



ქალთა ფონდი საქართველოში
WOMEN'S FUND IN GEORGIA



SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN GEORGIA (Second Phase)



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(Second Phase)

Tbilisi

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Preface

The following research was conducted within the framework of the Women's Fund in Georgia's project «Women's Rights and Environmental Justice» by the organization We Research, with the financial support of the German Women's fund filia.die frauenstiftung.

The research team wants to thank the participants of discussions and interviewees for taking part in the research and for their time spent on it. We would like to express our special thanks to the staff of "Women's Fund in Georgia", as well as to experts, Maia Barkaia and Tamar Antidze for their contribution to the research.

Opinions and conclusions expressed in the present research may not reflect the position of "Women's Fund in Georgia".

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KEY FINDINGS

- ➔ The intersection of environmental and gender equality is a new field for the key actors working on the environmental as well as on gender equality issues. Its implementation is challenging for most of the parties concerned. The lack of information, experience, and resources is considered as a significant barrier for the key actors working on environmental issues to mainstream gender aspect in their ongoing activities. Absence of specific action plans and/or widespread gender neutral and gender stereotypical attitudes is also considered as challenging.
- ➔ The influence of international donor organizations' agenda is more evident in the public rather than in the non-governmental sector. Implementation of the policy action points defined by the donor organizations is difficult for the parties concerned.
- ➔ The existing partnership practices between the stakeholders focusing on the environmental issues are positively evaluated by the key stakeholders. However, the linkages between the state agencies and organizations working on the environmental and gender issues are weak.
- ➔ According to the discourse prevailing in Georgia, doing housework is considered a woman's duty. Being chained to a domestic sphere makes women more vulnerable to negative impacts caused by climate change and natural disasters. According to the findings, even if women realize the negative impact of the changes happening in the environment on their everyday life, they perceive it as a norm and therefore, they do not try to advocate and lobby addressing these issues at the municipal level.

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- ➔ According to focus group participants, vulnerability caused due to the environmental changes is determined by the territorial attachment, economic status and social connections. It is noteworthy that in comparison to men, having lower income and lower participation in the workforce make women more vulnerable to environmental changes. However, the interviewees do not discuss economic vulnerability issues with specific reference to gender.
 - ➔ According to the interviewees, the involvement of women in the decision-making process on community level is lower compared to men. However, according to the community members there is a group of „active women“ that lobby their position and women agenda on the municipal level.

INTRODUCTION

Women's Fund in Georgia within the framework of a project „Global Alliance for Green and Gender Action“ (GAGGA) conducted research “Situational Analysis and Recommendations on Environmental Justice and Women's Rights in Georgia”. Currently, the second phase of the research is implemented with the financial support of the German Women's Fund filia.die frauenstiftung. The first phase of the research was conducted in 2017 and implied a thorough analysis of documents. The desk research included analysis of international and national documents related to the environmental justice and women's rights, as well as reviewing existing projects and initiatives containing these issues.

Environmental justice means equal and fair distribution of environmental benefits and burdens on population, as well as equal access to the information concerning environmental protection and an equal opportunity for engagement.¹ In the past, the environmental justice movement was mainly concerned around race and class struggle, but today it is believed that it is impossible to achieve environmental justice without gender analysis of environmental issues. Challenges related to the environmental field (e.g. climate change and associated natural or anthropogenic changes, air, soil and water contamination, etc.) are specifically affecting women and appropriate measures need to be taken for their mitigation. It should be noted that the first record in the international documents on environmental justice in which women were referred as a separate group appeared only in the 1990s. In Georgia, according to the desk research findings, there is a lack of intersection of environmental justice and gender issues at the policy level. The analysis of the documents revealed that the policy documents, such as Constitution, Law on “Environmental Protection” and other legislative acts and strategic documents are gender-neutral and do not focus on women's empowerment aspect. Similarly, policy documents on women's rights and gender equality do not integrate environmental issues.

There is a lack of projects that intentionally cover both, envi-

¹ Dankelman, I. (2010). *Gender and Climate Change. An Introduction*. London: Earthscan

ronmental justice and women's rights, and they mainly are implemented by non-governmental organizations.

With the aim to enrich the findings of the desk research with the perspectives of the stakeholders, key informants and the local population, the qualitative research was conducted. The objective of the research was to analyze the impact of natural and anthropogenic changes in women and evaluate the level of integration of strategies to address the results of those changes in the respective policies.

More specifically, the following research objectives were defined:

- The assessment of the priority of the intersection between the environmental and gender equality issues by the stakeholders;
- Evaluating the level of collaboration and partnership among the agencies (governmental/ non-governmental) working on environmental and gender issues;
- Analyzing the impact of the changes caused by natural disasters on the daily life of women/men;
- Assessing the awareness of women and men regarding disaster risk reduction in particular, how to reduce the damage caused by the natural hazards and its mitigation measures;
- Identifying the role of women and men in the activities focusing on the protection of environment;
- Analyzing the level of engagement of women in the decision making process related to the protection of environment.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research methods were used within the framework of the research. In particular, focus group discussions (FGDs) and face-to-face interviews were conducted with the key stakeholders and community members. Fieldwork was held in three municipalities: Dedoplistskaro (Kakheti), Borjomi (Samtskhe-Javakheti) and Keda (Adjara). Further, in order to obtain information on a national level, interviews with the stakeholders were also conducted in Tbilisi.

The research had two main target groups – stakeholders working on environmental issues and community members. However, in order to present the perspective of the actors working on gender issues as well, meetings were held with a variety of the state departments working on gender equality or women empowerment issues and with an NGO.

