

Tbilisi School of Political Studies

“Participation of women in public and political life”

Georgia

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Introduction

The Government of Georgia and civil society organizations have a history of making efforts to promote gender equality in the country. Since the proclamation of its independence, Georgia has worked for harmonization of the legislation with international and European standards, including the European provisions on equal opportunities and equal treatment for women and men.

The ratification of the Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)¹ in 1994 and the activities conducted by the Council of Europe stimulated promotion of women's status and equality between men and women in Georgia and provided comprehensive and solid legal framework for women's human rights and gender equality². The legal framework helped Georgian Government to improve the situation in the field of gender equality. Also, set a solid basis for the civil society to ground its requests.

The Georgian government has passed a series of legislative acts to create institutional mechanisms, National Action Plans, and working groups to ensure the promotion of the participation of women in public and political life and gender equality. In March 2010, the Georgian Parliament enacted its Law on Gender Equality, which created a permanent Gender Equality Advisory Council and led to a National Action Plan for Gender Equality. Though, it should be mentioned that the endeavors undertaken by Georgia are not sufficient and do not ensure equal opportunities and equal treatment for women and men. The areas of concern still remain: women's representation in decision making and politics, women's economic status and the violence against women. However, all this must be seen against the larger political context.

¹ <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/>

² European Convention for Human Rights : Article 4 – Prohibition of discrimination; Protocol No. 7, Article 5 – Equality between spouses; Protocol No. 12, Article 1 – General prohibition of discrimination; European Social Charter (Updated), 1996; Council of Europe's Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings.

For more than 20 years, Georgia has been struggling with the challenges and difficulties of the transition period, including two unresolved ethnic conflicts that have affected both women and men in Georgia, the high level of migration, unemployment and poverty.

Since 2003, after “Rose Revolution” the government of Georgia initially embarked on ambitious political and economic reforms, however, concerns have been raised over state-supported limitations on political pluralism and violations of human rights. As for Georgian civil society, since 2003, it has lost much of its national influence due to political, social, and economic circumstances. UNDP’s Georgia Program Country Action Plan summed it up: “the civil society sector is yet to become systemic and influence players in policy development and decision-making. At the moment, the organizations lack concentration, capacity, and resources and often entertain donor driven interest³”.

The Parliamentary elections 2012 in great extent have defined the level of democratic development of the country and its ability to form just society - for the first time, since the break from the Soviet Union, the ruling party was changed peacefully in Georgia and the majority of seats were won by the new oppositional power. These elections made Georgia closer to democratic governance and opened new opportunities for developing just society.

³ UNDP Georgia “Country Program Action Plan” 2011- 2015. Retrieved from:
http://www.ge.undp.org/content/dam/georgia/docs/strategicdocs/cpap_GE_2011-2015.pdf

Traditional Concept of Women's Role in Society

Georgian social structure is very traditional and masculine with well-defined roles for men and women. Due to the existence of a hidden form of discrimination against women in a culture, the cult of motherhood and the myth of women's powerful influence in everyday life are promoted. The gender asymmetry is demonstrated in mentality-based public relations, double standards and sexism depriving women freedom and self expression. According cultural stereotyping, although "Georgian woman" possesses the biological body, she still cannot be considered as a biological creature because unlike the men and the women of other nationalities and unlike the human beings in general, she is not subject to the biological needs. Besides, her aliveness is limited to the reproduction, which defines an essence of the "Georgian woman"⁴.

Gender relationships in Georgia, till the middle of 1980s, have been developed under the influence of dominating ideology in the common for all Soviet republics. This ideology propagated equality of rights and women's participation in all the spheres of social life. But everything remained on the theory level. Meanwhile, patriarchal traditions continued to rule on the level of family relationships: the man is the head of the family, protector and supporter for the woman, who bring up the children and runs the household⁵.

