



MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
AND AGRICULTURE OF GEORGIA



In partnership with
Canada



GENDER ASSESSMENT

LAND DEGRADATION NEUTRALITY TARGET SETTING PROGRAMME 2.0

GEORGIA, 2025



Federal Ministry
for Economic Cooperation
and Development



Coordinated by: Regional Environmental Centre for the Caucasus (REC Caucasus)

Under the oversight of: Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia (MEPA)

In consultation with: Global Mechanism of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)

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Abbreviations

Abbreviation

LDN TSP 2.0

UNCCD

REC Caucasus

MEPA

COP

LDN

NDC

CEDAW

Full Form

Land Degradation Neutrality Target Setting Programme

United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification

The Regional Environmental Centre for the Caucasus

Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia

The Conference of the Parties

Land Degradation Neutrality

Nationally Determined Contribution

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

1. INTRODUCTION



Rural Georgian landscape with agricultural land and communities

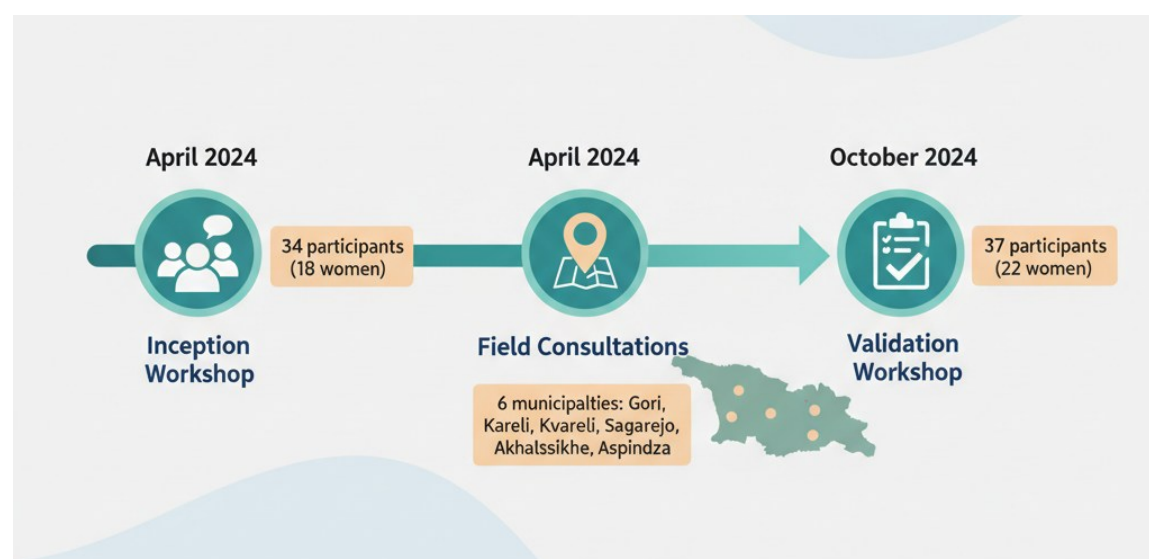
This Gender Assessment has been prepared within the framework of the second phase of the Land Degradation Neutrality Target Setting Programme (LDN TSP 2.0), coordinated in Georgia by the Regional Environmental Centre for the Caucasus (REC Caucasus) under the oversight of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia (MEPA), and in consultation with the Global Mechanism of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). The assessment responds to the mandate conferred by the Parties to the Convention through decisions 3/COP.15 and 13/COP.15, which call for the systematic integration of gender-responsive approaches into the refinement of national LDN targets and measures.

In line with UNCCD's principle that gender equality is both a fundamental human right and an operational necessity, the Gender Assessment in Georgia was undertaken as part of the project identification and development stage of the LDN TSP 2.0. The process aimed to move beyond policy-level commitments by generating practical evidence, mobilizing diverse stakeholders, and shaping priority actions to guide the design of transformative projects and programmes.

The methodology combined desk review of national policy and research documents, gender and social mapping of rural livelihoods, and most importantly, participatory multi-stakeholder consultations. Two national workshops served as milestones in the identification and development phase:

National Working Group Inception Workshop (29 April 2024, Tbilisi): Attended by 34 representatives (18 women), the workshop established the National Working

Group, clarified roles and responsibilities, and ensured gender-balanced representation from the outset.



National Validation Workshop (21 October 2024, Tbilisi): The event brought together 37 participants (22 women). Discussions emphasized that while gender considerations are increasingly reflected in national policies, they often remain generic and insufficiently linked to measurable targets. One of the key outcomes was recognition of women's increased representation in land management discussions and a commitment to integrate gender perspectives into updated national strategies, including the revised Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC).

A third milestone workshop was held on 24-26 December 2025 at Kvareli Lake Resort, Kvareli, serving as the National Validation Workshop for the draft Law on Pastureland Management and the updated national LDN targets. The event brought together 18 participants (44% women) from key national institutions including MEPA, the Parliament of Georgia, and the National Agency for Sustainable Land Management. Crucially for the gender assessment process, the presentation of updated LDN targets explicitly acknowledged gender-differentiated roles in land management and called for the integration of gender-specific indicators into national monitoring systems, reinforcing the findings and recommendations of this assessment.

Stakeholder contributions enriched the process, in particular in the most vulnerable municipalities, where the effects of land degradation are experienced daily. While this document touches on existing policy frameworks, the perspectives of those who are implementing local policies and working directly with the communities need to be amplified. During this process, the methodology focused on participatory

approach, conducting focus groups on the local level, creating a space for honest discussion regarding local challenges and how gender related topics are addressed when they arise. Unsurprisingly, these discussions identified significant gaps.

Table 1. Assessment Methodology and Stakeholder Engagement

Methodology Component	Details and Outcomes
Focus Group Discussions	80 participants (75% female) across six focus groups held in Gori, Kareli, Kvareli, Sagarejo, Akhaltsikhe, Aspindza, primarily municipality workers with direct implementation experience. Revealed persistent gaps between policy commitments and field realities, particularly around women's time constraints, cultural barriers to extension service access, and challenges in implementing gender-responsive budgeting at local levels.
National Working Group Inception Workshop	April 29, 2024, Tbilisi. 34 representatives (18 women, 53%). Established National Working Group, clarified institutional roles, and ensured gender-balanced representation. Confirmed commitment to move beyond generic gender references toward measurable action.
National Validation Workshop	October 21, 2024, Tbilisi. 37 participants (22 women, 59%). Validated findings and confirmed that gender considerations remain insufficiently linked to measurable targets despite policy progress. Generated commitment to integrate gender perspectives into updated NDC and national strategies.
National Validation Workshop on Pastureland Management and LDN Targets	December 24-26, 2025, Kvareli. 18 participants (44% women). Served as the national validation forum for the draft Law on Pastureland Management and Georgia's updated LDN targets for 2030. Gender dimensions were explicitly addressed, including recognition of differentiated roles of women and men in land management, barriers to women's land ownership and financial access, and a call to integrate gender-specific indicators into all LDN monitoring systems. Updated targets validated include: expansion of protected areas to 30% of territory, restoration of 70,000 hectares of degraded land, and afforestation of 1,500 hectares.
Desk Research and Data Analysis	Review of national legislation, sectoral strategies, and international commitments. Analysis of sex-disaggregated data from Geostat (Time Use Survey 2020-2021, Agricultural Holdings Survey 2022-2023), UN Women Georgia studies, FAO assessments, and World Bank research. Synthesis of regional academic literature on gender and land governance.

