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Gender Analysis of Climate Change and Disaster Management Policies in Georgia



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Gender Analysis of Climate Change and Disaster Management Policies in Georgia

ABBREVIATIONS	2
INTRODUCTION	3
DISASTER RISK REDUCTION AND MANAGEMENT (DRRM)	5
CLIMATE CHANGE AS A HAZARD ACCELERATOR AND ITS IMPACT ON GENDER EQUALITY	7
INTERSECTIONAL APPROACH	10
INTERNATIONAL INSTRUMENTS AND STANDARDS	12
GENDER ANALYSIS OF GEORGIA'S CLIMATE CHANGE AND DISASTER RISK REDUCTION AND MANAGEMENT POLICY	15
SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS	23

ABBREVIATIONS

Gender Analysis of Climate Change and Disaster Management Policies in Georgia

CCA	Climate Change Adaptation
CCM	Climate Change Mitigation
CEDAW	The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
Covid-19	Covid-19 virus
CSW	The Commission on the Status of Women
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
DRRM	Disaster Risk Reduction and Management
GAP	Gender Equality Action Plan
GFDRR	Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery
ICPD	International Conference on Population and Development
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
LWPG	The Enhanced Lima Work Programme on Gender
NDC	Nationally Determined Contributions
SFDRR	Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction
SOGI	Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
WaSH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WHO	World Health Organization
PWD	Persons with disabilities

Introduction

Gender Analysis of Climate Change and Disaster Management Policies in Georgia

According to the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR),¹ Georgia, due to its complex topography, geological, and climatic conditions, is located in a region prone to **natural hazards**.² Large-scale and recurrent hazards, such as floods, flash floods, mudflows, landslides, avalanches, earthquakes, hailstorms, heavy rainfall, droughts, and others, are common occurrences in various parts of Georgia.³

The transformation of a natural hazard into a disaster largely hinges on the state's preparedness to implement effective preventive measures, reduce risks, and respond adequately to the damage caused, as well as its capacity to recover and foster a more sustainable, resilient living environment.

In this regard, Georgia faces significant challenges. Natural hazards that escalated into disasters in recent years, such as the 2015 Tbilisi floods, the 2023 Shovi landslide, the 2023 floods and landslides in Guria, and the 2024 Nergeeti landslide, indicate deficiencies in the implementation of disaster risk reduction and management plans.

Globally, the increasing frequency of natural hazards in recent decades is increasingly linked to the adverse effects of climate change and human activities. As climate change progresses, the number of hazards associated with it is expected to rise significantly, requiring thorough and comprehensive preparedness.⁴

Since the transformation of a disaster into a disaster is largely determined by the level of vulnerability, the needs of various vulnerable groups must be considered in the processes of policy development and implementation. The degree of vulnerability, among other factors, is often shaped by gender aspects, particularly gender stereotypes and societal gender roles. Gender stereotypes and roles typically create a restrictive environment for women and girls, which also significantly affects the equal distribution of and access to resources. Consequently, the vulnerability of women to the negative effects of climate change and disasters is relatively higher.

It is critical to proactively review policies to assess how effectively women's needs are considered in Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) strategies, climate change-related and other relevant policy documents; which recommendations exist for decision-makers in this direction, and what steps need to be taken to advocate for the issue. The Sendai

1 Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery, the (GFDRR) (2017) "Disaster Risk Profile: Georgia"
Link: https://www.gfdr.org/sites/default/files/publication/drpf_georgia.pdf

2 Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC). (2022). TA-9878 REG: Developing a Disaster Risk Transfer Facility in the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation Region: Country Risk Profile – Georgia. Link: https://www.carecprogram.org/uploads/CAREC-Risk-Profiles_Georgia.pdf

3 UNDP. (2022). Analysis of the Legal and Regulatory Framework for Disaster Risk Knowledge in the Multi-Hazard Early Warning System in Georgia:
<https://www.undp.org/ka/georgia/publications/early-warning-legal-review>

4 Ibid.

Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction calls on signatory parties, including Georgia, to integrate a gender perspective into disaster risk reduction policies and practices. It also emphasizes strengthening the needs and role of women in disaster response and recovery processes.⁵

The purpose of this document is to contribute to the process of gender-sensitive analysis of Georgia's climate change and disaster risk management policy framework and to define recommendations that will assist decision-makers, local communities, including those affected by disasters, activists, and civil society representatives in advocating for the issue.



5 UNISDR (2015). Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 adopted at the Third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Sendai, Japan, in 2015: <https://www.undrr.org/publication/sendai-framework-disaster-risk-reduction-2015-2030>

Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM)

A disaster/catastrophe is a serious disruption of the normal functioning of a system or community that involves large-scale human, material, economic, or ecological losses and/or impacts, where the damage caused exceeds the capacity and resources of the affected community or society to cope with it.⁶

Disasters can be caused by various factors, including natural, technogenic (industrial and transport), technological, and anthropogenic (caused by negative human impact) hazards.⁷ It is important to note that not all hazards, including natural hazards, necessarily escalate into disasters. This is closely linked to the intersection of existing **risk, vulnerability, and the degree of exposure to negative impacts**.⁸ In this regard, it should be noted that the term "natural disaster" often encountered in literature, is an outdated and, at the same time, incorrect term.

To identify necessary action plans for disaster risk reduction and management, it is important to first assess what types of threats or hazards exist. Additionally, the degree of vulnerability of those residing close to these hazards needs to be assessed. The degree of vulnerability is influenced by various factors; for instance, the vulnerability of people living in so-called chaotic and impoverished settlements, or "slums," is significantly higher due to various natural and technological hazards compared to those living under conditions of resilient urban planning and development.

According to the explanatory document on disaster risk reduction terminology by the United Nations Agency for International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, **vulnerability** is a combination of certain characteristics and/or environmental factors that determine the degree of insecurity of community members, a system, or the natural environment to harmful impacts from hazards.⁹ Therefore, vulnerability is a central concept in disaster risk reduction and management. It is directly linked to the primary goal of this document – gender analysis of the policy framework.

After assessing the hazard and vulnerability dimensions, it is crucial to evaluate the extent to which people are exposed to negative impacts, considering their vulnerability. This will ultimately provide us with a risk assessment formula. Disaster risk reduction and management strategies should be planned based on this very formula, which is also essential for analyzing the intersection of climate change, disaster risk management, and gender issues.