The interviews were held a) with representatives of the State institutions – on central level (6 face-to-face and 2 group interviews) and on a local municipality level (4 interviews); b) with international and/or donor organizations (4 interviews), with local NGOs (4 interviews). Altogether, 20 interviews were completed.

Initially, it was planned to conduct FGDs with the representatives of local NGOs in three municipalities. However, focus groups were held only in Dedoplistskaro and Borjomi. As for Keda, due to the lack of participants, a face-to-face interview was conducted with a representative of an NGO in lieu of FGD.

Further, 6 FGDs were held with the representatives of the local community members. Since the research analyzed the impact of the environmental changes from a gender perspective, the FGDs were held separately with women and men. Accordingly, two focus groups were held in each location. To obtain more diverse perspectives, the FGD participants were from the central administration area (town) as well as from the surrounding villages.

The table below shows the number of completed interviews and FGDs per target groups and location areas:

Interviewees or a Target Group	Method	Quantity	Location
State Policy Makers	Interview	8	Tbilisi
Representatives of the Local Municipality	Interview	4	Kakheti, Samtskhe-Javakheti, Adjara
International and/or Donor Organizations	Interview	4	Tbilisi
NGOs (central level)	Interview	4	Tbilisi
NGOs (local level)	Interview FGD	1 2	Kakheti, Samtskhe-Javakheti, Adjara
Community members	FGD	6	Kakheti, Samtskhe-Javakheti, Adjara

Each interview and FGD was audio recorded, transcribed, and analyzed on a later stage of the research.

RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

Current research findings provide a general overview of environmental issues in Georgia and a variety of viewpoints from the state, non-state and community representatives though the report does not provide analysis through the lenses of diverse and specific areas of environmental protection.

Within the framework of the research, only the perspectives of the organizations and/or individuals working on the environmental issues were explored. Therefore, the viewpoints of the organizations working on gender issues are not captured in the report.

Participants of the FGDs were active citizens residing at the locations covered in the framework of the project. In some cases, they had no experience of the natural disasters that were discussed during the FGDs. Therefore, the research is focusing to present the participants' opinions and attitudes rather than the actual experiences.

To the best of our knowledge, the current research is one of the first attempts to analyze the intersection of the environmental justice and gender equality, thus the findings provide a general overview rather than a detailed explanation of the subject under study. Based on the findings, the future research might have a more focused research objective and explore the specific issue within the environmental protection areas, e.g. revealing the cultural factors and aspects in the areas of environmental justice, etc.

KEY FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH

1. EVALUATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION

The present sub-chapter contains perspectives on the environmental and the gender policy of the government and non-governmental agencies working on environmental issues. It also provides an overview of the challenges faced by the key stakeholders during the implementation of the respective policy, as well as the level of influence from the donor organizations and existing partnership practices between the agencies and/or individuals.

1.1 Environmental Policy

According to the results of the desk research, despite the lack of linkages between environmental and gender issues, the intersection of these topics are raising up. The representatives of the state institutions on both central and local levels indicate that intersection of gender and environmental issues is important and it is necessary to be managed on the policy level. However, effective steps in this direction are mainly made by international organizations and they try to promote mainstreaming the gender-sensitive approaches in environmental policy documents:

“We’ve been trying to make all the environmental policy documents that are under development gender sensitive. We have tried to include these issues into the formal documents and now gender aspects are reflected in the following documents: National Forestry Concept, Biodiversity Strategy, and Forest Strategy Project...”(International NGO).

It should be mentioned that according to the desk research, all the documents in which gender issues are underlined are doc-

uments developed at the national level. **As for the municipal level, no strategic document has been elaborated in which there is an intersection of gender and environmental issues.**

1.2 Implementation of Environmental Policy

It is a challenge to bring the existing state policy on environmental issues into action. The research findings indicate that there are agencies and organizations that successfully implement projects and carry out activities in this direction and they already obtained a significant experience. However, for some of the interviewees, **although intersection of the environment and gender is a familiar topic, they fail to incorporate it in their respective activities.**

The findings indicate a variety of the challenges that limit at this stage, the intersection of environmental and gender issues and its successful transition to practice:

- ➔ Lack of information, experience and resources;
- ➔ Difficulty in putting policy into practice;
- ➔ prevalence of gender neutral and gender stereotypical attitudes;

Lack of information, experience and resources are identified as a significant challenging factor by the interviewees, for a successful mainstreaming of gender equality in environmental issues. The representatives of the state institutions working on environmental protection issues claim that the gender issue is a new topic in the field of environment and a solid **experience in this direction has not yet been gained.**

“We lack the experience not because somebody has not learned something, but because this is a new direction.” (Governmental Organization)

The interviewees also discussed the **lack of awareness and information**. On the one hand, there is a need for information regarding the respective state policy and awareness raising on existing policy documents. On the other hand, there is a demand for in-depth information on understanding the intersection of environmental and gender equality issues. The interviewees express their willingness to strengthen their skills and deepen their knowledge with this regard.

“On the one hand, there is a common understanding of the concept, but I repeat once again that in this respect, we also need the capacity building so we could better manage or reflect these issues in further actions.” (Governmental Organization)

“[Intersection of gender/environment] should happen at all levels but this is so unfamiliar to me, (...) that I have no specific point of view and opinion with this regard.” (Local Municipality)

It is essential to analyse interviewees’ understanding of gender mainstreaming. For the majority of the representatives of the state agencies, mainstreaming gender equality in policy and projects mainly is practiced through maintaining the gender-balanced workforce in the respective departments and engaging an equal number of men and women beneficiaries in the projects.