These consultations, both on local and national levels, confirmed that gender remains a critical yet under-implemented dimension of Georgia's land governance framework. Building on these insights, the Gender Assessment highlights gender-differentiated roles, barriers, and impacts in land use and resource management, and incorporates the key outputs of the national validation workshop, including:

Recognition of the urgent need to integrate gender-responsive approaches into the implementation of LDN targets;

Active participation as a means to ensure diverse perspectives are reflected in discussions and decision-making processes; and

A proposal for developing a gender-sensitive strategy that guarantees the meaningful involvement of women and youth in land management decisions and the adoption of sustainable land practices.

Ultimately, this assessment positions gender equality as a cross-cutting enabler of sustainable land management in Georgia. By anchoring the identification and implementation of LDN measures in inclusive evidence and participatory dialogue, it provides a roadmap for ensuring that land degradation neutrality contributes not only to ecological resilience, but also to advancing the rights, opportunities and well-being of women and men alike.

2. POLICY AND COMMITMENTS CONTEXT

2.1 National Policy Documents on Gender Equality

Georgia has made notable progress in establishing a legal and policy foundation for gender equality, reflecting its commitment to international human rights standards and sustainable development objectives. Article 11 of the Constitution guarantees gender equality and prohibits gender-based discrimination. The Law on Gender Equality (2010) and the Law on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination (2014) remain the central legislative instruments protecting women's rights and ensuring equal opportunities. Amendments since 2018 have strengthened protection against sexual harassment and improved access to goods and services, while the introduction of a 25% gender quota in political party lists marked an important milestone in women's political participation.

At the strategic level, Georgia has endorsed the State Concept of Gender Equality and the State Concept on the Economic Empowerment of Women (2023), which address structural inequalities in access to resources, unpaid care work and informal employment. However, the absence of a dedicated National Action Plan on Gender Equality remains a critical gap. Gender objectives are instead dispersed across broader frameworks, including the National Strategy for the Protection of Human Rights (2022-2030) and associated action plans. Key sectoral action plans include:

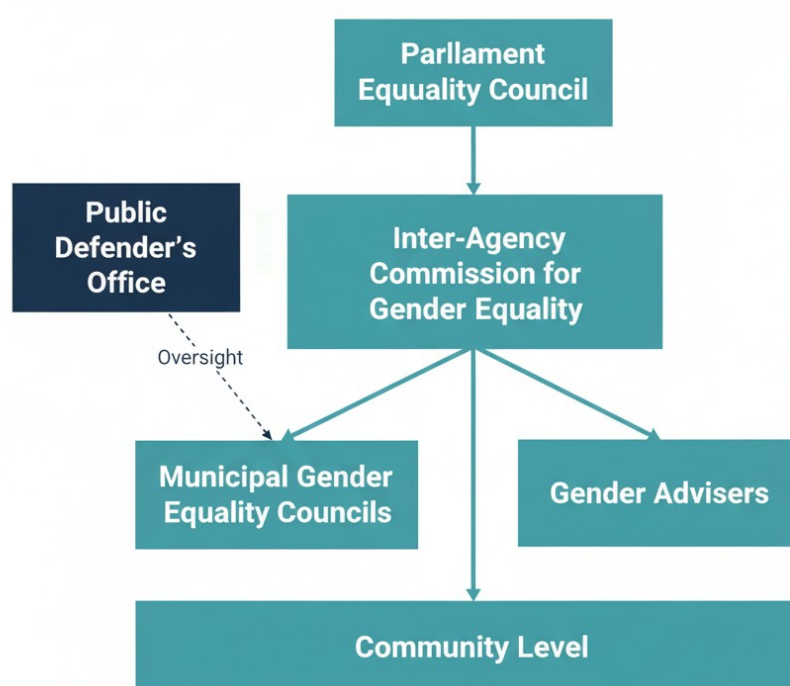
- National Action Plan on Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (2022-2024)
- National Action Plan for Implementation of UN Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace, and Security (2022-2024)

Sectoral integration of gender equality has been partial and uneven. The Agriculture and Rural Development Strategy (2021-2027), the National Strategy on Agricultural Extension (2023-2027), and the draft Strategy on Aquaculture (2023-2027) reference gender inclusion, often in general terms, with limited actionable measures or monitoring mechanisms. Climate change and biodiversity frameworks, including Georgia's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC 2021-2030) and the Second National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP), include provisions for gender-responsive action. The NDC is particularly notable as one of the first climate

policy documents in the region to dedicate a specific chapter to gender and climate change.

Despite these advancements, significant challenges remain. Gender mainstreaming is not systematically operationalized in line ministries and sectoral strategies rarely integrate gender-specific data, targets or indicators. Women's access to land, credit and decision-making continues to be constrained, particularly in rural areas, where traditional norms and structural inequalities persist.

Institutional Mechanisms supporting gender equality include:



Gender Equality Council (Parliament of Georgia): Monitors legislation and alignment with international obligations.

Inter-Agency Commission for Gender Equality, Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (since 2017): Coordinates action plans, promotes gender mainstreaming, and develops sex-disaggregated data methodologies.

Municipal Gender Equality Councils and Gender Advisers in Mayor's Offices: Localize gender commitments, though resources and capacity vary widely.

Public Defender's Office (Ombudsperson): Investigates and responds to discrimination cases.

Geostat's publication Women and Men in Georgia (2024) provides updated gender distributions in agriculture: in 2022-2023, about 32% of agricultural holdings were headed by women, who operated approximately 18-21% of the land.

Improvements in statistical infrastructure, including the Gender Statistics Strategy and the Gender Statistics Portal, are supporting more accessible, sex-disaggregated data.



Gender statistics in Georgian agriculture

2.2 International Commitments on Gender Equality

Georgia is party to key international conventions and frameworks advancing gender equality, reinforcing national obligations and guiding the integration of gender perspectives into land degradation neutrality (LDN) and sustainable land management:

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW): Georgia has ratified CEDAW and submitted six periodic reports. The 2020 report highlighted persistent challenges for rural women, including low land ownership and limited access to credit. The CEDAW Committee recommended comprehensive strategies for the economic empowerment of rural women and stronger implementation mechanisms.

Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action: Commitments include enhancing women's participation in decision-making, reducing structural inequalities in rural development, and addressing barriers to access resources and services.

