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Why Gender in Georgian Climate Policies?

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Abstract

This article addresses the lack of gender responsiveness and highlights the necessity for the involvement of women in climate policies and actions in Georgia. The need for mainstreaming gender in climate policies and actions is being recognised and encouraged by international researchers and agencies. Although considerable progress on legislative equality has been made in recent years, gender is not yet mainstreamed into any climate or energy policies in Georgia, with the exception of the Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC). Based on analyses of existing documents and policies related to climate change, this paper suggests that the Georgian government should develop gender-responsive climate policies through an intersectional approach, building capacity on gender mainstreaming in the relevant sectors, upscaling existing best practices by civil society, grassroots organisations and national experts, and conducting deep gender analysis as stipulated by the NDC.

Introduction

Research shows that climate adaptation and mitigation actions are more successful in achieving their objectives and are better accepted when gender is mainstreamed and when they are implemented in a gender-responsive manner (Lv/ Deng, 2019). Countries that have higher women's participation and gender equality have lower climate gas emission, when all other relevant variables, such as population or gross domestic product (GDP), on emissions are controlled (Ergas, 2012). Increased women's participation in climate policy has led to higher effectiveness and responsiveness of climate and environmental policies (Burns/ Daniel, 2020).

Gender inequality affects access to and control over resources, institutional structures, social, cultural and formal networks and decision-making processes. Poorly designed or implemented climate solutions can actually exacerbate gender and social inequality, among other adverse environmental and social impacts (IPCC, 2018).

Gender mainstreaming or gender-responsiveness of national policies should not only mean considering women as a vulnerable group, or indeed equal participation of women and men. It is essential to do in-depth analysis to investigate the injustices that hinder gender-responsive policy making (UNIDO, 2014). Assessing gender-based inequalities followed by systematic main-

streaming of gender into climate policies and actions ensures that these are appropriate to the local context and address the needs and rights of women and men as stakeholders, and that they have equal access to resources, decision-making and benefits of climate actions (Burns/ Daniel, 2020).

International Obligations

Internationally, the ecofeminist movement has been pushing to include gender in environmental and climate policies since the 1990s (EEB/ WECF, 2021). One of the key areas for change in the Beijing declaration (United Nations, 1995) was the intersection of gender and environmental dimensions. It calls on governments and organisations to conduct gender-responsive research and create a platform where women are involved in decision-making processes related to sustainable development. The platform states that governments should 'establish strategies and mechanisms to increase the proportion of women, particularly at grass-roots levels', as 'their experience and skills in advocacy for and monitoring of proper natural resource management too often remain marginalised in policy-making and decision-making bodies, as well as in educational institutions and environment-related agencies at the managerial level' (UN, 1995, pp. 104–105).

In 2015, the Paris Agreement under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) recognised the need for gender equality as a preambular principle for all climate action. As a mechanism of the Paris Agreement, National Determined Contributions (NDCs) stipulating national climate goals and objectives should have references to gender included in terms of equality, gender-responsiveness, and women's empowerment as well as leadership in climate actions (Siegele, 2020).

The Enhanced Lima Work Programme on Gender (ELWPG) and its Gender Action Plan (GAP) was adopted at the Conference of the Parties (COP) 25 one year after the Paris Agreement. It aims to set up platforms for capacity building on gender and to further mainstream gender in 'all relevant targets and goals in activities under the Convention [UNFCCC]' to increase 'effectiveness, fairness, and sustainability' (Burns/ Daniel, 2020). Georgia is party to the Beijing platform and the Paris Agreement, as well as being signatory of the ELWPG; thus, it is obliged to integrate gender and empower women as described.

Gender in Georgia's Climate Practices

Women as Vulnerable Group and Managers of Resources

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO, 2010), women are more sensitive towards climate change

than men, due both to their physiology and to economic and social barriers. In most municipalities of Georgia, more women than men live below the poverty line. Thus, the government will need to make greater efforts to ensure adaptation to climate change of this vulnerable population group at all levels (National Association of Local Authorities of Georgia, 2016).

The unsustainable energy situation especially in rural areas affects women disproportionately (UNECE, 2020). In rural areas, women have less access to clean and easily obtainable cooking and lighting fuel resources. Consequently, women have to do more physical work to take care of the household, leaving less time for self-development due to the lack of access to electricity. Increasing access to energy would reduce women's physical labour burden and contribute to women's economic empowerment as they could access the opportunity to work from home; furthermore, reliable lighting would contribute to greater security for women (UNECE, 2020).

In Georgia, households spend up to 25% of their income on energy bills, while not being able to keep their poorly insulated houses comfortable during winter. Women spend more time at home because many of them are housewives, and therefore spend most of the day caring for children and the household (WECF, 2016). Thus, spending more time inside, women and children suffer more from indoor air pollution caused by the use of solid fuels in inefficient stoves for heating (affecting 80% of the rural population) and cooking (affecting 20% of the total population) (WECF, 2020).