6 International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) & United Nations in Georgia. (2009). Disaster Risk Reduction Terminology: https://www.preventionweb.net/files/45426_unisdrterminologyondisasterriskredu.pdf

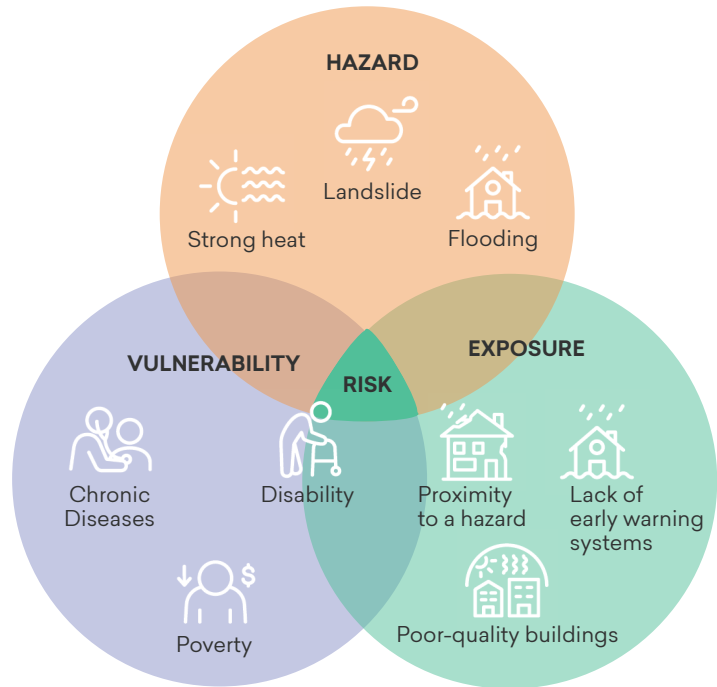
7 The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC). What is a Disaster? Link: <https://www.ifrc.org/our-work/disasters-climate-and-crises/what-disaster>. Last visited: 8 July, 2024.

8 Heinrich Böll Foundation, & World Experience for Georgia (WEG). (2016). Climate Change and Sustainable Development. Link: https://weg.ge/sites/default/files/climate_change_and_sustainable_development.pdf

9 International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) & United Nations in Georgia. (2009). Disaster Risk Reduction Terminology.

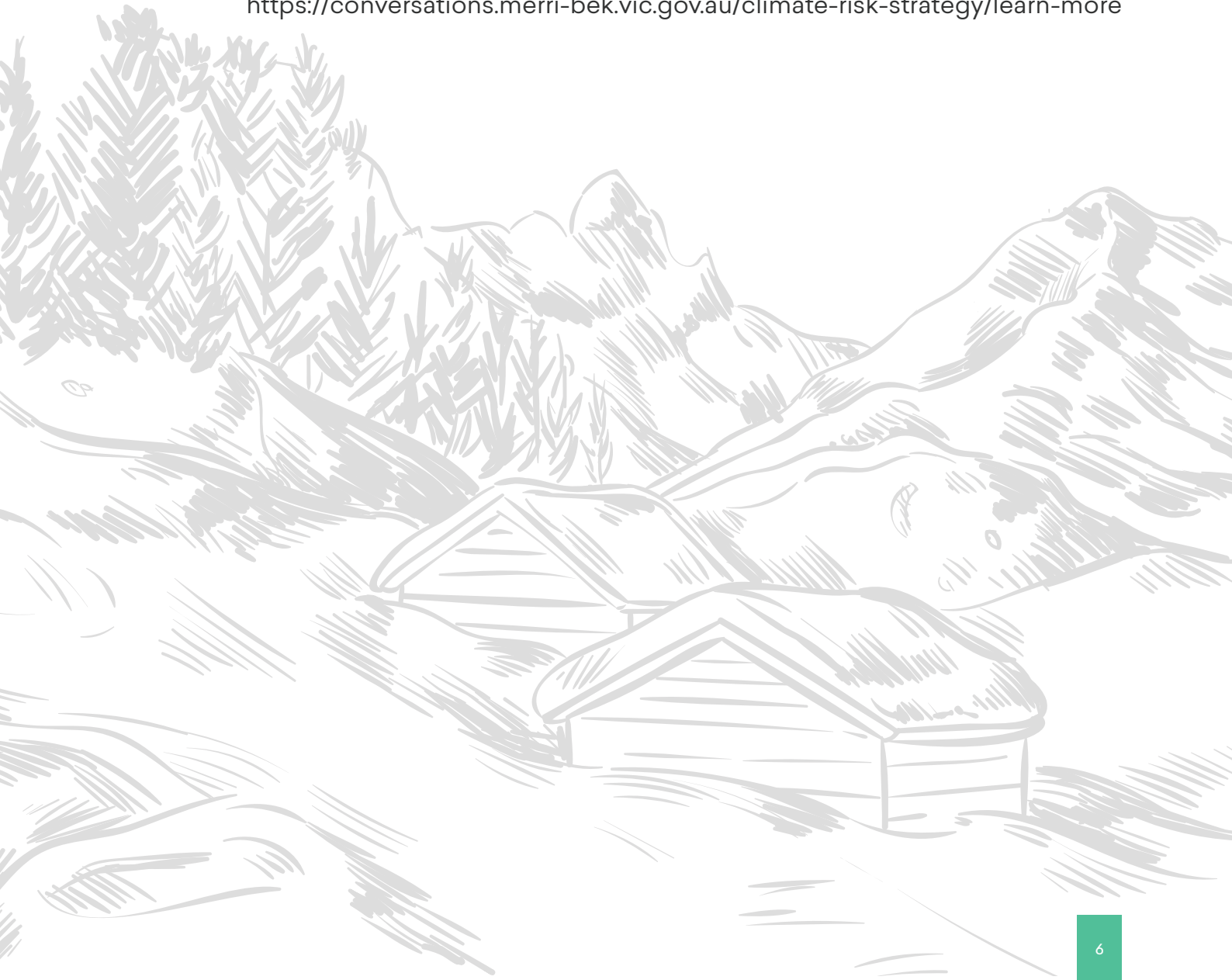
RISK ASSESSMENT DIAGRAM

Source: Merri-bek City Council



Available

<https://conversations.merri-bek.vic.gov.au/climate-risk-strategy/learn-more>



Climate change as a hazard accelerator and its impact on gender equality

It is well known that climate change acts as a “threat multiplier”,¹⁰ implying an increase in the frequency and severity of climate-related hazards and disasters in the future. Given inadequate or ineffective disaster risk reduction and management policies or practices, it is likely that these hazards will escalate into disasters.