2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Georgia has pledged to achieve SDG 5 (gender equality) alongside other SDGs relevant to rural livelihoods, including SDG 1 (no poverty), SDG 2 (zero hunger), SDG 6 (clean water and sanitation) and SDG 15 (life on land). Gender indicators remain underdeveloped in national monitoring frameworks, limiting evidence-based interventions.

Council of Europe & EU Integration: Under the EU - Georgia Association Agreement and EU candidate status (2023), Georgia is aligning gender legislation with European standards. The European Commission's 2022 Opinion noted broad

legal alignment, but emphasized the need for stronger enforcement and institutional mechanisms.

UNCCD Gender Action Plan (2017) and 2022 Roadmap: As a Party to the UNCCD, Georgia is formally committed to implementing the UNCCD Gender Action Plan (2017), which provides a structured framework for mainstreaming gender into all aspects of land degradation neutrality planning, implementation, and monitoring. The 2022 Roadmap further operationalizes these commitments by identifying concrete steps for integrating gender equality into national LDN target-setting processes, including the systematic collection of sex-disaggregated data, equal participation of women in land governance structures, and the recognition of women's traditional ecological knowledge in restoration planning. For Georgia, these instruments are particularly relevant as they directly guide the LDN TSP 2.0 process and set expectations for how national targets and transformative projects should address gender disparities in land use and natural resource management.

2.3 Implications for LDN TSP 2.0

Georgia has a solid normative basis for gender equality, both nationally and internationally. However, institutional capacity, coordination and implementation gaps limit the translation of law into meaningful outcomes for rural women and land governance. For the purposes of LDN TSP 2.0, the following implications are critical:

- National laws and strategies provide a strong framework, but enforcement and accountability mechanisms are weak, limiting their impact on land governance and resource management.
- Existing structures - ministries, councils, and municipal bodies -offer potential for coordination, but operational mandates, resources, and capacities are inconsistent.
- LDN strategies must adopt actionable measures, measurable targets and gender-sensitive monitoring frameworks, including regular collection and use of sex and socially disaggregated data on land ownership, asset control, earnings and participation.
- Stronger operational mandates in agriculture, environment, and climate ministries are needed, with clear budget allocations and enforcement mechanisms down to municipal levels.

LDN implementation in Georgia can be transformative only if it moves beyond declaratory references to gender, actively engages institutional mechanisms, and ensures that policies translate into tangible improvements for rural women and equitable land governance.

Strengthening Institutional Mechanisms for Gender-Responsive Land Governance

Translating these normative commitments into tangible outcomes requires targeted institutional reform at both national and municipal levels. Several concrete measures are recommended:

At the **ministry level**, dedicated gender units or focal points should be established, or where they already exist, adequately resourced and empowered, within MEPA and other line ministries relevant to land governance, including the Ministry of Regional Development and the Ministry of Economy. These units should carry explicit mandates to integrate gender-responsive approaches into sectoral planning, budget allocation, and monitoring frameworks related to land degradation neutrality.

At the **municipal level**, Gender Equality Councils and Gender Advisers in Mayors' Offices should be formally linked to land-use planning processes, including Municipal Pasture Management Planning and LDN Decision Support Systems. Currently these mechanisms operate largely in isolation from land governance structures. Formalizing this connection, through clear inter-institutional protocols, dedicated budget lines, and capacity building, would significantly improve the translation of national gender commitments into local land management decisions.

At the **coordination level**, the Inter-Agency Commission for Gender Equality should be engaged as a standing participant in LDN-related interministerial processes, rather than consulted on an ad hoc basis. This would ensure that gender mainstreaming is treated as a cross-cutting governance responsibility rather than the mandate of a single institution. Regular joint reporting between gender equality bodies and environmental ministries on sex-disaggregated land governance indicators would further strengthen accountability.

Finally, **budget allocations** for gender-responsive land management activities must be explicitly earmarked at both national and municipal levels. Gender-sensitive programming cannot be sustained through goodwill alone, it requires secured financing, measurable targets, and regular public reporting on progress. These mechanisms, taken together, would represent a meaningful step toward closing the gap between Georgia's strong normative framework for gender equality and the persistent implementation deficits observed in rural land governance.

3. GENDER AND SOCIAL MAPPING

3.1 Context

Rural areas of Georgia account for nearly 40 percent of the national population, and their livelihoods are heavily dependent on agriculture, livestock and natural resource use (Geostat, 2023). These areas are particularly vulnerable to land degradation, climate variability and unsustainable practices, all of which directly impact household well-being. Within this context, gender relations strongly shape access to and control over land and resources, as well as opportunities for participation in governance and decision-making.

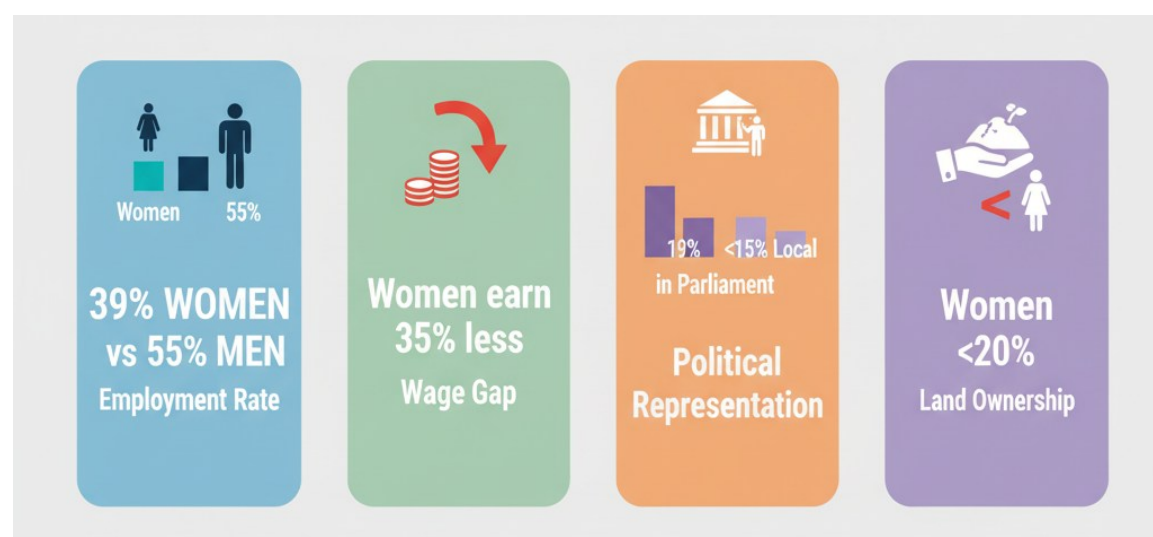
This chapter draws on a desk study of national statistics, policy documents and scientific literature, combined with field-based qualitative research conducted in

Georgia, including interviews, to provide an evidence-based understanding of gender dynamics in land use and LDN implementation.

Despite advances in national gender policies, significant disparities persist between women and men in rural areas. Women make up 52% of the total population, yet their representation in rural decision-making, land ownership and agricultural asset control remains disproportionately low. In 2022, women accounted for 41% of the agricultural labor force, but held only about 19% of registered land plots. These inequalities increase women's vulnerability to the socio-economic impacts of land degradation and climate change, particularly in mountainous regions where resource scarcity is most acute.

