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# Potential Climate Change Impacts on Women's Vulnerability in Georgia

Climate change can increase the vulnerability of women to various risks, including natural disasters, food insecurity, water scarcity, and health problems. Women may also face unique challenges in accessing resources and services, which can limit their ability to adapt to a changing climate. Developing countries, with their more traditional gender roles, are even more likely to experience disproportionate impacts of climate change on women, and Georgia is no exception. Thus, the country needs to address this problem through a comprehensive approach which accounts for the social, economic, and environmental factors that contribute to gender inequality.

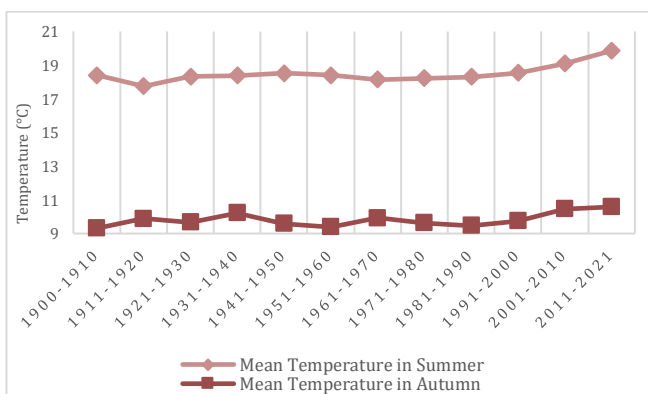


## Introduction

According to Georgia's fourth national communication report to the United Nation's Framework Convention on Climate Change, the negative impacts of climate change on ecosystems and the economy can hinder Georgia's path toward sustainable development. Therefore, a key focus for the country should be to develop climate-resilient practices and reduce the vulnerability of communities exposed to these impacts.

The climate scenarios in the communication report present a worrying picture of warming trends in the country, mainly due to increased temperatures in the last summer and autumn seasons, as depicted in Figure 1 (MEPA, 2021). Such alterations in weather patterns often lead to glacier retreat, water scarcity, coastal erosion, and biodiversity loss in different regions of Georgia (ibid).

Figure 1. Average summer and winter temperatures in Georgia, 1900-2021.



Source: Climate Change Knowledge Portal (World Bank, 2021).

An increasing body of international research has demonstrated that climate change can have adverse effects on agricultural production, food security, water management, and public health. Furthermore, research has revealed that these

effects are not gender-neutral, with women and children being among the most affected groups (World Bank Group, 2021).

## Climate Change Impacts on Women – A Georgian Perspective

Women in developing countries like Georgia experience various impacts of climate change, which affect them differently than men. The effects might vary according to region or community, but some common signs can be identified. The main channels through which women are disproportionately affected by climate change are discussed in the following sub-sections.

### Health Impacts

Climate change has a significant effect on human health, with women being more vulnerable due to various cultural, social, and economic factors (Sbiroli et al., 2022). In particular, women appear to be more susceptible to infectious diseases and undernutrition, especially in middle and low-income countries (ibid).

Springmann et al. (2016) found that, by 2050, Georgia could experience about 32.36 climate-related deaths per million due to malnutrition caused by a lack of fruits and vegetables in people's diets and due to increased health complications associated with undernutrition. In Georgia, malnutrition is a significant gender equality concern. According to the [Global Nutrition Report](#), women in Georgia disproportionately experience exposure to undernutrition translated into underweight. Similarly, women represent the majority of Georgians with obesity (26.8 percent, compared to



22.2 percent among men). Both these issues may be further exacerbated by climate change in the future.

Furthermore, in Georgia, women are more likely to care for sick family members. According to [Geostat](#), 31 percent of women who have sick or dependent family members are involved in providing them care, compared to only 15 percent of the men. This puts women at greater risk of exposure to climate change-induced infectious diseases, given that research has demonstrated an increased risk of such diseases worldwide, including in areas in Europe that have climate profiles similar to Georgia (Mora et al., 2022; Gray et al., 2009).

Figure 2. Prevalence of underweight among adults (>18) in Georgia, 2000-2016.



Source: Global Nutrition Report (2023).

## Water and Food Scarcity

Climate change is also known to affect food and water supply through changes in agricultural conditions, droughts, and floods. In developing countries as women are often responsible for food and water supply, they are disproportionately affected by water shortages resulting from climate change (Figueiredo & Perkins, 2013). Women in

poor rural households in Georgia are likely to face similar challenges.

Women in Georgia also play a crucial role in agriculture (according to Geostat, 47 percent of workers in agricultural holdings were women in 2021). Fluctuations in temperature and precipitation patterns can reduce crop yields, leading to lower income and food insecurity. This may disproportionately affect female farmers, as access to agricultural technologies, land ownership and lack of necessary knowledge and skills are some of the significant barriers for women involved in agriculture in Georgia (Gamisonia, 2015).