The normative roles are strongly attached to gender, and there are quite different forms of behavior expected of men and women. Traditionally women are not expected to drink strong alcohol, smoke tobacco, have premarital sex, or live separately from her parents, to be decision-makers inside the family or be breadwinners, though Georgian women are entitled to education and work as men.

The ideal woman is to be shy, virtuous, noble, charitable, delicate and obedient wife, good housewife, a good mother, patient, caring and diligent person. The characteristics as braveness, independence, intellectualness, self-esteem and self-will are not being value for women⁶.

Even today, there is a lack of awareness and understanding of the concept of gender equality. This lack of awareness as well as the denial of any problems on many different levels hampers

⁴ Ani Chankotadze. Retrieved from: http://www.gwi-boell.de/downloads/cultural_stereotypes.pdf

⁵ Culture of Georgia, History, People. Retrieved from: <http://www.everyculture.com/Ge-It/Georgia.html>

⁶ Ani Chankotadze. Retrieved from: http://www.gwi-boell.de/downloads/cultural_stereotypes.pdf

the development process⁷. There is strong assumption that discrimination based on sex does not exist in Georgia, thus as long as the human rights of women are not violated, no special measures are required.

According to the Georgian Constitution: “Citizens of Georgia are equal in social, economic, cultural and political life regardless of national, ethnic, religious or language origin. According to universally recognized principles and norms of international law all have the right to develop their culture freely without any discrimination and interference. They may use their language in private and public life.⁸”

However, in today’s Georgia, where democracy and a market economy are still at the stage of formation, realization and implementation of social, economic and cultural rights acquire a special importance for the most vulnerable social groups of the society, including women.

⁷ Wendy Harcourt. (2011). Gender Equality and Development Effectiveness. Retrieved from: http://cso-effectiveness.org/IMG/pdf/report_on_gender_equality-2.pdf

⁸ Georgian Constitution. http://www.parliament.ge/index.php?lang_id=ENG&sec_id=68

Political Participation of Women

Georgia legislation recognizes equality of men and women in the implementation of civil and political rights. However, only a small number of women occupy political positions in real life. Women's low political participation can be partially explained by cultural gender stereotypes that place women and men in different societal roles. Today women encounter conservative role models, with little understanding and appreciation for their ambitions beyond being wives and mothers. More specifically, different studies of public values showed that Georgian men and women seldom view women as politicians⁹.

It should be pointed that women's representation in politics has substantially decreased in Post Soviet era – the backward tendencies were manifested through women's participation at all levels of political decision-making: throughout the Transformation Period (1991-20012) women constituted just 6 % of Georgian Parliament, only exception was after “Rose Revolution”, when 9.4% women were elected in the Parliament. The highest representation of women in the local governance was 12.8% in 1998; in the local governance women's representation decreased up to 11% for 2010.

Interconnected psychosocial, political, institutional and economic issues limit women's engagement in decision-making and political life more generally. For example, shifting gender roles have affected how men and women deal with new realities, relating to burdens and opportunities for participation of both genders. Political divisions within society also pose barriers, in addition to a lack of consistent political will, institutional capacity, and coordination among key stakeholders. Finally, economic conditions can promote a vicious cycle, hindering participation while the lack of political voice also serves as a key obstacle to efforts that address this marginalization.

Studies on Georgian political parties showed that till now there was no genuine political force that is entitled to promote women-related issues and gender balance in decision-making. The political leadership, as well as governing institutions had no vision on significance of gender

⁹ Sumbadze, N. Retrieved from: http://www.ipseng.techtone.info/files/9213/4245/8172/Taobebi_da_Girebulebebi_-_Book_1.pdf

equality, as important precondition for sustainable development of the country and democracy as a whole¹⁰.

It should be mentioned that several political parties have formed women's caucuses: "Industry Will Save Georgia", "Labor Party of Georgia", "New Rights", and "Christian Democrats". But these caucuses mainly focused their activities on charity. It can be explained by the level of political culture and discourse in Georgia: even at the highest echelons of government and legislative representation. There are no institutionalized training programs established by political parties for promoting women's leadership.

