2001. The organisation covers all aspects of women's rights, gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment. The mission of 'Sapari' is to create and sustain an equal, non-discriminatory and non-violent environment. To that end, the organisation engages, inter alia, in strategic litigation, lobbying and advocacy activities, research, capacity building of professionals and awareness raising campaigns.
- **Equality Now** is an international human rights NGO with ECOSOC status with the mission to achieve legal and systemic change that addresses violence and discrimination against all women and girls around the world. Founded in 1992, Equality Now is a global organization with partners and members in every region. Ending sexual violence, ending sex trafficking, ending harmful practices and achieving legal equality are the main areas of Equality Now's work.

Other organisations that are also active and key stakeholders in the field are:

- **Georgian Young Lawyers Association (GYLA)** is a non-governmental organization which aims to protect human rights and promote good governance in Georgia through strategic litigation, advocacy and awareness-raising on human rights. Over the last 20 years, GYLA has been implementing a number of projects dedicated specifically to the recognition and protection of domestic violence victims' rights, combating domestic and gender-based violence.
- **Human Rights Center** aims to increase respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and the promotion of peace processes in Georgia. To achieve this, it works towards increasing public awareness and respect for human rights, calling for the government to respect the rule of law, principles of transparency and the redistribution of power.
- **Women's Initiatives Supporting Group (WISG)** is a non-governmental, non-profit organisation defending the human rights of lesbian, bisexual women, trans and intersex persons in Georgia.

- **Cultural-Humanitarian Fund “Sukhumi”**, IDP women NGO based in Kutaisi and Tbilisi with over 20 years of experience in advancing gender equality, women’s political empowerment, fighting against domestic violence and promoting women’s participation in peace-building. Organization strives to promote social, educational, economical, and political development of IDPs and conflict affected women and girls by building their leadership capacities, raising their social and legal awareness, supporting them to develop themselves into equal partners, active citizens and central decision-makers. It advocates for community concerns through which women pursue human rights and peace.
- **Social Justice Center (former EMC)** is a human rights organization which aims to promote the protection of the rights of marginalized and discriminated groups, including rights of workers, homeless individuals, people with disabilities, religious minorities, Women, LGBTQI persons and others through research, advocacy and strategic litigation. The organization also monitors the ongoing institutional reforms in Georgia and supports the improvement of legal protective mechanisms and strengthening of the legislative framework.
- **Georgian Democracy Initiative (GDI)** is a local human rights organization focusing on civil and political rights (and their protection through strategic litigation), equality, judiciary, and civic education. During several years it provided free legal aid for the victims of domestic violence and was involved in the process of reforming criminal justice.
- **Tbilisi Pride** is a civic movement which opposes homophobia/transphobia and fights to overcome it through exercising the constitutional rights of peaceful assembly and manifestation. The goal of the movement is to contribute to creating an environment, where LGBT people are protected, accepted, free and equal with the other citizens of Georgia.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on this brief analysis, overview of key donors’ interventions and interviews with some key NGOs the following are recommended:

- *To support i) women’s right movement ii) women’s political empowerment and Georgian-Danish peer-to-peer cooperation, to be further explored and consolidated between for example KVINFO and a range of Georgian NGOs mentioned above.*
- *Opportunities for co-funding with Sweden and UN-WOMEN are clearly expressed and should be further explored.*

ANNEX 1 LIST OF CONTACTS

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- Taso Foundation Tabukashvili Street 15, 0108 Tbilisi, Georgia Phone/Fax: (995 32)292 05 95 Email: info@taso.org.ge
- Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (GYLA) #15, Jansugh Kakhidze, 0102, Tbilisi, Georgia Phone: +995 32 293 61 01 E-mail: gyla@gyla.ge <https://gyla.ge/en> domestic violence victims' rights, combating domestic and gender-based violence.
- Union Sapari 11/a Akaki Gakhokidze, Tbilisi, Georgia Phone: +995 322 307 603, +995 599 407 603 Email: unionsapari@gmail.com
- Human Rights Center (HRC)
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