Increased frequency of disasters will undoubtedly have a significant negative impact on the population and natural environment. However, the extent to which people are affected by the negative effects of climate change is closely linked to vulnerability and existing inequalities, including gender inequality. Consequently, as climate change progresses, the situation of marginalized groups is expected to worsen, increasing vulnerability and exposure to adverse effects.

According to the formula discussed above, risk increases. Risk, in turn, is not gender-neutral and affects women and men differently. It should also be noted that gender mainstreaming does not imply a binary understanding of gender.

It is considered that gender inequality, alongside climate change, is the greatest challenge to sustainable development.¹¹ This is why it is crucial for **climate change adaptation** and **mitigation policies**¹² to place special emphasis on the importance of eliminating existing inequalities and developing with consideration for gender mainstreaming.

Gender mainstreaming, in turn, is a complex and comprehensive approach aimed at achieving gender equality,¹³ which is realized by integrating a gender perspective into all areas and sectors of society's functioning.¹⁴ Gender "mainstreaming" at the decision-making level involves considering and incorporating gender equality issues across all policy directions.

According to the 2022 Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction,¹⁵ gender-specific needs and challenges emerge in the context of crises and disasters.

For example:

Due to existing gender stereotypes and roles in society, women are often lacking in self-preservation and "life skills" such as swimming, driving, literacy, climbing, and so on,

10 United Nations. (2019). Climate change recognized as ‘threat multiplier’, UN Security Council debates its impact on peace. Link: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/01/1031322> Last visited: 9 July, 2024

11 UNDRR, (2009) Gender dynamics of disaster risk and resilience – link: <https://www.undrr.org/implementing-sendai-framework/sendai-framework-action/gender>

12 Terminology can be found: International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) & United Nations in Georgia. (2009). Disaster Risk Reduction Terminology.

13 UN Women, & European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI). (2014). Practical Guide for Public Officials – Gender Mainstreaming. Link: <https://shorturl.at/Vl6ar>

14 Ibid

15 United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR). (2022). Global assessment report on disaster risk reduction 2022. Link: <https://www.undrr.org/publication/global-assessment-report-disaster-risk-reduction-2022>

which increases their vulnerability and susceptibility to negative impacts.

Additionally, in traditional societies, girls and women typically bear the **burden of caregiving** for the household and its members, including children, elderly family members, and individuals with disabilities. This caregiving responsibility hampers their capacity to evacuate efficiently. After disasters, women remain responsible for caring for the sick and injured while also managing their daily tasks. If the primary breadwinner of a family is injured or killed in a disaster, women also need to find work, further increasing the burden of unpaid labor and **household duties**.¹⁶

It is important to note that formal post-disaster recovery programs primarily focus on work and income sources generated by men and fail to recognize women's livelihoods in the informal sector or the uncompensated losses they incur from household activities. The London School of Economics' disaster analysis across 141 countries highlights that the higher mortality rates among women and girls during disasters are also linked to their economic and social status.¹⁷

In crisis situations, women's **access to financial resources**¹⁸ is lower compared to men, which is a result of pre-existing discriminatory socio-economic conditions. For instance, women are less likely to control or own property, often due to discriminatory approaches in inheritance law and related practices.

Women often have limited access to mobile phones and computers, which can restrict their access to **vital information sources**.¹⁹ However, access to information is essential for effective evacuation and early warning systems.

During crises and disasters, incidents of gender-based violence tend to rise. Research from various countries has shown that violence against women often increases in crisis situations. For instance, monitoring the COVID-19 pandemic - a biological disaster - revealed what has been termed a "**shadow pandemic**,"²⁰ highlighting the significant rise in gender-based violence worldwide.

During crises and forced displacement, **the risk of trafficking for sexual exploitation among women and girls escalates**, including forms such as forced child marriage, forced labor, and domestic servitude.²¹

Moreover, access to **water, sanitation, and hygiene (WaSH)** becomes a critical concern

16 Ibid

17 ReliefWeb. (2014). I'm here: Adolescent girls in emergencies - Approach and tools for improved response. Link: <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/i-m-here-adolescent-girls-emergencies-approach-and-tools-improved-response> Last visited: 9 July, 2024.

18 World Bank Blogs (2021) Women's legal rights and gender gaps in property ownership in developing countries, link: <https://blogs.worldbank.org/en/developmenttalk/womens-legal-rights-and-gender-gaps-property-ownership-developing-countries> Last visited: August 10th, 2024

19 GSMA (2023) The Mobile Gender Gap Report- link: <https://www.gsma.com/r/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/The-Mobile-Gender-Gap-Report-2023.pdf>

20 UN Women The Shadow Pandemic: Violence against women during COVID-19

21 Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). (2022). Trafficking in persons in conflict situations: The world must strengthen prevention and accountability. Link: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2022/07/trafficking-persons-conflict-situations-world-must-strengthen-prevention-and>

during and after disasters.²² Traditional gender roles often assign domestic tasks like cooking, laundry, dishwashing, and fetching water to girls and women. This can significantly increase their burden in securing water, exposing them to heightened safety risks as they may need to travel long distances to find it.

For women and girls, maintaining sanitation and hygiene is an essential aspect of personal **safety and bodily autonomy**. For instance, sharing sanitation and hygiene facilities with men can increase the risk of violence. Moreover, women and girls have specific hygiene needs, making the availability of clean, functional, and isolated spaces critical. Access to menstrual and other hygiene products is crucial to enable them to manage menstrual hygiene and pregnancy effectively.²³

In the context of disasters, harmful practices, and gender stereotypes directed at women become even more perilous. These practices include early marriage and pregnancy, limited social and economic opportunities, and gender-based violence, among others.

Crisis situations particularly undermine access to sexual and reproductive health services, affecting crucial areas such as abortion, contraception, prenatal and postnatal care, management of HIV/AIDS, treatment for other sexually transmitted infections, and breastfeeding support.

As a result, climate change disproportionately impacts various groups within society. The intersectional approach discussed in the next chapter allows us to analyze the factors contributing to this unequal impact and the varying degrees of vulnerability experienced by different communities.



22 UNICEF and WHO (2023) Women and girls bear brunt of water and sanitation crisis - new UNICEF-WHO report
link: <https://www.who.int/news/item/06-07-2023-women-and-girls-bear-brunt-of-water-and-sanitation-crisis---new-unicef-who-report>

23 UN – Water, Water and gender. Link: <https://www.unwater.org/water-facts/water-and-gender>

Intersectional approach

For effective disaster risk reduction and climate change policies, it is essential that gender mainstreaming is grounded in an intersectional analysis and a human rights-based approach. Intersectionality recognizes that each individual possesses multiple identities that coexist and shape their unique experiences.²⁴ These identities can be associated with different layers of discrimination in various contexts.