On their part, women's nongovernmental organizations carried activities to promote women's representation - from the beginning of 1999 by initiative of women's NGOs number of women's political networks were formed that put a pressure on the Government and political forces.

In 2001- 2008 women's political networks presented to the parliament four different legislative recommendations that were directed to increase women's representation in political sphere – these recommendations in different manner demanded introduction of quotas for women in political parties. Unfortunately, all these attempts failed¹¹.

Though, it should be mentioned, that openly discriminating public discourse begins to change in lately. It is evident that women's representation in politics is better promoted in society and media.

The Parliamentary Elections 2012 can be considered important for women's representation in politics of Georgia. This was stimulated by several factors: the international community (especially CEDAW recommendations¹²) became more demanding and urged Georgian government to implement gender equality in political decision making, as Georgia is on the last place by its gender index in OSCE region¹³. Women's organizations became better coordinated and challenging political establishment. The government - more responsive to gender equality

¹⁰ Women's Political Resource Center. <http://www.wprc.org.ge>

¹¹ Women's Political Resource Center. <http://www.wprc.org.ge>

¹² Concluding comments of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women: Georgia. Retrieved from: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/cedaw36/cc/Georgia/0647834E.pdf>

¹³ Global Gender Gap Index 2011 http://www3.weforum.org/docs/GGGR11/GGGR11_Rankings-Scores.pdf

issues – in 2012 introduced affirmative amendment to the Electoral Law: the additional financial support to the political parties that have 20% of women on their party lists¹⁴.

This caused the change in the rhetoric's of political parties concerning gender equality and women's representation in politics and resulted in better gender balanced political party lists: altogether 16 political parties nominated 731 women, among 2320 candidates for the Parliamentary elections. As a result, 18 women won the parliamentary seats what constitutes 12% out of 150 seats. From 77 mandates of the party lists 11 were won by women, from 73 districts mandates 7 were won by women¹⁵.

For the first time women were able to win districts in such numbers, as one mandate system is unfavorable for women to be elected. At the moment there are 16 (10.6%) women MPs. 2 women, former MPs were appointed to the executive government on the high positions - the Minister of the Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Justice. There is one more female minister in the new established Government – the Minister of Environment. Altogether in the Government of Georgia on the highest positions there are 15.7% of women, on the deputy level – 24%.

As for other forms of political participation include voting, civil disobedience, media campaigns, etc. which can be coordinated by individuals, through communities, through civil society, and other channels, women's participation is quite high. Women are well represented in civil society and media, though it differs from region to region. The lowest participation can be observed in rural areas populated by IDPs and ethnic minorities, Azeri and Armenian population.

¹⁴ <http://www.parliament.ge/index.php?lang=en>

¹⁵ <http://www.ccc.gov.ge>

The Role of Education and of the Mass-Media in Promoting Women

Georgian culture highly values education. The country has high literacy and primary and secondary school enrollment rates for both males and females¹⁶. The current school system in Georgia is structured as follows: primary school—grades one to five, basic classes—grades six to eight, and secondary school—grades nine to twelve. According to data from 2008, the net enrollment rate for primary schooling (98.7%) is higher than the rates for basic and secondary (80.8%) levels¹⁷. However, the patriarchal culture is still influential as one study found that parents would still prefer to send their male child to school if they could not afford to send all their children¹⁸. While slightly more women than men are enrolled in postsecondary institutions¹⁹, this is likely due to men being able to find work more easily after secondary or vocational school.

The considerable differences between the status of men and women and prescribed roles in society still are reinforced by the education system and Mass Media. Though women in Georgia are active in civil society, participate in the workforce, and are enrolled in tertiary education at relatively equal or even slightly higher rates than men, they remain expected to be the primary caretakers of children and of the household and have a limited role in the household decision-making process. Men, on the other hand, are expected to be visible in the public sphere and the primary breadwinners for the household, and generally serve as the principal decision makers of the family.²⁰ These expected roles - additional hinder career advancement and other personal fulfillment of women²¹, are promoted by lack of gender-equitable education system and mass Media.