The National Sustainable Energy Action Plan of Georgia (NSEAP) has acknowledged that women are the main energy users in rural communities as they spend most of their time cooking on wood stoves. Women use ecosystem services differently from men, as their traditional roles in the household and community require them to look after cattle grazing in the forest and collect non-timber forest products, such as wild berries and nuts, medicinal herbs, mushrooms, etc. (UNECE, 2020).

The report 'Gender Assessment of Agriculture and Local Development Systems' confirmed the crucial role of women as resource managers, as women were found to engage in agricultural activities on 80 more days per year than men. Although women are more involved in agricultural work, they have 20% less access to information about the agricultural sector and any state services available compared to men. According to the UN Women/ SCO/ ADC's report, there are three possible reasons for this. First, agricultural education is limited in Georgia, especially in rural areas because there are no proper programs available to advance expertise in the agricultural sector. Stereotypes dictate to women that this field is not suitable for them, and social and cultural restrictions prevent women from advancing in the agri-

cultural sector. Finally, since women spend most of their time caring for the household, they don't have time to develop new skills (UN Women/ SCO/ ADC, 2018).

Several civil society initiatives have recognised women's distinct role in managing energy resources and designed gender-sensitive pilot interventions in Georgia accordingly (WECF 2015; CENN, website). Most national policy documents on energy or climate have yet to do so.

Women as Agents of Change and Decision-Makers

With only 22% of parliamentarians and 33% of ministers in 2021, women are not represented equally in Georgia's government (Parliament of Georgia, website; Government of Georgia, website). The women's participation rate in UNFCCC missions in Georgia has been increasing up to around, but rarely more than 50% over the previous years, and in the past five years a woman was appointed as head of delegation three times. The ELWPG encourages parties to appoint and provide support for a member of the UNFCCC country delegation as 'National and Climate Change Focal Point (NGCCFP) for climate negotiations, implementation and monitoring'. They are in charge of coordinating gender mainstreaming in the national climate policies and get specific support from the UNFCCC. By January 2021, 83 countries have submitted a NGCCFP, among them Georgia.

Georgia's updated NDC has a separate section on gender and climate change that aims to mainstream gender, further equal participation, empower women, build capacity, and develop gender-responsive climate policies.

The NDC also addresses Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5, which aims to eliminate gender inequality and discrimination against women and girls by means of their economic, political and social empowerment. However, the NDC excludes target 5c of SDG 5, which underlines the importance of taking legislative measures to achieve gender equality.

In addition, the document mentions the role of women as educators, decision-makers and agents of change, their active involvement in the education system, and their unique position to increase energy efficiency in households. However, it does not foster the discussion on how women's empowerment can be achieved through their involvement in decision-making processes or measures to implement any of the other gender aims, nor does it formulate measurable targets. Surprisingly, the draft Climate Action Strategy Plan (CASP) (MEPA, 2020), which outlines the implementation plan of the NDC, does not mention gender in any way. Neither is women's equal participation in climate policies and actions addressed in the Low Emission Development

Strategy (LEDS), Green Budget, National Communication (NC), or the Association Agreement.

Nevertheless, gender has been integrated into Georgia's two Green Climate Fund (GCF) proposals and Gender Action Plans (GAPs), as mandated by the GCF. These GAPs include gender training and 30% women's representation in stakeholder consultations/staff, as well as analysis on gender roles and impacts (UNDP, 2018; GIZ, 2020). The LEDS includes a Communication and Awareness-Raising Strategy also aiming to 'address the issues of gender, youth and people with disabilities (PWD) in its outreach efforts'.

Additionally, Georgia has registered a gender-sensitive Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Action (NAMA) on the efficient use of biomass at the UNFCCC and submitted it for funding to the NAMA Facility, a union of donors funding low-carbon development initiatives. Despite high ratings and international interest, it has not been financed due to geographical priorities. The NAMA was developed by a coalition of civil society organisations and included women's empowerment targets such as a quota on women in decision-making, a gender-sensitive financial mechanism and capacity building for women and men (WECF, 2015).

Most Civil society organisations have not been integrating a gender approach into its climate actions, with the exceptions of Women Engage for a Common Future (WECF), Caucasus Environmental NGO Network (CENN) and to some extent the Rural Community Development Agency (RCDA). With the exception of the previously mentioned NAMA, civil society did not take a stance on advocating for gender-responsive climate policies, despite an active dialogue between environmental NGOs and decision-makers. They lack the capacity and awareness to integrate gender approaches into environmental action and advocacy. Women and gender NGOs, on the other hand, are not actively involved in climate actions or policies, as they lack the technical expertise on combating climate change. Civil society in Georgia works in silos, each in their own area of expertise, and it lacks cooperation.