Individuals who embody multiple identities - such as a woman with disabilities or a rural woman with disabilities - experience discrimination not just because of one particular aspect of their identity, but at the intersection of several characteristics.²⁵ The intersectional approach examines these overlapping identities and the various layers of potential discrimination. By applying an intersectional approach, it becomes possible to gain a complex understanding of the outcomes, relationships, and impacts of different forms of discrimination and oppression.²⁶

In disaster and crisis situations, women from non-dominant ethnic and religious groups, LGBTQ+ women, women with disabilities, and those living in rural areas or poverty face heightened risks and have unique needs. These women often encounter discrimination not only based on gender but also due to other intersecting identities. For example, in emergency contexts, the needs of women with disabilities may differ significantly from those of men with disabilities, as well as from those of women without disabilities.

Applying an intersectional analysis to disaster risk reduction policies aids in understanding the dynamics of vulnerability and, in turn, makes policy and program development in this area more targeted and resilient.²⁷ An intersectional analysis of the impact of climate change reveals how different groups and individuals are affected by climate change and its negative consequences, taking into account their specific identities and experiences.²⁸

Applying a gender "lens" involves recognizing gender not just in binary terms, but also embracing the diversity of sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI). While the international disaster risk reduction strategy for 2015-2030, known as the Sendai Framework, emphasizes gender aspects and addresses the needs of vulnerable groups, it still frames gender in binary terms (male and female) and does not specifically acknowledge the LGBTQIA+ community as a vulnerable group. This gap in the Sendai Framework contributes to the significant underrepresentation of LGBTQIA+ issues in

24 Holman Library, Green River College. Intersectionality and identity. Link: <https://libguides.greenriver.edu/c.php?g=699114&p=4958309>. Last visited: 9 July, 2024.

25 Human Rights Education and Monitoring Center (EMC). (2017). The Public Defender as an Equality Mechanism. Link: <https://socialjustice.org.ge/ka/products/kvleva-sakhalkho-damtsveli-rogorots-tanastorobis-mekanizmi>

26 Youth Development Center - XXI. (2021). Connect-Ed Teaching Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in Non-Formal Education. Link: https://issuu.com/projectconnected/docs/final_22.04.2021/1

27 UN Women. Women's Resilience to Disasters Knowledge Hub - Intersectionality. <https://wrd.unwomen.org/practice/topics/intersectionality>

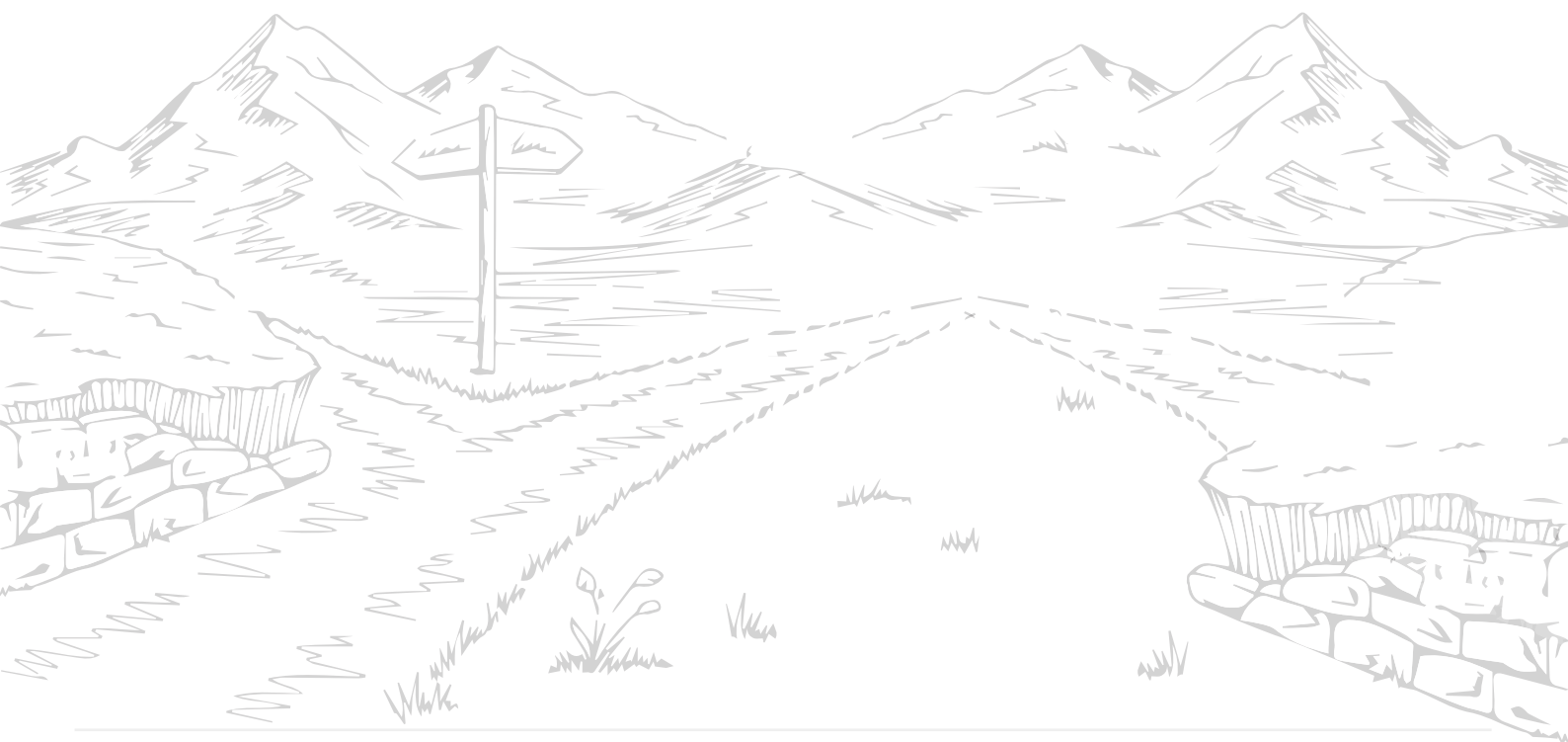
28 Kaijser, A., & Kronsell, A. (2014). Climate change through the lens of intersectionality. *Environmental politics*, 23(3), 417-433. <https://rsa.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/09644016.2013.835203>

disaster risk management legislation and policies across various countries.