Georgian Ministry of Education and Science officials, appear to lack a complete understanding of gender inequalities that exist in Georgia and their related consequences. In order to design

¹⁶ According to data from 2008 and 2009, adult literacy rates for both males and females are over 99%, and net primary school enrollment rates are around 99.7% for males and 97.6% for females, while net secondary school enrollment rates are around 82.4% for males and over 79.2% for females. World Bank Group website (2011). World data Bank: Georgia. Retrieved from: <http://databank.worldbank.org/ddp/home.do>

¹⁷ World Bank Group website (2011).

¹⁸ Sumbadze, N. (2008). *Gender and Society: Georgia*. Tbilisi: Institute for Policy Studies.

¹⁹ Women represent 56.5% of students in bachelor's programs and 55.3% of students in master's programs. Sumbadze, N. (2008).

²⁰ Erste Foundation website. (n.d.). Interview with Nino Tchogoshvili and Lali Pertenava on their research in Georgia. Retrieved from: <http://erstestiftung.org/gender-check/georgia-nino-tchogoshvili-and-lali-pertenava/>

²¹ Duban, E. (2010, June). *Gender Assessment USAID/Georgia*. DevTech Systems, Inc.

gender-equitable teaching process, curricula and textbooks, as well as encourage girls to enter non-traditional fields of study, the education system must develop a deeper understanding of what gender norms and stereotypes exist in Georgia and how they may be perpetuated through teaching. In big majority the scholars, teachers and school administrators are lacking gender sensitive training on a yearly basis are reproducers of discriminatory norms.

The situation is similar in terms of work of Mass Media, though broader public awareness is vital to the promotion of gender equality and women's role in society. The lack of acknowledgement of women's rights By Georgian Media and coercing traditional norms continue to prioritize men and limit opportunities for women. In spite recommendations of international organizations (CEDAW)²² and pressure from civil society organizations Georgian Media remains reluctant to promote change in Gender norms.

²² Concluding comments of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women: Georgia. Retrieved from: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/cedaw36/cc/Georgia/0647834E.pdf>

Standard of Living

The economic and social situation in the country is quite critical with high level of unemployment and poverty among population. Despite significant economic growth in the last decade, with GDP growth in the 9–12% range in 2005–07, and 6.8% GDP growth in 2011, Georgia is still considered a developing country according to the International Monetary Fund's World Economic Outlook Report²³. Georgia's GDP per capita in 2011 was \$5,491 (112th in the world), very similar to countries like Guatemala, Sri Lanka, Angola or Jordan. About 11% of the Georgian population remains poor according to World Bank's standards²⁴.

Unemployment has been a persistent problem in Georgia ever since the country gained independence in 1991. According to the National Statistics Office of Georgia²⁵, unemployment rate stood at 15.9% in 2011. This is by far the highest level among the former Soviet Union countries. However, this figure does not reflect the vast discrepancies between urban and rural areas of the country. The methodology used to keep track of unemployment produces relatively low unemployment rates for rural areas (4.8%). By contrast, the average unemployment rate in cities is 26%, while in Tbilisi unemployment is reported to be reaching 40%. Unemployment rate among women is slightly lower 15.1%, when average unemployment rate for men is 16.7%. Foreign aid plays a prominent role in Georgia's annual budget. More than US \$1.5 billion (approximately GEL 2.1 billion) were delivered annually by donors between 2009-12. The state's annual budget in each of those years was 6.75, 6.97, 7.35 and 6.6839 billion GEL²⁶.

In addition, foreign direct investment has significantly declined in Georgia since the late-2000s global recession, not least due to conflict in the country. Since the 2008 war, inflation has risen substantially and the country is facing problems in generating revenue. Georgia has also suffered substantial damage to infrastructure from the 2008 war and has had the burden of needing to provide for several thousand IDPs from conflict areas. With all of Georgia's challenges, perhaps it's greatest —especially according to the Georgian people— is to create jobs.