“To my mind our municipality [is successful] in that regard. For example in terms of employment, in terms of meeting with women ... Actually, all the Boards, whether it is a Supervisory Board, Advisory Board at the Mayor or any other are structured in such a way that 60-70% of their members are women” (Local Municipality).

According to the respondents, **a lack of human resources** is also a significant challenge. In particular, the state agencies working on the environmental issues do not have a dedicated employee who will ensure gender equality, attend trainings on these issues

and will be responsible for gender mainstreaming. It is noteworthy that, in certain cases, especially while implementing projects funded by the international donors, an international or a local gender expert is considered to be involved in the project, though, this is also related to additional resources.

The above-referred challenges limit the organizations working on environmental issues to mainstream gender equality in the respective activities which in turn impede achieving tangible results.

The lack of information was considered as a significant challenge that limits the opportunity of putting policy into practice. It should be mentioned, that the state policy notes on the intersection of environment and gender are general and are not reflected in action plans. Therefore, for the representatives of the state institutions, both on central and local levels, it is indistinct how to ensure an intersection of environmental and gender equality issues and what are the specific steps to be taken to implement it successfully.

“Gender and climate are closely interconnected. It would be great if it is considered in an action plan or policy. Not the superficial way, but with a detailed action plan indicating what we should do in this direction; with specific action points showing where we are and where we should go.” (Local Municipality)

As mentioned above, these topics are brand new, therefore, there is a lack of information and experience. Consequently, it is challenging for the interviewees to conceive how to implement specific activities that cover both topics.

“The project that we are implementing at the moment is related to the multi-functional forest management in Borjomi. How should one mainstream gender in this case? I wrote a project on the topic. However, we have not considered gender issues at all and I can’t even see how it could be considered.” (Local NGO of the region)

Considering the novelty of the topic and a lack of strategic standpoint, it is essential to elaborate a detailed action plan and provide the key stakeholders with in-depth information regarding the policy documents.

The prevalence of gender neutral, in some cases, gender stereotypical attitudes are also considered as a key challenge. Interviews revealed that community members fail to recognize that environmental changes have a different impact on women and men. The respondents mostly have **gender-neutral attitudes with this regard**,

“Maybe, we don’t have [gender issues] reflected in strategic documents. If something is done, there is a general record on population. But (...) everything that is done, is done for the population ... women are the part of the same population, an important and plenipotentiary part.” (Local Municipality)

Besides gender-neutral attitudes, **gender stereotypes are prevalent among the respondents**. Even though they agree that it is important to mainstream gender issues, this statement has no ground and is not supported with their justification. The respondents still have the gendered division of men’s and women’s activities:

“[Gender issues should be considered in policy documents] but you know what? A woman is still a woman. And a woman is weak.” [Local NGO of the region]

Existence of such attitudes limits the opportunity of mainstreaming gender equality in environmental protection issues. The interviewees are aware that the intersection of these fields is considered as a good practice however, the deeply rooted conservative value system remains the same. Considering the challenges at the attitudinal level, it is essential to provide the key stakeholders with the in-depth information on the importance of gender mainstreaming and the impact of its implementation.

Not only gender-neutral attitudes are prevalent but also **the**

gender stereotypes are widespread in society. Environmental issues are often considered as a men's field, which in turn challenges engagement of women and limits them to access the field.

“It turned out that the forest sector is dominated by men (...) which, obviously, did not gain great interest from women. (...), this strategic planning showed us that it is not necessary to force women to attend the discussions on the issues that are not interesting for them. But there are fields where women are present. For example, it can be the field of education. We have decided to focus (...) mainly on schools because the vast majority of teachers are women.” (International NGO)

Based on the above mentioned, considering the Georgian context, it is possible that at this stage, more effective is to present environmental issues to the areas that are dominated by women which in turn, would create the grounds for the increased interest, involvement and participation.

1.3 Integration of Environmental Issues in Gender Projects

Similarly to the environmental policy, which lacks the gender mainstreaming, there is no connection with the environmental issues in the policy related to gender equality. The interviews revealed that for the representatives of the state agencies working on women's empowering aspects and non-governmental sectors, the environmental issues are not the subject of high interest. There are crossing points between these two issues (refer to subchapter of partnership), but environmental protection is not a part of the agenda of actors working on gender equality.

In agreement with the institutions working on environmental protection issues, the causes of a lack of mainstreaming are the novelty of the topic and the lack of experience. Besides, the interviewees discussed **“more urgent”** topics (for example, femicide, violence against women), which require an immediate action and

follow-up from them. Accordingly, it could be concluded that environmental mainstreaming in gender equality is not relevant yet and other topics get higher attention from the key stakeholders.

1.4 Influence of International Donor Organizations on Gender Mainstreaming in Environmental Programs

The research findings indicate that the projects in which gender issues are mainstreamed are mainly due to the influence of international donor organizations. This approach is discussed on the central level by both, governmental and non-governmental organizations. However, non-governmental organizations have those topics more internalized and the **influence of the requirements from the international donor organizations is more visible in the public sector.**

“When an international project is approved for the country, the project always has a subchapter, where there is an overview of gender issues.” (Governmental Organization)

“In environmental protection, funds mainly come from the international donors. International donors have their standards and requirements. And gender, often, by default, is included in those requirements and standards.” (International NGO).