Experiences and case studies demonstrate that the LGBTQIA+ community is at heightened risk during crises, with threats often directly impacting their health, lives, and well-being. Moreover, discriminatory practices and increased violence may arise during disaster responses, particularly in gender-segregated shelters, toilets, and sanitation facilities, when planning fails to take into account sexual orientation and gender identity concerns.²⁹

In this regard, it is worth mentioning the Yogyakarta Principles, which outline the importance of realizing human rights in relation to sexual orientation and gender identity.³⁰ A human rights-based approach asserts that an individual's sexual orientation or gender identity should never be a barrier to accessing disaster relief and recovery services.

It is essential to recognize that the experiences, knowledge, skills, and resilience developed by LGBTQIA+ individuals - often in response to living in hostile environments - can be especially valuable in disaster contexts. Involving LGBTQIA+ community members in policy development is crucial, not only to address their specific needs but also to create more resilient and sustainable disaster risk reduction and management policies.



²⁹ Seglah, H. A. & Blanchard, K. (2021) Ibid;

³⁰ Principles on the application of international human rights law in relation to sexual orientation and gender identity and The Yogyakarta Principles Plus 10 (2017). https://yogyakartaprinciples.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/A5_yogyakartaWEB-2.pdf

International instruments and standards

This chapter examines international documents and standards related to climate change, disaster management, and gender issues. These internationally recognized standards serve as a crucial foundation for national policies. Georgia has signed many of the international agreements discussed below, reflecting its commitment to aligning its national legislation and policies with global standards.

The report of the 66th session,³¹ of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW66) in 2022, emphasizes the importance of strengthening the role of women and girls in the context of climate change, environmental policies, and disaster risk reduction. It reviews key international documents that highlight the critical need for achieving gender equality in addressing climate change and managing disaster risks.

In this context, it is also important to mention the **Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action**, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women in September 1995. The declaration establishes a global commitment to achieving gender equality, development, and peace worldwide. It identifies women and the environment as one of its priority areas. Furthermore, the declaration clarifies that women can play a crucial role in developing ecologically sustainable consumption and production models, approaches to natural resource management, and environmental monitoring systems. The document emphasizes the importance of women's participation in policy-making, as well as in decision-making at all levels regarding natural resource management, environmental protection, and rehabilitation processes.³²

The important role of women and the need for their involvement in decision-making processes are highlighted in the **Rio Conventions** on Desertification and Biodiversity. In recent decades, there has been a significant increase in activities promoting gender equality within the **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)**. The 21st Conference of the Parties to the Convention adopted the **Paris Agreement**, a landmark climate accord that explicitly recognizes the importance of gender equality and women's empowerment in addressing climate change.³³

In 2014, at the initiative of the Convention's Parties, the first **Lima Work Programme on Gender (LWPG)**³⁴ was established. The goal of the work program is to integrate gender equality and a gender perspective into the implementation of the Paris Agreement by the Parties to the Convention and the Convention Secretariat. At the 25th Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC in 2019, it was decided to extend the Lima Work Programme and strengthen the Gender Action Plan (GAP).³⁵ The enhanced Lima Work

31 Commission on the Status of Women. (2022). Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes (E/CN.6/2022/3). <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3956348?ln=en&v=pdf>

32 Also UNDP (2022). Analysis of the Legal and Regulatory Framework for Disaster Risk Knowledge in the Multi-Hazard Early Warning System in Georgia.

33 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). (2015). Decision 1/CP.21: Adoption of the Paris Agreement (FCCC/CP/2015/10/Add.1)

34 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). (2019). Decision 3/CP.25: Enhancing ambition and support (FCCC/CP/2019/13/Add.1).

35 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). (2019). Decision 3/CP.25: Enhancing ambition and support (FCCC/CP/2019/13/Add.1).

Programme on Gender particularly emphasizes the equal and full participation of women in processes related to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, including the annual Conferences of the Parties.³⁶

The 2030 **Agenda for Sustainable Development**, adopted in 2015, recognizes the inseparable link between sustainable development and gender equality. One of the primary goals of the Sustainable Development Goals is to address environmental challenges and climate change.³⁷ Therefore, gender equality and climate action are central to the Sustainable Development Goals.

The importance of gender mainstreaming is clearly emphasized in the **Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR)**³⁸ 2015-2030. The Sendai Framework is a global agenda for disaster risk reduction and management, aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

ACCORDING TO SUBPARAGRAPH (I) OF ARTICLE 36 OF THE SENDAI FRAMEWORK:

Women and their participation are critical to effectively managing disaster risk and designing, resourcing and implementing gender-sensitive disaster risk reduction policies, plans and programmes; and adequate capacity building measures need to be taken to empower women for preparedness as well as to build their capacity to secure alternate means of livelihood in post-disaster situations.³⁹

36 United Nations Climate Change. Enhanced LWGP and its GAP. <https://unfccc.int/topics/gender/workstreams/the-gender-action-plan>

37 Commission on the Status of Women. (2022). Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes (E/CN.6/2022/3).

38 UNISDR (2015). Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 adopted at the Third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Sendai, Japan, in 2015: <https://www.undrr.org/publication/sendai-framework-disaster-risk-reduction-2015-2030>

39 UNISDR (2015); Article 36, section i

Among international documents, the General Recommendations adopted by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) should also be noted. The 34th **General Recommendation**, adopted in 2016, focuses on the situation of rural women and highlights that rural women are disproportionately affected by poverty, economic and political marginalization, climate change, disasters, and limited access to infrastructure, social protection, and other services (Part III, F).

CEDAW's 37th General Recommendation, adopted in 2018, highlights the gender dimensions of disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change and the disproportionate negative impacts on women and girls. The recommendation emphasizes the importance of protecting the rights of women and girls at all stages of climate change and disaster management.

In 2009, the Women and Gender Constituency (WGC) was established. Since 2011, it has been recognized as an official observer by the UNFCCC Secretariat. The working group aims to prioritize gender issues and women's representation in all UNFCCC processes and the 2030 Agenda. In February 2024, the WGC, along with other UNFCCC working groups and over 180 NGOs, issued a joint call for gender justice to be a central issue at the 29th Conference of the Parties (COP29), to be held in November 2024.⁴⁰



40 Women and Gender Constituency. (2024). Sign on letter to COP-29 presidency. <https://womengenderclimate.org/>

Gender Analysis of Georgia's Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Policy

This analysis employs an intersectional and human rights-based gender lens to examine the national legislative and policy framework. Its objective is to describe and assess, in relation to international standards, the extent to which Georgia's legislative and policy framework addresses gender issues within the context of climate change and disaster management.

