



**Commission on the Status of Women  
Fifty-ninth session**

**National mechanisms for gender equality: advocates for action and  
accountability, catalysts for change**

**PANEL DISCUSSION**

**LESSONS LEARNED: REDISCOVERING THE POWER OF PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN  
NATIONAL MECHANISMS FOR GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN CSOs FOR  
AIMING INCREASED RESOURCES AND SERVICE DELIVERY**

**by**

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15.00 - 18.00 pm**

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\*The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the United Nations.

This paper represents the summary of the presentation made by the panelist Anna Arganashvili on the panel devoted to the work of national mechanisms for gender equality. It briefly summarizes the status of the national mechanism in Georgia and analyses the role of women's CSOs in lobbying for increased resources and gender-sensitive service delivery.

### **1. Empowering women – though investing the resources**

Following the model by Welzel & Inglehart (2005)<sup>1</sup>, the human-empowerment triad for fostering effective democracy implies the sequence of three elements: action resources, self-expression values and democratic institutions. Empowered women in the context of the developing country like Georgia require a combination of these components.

Based on the model of human-empowerment action-resources in the context of the developing country implies: both material and cognitive resources, education opportunities and skills-labs, economic resources, access to financial resources, including microfinances, access to full and decent employment, provision of gender-sensitive service-delivery etc. These resources give women the opportunity to become active stakeholders in the democratization process. Raising levels of resources increase women's ability to pressure the government for reaching de facto gender equality. Investment of resources in women results in improved equality and an equitable redistribution of wealth.

Action-resources, once allocated to 'safe' and traditional areas of expenditure, are not easy to redirect into alternative routes. Actually, it requires reconsidering traditional schemes of action and making harsh decisions. National mechanisms in collaboration with women's CSOs are one of the biggest catalysts for this action. But how effective is this partnership nowadays? I will try to respond to this question below.

### **2. Current status of the national mechanism of Gender Equality in Georgia**

In recent years, Georgia has made important progress in terms of the establishment/development of national machineries in the field of women's empowerment and gender equality. Since 2010, a standing Council on Gender Equality has been established in the Parliament. In 2013, a special post for the Assistant to the Prime Minister on Human Rights and Gender Equality Issues was established, followed with the establishment of Human Rights Council (chaired by the Prime Minister) in 2014. Under the auspices of this Council, again in 2014, a working group on Gender Equality and Women's Rights was created (overseeing the implementation of Gender Equality National Action Plan), an inter-agency Council on the Measures to Eliminate Domestic Violence was re-established (responsible for the implementation / development of domestic violence policies) as well as a National Coordination Group on Women, Peace and Security (overseeing the implementation of the commitments undertaken by the government around women, peace and security agenda). In addition, the Public Defender of Georgia established a Gender Equality Department within its structure followed by the adoption of relevant gender equality action plans and a gender mainstreaming strategy.

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<sup>1</sup> Welzel, C., Inglehart, R. (2008). The role of ordinary people in democratization. *Journal of Democracy*. Vol 19. Num. 1, 126-140.

### 3. Layer of gender equality 'paint'

Notwithstanding the arrangement – and continuous improvement – of these institutional mechanisms, statistics on the status of women do not yet seem to reflect this improvement:

According to the National Statistics Bureau, on average, women in Georgia earned 63% of men's salary in as of 2013 (60% in 2012 and 2011). 43% of women were economically inactive in 2013, while for men, the same indicator stands as 23%.

Following the latest study on the issue of women employment and economic activism,<sup>2</sup> 66% of men (who have been eligible for bonuses/compensations) have received those bonuses, while women were almost twice less likely to receive them, at 34%. 60% of men have got premias, while the same experience has been for 41% of women (who responded that they have been rewarded compensations/benefits by their employer). The significant finding regarding benefits was that there is also a wide gender gap regarding the health insurance – 67% of men and just 33% of women claimed, they have health insurance provided by their employer.

The same shortage of services is visible in other areas: still very limited services for the victims of gender-based violence (only shelters), neither general, nor vocational educational programs are gender-sensitive, women are not benefiting from a gender-sensitive social system (victims of domestic violence are deprived of social benefits once fleeing from the perpetrator's house), no social workers are dealing with the women experiencing issues related with violence, unemployment, homelessness, etc.

### 4. The reasons underlying

- ✚ Still, gender equality is not a priority on the development agenda of the government (the above-mentioned institutional mechanisms and action plans are weakly funded and gender equality agenda is mainly driven by international and local development actors).
- ✚ National mechanisms are actually marginalized within the legislative and executive government, not invited to the round tables where Grand National reforms are discussed.
- ✚ National mechanisms actually lack power and cannot influence any entity, other than providing consultations and recommendations which are not taken into consideration and are not heard.
- ✚ National mechanisms are experiencing serious shortage of human resources and financial resources (e.g. the parliamentary Council of Gender Equality is not supported by any staff members).
- ✚ Staff of the above mentioned entities are usually have multiple official duties and responsibilities. For example, the head of the gender equality council is at the same time the deputy head of the parliament; the Prime Minister's advisor on gender equality is at the same time human rights advisor, and so forth. In practice it means that the workload of these professionals is often filled up with other tasks rather than the gender equality national mechanism duty-driven.

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<sup>2</sup> Bendeliani, N., Turk, P., Amashukeli, M., Khechuashvili L. (2013). Gender Discrimination in Georgian Labour Market, Centre for Social Sciences.

[http://tanastoroba.ge/system/publications/2/Gender\\_Discrimination\\_in\\_the\\_Georgian\\_Labor\\_Market.pdf](http://tanastoroba.ge/system/publications/2/Gender_Discrimination_in_the_Georgian_Labor_Market.pdf). Last viewed 07.03.2015

## **5. The Power of Belonging**

Where do national machineries for gender equality belong? Do they belong to the Governments who marginalize these structures or to the women who envisage them as fulfilling the long standing dream of gender equality?

Is this the time to reconsider the concept of national mechanisms and their philosophy of belonging, will they actually regain the power within the formal structure of Government?

Can the national mechanisms and women's CSOs form mutual strategies of action for lobbying for increased resources and services?

How can the inner, massive energy of women united in CSOs be realized in support of national mechanisms, through lobbying all the other entities of the legislative and executive government?

Can women from women's CSOs participate in nominating the candidates representing national machineries and increase their accountability to women's CSOs, thus strengthening their independence and influence over the governmental structures?

We can discuss all the new opportunities and powers for realizing Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

It's about the power of belonging!