Traditional gender roles reinforce this imbalance. Women are primarily engaged in food production, household management and care work, while men dominate commercial agriculture, livestock trade and formal decision-making structures. These divisions shape both the experiences of degradation and the capacity to access adaptation and livelihood opportunities.

3.2 Gender Profile in Georgia



Key gender disparities in Georgia

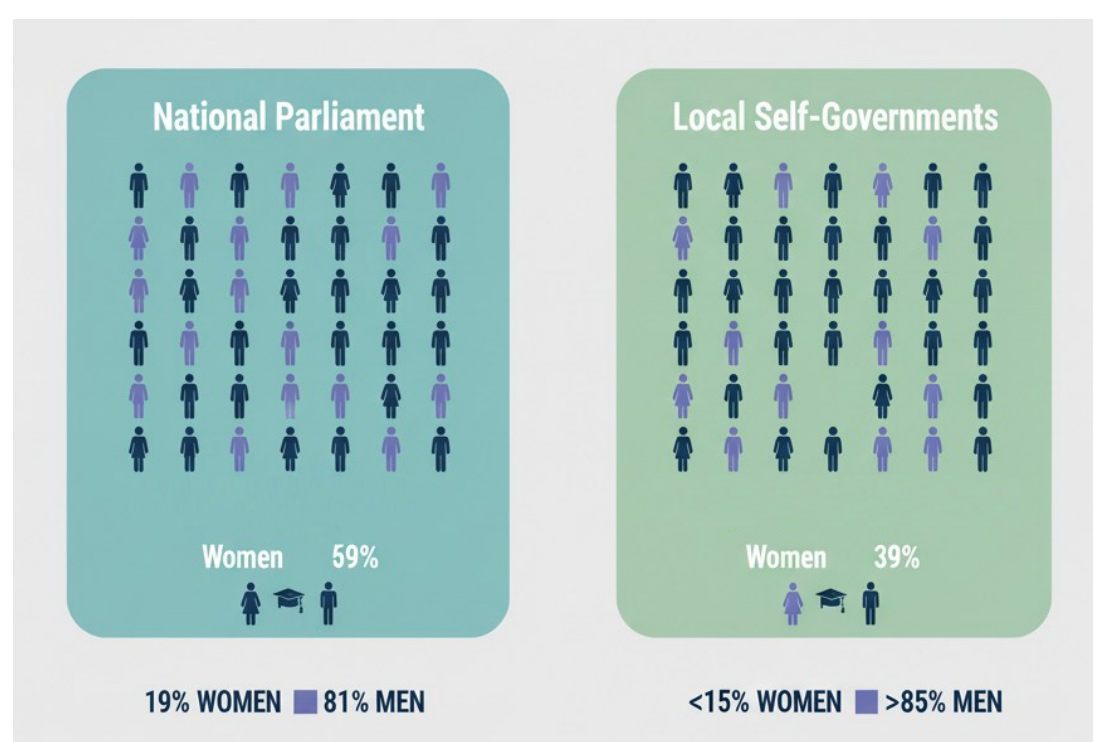
The gender profile of Georgia highlights both progress and persistent gaps. Since 2010, the country has established a legal and institutional framework for gender equality, including the Law on Gender Equality (2010) and the Law on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination (2014). These laws provide the foundation for equal rights but have not fully translated into practice in rural land governance.

Education and Employment: Women have slightly higher rates of tertiary education completion than men; however, their employment rate remains lower (39% for women vs. 55% for men in 2022, Geostat). In rural areas, women's employment is predominantly informal and linked to subsistence farming. Field interviews confirm

women's reliance on small-scale agricultural activities for household subsistence.

Women's average monthly earnings remain 35% lower than men's (Geostat, 2023). The wage gap is particularly pronounced in agriculture and forestry, sectors highly relevant for land degradation neutrality (LDN).

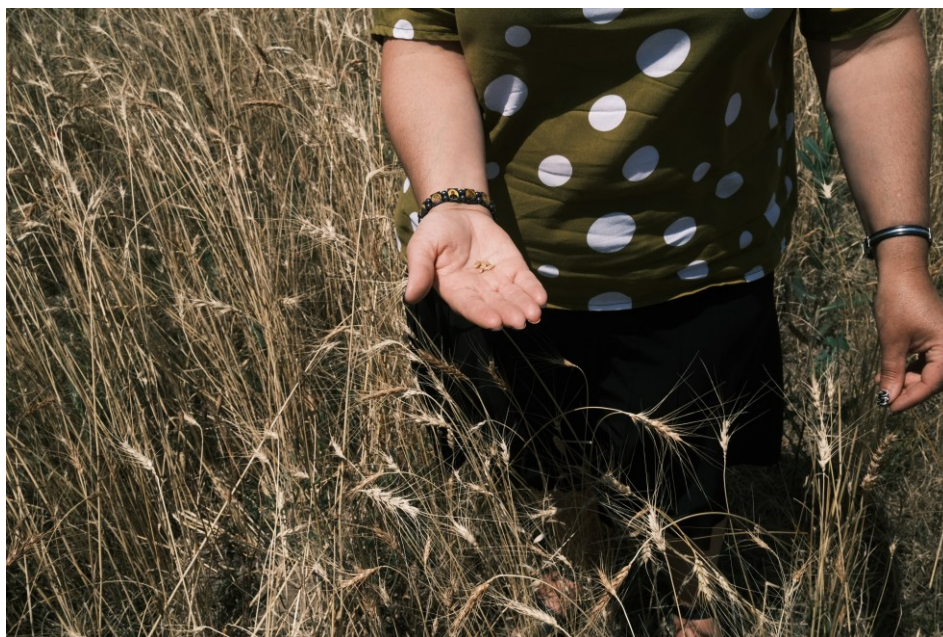
Women's representation in the national parliament is 19%, while in local self-governments it is below 15% (IPRM, 2022). Their underrepresentation at the municipal level reduces their influence over land-use planning and LDN-related decision-making.



Women's political representation gap

Poverty and Social Vulnerability: Female-headed households, especially in rural and mountainous areas, are overrepresented among low-income groups. Care burdens, migration of men and limited access to productive assets exacerbate this vulnerability. Participatory mapping in Georgia shows that women in these households often bear the full responsibility for managing natural resources.