“International organizations, for example, donor organizations, there are direct requirements that gender lenses must be included in the project.” (Local NGO of the region)

However, **a variety of challenges were revealed by the key stakeholders regarding the policy implementation process such as understanding and putting policy actions developed by the donors into practice.**

“They [international donor organizations] are also within the frames of general description and terminology and do not specify what exactly they mean why and how.” (Governmental Organization)

Taking into consideration the above mentioned, it could be concluded that the intersection of environment and gender is a topic that mainly is directed from the top thus, „top-down“ approach is applied rather than initiated from the grassroots level. The majority of the interviewees have some information on the issue, though it is not an integral part of the existing value system. Consequently, it is critical to raise awareness and provide more in-depth information on the mainstreaming of gender issues across the field of environmental protection. Most of the interviewees lack the understanding of how the intersection of these two topics is possible however, they express their interest and willingness to get more information and improve their skills. Furthermore, it is essential to have a detailed action plan that will help the key stakeholders to implement the policy requirements defined by the state as well as the donors.

1.5 Partnership

The findings indicate that **the level of partnership between the key stakeholders on environmental protection is evaluated positively**. The state agencies and donor/international NGOs, as well as central and local organizations are partnering successfully.

As successful is the collaboration between the stakeholders working on environmental issues, as **weak is the relationship between the state agencies and organizations working on environmental protection and gender issues**.

Even though a certain state institution might have staff members or departments working on topics related to environment and gender, in the most of the cases, there is no collaboration between them and they do not work jointly on projects. For instance, within the framework of the research, a variety of departments which work on environmental issues in the target municipalities were selected for the interviews. These kinds of departments are Environmental and Natural Resources Committee in Borjomi Municipality, Environmental Supervision Office and Infrastructure Office in Keda Municipality. In addition, there are women's rooms created in each

municipality that work on gender issues. However, according to the respondents, there is a lack of collaboration between these departments and they do not work on the issues together. According to the representatives of the women's room, this municipal service is newly introduced and therefore, the focus is specifically on gender issues at this stage, and other topics cannot be covered.

Furthermore, according to the respondents, joint efforts on environmental and gender issues are not invested at a higher strategic level, though in case of a need they have to cooperate. For instance, according to the representatives of the Public Defender, this kind of collaboration was a success during the Tbilisi flood on June 13th, when depending on the gender of the victims, it was necessary to take into consideration specific needs that they had. However, it should also be noted that according to the findings, the cases of such collaboration are less likely and the respondents are also less likely to recognize such a need.

Concerning the collaboration between the NGOs working on environmental and gender issues, it should be noted that the respondents are less likely to recognize the necessity of collaboration with the representatives of gender field. Despite, there are some exceptions regarding the international organizations which indicate that they have a desire to collaborate with organizations working on gender issues and they would appreciate if these organizations were more interested in environmental topics.

“We try to collaborate with the organizations working on gender issues and have more experience in this direction and we are sure, that we will have better results in case of collaboration with them and we would like gender organizations also to try and collaborate with environmental organizations. The only gender is not important for the environment, the environment is also important for gender.” (International NGO).

Among the representatives of NGOs involved in the research there is the only organization that states they have an experience of collaboration with the organizations working on women's issues.

The interviewees discussed the ways of improving collaboration and communication between organizations focusing on environmental issues. In particular, they indicate the need for developing an online platform so the organizations are able to observe the progress of each other's activities. According to the interviewees, the existence of such a shared space will improve communication and make it more effective to work on a challenging issue.

“We need more platforms of thematic, targeted dialogue and collaboration, we need more synergy. Of course, such opportunities are not used and it is possible to make better use of them.” (International NGO)

In summary, the intersection of environmental and gender issues is a relatively new topic for the key stakeholders. The novelty of the topic, lack of information and gender neutral or discriminatory attitudes hinder gender mainstreaming in environmental projects. Lack of priority is named as a challenging factor in mainstreaming environmental issues in gender-related projects. The donor directed priority of the gender mainstreaming was emphasized, however, in many cases, it is difficult for the parties concerned to understand how this could be implemented in practice. The partnership between environmental agencies and organizations is successful; hence, the partnership between the institutions working on environmental and gender issues is almost non-existent.

2. IMPACT OF NATURAL DISASTERS ON WOMEN AND MEN AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

The present subchapter presents perspectives of the community members from the target locations of the research regarding the intersection of gender and environment. In particular, the subchapter covers how processes and changes in the environment are reflected in the daily life of women. Furthermore, who is considered as the most vulnerable groups because of the environmental changes, what the level of awareness concerning the environmental issues is and what the level of involvement of women and men is. This subchapter mostly focuses on presenting the opinions and perspectives of the community members as well as other key stakeholders.

2.1 Impact of Environmental Changes on Daily Activities of Women

Natural disasters have a different impact on women and men². Since women and men have different roles in society and have to fulfill different functions, natural disasters such as desertification, forest fires, etc. have different influence on their daily life². Previous studies conducted in Georgia show that traditional distribution of gender roles is prevalent, which means that doing housework is considered to be women's role, while men are considered to be responsible for providing financial support for the family³. Consequently, the public space is perceived as a man's sphere and domestic space – as a woman's sphere.

Despite the fact that the prevailing gender order creates boundaries around women's role mainly focusing on domestic and family sphere, 30% of women in Georgia provide financial support

² Additional information is available <http://www.fao.org/wairdocs/x5309e/x5309e0b.htm>.