Economic reforms, and entering new market economy, depreciated of the staff salaries have generated intense dislocation, creating large numbers of un- and underemployed. These dire conditions have pushed hundreds of thousands of Georgians to look for work in other countries

²³ Georgia Country Report. Retrieved from: <http://www.gfmag.com/gdp-data-country-reports/269-georgia-gdp-country-report.html#axzz2ZU1NgMOa>

²⁴ World Bank Group website (2011).

²⁵ National Statistics Office of Georgia. www.geostat.ge

²⁶ Ministry of Economic and Sustainable Development of Georgia. <http://www.economy.ge/en/georgian-economic-outlook>

over the past 18 years. Ethnic majority departed abroad as labor emigrants in order to save their families from famine. According to the census 2002, 78.4% of emigrants left the country mainly to improve their living standards. Noticeably, in 1995-1998, the whole Georgian population despite of ethnicity became involved in the migration flows. The scales of temporary migration were increasing from year to year and labor migration became one of the active economic determinants of the country. As there are hardly any legal opportunities for labor migration from Georgia, these migration processes are basically irregular.

Female economic migration abroad had raised with the job placements abroad usually incompatible with professional qualifications, leading to a devaluation of women's labor and deprivation of any guarantees of social or legal protection²⁷.

On another hand, while the transition has taken a heavy toll on both women and men, women have found strategies to cope with it. Considering their background and work experience in such traditional female professions as education and health care, women easily became active in civil society by establishing and joining volunteer organizations and addressing a variety of social issues that are important for women, men and children. Although women started undertaking a number of roles in society, this new activism could not change their status in the family and society. This period witnessed the birth of a number of women's NGOs. Today, there are 200 officially registered organizations, out of which 80 are active throughout the country. Women's rights defenders have won some victories, however, their activism has been fragmented and, unfortunately, the women's movement has failed to consolidate into strong organizations, prepare effective initiatives, and communicate its concerns to the broader public.

Still, there is substantial disparity in the traditional female and male professions in Georgia: the traditional professions for women are considered education and health care. And indeed, the employment rate of women in education system is prevailing 6 times the employment rate of men, though power hierarchy remains male dominated. In the healthcare system female doctors constitute 66, 9%, as for men - the percentage of male doctors is 31.1%, there have been significant and notable differences between the level, and avenues, of participation of men compared to women. More generally, women and men have dealt with economic hardship differently, with men often being more psychologically vulnerable, as reaction to unemployment and to social welfare problems. It has been more difficult for aged men to psychologically come to terms and cope with poverty, after they had a relatively high standard of living in young age. Women have been perceived as dealing with these changes more easily; in particular, they have

²⁷ International Organization for Migration Georgia. <http://www.iom.ge/>

been able to work, more actively engage with new circumstances and they have taken on the role of breadwinner in their families. As a result of women becoming the breadwinners, men have hesitated taking the homemaker role. This has led to a double-burden for women, having to run the household as well as secure earnings for the family²⁸.

²⁸ National Statistics Office of Georgia, www.geostat.ge

Domestic Violence

Both the government and civil society of Georgia have undertaken a number of efforts to address human rights concerns, including combating DV. Georgia faced significant problems in addressing DV from the 1990s until 2005. However, there were numerous, highly collaborative efforts underway to address these issues.

In 2003 it was noted that —there is no separate legislative act prohibiting domestic violence, and the Criminal Code of Georgia does not recognize the concept; the victims of DV have very little understanding of their rights, even though they are protected under international conventions; and that factors preventing victims from reporting their situations included —psychological barriers and fear due to a lack of police assistance or assurance that courts would prosecute abusers²⁹. The report also noted limited programs in Georgia aimed to approach DV victims or to protect them from future assault³⁰.