Gender-Sensitive Reporting and Monitoring

The NDC intends to collect and manage gender-disaggregated data on greenhouse gas mitigation and climate change adaptation and conduct gender analysis where relevant. However, no methodology has been laid out, nor have gender-disaggregated data been presented publicly except for reports by civil society. The Biannual Update Report (BUR) (MEPA, 2018) and fourth NC (MEPA, 2021) do not consider gender at all.

According to the Draft National Sustainable Energy Action Plan of Georgia, the Georgian government intends to include gender in every aspect of each SDG,

and put 'special emphasis on ensuring that all SDGs have gender-sensitive indicators and that gender equality policies reflect commitments made in the nationalized SDGs and their targets' (UNECE, 2020, p. 43). The plan does not discuss any further how this can be shaped. Even though the international SDG 13 mentions gender (target 13B), this has not yet been adopted in the national targets.

The 2017 Energy Survey¹ gives an extended overview of all issues that households in Georgia are struggling with. The gender of respondents was recorded, but was not considered in the survey. The household as 'black box' is used in all analyses.

Recommendations on How to Strengthen Gender Responsiveness and Participation of Women in Climate Issues

Georgia was one of 64 countries (out of 195) which referred to gender in its Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC) in 2016 and elaborated on it more in its NDC in 2020. The NDC intends to mainstream a gender-sensitive approach and has mentioned the most important aspects and tools to reach gender responsiveness in climate action and policies. However, the CAP and CSAP do not describe in any way how to ensure gender-responsive climate actions. Gender is being touched upon in some of the other climate-related policies and plans, but there is no consistent strategy.

Georgia is part of all gender-related conventions and has made remarkable progress on implementing SDG 5 (WeResearch, 2019). It has integrated women's rights almost completely up to international standards into the national legislation. But gender mainstreaming in environmental policies and actions requires both financial and human resources, experience and expertise. It requires an inter-sectoral approach throughout different ministries, institutions and civil society.

To strengthen gender responsiveness and participation of women in climate policies and actions, we recommend the following measures and steps:

- Full implementation of the NDC, thus ensuring women taking leadership roles in creating gender-responsive policies is a key aspect of the Georgian state's agenda in combating climate change and achieving sustainable development. The Georgian state should ensure that women are equally represented in decision-making processes at local, national and country delegate levels to UNFCCC missions.
- To achieve this, an inter-sectional approach is key. Through increased inter-departmental and inter-sectoral communication, a consistent gender strategy can be developed and integrated into all relevant policies and actions as laid out in the NDC. Gender experts from the national ministries and institutions, international organisations and national experts can be involved in the development of climate policies. Georgia's NGCCFP should be empowered to coordinate the process with the support of international organisations.
- All organisations working on climate issues should build capacity on gender and women's empowerment, including international and civil society organisations. During the COPs, the delegation can take part in different workshops on gender. Also on a national level, workshops addressing the topic can be organised upon request by international organisations such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Climate Technology Center and Network (CTCN) or the UNFCCC. International organisations have developed a wealth of guidance on all aspects of gender mainstreaming in climate policies and actions (UN Women, 2016).
- The climate department under the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia is in general open to civil society involvement from both the gender- and environmentally-oriented organisations. This should be facilitated to a greater degree through public reviews, consultation meetings and appropriate funding, with a focus on a more active involvement of women's organisations, while building capacity of the environmental sector on gender. Civil society and international organisations can provide expertise on mainstreaming gender in a consistent manner in climate policies and actions. This approach should include empowering, involving and building capacity of grassroots organisations. They are guardians of their environment and a valuable source of information, ensuring that planned climate actions are beneficial for the local population. Grassroot organisations have a direct interest in preserving their environment and first-hand experience with local ecological and social realities. Their involvement and support is crucial for climate actions to succeed, as the recent developments around the Namakhvani hydropower project demonstrate.²
- In order to implement the NDC's intention to use gender-disaggregated data and carry out gender analysis where necessary, the relevant institutions should be engaged, including those working on the energy survey, NCs, BURs and CAPs. In order to develop effective policies, it is necessary to first adequately

1 See https://www.geostat.ge/media/20691/energoresursebi_2017.pdf (accessed 19 August 2021).

2 See <https://oc-media.org/thousands-turn-out-for-kutaisi-hydropower-protest/> (accessed 19. August 2021).

assess the situation by using gender-disaggregated data, taking into account sex (the biological attribute of being female or male), gender (referring to socially constructed roles), race, ethnicity, location,

migration status, marriage status and so on (Duerto Valero, 2019). This process requires resources and can take years to update missing information and track the relevant changes (OECD, 2015).

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Ana Muradashvili received her M.A in Gender Studies from the University of Buffalo, USA, committed to creating an equal, safe, and inclusive environment for women in Georgia. As an activist, she promotes women's participation in politics and advocates for girl's education, with a focus on ethnic minority rights.

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