³ The research is available [http://www.ge.undp.org/content/dam/georgia/docs/publications/GE_UNDP_Gender %20Research_ENG.pdf](http://www.ge.undp.org/content/dam/georgia/docs/publications/GE_UNDP_Gender%20Research_ENG.pdf)

for the family³. According to the participants of the focus groups, it is understood that there is no difference between women's and men's jobs anymore, and they are equally employed and equally share agricultural activities. This is positively perceived by the interviewees. Furthermore, in research locations, the main areas of employment are school and kindergartens, where women are represented. So there are more possibilities for women to work outside the domestic area.

“For example, I can't see the difference between me and my husband's activities in everyday life. We both leave home in the morning. We both work till the end of the day and come back home together.” (Focus Group, Women).

However, **equal distribution of activities concerns the formal labor rather than unpaid domestic work**. Even when a woman is employed and is engaged in formal labor, doing housework remains to be her main responsibility.

“A woman in a family does more than a man. You can't make [a man] do the cleaning, washing the dishes, it's impossible. And taking care of children is also a woman's duty.” (Focus Group, Women).

“Let's take an employee of a kindergarten as an example, in the morning, if she has children, she takes care of children to make them ready for kindergarten, for school, sends them off to school/kindergarten, of course, she makes breakfast for them. She gets ready herself after all of these activities, plus she does some housework, quickly cleans the house, as much as she can. Afterward, she goes to work. After work, she returns home. Following again comes dinner, supper, children and this is her everyday routine.” (Focus Group, Women).

Being chained to the domestic space makes women more vulnerable to negative impacts caused by climate change and natural disasters. Environmental changes, such as processes caused by the implementation of infrastructural projects, have a specific negative impact on women and their everyday work.

“[After building a new road] road has more dust. It caused

the necessity of cleaning the dust from the furniture many times, besides, it caused some kind of diseases in children. Who should take a child to a doctor? Again, a woman should. Besides, the streets have become crowded and women have to accompany children on their way to and from school.” (Governmental Organization)

It should be mentioned that some stakeholders working on environmental issues, as well as the state agencies and the representatives of non-governmental sector, emphasize the existing differences on women and men because of environmental changes. However, some respondent’s narrative includes gender-neutral attitudes and perceptions.

“Let’s take the City Hall Office, when they take preventive measures regarding landslide, a special wall for slope reinforcement should be arranged near somebody’s house, of course, everybody is safe there, a woman, a man, and a child.” (Local NGO of the region)

“For example, if there is a natural disaster. Damage that we receive is equal for a woman and a man.” (Local NGO of the region)

“In my opinion, it’s a bit difficult to discuss the harm caused by the natural disasters from the gender lenses, because the disasters are equally very harmful for both sexes.” (Governmental Organization)

As for the community members’ perspectives, diverse opinions were expressed. Men consider the impact of the environmental changes on women and men do not differ while according to women, this impact is a burden for women. To illustrate the scale of a burden, they provide an example of winds caused by cutting wind-breaks that also damage the harvest. In this case, both women and men have to work with double efforts, though it is more difficult for women to endure this physically than for men.

“When they [women] go outside and work physically, of course in the long term, it has a negative effect on their health, they

get sick. For example, when they go to a plot of land for work and receive 30 GEL, then they have to spend 20 GEL on buying medicines for treatment.” (Focus Group, Women)

According to the participants of the focus group, improved infrastructure has had a positive influence on women’s domestic labor. According to the participants of the focus groups, gasification and providing villages with water have made unpaid housework significantly easier for women.

Also, it is noteworthy that **even if women realize the impact of the environmental processes on their daily life, they perceive this as a social norm and do not attempt to advocate addressing these issues on the municipal level.** Therefore, it is essential to mainstream or include these topics at the policy level and ensure its due implementation.

2.2 Impact of Environmental Changes on Vulnerable Groups

As discussed in the previous subchapter, some interviewees consider that the environmental changes and natural disasters have a different impact on the different segments of society. They identify the most vulnerable groups, which are the following: inhabitants of high mountainous regions and rural areas, people living beyond the poverty line and economically poor people, and people living alone. According to the interviewees, the vulnerability of people residing at high mountainous regions and rural areas is determined by the conditions caused as a result of the poorly developed infrastructure. Economic issues are named as one of the strongest determinants of vulnerability. According to the interviewees, economically strong people are always more protected.

„Representatives of the low layer of the society are more affected by [natural disasters]. Those who are economically stronger have more income. They manage to confront it with owned comfort, they can afford warmth, can use natural gas, they can have air conditioning system, constant supply of water, can dig a well and somehow improve their conditions. And

those who are unemployed and represent a lower layer, of course they are more vulnerable.” (Local Municipality)

It should be mentioned that in Georgia women’s economic activity, as well as their labor remuneration is relatively low compared to men⁴. This is related to the fact that women are more vulnerable to environmental changes. However, during the interviews and focus group discussions, the respondents did not associate economic inequality to gender aspect.

Lastly, the interviewees discussed the specific vulnerability of people living alone (a sole breadwinner). In this case, two subgroups are considered: elderly people living alone without family members and also women living alone. According to the interviewees, these groups are especially in need of some help during natural disasters. Consequently, within this vulnerability groups the gender perspective is cross-cutting.