With these ongoing services and activities in the country, in 2004, Georgia started drafting a law against domestic violence³¹. Through these efforts, in May 2006, Parliament passed the Law on Domestic Violence. Nonetheless, part of society continued to claim that DV was not a problem in Georgia. The next step was the composition and charter of the Interagency Council for the Prevention of Domestic Violence - on 26 December 2008³², which is responsible for programming in the following areas: 1) Legislation, 2) Victim Protection and Legal Aid, 3) Awareness Raising, and 4) Training and Education for service providers.

Despite these positive indications, by all accounts, capacity change in addressing DV for men and women in Georgia has moved more slowly than expected. There are continued difficulties related to cultural, gender, and socioeconomic conditions. The victim is often too frightened or too ashamed to speak about it. It would be wrong to ignore that many victims and their children may continue to live with violent partners for a significant period of time. They may do so for any number of very complex reasons.

It needs some time to make people and families much more open and willing to speak about problems and to understand that crimes within family are much more difficult and much sever than those crimes committed outside family. Because of tradition and mentality in Georgia,

²⁹ DevTech Systems Inc, 45.

³⁰ DevTech Systems Inc, 45

³¹ Government of Georgia. “Law of Georgia on the Prevention of Domestic Violence, Protection of and Assistance to Victims of Domestic Violence.” 2006

³² Government of Georgia (GoG), “Composition and Charter of Interagency Council for the Prevention of Domestic Violence.” 2008

women are ashamed to speak about DV and not tolerate the violence in sake of keeping the family together.

The general differences in capacity to address DV among the regions of Georgia are an important issue, as in regions and villages family relationships are much more closed.

The lack of data on victims of domestic violence is a key problem in Georgia. Every other agency has statistics, but general statistics doesn't exist. The challenge is that there is duplication and overlap of the existing statistics, but not necessarily shared within stakeholders. Finally, to reach remote regions of the country and challenge cultural norms and stereotypes, it is essential to work on a community level and be informed by the work of locals. In future awareness raising campaigns, particularly in rural areas of Georgia, more robust efforts should be made to reach people in languages other than Georgian, and sensitivity to the evolving needs of IDP groups and sexual minorities should also be considered.

Positive aspects of the DV law include that it prioritizes the protection and needs of victims rather than focusing primarily on prosecution of offenders. The DV law amendments passed in 2009 addressed some of the gaps in the original legislation, such as elaboration on the details of rehabilitation for offenders and increased protection of victims.

Though police practice has improved, some police procedures have the potential to put victims at further risk and may lead victims to choose not call the police. Strong efforts have been made to sensitize police about DV, and police are undertaking wholehearted efforts to improve practices related to DV victims. Though, high levels of staff turnover within all professions create gaps in knowledge about DV.

Awareness about DV appears to have increased among the general population. Much of the DV awareness raising materials had been translated into multiple languages in order to target non-Georgian speaking citizens. However, DV continues to be viewed as a private matter. DV awareness raising programs did not focus enough on reaching out people living in rural areas and to sexual minorities. Funding limitations impede stakeholders' ability to maintain continuous awareness raising efforts.

Enforcement of the legal framework in the field of gender equality

The Government of Georgia has a history of making efforts to promote gender equality in the country.

A State Commission on Elaboration of the State Policy for Women's Advancement was established in 1998. The Commission elaborated a draft "National Action Plan for Improving Women's Conditions in Georgia for 1998-2000", which was approved by the President of Georgia. The Plan had the following priorities: 1) establishment of Institutional Mechanism; 2) Increase women's role and participation in decision-making processes; 3) Economic policy; 4) Women and poverty; 5) Women and armed conflicts; 6) Women and health improvement; 7) Women's rights.

After the Rose Revolution of 2003 Georgia strengthened the development of a gender equality policy, together with other important reforms, which were reflected in pronounced political, social, and economic transformations in Georgia.