## Economic Impacts and Access to Resources

One of the main reasons to why women are disproportionately affected by climate change is that their underlying economic conditions are less favourable than men's (Yadav & Lal, 2018). In 2021, the majority of people outside the labor force were women (65 percent), while men constituted 35 percent (Geostat). It is important to mention that in the same year, only 33 percent of women were employed in Georgia, compared to 49 percent of men. Additionally, the average salary for women was 1056 GEL (813 GEL in the agricultural sector), while men earned an average of 1538 GEL (1006 GEL in the agricultural sector). Finally, although poverty rates among women in Georgia are slightly lower than among men, 17.1 vs. 17.9 percent respectively (absolute poverty rates in 2021), the poverty data does not account for the gender-biased distribution of household resources. Women face larger barriers in obtaining financial resources (collaterals, loans, etc.) than men because they own less property. For different types



of property, only 44 percent are owned by at least one woman, according to the National Agency of Public Registry of Georgia. The corresponding number for men is 56 percent. Geostat data further indicates that households headed by men make up 63 percent of the total number of households, whereas households headed by women account for only 37 percent. These unfavorable conditions hinder women's access to vital information and resources required for climate change adaptation and mitigation.

The discussed impacts may be especially prominent for women in poor rural households. Climate change-induced natural disasters are typically more detrimental for households dependent on agriculture (Dagdeviren et al., 2021), especially subsistence farmers and poor agricultural workers (in particular those without access to technology or resources). In Georgia, women are in majority in both these categories.

### Natural Disasters and Displacement

Climate-driven disasters are over 14 times more likely to cause fatalities among women and children than men, according to UNHCR (2022). Additionally, women in agrarian societies impacted by climate change are less likely to use adaptive measures, putting them at higher risk of displacement (Palacios, Sexsmith, Matheu & Gonzalez, 2023). Such risks are also likely to pertain to the rural areas of Georgia.

## Georgia's International Obligations and Policies

In previous decades Georgia has made significant progress when it comes to incorporating gender equality and climate change into the policy

agenda. In particular, Georgia follows numerous international legislative initiatives regarding sustainable development, gender equality, and climate change.

Georgia is a party to the **Paris Agreement** and the **Beijing platform** (a comprehensive roadmap *for women's rights and empowerment*, which lists the problems associated with gender inequality and different strategies to overcome them, signed by Georgia in 1995). It is also a signatory of the **Gender Action Plan (GAP)**, adopted a year after the Paris Agreement to integrate gender into targets and increase effectiveness, fairness, and sustainability.

The updated **Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) of Georgia** includes a dedicated section on gender and climate change. This section aims to promote gender mainstreaming, encourage equal participation, empower women, build capacity, and develop climate policies that are responsive to gender considerations. Furthermore, the Long-term Low-emission Development Strategies for Paris Agreement parties (including Georgia) has a communication and awareness-raising strategy that seeks to address gender, youth, and people with disabilities in its outreach efforts (United Nations, 2022).

Despite these commitments, Georgia is lagging when it comes to tackling the issues of climate change and gender in coordination. For example, even though Georgia has adopted a Gender Equality Law and Action Plan, it does not address climate change issues. Therefore, municipalities are not required to consider gender aspects of climate change impacts.



## Identified Gaps and Policy Recommendations

Despite the number of policies and measures undertaken, unsolved problems hinder the country's ambition to adhere to gender-mainstreamed climate change-addressed policymaking.

For example, there is a lack of gender-disaggregated data on the impacts of climate change in Georgia, which prevents policymakers from developing targeted strategies to address women's needs. Therefore, collecting and analyzing disaggregated data with gender-specific impacts in mind is recommended. Additionally, involving women in decision-making and ensuring their participation in climate change efforts is crucial as their unique experiences and perspectives can inform more effective and equitable responses to climate change impacts.

As previously mentioned, climate change in Georgia is expected to exacerbate water and food scarcity, which can disproportionately affect women. Therefore, implementing climate-resilient water management strategies and increasing access to climate-resilient agricultural practices, such as crop diversification and improved irrigation systems, can help increase farm productivity and reduce the adverse impacts of climate change on women.

Furthermore, there is a need to provide women with access to financial resources and services and to address gender-based inequalities that may limit women's ability to access information and resources necessary for climate change adaptation and mitigation.

Finally, addressing the impacts of climate change on women in Georgia will require a coordinated and sustained effort from a range of stakeholders, including governments, civil society organizations, and local communities, so that women are not left behind in the global effort to address the impacts of climate change.

## Conclusion

To effectively address the impacts of climate change on women in Georgia, it is essential to recognize that various social, economic, and cultural factors shape women's experiences. For example, women in rural areas may face different challenges than women in urban areas; women with few economic means may be disproportionately affected by climate change. Therefore, policies should not only integrate gender-mainstreaming, but also account for these heterogeneities, to ensure that different parties of the society are adequately addressed within the climate change policy agenda.

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