3.3 Gender Roles in Rural Livelihoods



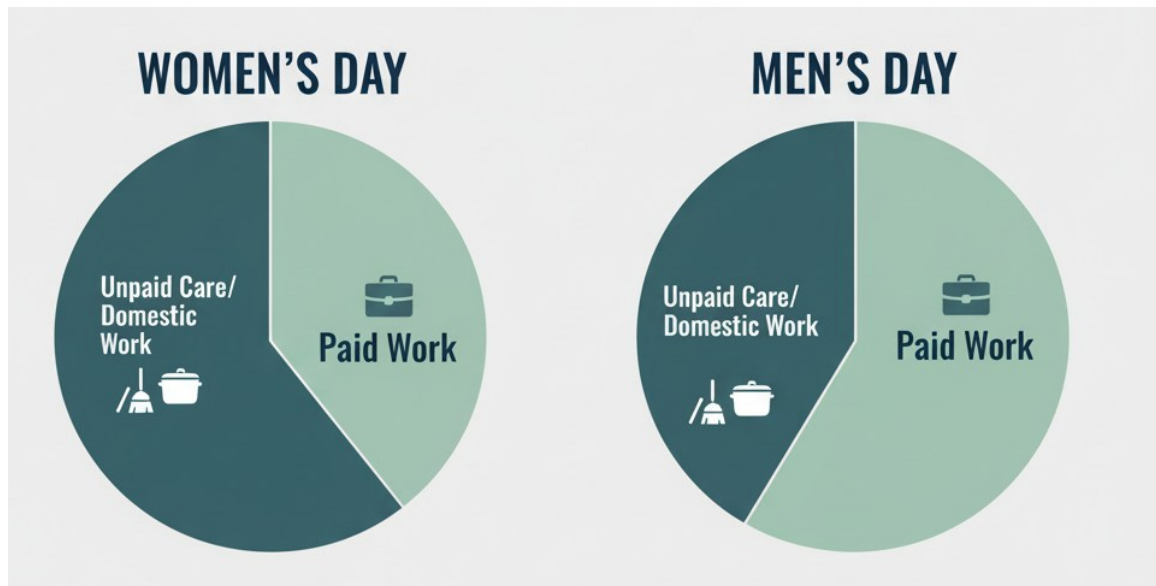
Woman farmer from Gori Municipality

Agriculture and Land Use

Women comprise around 41% of the agricultural labour force, largely engaged in subsistence farming, horticulture, and food processing. Men are more involved in commercial crop production, livestock trading, and market-oriented farming. Both desk and field-based data confirm that women operate a substantially smaller share of the land area compared to men, reflecting notable gaps in land ownership and asset control (Geostat, 2024).

Household and Care Economy

Women perform on average 3.5 times more unpaid domestic and care work than men (Geostat, 2021). Interviews and focus groups highlight that this "time poverty" limits women's mobility, participation in trainings and engagement in governance forums.



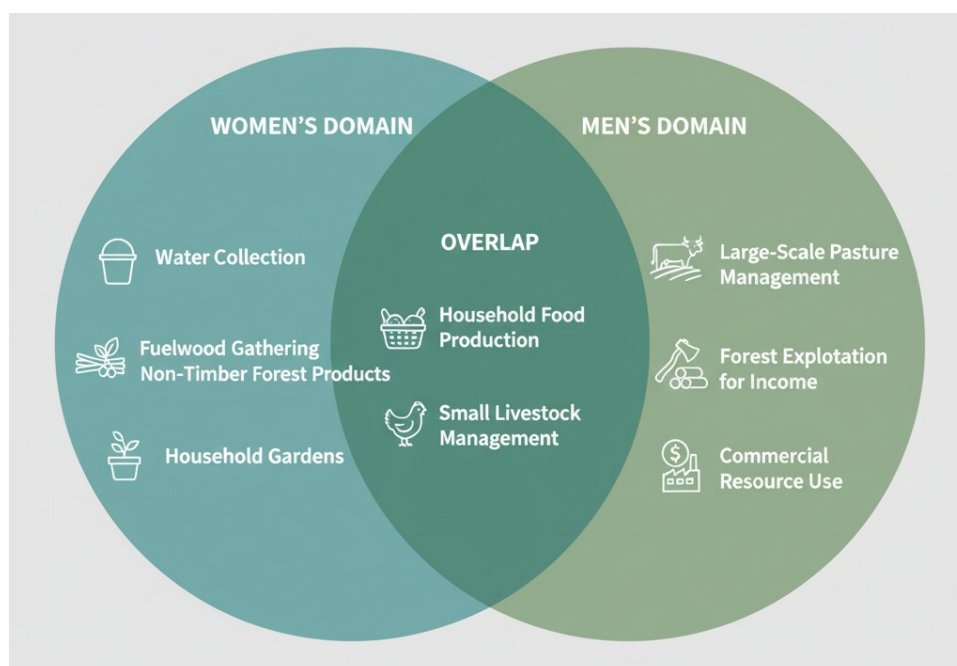
The gap between paid work between men and women

Decision-Making

Men are more frequently recognized as landowners and household heads, granting stronger influence in cooperatives, pasture user associations, and municipal councils. While women's participation is slowly increasing through donor-supported initiatives, it remains limited. Field research in Georgia revealed that even when women attend meetings, their knowledge and recommendations, especially regarding sustainable land management, are often undervalued.

Natural Resource Management

Women are central to collecting water, fuelwood, and non-timber forest products for household use, while men typically manage larger-scale pasture and forest exploitation for income. Participatory mapping shows that men control key communal resources, whereas women manage household-level resources that are essential for sustainability. This division affects how land degradation impacts are experienced and addressed.



Gendered management of natural resources

3.4 Barriers to Gender Equality in Land Use and LDN Implementation

Several structural and socio-economic barriers continue to limit gender equality in land management and LDN measures:

- Women own fewer than 20% of registered land plots. While joint land registration reforms have improved the situation, implementation is uneven, particularly in rural and mountainous areas.
- Because land ownership is often a prerequisite for collateral, women face systemic challenges in accessing credit, agricultural subsidies, and rural finance schemes.
- Heavy care burdens combined with poor rural transport and digital connectivity constrain women's ability to attend consultations or benefit from extension services.
- Women remain underrepresented in local governance structures, and gender stereotypes continue to limit recognition of women as legitimate decision-makers.
- Limited access to agricultural training and technical resources hinders women's ability to engage in discussions on LDN-related priorities.
- In Georgia, joint registration reforms improved women's land ownership on paper, but cultural norms and administrative hurdle slowed implementation in rural areas.

Table 2. The Gap Between Formal Rights and Practical Realities

Indicator	Current Status	Hidden Reality
Agricultural Holdings Headed by Women	32% (Geostat 2022-2023)	Majority acquired through widowhood rather than direct inheritance or purchase; often smaller, lower-quality parcels
Agricultural Land Operated by Women	18-21% (Geostat 2022-2023)	Women may work land daily but male relatives control major decisions about crops, investments, and sales
Legal Inheritance Rights	Equal rights guaranteed (Constitution Article 11)	Customary practice favors male inheritance; women who claim legal rights face family conflict and social pressure
State Land Allocation	64% of agricultural land remains state-owned; allocation processes exist	Informal networks favor male applicants; women lack information about opportunities; collateral requirements exclude women
Access to Credit Using Land as Collateral	Banks accept agricultural land as collateral	Women's limited land ownership means they cannot meet collateral requirements; informal credit at 18%+ interest rates

3.5 Differentiated Impacts of Land Degradation

Land degradation does not affect all groups equally, and its consequences in Georgia are shaped by gender and social position.