“Women, who live alone are really the most vulnerable - women living alone or elderly women who are not able to perform certain physical activities.” (NGO)

To summarize, **according to the participants of the FGD, vulnerability to the environmental changes is determined by territorial attachment, economic condition, and social connections while the latter is only considered through the gender lenses.**

2.3 Involvement of Women in Decision-making Process Related to Environmental Changes

As it was indicated in the preceding subchapter, based on different roles and functions women and men have different necessities. Therefore, to consider their necessities at all levels, it is essential to have both engaged in the decision-making process. According to the observation made by the representatives of the state institutions, **mainly men are involved in the meetings cover environmental issues. Therefore, often women’s needs are neglected**

⁴ The research is available <http://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20georgia/attachments/publications/2018/womens%20economic%20inactivity%20and%20inf%20employment%20georgiageo.pdf?la=ka&vs=3009>

and not necessarily taken into consideration.

“When we ask for information concerning the number of women and men taking part in the village meetings, mainly number of men succeeds. In this case, the most important thing is to see whether women’s voices are heard or not, whether they make a decision or not and whether they lobby issues that meet their specific needs or not.” (Governmental Organization)

Opinions of community representatives in this regard differ. Men say that women are actively involved in meetings and there is an equal number of both sexes presented. Women think that the meetings are mostly attended by men which is explained by the “Georgian Mentality”.

- [Men] will not even let [the information] reach women. It is the Georgian Mentality.
- Besides that, they [women] have no time. If there are men, the Georgian Mentality means that where there is a man, there is no need for the presence of a woman. (Focus Group, Women)

In addition, it is noteworthy that often, the involvement of women depends on the topic of a discussion at the meeting. They are more involved when topics concern “Women’s Fields”.

„Involvement and activism from women are present when there are specific issues, which concerns the specific families. In case of a general and larger global [problem] – i.e. the road connecting one village to another village, the landslide – in this case, women are less active.” (Local NGO of the region)

Therefore, again, different „spheres“are divided into women’s and men’s spaces. However, the members of the community also state that as usual, there are **„active“ representatives of women** in the community, who are involved in decision-making processes through actively lobbying their interests and often manage to “make their opinions heard” more successfully than men.

“Women speak louder, they speak up about problems and are more active in this regard.” (Local NGO of the region)

2.4 Awareness on Environmental Issues

Focus group discussions held with the community members indicate that there are awareness raising meetings and campaigns on environmental issues conducted at the municipality level. Some of the respondents recall the projects focusing on awareness raising implemented by international and local organizations. However, it was noted that it is necessary to make information on prevention and self-defense against environmental and natural disasters accessible to a wider population. Moreover, it is necessary to spread information concerning ongoing infrastructural projects in the municipality as well as in the community. Lastly, vulnerable groups should be intentionally provided with information concerning prevention and the self-defense against natural disasters.

According to the interviewees, **despite the meetings facilitated by the organizations, the majority of the population still has no access to information.** The following informational needs were identified: a) how to prevent natural disasters; b) how to (re) act during natural disasters; c) how to protect the environment.

„Population should have an elementary level of knowledge on, let's say, how to extinguish the fire very easily, how to avoid fire spread, how to make ditches.” (Focus Group, men)

Based on information gained through the FGDs, it became evident that **community members do not possess information concerning the impact of the HPP on nature and humans.** They associate some changes to the HPP constructions, such as frequent headaches and poor yield. Therefore, before or during the implementation of large infrastructural projects it is necessary to provide the local population with the detailed information on possible changes that might be caused by the implementation of that particular project.

Considering that certain groups are more vulnerable towards natural disasters, it is important **to take into consideration the peculiarities of those vulnerable groups during the campaign planning that focuses on awareness raising** and to work specifically with

these target groups in order to let them have enough information on how to behave during such occasions.

“Various cataclysms, let’s take freshets, landslides, fires, mostly take place within the period from 12:00 to 18:00. This is the time when there are only women, children, elderly or old people with disabilities staying indoors... if a person in that house has no relevant knowledge... if she/he doesn’t know how to act in this case... they should have enough awareness [to know] what to do, how to act, at least how to provide the first aid.”
(Local Municipality)

Consequently, it is crucial to consider the specific needs of vulnerable groups while disseminating information regarding the environmental issues.

2.5 The Role of Women and Men in Environmental Protection

The participants of the focus groups name the problems related to environmental protection which are relevant in their municipalities and/or regions. These problems are as follows:

- ➔ Desertification;
- ➔ Landslide;
- ➔ Access to water;
- ➔ Deforestation and lack of windbreaks
- ➔ Forest fire and forest tree disease;
- ➔ Absence of landfills;
- ➔ Infrastructural projects (construction of HPPs).

In some cases, environmental changes are human-caused. According to the participants of the focus groups, deforestation was an issue in the 1990s, which was caused by the economic crisis in the country. During this period, the lines of windbreaks were also cut, which now causes serious difficulties for the population in agricultural activities. The participants mention that nowadays, due to

the gasification, trees are not cut in the same intensity, though this still remains as an issue.

According to the interviewees, the reason for the second problem is ignorance of the population, which is demonstrated through not obeying the safety rules during the burning of the fields that causes danger of fires. And finally, the interviewees discussed the need of the waste management in their communities in order to avoid pollution of the environment. On the one hand, they emphasize the seriousness of a problem related to contamination of the environment with polyethylene, but, on the other hand, they state that the regulation of landfills has relatively solved this problem.

To summarize, **infrastructural development, gasification and regulation of landfills have had a positive impact on environmental protection.** However, besides the infrastructural development, the above-mentioned issues are mainly related to civic consciousness and civic activism. According to the participants of the focus groups, some of the representatives of their community realize the responsibility towards protecting the environment and their own contribution in this direction, for example, they initiate and organize environmental clean-up actions, though for other representatives of the community environmental issues are not relevant, they do not express interest and consequently, they do not realize their role and function in this direction.