GENDER EQUALITY

At the national level, within the context of gender equality, it is important to note **the Law on Gender Equality** adopted in 2010. This law establishes the fundamental guarantees for ensuring the equal rights, freedoms, and opportunities of women and men as enshrined in the Constitution of Georgia, and defines the legal mechanisms and conditions for their realization in relevant spheres of public life.⁴¹ Amendments made to the law in 2018 strengthened the mandate of the national gender equality mechanisms and expanded their obligations. However, the law does not address any issues related to climate change, environmental and natural resource management, or disaster risk reduction

The National Human Rights Strategy for 2014–2020 included gender equality as one of its strategic objectives. In September 2022, the Government of Georgia adopted the second **National Human Rights Strategy for 2022–2030**.⁴² Issues of gender equality, women's rights, and combating domestic violence are presented under the third priority, which aims to reflect the constitutional guarantees of equality in state policies and to ensure their implementation in practice, as well as the exercising of human rights and freedoms without discrimination. Notably, in the context of achieving substantive equality, the role of women's participation in public and political life and the importance of women's political and economic empowerment are emphasized.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

The 16th goal of the National Human Rights Strategy relates to improving the system for protecting and ensuring the human right to a healthy environment. Meanwhile, the 2024–2026 **Action Plan for Human Rights Protection in Georgia**,⁴³ which is a central document for the practical implementation of the strategy, includes several specific tasks and activities (tasks 16.1, 16.2, 16.3, 16.4, and 16.5, and corresponding activities) aimed at environmental protection, climate change, access to clean air and quality drinking water, waste management, and improving access to environmental justice. It is worth noting that the presented tasks are gender-neutral.

41 Georgia's Law on Gender Equality, Article 1.

42 National Strategy for the Protection of Human Rights of Georgia for 2022–2030. Link: <https://parliament.ge/legislation/24597>

43 National Strategy for the Protection of Human Rights of Georgia for 2022–2030. Available at: <https://parliament.ge/legislation/24597>

It is also noteworthy that the strategy includes a task to enhance communication with internally displaced persons, particularly displaced women, to better identify their needs. Additionally, the strategy aims to increase the participation of displaced women in peacebuilding processes.⁴⁴ While it acknowledges the displacement of individuals due to disasters - referred to as “eco-migrants” - it does not specifically address their unique circumstances and needs. Furthermore, Georgia's law on internally displaced persons does not encompass those displaced by disasters, which is inconsistent with the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement of 1998 and international standards. As a result, eco-migrants, including women and girls, do not receive the same level of protection as those displaced by conflict.

Some documents used the term "natural disaster," which is inaccurate, as noted earlier, consequently, some quotes below may reflect this terminology.

Georgia's Environmental Protection Law⁴⁵ imposes general obligations on citizens. Article 7 states:

The territory where ecological balance is disturbed and human health endangered, due to an activity, an accident, a catastrophe or a natural disaster, shall be declared an ecological disaster zone.

For responsible authorities:

Have plans agreed with the relevant state bodies on operative and systematic measures for the prevention of the consequences of man-made accidents and natural disasters, and on actions during accidents and disasters.

Furthermore, the law outlines a general framework for declaring a state of emergency in the event of an ecological disaster (Article 42) and establishes procedures for declaring an area as an ecological disaster zone (Article 44).

The responsibilities of local self-governing bodies within their jurisdiction are defined by the law on the approval of **the National Civil Security Plan**.⁴⁶

44 National Strategy for the Protection of Human Rights of Georgia for 2022-2030: Priority IV, Task "G". Link: <https://myrights.gov.ge/en/Policy%20Documents/plan>

45 Law of Georgia on Environmental Protection: <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/33340?publication=30>

46 Decree N508 of the Government of Georgia on Approving the National Civil Security Plan. Link: <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/2993918?publication=0>

According to the plan:

When developing potential scenarios for emergencies, the number, density, and vulnerability of the population at risk must be considered, as well as their awareness and preparedness in risk management and safety. The forces and resources available within and around the emergency zone should also be taken into account.

The National Civil Security Plan outlines various measures to support the population. However, neither the Law on Civil Security nor the National Civil Security Plan specifically addresses the needs of women or particularly vulnerable groups during disasters, nor does it detail the responsibilities of public agencies in this regard.

These documents are **gender-neutral** and are often criticized as "**gender-blind**," meaning they fail to consider gender-specific aspects.

DISASTER RISK REDUCTION AND MANAGEMENT

In 2017, Georgia adopted its first disaster risk reduction strategy for 2017-2020.⁴⁷ This strategy aimed to establish a unified system for disaster risk reduction, improve disaster preparedness and response capabilities at both national and local levels, and enhance the effectiveness of responses to potential hazards. The strategy reflected both the existing situation and the main priorities of disaster risk reduction policy, as well as the national mechanisms for implementing the strategy.

It is important to note that the strategy addressed the issue of gender equality in disaster risk reduction:

Taking into account that women, especially during pregnancy, belong to a group of the population which is vulnerable to disasters, their participation at all stages of the disaster management system is very important. 14 Specific needs of women must be taken into account in disaster preparedness policy, as well as during the implementation of disaster prevention, assessment, preparedness and response measures.“ (section 3.12)

The strategy also emphasized the importance of increasing the role of persons with disabilities in disaster risk reduction policy and noted that it was necessary to ensure „better participation of persons with disabilities (the group which is more vulnerable to disasters than the rest of the population), especially children with special needs, within the DRR policy. “

⁴⁷ Decree N4 of the Government of Georgia on Approving the National Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction 2017-2020 and its Action Plan.
Link: <https://test.ncdc.ge/Handlers/GetFile.ashx?ID=97f59f11-547b-4a0e-a24a-a2cc98eba9aa>

However, despite the fact that the strategy considered gender equality issues, action plan⁴⁸ did not outline specific activities in this direction, nor did it reflect any planned measures to ensure the involvement of persons with disabilities (including women).

The 2020 report on the effectiveness of flood-related emergency management (prevention and preparedness)⁴⁹ revealed that monitoring of the implementation of the Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy's action plan was not conducted in 2019. Additionally, many of the issues outlined in the plan have been postponed and remain unresolved. Notably, an updated action plan for disaster risk reduction has yet to be adopted.