For women the declining soil fertility, water scarcity, and deforestation increase workload in subsistence farming, water collection, and fuelwood gathering. These pressures undermine food security and income-generation opportunities from small-scale agro-processing and non-timber products. Field data show that women's perception of degradation often focuses on human-induced factors, reflecting management-oriented knowledge

For men, it can be limited income from livestock and commercial farming due to reduced pasture productivity and declining soil quality. Many men migrate in search of alternative livelihoods, leaving women to manage farms, contributing to the "feminization of agriculture." Men generally attribute degradation to natural factors such as slope erosion and rainfall variability.

Women-headed households, internally displaced persons (IDPs), elderly farmers, and rural youth face intersecting vulnerabilities. For example, women-headed households often lack access to labor for physically demanding farming, while IDPs face insecure land tenure, restricting their ability to benefit from LDN interventions.

3.6 Implications for LDN TSP 2.0

The gender and social mapping highlights several implications for the design and implementation of LDN measures in Georgia:

Gender-Sensitive Land/Asset Registration Reforms: Implement reforms that remove procedural and financial barriers for women to register land and machinery in their names, and incentivize joint registration where culturally appropriate.

Market and Value-Chain Support for Women: Provide targeted grants, aggregated supply groups, and support for women-led cooperatives to close the income gap that is not explained by productivity.

Targeted Extension and Technology Transfer: Account for time poverty by offering training schedules, mobile extension services, and local demonstration plots so women can use innovations that boost sustainability and income.

Gender-Responsive Indicators for LDN: Include sex-disaggregated indicators on land ownership, decision-making participation, income from holdings, and access to climate-smart inputs and subsidies. Embed these in LDN monitoring and national SDG reporting.

Resourcing Municipal Gender Mechanisms: Translate national law into local action for land governance, including capacity building and budget lines for gender-responsive land management activities.

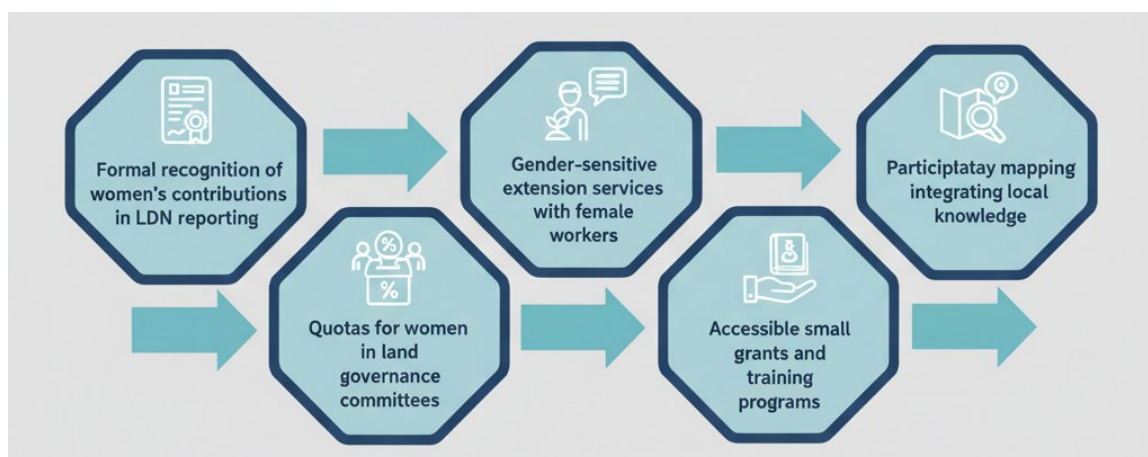
Through addressing structural inequalities and ensuring inclusive participation, Georgia can strengthen both the social legitimacy and the effectiveness of its LDN commitments. Integrating women's knowledge, particularly their management-focused insights on regulatory ecosystem services, into restoration and land management planning is crucial for sustainable outcomes.

Table 3. Gender and Social Mapping Matrix in the Context of LDN in Georgia

Category	Women	Men	Source
Primary Land Use	Home gardens, subsistence crops, small livestock, non-timber forest products	Pasture management, commercial crops, livestock trading, market-oriented farming	Desk study: Geostat 2023, 2024; Field research: Interviews, FGDs, Participatory Mapping (Georgia)
Perception of Degradation	Human-induced causes; focus on sustainability and regulatory ecosystem services	Natural/environmental causes; focus on provisioning services for household income	Desk study: Okpara 2019; Mponela 2023; Field research: Life stories, FGDs in Georgian rural communities
Decision-Making	Limited formal power; low participation in cooperatives and councils	Stronger influence as landowners and household heads	Field research: FGDs, Interviews, REC Caucasus 2025 (Georgia)
Impact of Land Degradation	Increased labor burden, reduced food security, higher vulnerability	Reduced pasture productivity and income; migration for livelihoods	Desk study: PHE-EC 2024; Field research: Focus Groups in Georgian rural areas

4. GENDER DIMENSIONS IN LDN TARGETS AND MEASURES

This chapter presents the gender dimensions of land degradation neutrality (LDN) targets and measures in Georgia, integrating qualitative findings from interviews, focus groups, and participatory mapping, as well as quantitative sex-disaggregated data collected from surveys. The analysis aims to reveal how women and men participate in land use and natural resource management, the barriers they face, and opportunities to enhance gender equality through LDN implementation.



4.1 Current LDN Targets and Gender-Responsiveness

Georgia's Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) commitments under the UNCCD are anchored in national priorities of sustainable land management, restoration of degraded pastures, erosion control, and improved land-use governance. Current LDN targets largely focus on the rehabilitation of degraded agricultural lands, afforestation and reforestation programs, and improved pasture management, with municipal-level implementation mechanisms.

While gender considerations are increasingly acknowledged in national strategies, such as the Law on Gender Equality (2010) and the National Strategy for Agricultural Development (2021-2027), the integration of gender into LDN measures remains partial. Most targets are framed in technical and environmental terms (e.g., hectares restored, erosion reduced, productivity improved) without systematically embedding sex-disaggregated indicators or gender-sensitive monitoring systems.

Donor-supported initiatives, particularly those implemented by FAO, UNDP, and GIZ, have piloted more gender-responsive practices, such as support to women's cooperatives and training in sustainable land management. However, these remain fragmented, and gender equality is not yet a mainstream feature of Georgia's national LDN targets.

The review of existing LDN targets and measures shows limited explicit integration of gender concerns. While LDN policies include measures for sustainable land management, they rarely address women's specific constraints, including access to land, credit, and decision-making power.

Key findings from the qualitative interviews:

- Women in rural mountainous areas reported that their role in pasture management and household food security is substantial, but their voices are often excluded from local land-use committees.
- Men highlighted that while women contribute labor and knowledge, formal recognition of their contribution is lacking, particularly in land ownership and grazing rights.
- Participatory mapping exercises revealed that water points and grazing areas are predominantly controlled by men, whereas women manage home gardens and non-timber forest resources.