„You are walking on the road and you see that there is a plastic bag, a bottle or something else on the trees ... We started [a project] “Clean Environment for my Village” and we started cleaning. We were fourteen women. Then they started saying: I won’t pick up this, I won’t pick up that because someone else is not coming out to pick up her/his garbage.” (Focus Group, women)

Subsequently, it is necessary to increase the sense of civic responsibility regarding the environmental issues among the community members.

According to the results of the research, a person who causes damage to the environment as well as a person who protects

it mainly is considered a woman as well as a man and, even in this case, the approach is mainly gender-neutral.

„The problem caused as a result of the environmental pollution harms a woman and a man at the same time, and the woman and the man both make their contribution in the direction of environmental pollution.“ (Governmental Organization).

However, there are cases when gender is specified and women get specific responsibilities:

“A woman can play a very special role because she is a tutor and for example, at schools teachers are mainly women and if their environmental awareness is at the appropriate level, they will bring up the next generation differently.” (Local Municipality).

Existence of different opinions between women and men in the direction of environmental pollution and its protection indicates that it is advisable to provide the key stakeholders with in-depth information on the above-discussed topics.

To summarize, the responsibility of unpaid housework makes women more vulnerable towards the changes happening in the environment. In most cases, neither key stakeholders nor the community members understand this in a proper way. People who live in the mountainous regions and rural areas, those who are economically challenged or live alone, are named as the most vulnerable groups. In spite of informational campaigns, representatives of the community need additional information for rethinking the changes in the environment and their role and responsibilities in eliminating the negative consequences of those changes.

Conclusions and Recommendations

1. The intersection of environmental and gender issues is a new field for the actors working on environmental as well as on gender inequality issues. They do not have enough information related to these topics as well as they lack understanding on how to implement it in practice. There is a lack of gender sensitivity of the topic within the stakeholders working on environmental issues. Therefore, it is recommended to focus the work on the following areas:
 - Providing stakeholders with in-depth information on gender mainstreaming: what does it mean and what does it cover?
 - Changing the gender-related stereotypical attitudes – why is it important to ensure gender mainstreaming?
 - Building technical skills – how should gender mainstreaming be ensured during the implementation of policy and projects?
2. Among the stakeholders, as well as within the local population, gender-neutral positions are prevalent. It is important that the stakeholders working on gender issues make more emphasis on disseminating gender sensitive discourse.
3. It is a challenge to transfer the intersection of environmental and gender issues from policy into practice. It is essential to elaborate detailed action plans on both levels - state policy as well as international donors' requirements.
4. Partnership between the organizations working on environmental issues is a success, though according to the observations from the respondents, it is necessary to create the platform, which will provide an opportunity to better track the activities and progress of each stakeholder and identify the areas of collaboration.

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5. It is crucial to foster the collaboration between organizations and institutions working on environmental and gender issues. It is suggested to organize a round table, where the representatives of both fields will be present so the shared space for dialogue and discussions is created.
 6. Despite the awareness-raising activities, the community members emphasize the lack of information. It is critical to provide the population with information on environmental protection. Moreover, it would be recommended to take into consideration the peculiarities of vulnerable groups while raising awareness and disseminating targeted information. Community members lack civic awareness and sense of responsibility towards environmental protection issues. Therefore, it is essential to foster civic engagement and understanding of the roles and duties in environmental pollution as well as in environmental protection issues.

Annexes

Annex #1: Questions for Representatives of Government /Non-governmental Sector

Introduction

1. Please introduce yourself (first name/surname, place of work and position)
2. Please, state when you started your work on environmental/gender issues.
3. Please, briefly describe specific activities that you implement in environmental and gender directions or what are the topics of your work?
4. In what kind of activities were you taking part concerning the environmental and gender issues during the last three years?
5. Does your organization have a specialist in the field of environment and gender? Are these two fields separated from each other or combined? If there are individual staff members, how do they collaborate? (Are these two fields separated from each other or combined)

Identification of Needs

6. Please, share your opinion with us, do you see intersection between environmental and gender issues or not? Why?
7. How do you think, is intersection of gender and environment necessary in the process of policy planning or implementation? Why?
8. In your case, is your work on environmental and gender issues integrated or separate (separate projects? Departments? Employees?)? Please, provide an example of intersectional work on environmental and gender issues.
9. In your case, are gender issues taken into consideration while implementing environmental projects? If yes, how?

Evaluation of Environmental Policy and Existing Situation

10. How would you evaluate the existing policy in relation with environment and gender? How are the interests of various groups protected, whose conditions have been changed as a result of natural disasters? What impact do natural disasters have specifically on women?

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11. How would you evaluate the existing situation in terms of foreseeing gender issues in projects in the field of environmental protection implemented by state structures?
 12. How would you evaluate the existing situation in terms of foreseeing gender issues in projects in the field of environmental protection implemented by international organizations?
 13. How would you evaluate the existing situation in terms of foreseeing gender issues in projects in the field of environmental protection implemented by local organizations?
 14. Generally speaking, how do you think, should gender issues be foreseen while elaborating environmental policy?/while implementing environmental project? If yes, why? If no, why?
 15. How do you think, how intersection of these two fields may happen? How would you do it in the projects carried out by you?