48 Ibid;

49 State Audit Office (2020). Audit Report on the Effectiveness of Flood Emergency Management (Prevention and Preparedness). Link: <https://www.sao.ge/ka>

CLIMATE CHANGE

One of the key documents within the policy framework is Georgia's Climate Change Strategy for 2030.⁵⁰ Gender issues are considered in the section on sectoral priorities, goals, and objectives, particularly in the context of forestry management.

TASK 7.3, which relates to the development of an adequate forest management system to address climate change challenges, notes that “by 2030, more than 50% of sustainable forest management plans will be **gender-sensitive**.” It is noteworthy that one of the indicators of this task is the number of sustainable forest management plans that are gender-sensitive. The Climate Change Strategy also includes a list of priority sustainable development goals and objectives, which are tied to the achievement of the goals set by the strategy. The document states that “all the tasks presented below represent, alongside the global ones, national-level tasks.”

Among the priority tasks of the Sustainable Development Agenda is **TASK 1.2**:

By 2030, at least halve the proportion of men, women, and children of all ages living in poverty in all its forms, according to national definitions.

Additionally, **TASK 1.4**:

By 2030, ensure equal access to economic resources for all women and men, particularly for the poor and vulnerable groups.

AND TASK 11.1:

Ensuring safe housing conditions for internally displaced persons residing in Georgia

Based on the internationally recognized definition, the group of forcibly displaced persons also includes those displaced due to disasters, including natural calamities. However, as noted, Georgian legislation takes a diversified approach to those displaced by conflicts and disasters.

In this case, it is not clearly defined at the national level whether the group of forcibly displaced persons includes eco-migrants within the context of task implementation.

The document also outlines the connection between Georgia and the European Union's Association Agreement. It is noteworthy that the obligations under the Association Agreement include reforms related to gender equality (Article 348), climate change action (Articles 230 and 231, with Chapter Four dedicated entirely), and disaster prevention, preparedness, and response (Article 377).

50 Georgia's Climate Change Strategy 2030. Link: <https://mepa.gov.ge/Ge/Files/ViewFile/47855>

As for the **2024-2025 Action Plan of Georgia's Climate Change Strategy 2030**,⁵¹ the document includes several activities that consider gender aspects. Additionally, the fifth goal of sustainable development, which is related to achieving gender equality, is specified in Task 5.

OBJECTIVE 7.3 Development of an adequate forest management system for climate change challenges.

ACTIVITY 7.3.2 Integration of gender-related issues into forest management plans

Activity Result Indicators:

- Methodological guidelines have been developed and approved for assessing forest management plans and integrating gender issues;
- By the end of 2025, 8 forest management plans will be gender-sensitive

In the process of gender analysis within Georgia's legislative and policy framework for climate change and disaster risk reduction, the central document is the 2021 Updated **Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) of Georgia**.⁵² Georgia presented its Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) document in accordance with Decision 24 of the 21st Conference of the Parties (COP 21) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

Notably, issues of gender and climate change are allocated an entire Chapter Six. However, the concerns of women and vulnerable groups are also clearly highlighted before Chapter Six. According to **Paragraph 12**:

The observation of the impacts of extreme weather events on Georgia's population, induced by the climate change during the last decades, reveals the following vulnerable groups requiring urgent adaptation measures: children and adolescents, women, elderly persons, persons with disabilities, persons with chronic diseases, and eco-migrants displaced as a result of disasters caused by climate change or those, who are threatened to be eco migrated due to the climate change.

51 Regarding the 'Updated Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) of Georgia' under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change Paris Agreement, the Georgia 2030 Climate Change Strategy, and the approval of the 2024-2025 Action Plan for Georgia's Climate Change 2030 Strategy (2021), you can access the document at: <https://www.matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/5147380?publication=0>

52 Georgia's Updated Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC). (2021). Link: <https://mepa.gov.ge/Ge/Files/ViewFile/50125>

Also, according to **PARAGRAPH 31**:

Georgia's updated NDC acknowledges that vulnerable groups listed in paragraph 12, in the conditions of scarcity of vital resources are likely to face some of the most immediate threats of climate change.

We have to underline the importance of **PARAGRAPH 32**, which states

Georgia, within the framework of a national adaptation plan, commits to identify the needs of children and women and set priorities within the climate change adaptation measures.

Emphasizing and highlighting the needs of vulnerable groups, women, and children in a politically significant document such as the Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) represents a significant step forward.

As noted, the entire Chapter Six of the NDC document is dedicated to gender and climate change issues. According to **PARAGRAPH 69**:

Georgia's updated NDC is in compliance with Article 11 of the Constitution of Georgia on the right to equality, Law of Georgia on Gender Equality, Decision 21/CP.22 on Gender and Climate Change, and Enhanced Lima work programme on gender and its gender action plan.

Additionally, the importance of nationalizing Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5) targets 5.1-5.6, 5.a, and 5.b, which pertain to achieving gender equality and supporting and empowering women, is highlighted.