International Framework

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

(1994): This Convention guarantees women equal rights with men in many spheres of life, including education, employment, health care, political participation, nationality, and marriage. The Convention also "takes an important place in bringing the female half of humanity into the focus of human rights concerns."³³

Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995): The Platform for Action is a groundbreaking agenda for women's empowerment that brought the concept of gender mainstreaming into the international discourse. It aims to remove "all the obstacles to women's active participation in all spheres of public and private life through a full and equal share in economic, social, cultural, and political decision-making."³⁴

European Convention on Human Rights (1999): This Convention sets forth a number of fundamental rights and freedoms. Article 14 prohibits discrimination with respect to rights under the Convention³⁵.

³³ United Nations General Assembly. (1979, December 18). Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women.

³⁴ United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women. (1995, September 15). Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

³⁵ Council of Europe. (1950, November 4). European Convention on Human Rights.

Millennium Declaration (2000): This Declaration created the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), eight goals to be achieved by 2015 that respond to the world's major development challenges. They form a blueprint agreed upon by the majority of the world's countries and as well as the world's leading development institutions. Goal 3, which is to promote gender equality and empower women, is particularly applicable³⁶.

Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (2002): The Optional Protocol enables individuals to raise complaints with the CEDAW Committee and allows the Committee to investigate human rights violations in member states. By ratifying the Optional Protocol, Georgia recognized the competence of the CEDAW Committee to receive and consider complaints from individuals or groups within its jurisdiction³⁷.

The Government of Georgia faces significant challenges with regard to the implementation of the Convention on the occupied territories of Abkhazia, Georgia and Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia, where the Government of Georgia is unable to exercise effective control.

Domestic Framework

Constitution of the Republic of Georgia (1995): The Constitution is the supreme law of Georgia. The following articles of the Constitution are particularly applicable: Article 6, which states that legislation shall correspond to universally recognized principles and rules of international law; Article 7, which provides that the state shall recognize and protect universally recognized human rights and freedoms; Article 14, which posits that everyone is equal before law regardless of race, color, language, sex, religion, political and other opinions³⁸.

State Concept of Georgia on Gender Equality (2006): The Concept institutionalizes the significance and priority for equality of women and men in Georgian society. The Concept was developed in line with the ideals behind the Rose Revolution, when Georgians expressed their will to build a democratic state. It was thus believed that every Georgian should be given equal rights in order for every citizen to contribute to the further development of the state. The Concept

³⁶ United Nations General Assembly. (2000, September 8). Resolution Adopted by the General Assembly: United Nations Millennium Declaration

³⁷ United Nations General Assembly. (1999, October 6). Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

³⁸Parliament of Georgia. (1995, August 24). Constitution of the Republic of Georgia.

is primarily philosophical and states few actual concerns of women in Georgia. Nonetheless, the Concept is viewed as a precursor to the Law on Gender Equality³⁹.

The Law Combating Trafficking in Persons (2006): The Law and definitions of human trafficking rely on acts of force, fraud, and coercion to exploit a person as labor or services. With force, fraud, and coercion being the main factors of human trafficking, this definition is dependent upon acts of violence against the trafficked victim.

The Government created the State Fund for Protection and Support of Victims of Trafficking (the body responsible for protecting, rehabilitating, and sheltering victims of trafficking). A decree by the President in 2006 designated the following government agency representatives to be members of the Interagency Council for TIP: Minister of Justice, Chairman of the Coordination Council Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Labor, Health and Social Affairs Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Interior Deputy, Minister of the Ministry of Justice, Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The Law on the Suppression of Domestic Violence, Protection and Assistance of the Victims of Domestic Violence (2006): After passing the Law the subsequent National Action Plan was developed. The Law represented significant first steps in establishing legislative regulation and protection for men and women victims of DV in Georgia. The scope of the Law is to define domestic violence and to provide legal and organizational methods to identify and combat DV. It also aims to guarantee protections in both legal and social spheres for DV victims⁴⁰.