Partnership and Collaboration

16. Please, share with us the partners of your organization in terms of working on gender and environment: donors, governmental and non-governmental organizations
17. How would you evaluate the effectiveness of collaboration of the organizations working on these topics? What kind of challenges are the organizations facing?
18. What kind of collaboration do you need at this stage?

Impact of Natural Disasters on Women

19. How do you think, which segment is the most vulnerable? Who is damaged most of all? Why?

Additional Comments

20. Please, share with us other organization/individual that provides us with information on these topics
21. Do you have any additional comments?

Additional Questions for Governmental Organizations

1. Is intersection between gender and environment stated in your strategic documents, including the budget and do you have an action plan that focuses on these two topics? If not, why?

Additional Questions for Donor Organizations

1. Please, share with us main priority directions of your organization, which define-project/program budget of your organization.
2. Do you have gender and environment in priority directions and exactly in which document are these directions reflected?
3. Please, name those priority directions (gender and environment) that you support and/or will support in the future (including regions) with the assistance of local organizations or the government.

Additional Questions for Local NGOs

1. To what extent are women involved in discussions concerning the policy, projects (especially infrastructural and power), activities (including budgeting) related to environment and gender on local level? Why?
2. What kind of barriers can be caused by less involvement of women on political level?
3. How do you think, how differently is the damage caused by natural disasters reflected on women and men?
 - When the head of the household is a woman?
 - When a woman is a widow, etc.?
 - To what extent are their labour obligations increased?
 - Social status and gender roles?
4. Are there different behaviours between women and men in terms of management of natural disasters or environmental protection?
 - Do women have appropriate skills that help them to recover their loss?
 - Do you state different needs in ongoing projects or programs? How?

Annex #2: Questions for the Representatives of the Community (women and men)

Moderator will introduce the goals of the research to the participants of the Focus Group, will provide them with information on research ethics and will receive a verbal consent on participation in the research and tape-recording of the discussion.

Demographic Block

1. Name
2. Age
3. Place of residence (name of a village/city)
4. Employment status
5. Marital status

Introduction

6. Please, describe a daily life of a woman living in your village (we can go into details in terms of an age, employment, etc.);
7. Please, describe a daily life of a man living in your village (we can go into details in terms of an age, employment, etc.);
8. What kind of differences would you point out in a daily life of the woman and man described by you and what causes these differences? (to the moderator: if a group members don't name environment, please ask more questions);

Impact of Natural Disasters on Women

9. Please, think about the natural disasters that took place in your region during the last year (5 years?)?
10. Have natural disasters been a frequent case in your municipalities recently? (to the moderator: if a group can't name natural disasters, in the first question make it clear according to the region Borjomi – forest management/fires; Keda – eco-migration, construction of HPPs, Dedoplistskaro – desertification, water shortage); please, describe whether these processes caused any changes in your daily life. If yes, what kind of change did it cause?

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11. Were there any positive changes? Please, bring a specific example. How was this positive change reflected on your daily life? (Did the same change happen in the daily life of men/women?)
 12. Did you receive any kind of damage? Please, bring a specific example.
 13. Did you have any kind of economic loss? What exactly?
 14. Was your workload changed? How?
 15. How did you deal with the above mentioned loss/problem?
 16. Did you receive any kind of support? From whom did you receive the support and what kind of support did you receive?
 17. Which group was more affected by the damage and how? Women/men/children/elderly/people with disabilities? Please specify
 18. Generally, how do you think, which group is damaged the most during a natural disaster? Women/men/children/elderly/people with disabilities?
 19. Generally, what kind of changes can you notice in your community, society, because of the mentioned process? (to the moderator: try to make them concentrate on community evaluation relying on their own example);
 20. How do you think, generally, what are the results of the changes caused by the environmental conditions for women? For men? (ask more questions: about their health condition, social status, gender roles, etc.)

Involvement of Women and Men in environmental processes?


21. How do you think, who is responsible for environmental protection?
22. What is a role of women? Of men? How do you think, which role is more important, women's or men's? why? (to the moderator: roles that will be named here during the focus group should be focused on afterwards in the next question)
23. How do you think, who is damaged more by natural disasters,

a woman or a man?

24. Do you have information how to act in case of natural disasters?
25. How should population reduce risks to avoid the mentioned disaster? (bring a natural disaster that is appropriate for the region as an example)
26. Do you have information how to act in order to protect the environment? (specify to the group: in case of fires (Borjomi)? In case of desertification (Dedoplistskaro)? In case of a landslide, soil degradation (Adjara)?)
27. What do you personally do in terms of environmental protection? Please, bring examples (to the moderator: if they can't remember their own example, ask them about the community)
28. What kind of difficulties do you meet while protecting the environment and how do you manage to solve them?
29. Do women/men representatives of your community get involved in the made decision concerning the environmental protection? E.g. when the municipality plans different projects in the direction of environmental protection (or infrastructural projects that have direct or indirect influence on your living environment) do you take part in decision? If yes, how?
30. Have you attended meetings of local or non-governmental organizations on implementation of environmental projects in your community? If yes, please share with us your experience. Generally, who attend this kind of meetings?

Comments

31. Do you have any additional comments?

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The first phase of the Situational Analysis of Environmental Justice and Women's Rights in Georgia was conducted within the project „Global Alliance for Green and Gender Action“ (GAGGA), while the second phase of the research was conducted with the financial support of the German Women's Fund *flia.die frauenstiftung*. Women's Fund in Georgia has been implementing the initiative for already a couple of years. The current research is one of the first attempts to analyze the intersection of the environmental justice and gender equality, based on which more specific issues can be explored in the future.