Quantitative data (sex-disaggregated surveys):

- Less than 20% of women own agricultural land (Geostat, 2024).
- Women's participation in local pasture management committees is below 15%, despite their substantial role in livestock and fodder management.
- Access to extension services and agricultural subsidies is lower for women (approx. 25% of eligible women vs 55% of men) (UN Women, 2023).

4.2 Critical Gaps in Inclusiveness and Participation

Barriers identified in qualitative interviews and focus groups:

- Cultural norms: Women reported that social expectations limit their participation in decision-making at community meetings.
- Land tenure limitations: Inheritance and legal frameworks favor men, limiting women's formal land rights.
- Resource access: Women have less access to credit, tools, and training for sustainable land management.
- Information asymmetry: Extension services and policy updates are often communicated in male-dominated spaces.

A female focus group participant from Aspindza stated: "We manage the gardens, collect fuelwood, and care for animals, but when it comes to meetings about pasture rules, our opinions are rarely heard."

Participatory mapping exercises showed women's reliance on local water sources, which are not formally recognized in LDN planning, affecting their ability to sustainably manage household gardens.

Surveys indicate that 80% of women spend over 3 hours daily on unpaid care and resource collection, limiting their participation in training or meetings.

Only 10% of local LDN-related small grants have women as lead recipients (REC Caucasus, 2025).

4.3 Opportunities to Enhance Gender Equality through LDN

Based on the integrated findings, several opportunities exist to enhance gender-responsiveness.

1. Formal recognition of women's contributions:

- Integrate women's roles in livestock, home gardens, and non-timber forest products into LDN reporting and monitoring.
- Increase women's participation in decision-making.
- Set quotas for representation in local land governance committees.
- Conduct meetings at times accessible to women and provide childcare support.

2. Expand access to resources and information:

- Ensure small grants, training, and technical support are accessible to women, considering time and mobility constraints.
- Provide gender-sensitive extension services, including female extension workers and community-based workshops.

3. Participatory planning:

- Use participatory mapping as a tool to integrate local knowledge, ensuring gender-specific resource use patterns are acknowledged in LDN strategies.

4. Monitoring and evaluation:

- Disaggregate all LDN indicators by sex.
- Use qualitative feedback from women's life stories and focus groups to assess policy impact beyond quantitative metrics.

4.4 Key Qualitative Highlights

The qualitative findings from interviews and focus groups revealed important insights about gender dynamics in land management that complement statistical data. Women consistently reported barriers to participation in decision-making forums, despite their extensive knowledge of local ecosystems and sustainable practices. Men acknowledged women's contributions but often did not recognize the structural barriers women face. These nuanced perspectives are essential for designing effective LDN interventions that address both technical and social dimensions of land degradation.

Table 4. Key Qualitative Highlights

Theme	Insight from Interviews & Focus Groups	Quantitative Reinforcement
Land ownership	Women's ownership <20%; inheritance favors men	Land ownership data (Geostat, 2024)
Resource management	Women manage gardens, water, and non-timber forest products	80% of women spend 3+ hours daily on unpaid care

Participation in committees	Women rarely attend or influence decisions	<15% participation in pasture management
Access to training & credit	Limited due to social norms and time poverty	Only 25% of women access subsidies or extension services
Small grants	Women underrepresented as recipients	10% women-led projects (REC Caucasus, 2025)

4.5 Gender Mainstreaming in Georgia's Updated LDN Targets

Georgia's updated national LDN targets, validated at the December 2025 Kvareli workshop and developed under the LDN TSP 2.0 framework, represent significantly more ambitious environmental commitments than the country's previous goals. This section presents each updated target alongside concrete recommendations for ensuring gender-responsive implementation, recognizing that the effectiveness and equity of these targets depends on the meaningful participation of both women and men in their delivery.

Target 1: Expansion of Protected and Conservation Areas to 30% of National Territory (up from 12%)

Georgia has set a transformative goal to bring 30% of its territory under protected or conservation area status by 2030.

- Ensure that women living in and around newly designated protected areas are consulted in boundary-setting and management planning processes, as they are primary users of non-timber forest products, water sources, and household gardens that may fall within or adjacent to protected zones.
- Develop gender-disaggregated assessments of how expanded conservation areas affect women's and men's livelihoods differently, particularly in mountainous communities where resource access is already constrained.
- Include women's representatives in protected area governance bodies and co-management committees, with minimum representation thresholds established from the outset.

Target 2: Afforestation of 1,500 Hectares and Restoration of 20,000 Hectares across Kakheti, Samtskhe-Javakheti, and Guria Regions

Georgia aims to afforest 1,500 hectares and restore 20,000 hectares of degraded forest land across three priority regions by 2030.

- Prioritize the involvement of women in tree planting and restoration activities through targeted recruitment, flexible scheduling that accommodates care responsibilities, and equal access to any associated payments or incentives.
- Document and integrate women's traditional ecological knowledge of local tree species, soil fertility indicators, and water conservation practices,

particularly in Samtskhe-Javakheti communities where such knowledge was identified as an underutilized resource during focus group discussions.

- Disaggregate all monitoring data by sex, tracking women's and men's participation in restoration activities, access to training, and share of benefits received.

Target 3: Ensuring 60% of All Forests are Managed under Sustainable Principles

Georgia commits to bringing 60% of its forest area under sustainable forest management frameworks by 2030.

- Review the governance structures of forest management bodies and user associations to identify and address barriers to women's participation, including meeting schedules, location, and decision-making norms that systematically exclude women.
- Integrate gender-sensitive indicators into sustainable forest management certification and monitoring frameworks, including data on who controls income from forest resources and who bears the labor burden of forest-related activities.
- Support women-led community forestry initiatives and cooperatives as models of gender-responsive sustainable management.

Target 4: Restoration of 70,000 Hectares of Degraded Land

Georgia's most ambitious restoration target involves rehabilitating 70,000 hectares of degraded agricultural and natural land by 2030.

- Ensure that land restoration programmes explicitly target women landholders and women-managed plots, given that women operate only 18-21% of agricultural land despite comprising 41% of the agricultural labor force.
- Design grant and subsidy schemes for restoration activities to be accessible to women, addressing the collateral requirements and administrative barriers that currently exclude them from most rural finance mechanisms.
- Establish sex-disaggregated baseline data on the condition of women-managed versus men-managed land plots to enable gender-sensitive monitoring of restoration outcomes.

Target 5: Modernization of Irrigation and Drainage Systems for Sustainable Agriculture

Georgia aims to modernize irrigation and drainage infrastructure to support sustainable agricultural practices and improve land productivity by 2030.

- Ensure women are represented in water user associations and irrigation management committees, as water access directly affects their primary responsibilities in household food production and garden management, as identified consistently across all regional focus groups.
- Design irrigation improvement programmes to account for women's specific water needs at the household level, not only for commercial agricultural production.
- Collect and report sex-disaggregated data on who benefits from improved irrigation access, including smallholder and subsistence farmers who are disproportionately female.