It should be particularly noted that, according to **PARAGRAPH 72**

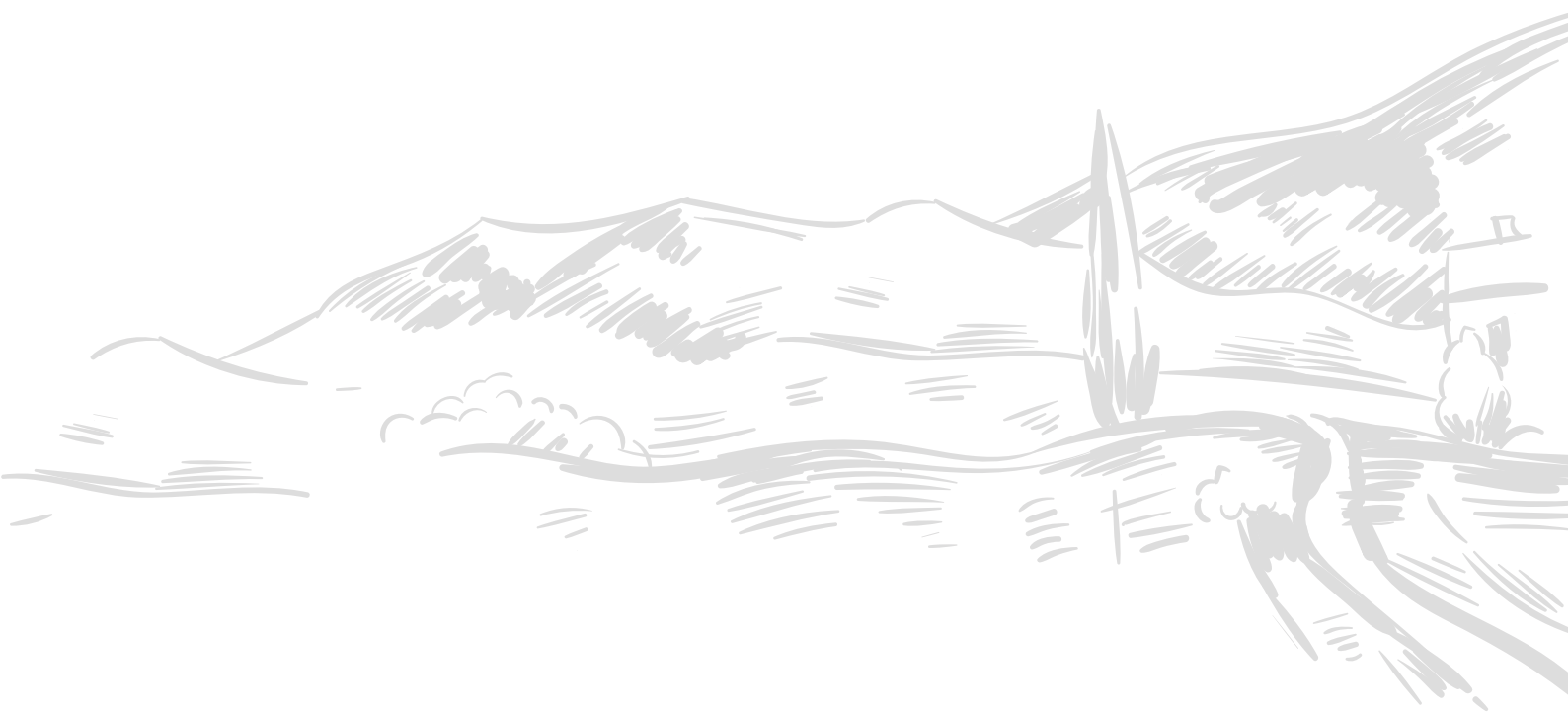
Georgia further considers to empower women as agents of change through their participation in decision-making processes related to energy efficiency measures and efficient use of water resources in households.

Recognizing women **as agents of change** indicates that women are perceived not only as vulnerable groups but also as significant actors who can contribute to positive societal changes.

According to the updated Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) document, it is planned to collect, manage, present, and archive gender-disaggregated data within the framework of national reporting on climate change mitigation and adaptation. Additionally, gender analysis will be conducted, and capacity-building and knowledge-sharing activities will be implemented within the framework of climate change-related projects. The document emphasizes the importance of cooperation and the involvement of various stakeholders in the implementation of the actions outlined in the sixth chapter.

According to **Gender Climate Tracker platform**,⁵³ Georgia is one of the first countries in the region to clearly highlight women's issues in its NDC document, which should be viewed positively. Additionally, the 2021 report by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) on "Gender and National Climate Plans: Integrating Gender in Updated Nationally Determined Contributions" is also of interest in this regard.⁵⁴

However, as the analysis revealed, gender issues are inadequately addressed in certain strategic documents, complicating the achievement of the objectives outlined in the NDC. Therefore, it is essential to ensure gender mainstreaming not only within individual strategic documents but also across all related legislative and policy instruments.



53 Gender Climate Tracker. Country Profiles – Georgia. Link: <https://genderclimatetracker.org/country-profile/georgia/?s>

54 International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). (2021). Gender and national climate planning: Gender integration in the revised Nationally Determined Contributions. Link: <https://genderandenvironment.org/gender-and-ndcs-2021/>

Summary and Recommendations

In the face of aggravated climate change, enhancing efforts in disaster risk reduction and management at all levels is essential. Prioritizing inclusivity and providing equal, genuine opportunities for participation not only addresses human rights concerns but also fosters a resilient, recovery-oriented, and empowered society.

The recommendations presented here are based on a gender analysis of Georgia's legislative and policy framework for disaster risk reduction related to climate change. While they are not exhaustive, these recommendations highlight key areas that will assist decision-makers in policy development and implementation. Furthermore, they aim to advocate for the significant issues identified in the analysis. Engaging representatives from civil society, women, independent experts, educational institutions, youth workers, and educators in this advocacy process is vital.

Key recommendations include:

- **Increasing the equal and meaningful participation of women** in decision-making processes related to climate change, environmental protection, natural resources, and disaster risk reduction and management.
- **Valuing and recognizing the abilities, knowledge, skills, and resilience** of women, LGBTQIA+ individuals, and other marginalized groups as strengths in the policy development and implementation process.
- **Strengthening gender mainstreaming** in policy development and implementation, and increasing political accountability in this area by:
 - Developing a gender-sensitive, updated strategy and action plan for disaster risk reduction;
 - Creating a gender-sensitive climate change strategy action plan for post-2025;
 - Enhancing gender mainstreaming at the local government level.
- **Institutional strengthening** to ensure gender mainstreaming in disaster risk reduction policies, including capacity building for community organizations through the dissemination of relevant knowledge on gender and disaster risk reduction.
- **Harmonizing national legislative and policy frameworks** with international standards, including:
 - Expanding the definition of displaced persons and extending legislative protection mechanisms to include those displaced by disasters.
- **Strengthening coordination and collaboration** between accountable state agencies at central and local levels on disaster risk reduction, climate change, and gender issues.
- **Enhancing the role and accountability of local self-governance** in planning and implementing preventive measures for hazard assessment and disaster risk reduction.

- **Integrating issues related to sexual and reproductive health and rights, gender equality, and women's empowerment** into thematic strategies and action plans on disaster risk reduction and climate change, including documents developed by non-governmental and international organizations.

- **Developing mechanisms for collecting gender-sensitive and gender-specific data.**

- **Refining risk identification mechanisms** to consider the needs of women and other vulnerable groups in the risk assessment process.

- **Investigating and supporting the specific needs of women internally displaced due to disasters.**

- **Raising public awareness** about climate change, environmental protection, and disaster risk reduction and management issues, including through integration into formal and informal education.

As noted, these recommendations are not all-encompassing but serve as a foundation for future initiatives and research expansion. Given the limited availability of literature on this topic in the Georgian language, the gender analysis of Georgia's climate change-related disaster risk reduction policy aims to advocate for these issues and promote awareness in this area. On behalf of the authors, we hope that this process continues and that these recommendations contribute to concrete advocacy efforts.



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