In December 2009, amendments to the DV law were approved and adopted by the Parliament. Among other issues, these amendments aim to address with more specificity rehabilitation services for DV perpetrators, and to reassess the national referral mechanism. These changes are likely to have a strong effect moving forward on the identification and treatment of DV victims and perpetrators alike.

Law on Gender Equality (March 2010): The Law establishes the fundamental guarantees of equal rights, freedoms, and opportunities of women and men granted by the Constitution, defined legal mechanisms, and conditions for their implementation in relevant spheres of social

³⁹ Parliament of Georgia. (2006, July). State Concept of Georgia on Gender Equality.

⁴⁰ Criminalization of Trafficking in Persons in 2003, “Law of Georgia on the Prevention of Domestic Violence, Protection of and Assistance to Victims of Domestic Violence” in 2006, and the “Law of Georgia on Combating Human Trafficking” in 2006

life. The Law mandates the collection of data disaggregated by sex; equality in the spheres of education, labor relations, family relations, healthcare, and social protection; and equal voting rights for men and women. The Law names the Gender Equality Advisory Council responsible for developing the National Action Plan for Gender Equality, ensuring its coordination, and monitoring its implementation. The Council shall submit annual reports on the status of gender equality to Parliament. The Office of the Public Defender is granted authority to monitor and take responsive measures on violations of gender equality. The law also introduces gender-responsive planning and budgeting on the part of the government⁴¹.

The Georgian Government also adopted a number of measures to address gender inequality in Georgia, including **the National Action Plan on Security Council Resolution 1325** (2011) and **amendment to the Electoral Law – the additional financial support to the political parties** that have 20% of women on their party lists (2012).

All the novelties in the Georgian legislation and practices, including the drafting of the above-mentioned strategies, coordination councils, institutional mechanisms and laws were introduced and implemented with the limited capacity.

To address the limited availability of sex disaggregated statistical data to assess progress and trends over time Georgia addressed the issue of enhancing collection of data disaggregated by sex covering entire population, and the sectors of health care, social security, education, households, employment and unemployment, incomes and expenditure, business sector, agriculture, crime, power. In this regard the reference shall be made to publication of the National Statistics Office of Georgia “Women and Men in Georgia”, published in 2011 in Tbilisi and the Statistical Booklet published by the Department of Statistics, Ministry of Economic Development of Georgia, in 2008 called “Women and Men in Georgia”.

Although a continued stream of legislation has been passed since 2006 to address gender inequality in Georgia, several important gaps persist. Georgia ranks 86th out of 135 countries on the World Economic Forum’s Global Gender Gap index⁴². Other Southern Caucasus countries have comparable rankings, with Armenia at 84th place and Azerbaijan at 91st.

⁴¹ Parliament of Georgia. (2010, March 27). Law of Georgia on Gender Equality.

⁴² www.weforum.org/reports/global-gender-gap-report-2012

Conclusions

The significant effort has been made to promote women's participation in decision-making at the international and national levels. The Georgian Government showed clear commitment to gender equality through developing national legal framework, institutional mechanisms and policies to address women's participation in decision-making. Nevertheless, it should be mentioned that creation of equal opportunities for women and men and advancement of women's participation in decision making, require greater commitment and accountability from all actors, including the State. Women remain underrepresented in decision-making positions across the most power structures and the governing bodies and are deprived of equal opportunity to reflect their concerns, needs and interests in political decisions. The underrepresentation of women in decision-making process hampers the economic growth and democratic development in Georgia. Promotion of women's participation in politics is an essential strategy for the Georgia's development, and requires additional legal measures, such as mandatory quotas, sanctions and etc. The state programming and financial support is also lacking. The cultural barriers, socio-economic constrains are main obstacles for full representation of women in politics and gender balanced governance. The role of education and mass media is among the most important in encouragement of the society to support women's advancement and success in politics. The civil society and mass media are the key players in promoting women's leadership and forming bases for gender inclusive governance.