Target 6: Integration of LDN Principles into National and Local Policy Frameworks by 2030

Georgia commits to embedding LDN approaches into national policy instruments, including the updated Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC 3.0) and the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP), as well as into municipal-level planning by 2030.

- Ensure that the updated NDC 3.0 and NBSAP include explicit, measurable gender equality targets linked to land management, building on the gender chapter already present in the current NDC.
- Require that Municipal Pasture Management Plans and LDN Decision Support Systems include gender-disaggregated data and women's participation requirements as standard components.
- Establish a formal reporting mechanism through which progress on gender-responsive LDN implementation is tracked and publicly reported, with oversight shared between MEPA and the Inter-Agency Commission for Gender Equality.

5. STAKEHOLDER AND PARTNER ENGAGEMENT

5.1 Overview and Objectives

The effective implementation of a gender-responsive Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) framework in Georgia depends upon a coordinated, multi-stakeholder approach. This chapter identifies critical stakeholders and partners—spanning government, civil society, research institutions, and development partners—and outlines strategies to ensure gender-balanced representation, diverse perspectives, and inclusive expertise in the planning and execution of LDN and gender assessment activities.

The key objectives for stakeholder engagement are:

- Inclusivity: Ensure equitable participation of women and marginalized groups.
- Relevance: Bring together diverse expertise in natural resource governance, gender equality, and land management.
- Synergies: Leverage existing platforms and partnerships to reinforce coordination and accelerate implementation.
- Sustainability: Build institutional capacity and long-term ownership among partner organizations.

5.2 National Workshops as Platforms for Engagement

Two important national-level workshops in 2024 demonstrated the commitment of Georgia to participatory and gender-balanced processes under the LDN TSP 2.0:

National Working Group Inception Workshop (29 April 2024, Tbilisi): Thirty-four representatives attended, of which 18 were women. The workshop launched the activities of the National Working Group, established roles and responsibilities, and ensured gender-balanced representation from the start of the process.

National Validation Workshop (21 October 2024, Tbilisi): Organized by the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture (MEPA) with support from the Global Mechanism of the UNCCD and REC Caucasus, the event gathered 37 participants, of whom 22 were women. One of the key outcomes was improved gender inclusion in land management practices, reflected in:

- Increased representation of women in discussions and decision-making processes related to LDN and sustainable land management.
- Recognition that while gender issues are present in some policies, references remain brief, generic, and rarely linked to measurable targets or actionable strategies.
- A call for translating existing gender mainstreaming commitments into real change through implementation and monitoring.

Workshop deliberations also underscored synergies between land degradation and climate change policies. The MEPA Climate Change Division emphasized the need

to integrate land degradation concerns into the updated Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), including joint attention to soil carbon absorption as a shared priority. Civil society contributions, notably from the Women Farmers Association, highlighted both the active engagement of rural women and the limitations they still face in scaling their impact. Participants reached consensus on the need to:

- Mobilize high-level governmental leadership.
- Engage all stakeholders, including private sector and international organizations.
- Embed the LDN approach into national policy and project frameworks.
- Secure donor support for sustainable financing.

These workshops illustrate the practical application of gender-balanced engagement, while also demonstrating the persistence of structural challenges, such as the gap between declaratory commitments and actionable implementation in gender mainstreaming.

5.3 Facilitation of Participatory and Inclusive Stakeholder Consultations



Focus group discussion in Aspindza

Ensuring participatory and inclusive consultations is fundamental to advancing gender-responsive land degradation neutrality (LDN) planning in Georgia. Such consultations create an enabling environment for diverse stakeholders—women, men, youth, marginalized rural communities, civil society representatives, and private sector actors—to engage meaningfully in the design and implementation of LDN strategies and projects.

During the LDN TSP 2.0 national process, the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia (MEPA), in collaboration with the Regional Environmental Centre for the Caucasus (REC Caucasus) and with support from the Global Mechanism of the UNCCD, has placed emphasis on organizing stakeholder consultations that guarantee gender-balanced representation and equal opportunities for active participation. These consultations are designed to ensure that perspectives and priorities of different social groups are reflected in the national targets, measures, and future transformative projects.

Addressing Barriers to Participation



Barrier/solution matrix for addressing existing barriers

Despite progress, consultations in Georgia have highlighted persistent barriers that may limit equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes:

- Socio-cultural barriers: In rural communities, traditional norms often assign women primary responsibilities for household and care work, limiting their availability to attend consultations.
- Economic barriers: Limited financial resources and unequal access to assets reduce the ability of women farmers and smallholder households to participate in consultation processes, particularly when meetings require travel or extended time commitments.
- Institutional barriers: While policy frameworks reference gender equality, gender mainstreaming in practice often remains generic, and consultations

may lack specific mechanisms to ensure women's voices are systematically incorporated into decision-making.

- Knowledge and capacity gaps: Women and youth are often underrepresented in technical discussions due to limited access to training and extension services, reducing their influence on shaping project priorities.

Measures to Enhance Inclusiveness

To address these challenges, the gender assessment recommends that stakeholder consultations under the LDN TSP 2.0 in Georgia incorporate the following measures:

- Targeted outreach and representation: Proactively invite women's associations, such as the Women Farmer Association of Georgia, youth groups, and representatives of vulnerable rural households to ensure gender-balanced representation in all workshops and working groups.
- Capacity development and knowledge sharing: Provide preparatory materials, awareness sessions, and capacity-building opportunities to strengthen women's and marginalized groups' ability to contribute substantively to discussions.
- Practical facilitation measures: Schedule meetings at times and locations accessible for women and men; provide childcare or transport support where possible; and use participatory facilitation techniques that encourage equitable dialogue.
- Integration of gender perspectives into outcomes: Ensure that consultation reports explicitly highlight gender-differentiated priorities and include recommendations that address women's and men's distinct roles, needs, and challenges in sustainable land management.
- Monitoring of participation and outcomes: Establish gender-sensitive indicators to track representation, engagement levels, and integration of gender-responsive measures in subsequent policy and project documents.

Lessons from the 2024 LDN Workshops in Georgia

The 2024 inception and validation workshops demonstrated the importance of structured gender-sensitive facilitation. With women representing 18 of 34 participants in the inception workshop and 22 of 37 participants in the validation workshop, gender balance was relatively well achieved. Moreover, gender issues were explicitly discussed, including the need to move beyond generic references to gender mainstreaming toward the adoption of actionable, measurable commitments. Participants highlighted the need for stronger synergies between land degradation neutrality and climate change policy processes, with emphasis on women's roles in agriculture, soil management, and climate adaptation strategies.

These workshops illustrate that inclusive consultations not only improve the legitimacy of outcomes but also enhance the effectiveness of LDN strategies by

ensuring that interventions are grounded in the lived realities of all stakeholders. Moving forward, institutionalizing gender-sensitive consultation practices will be essential for mainstreaming gender equality into land degradation neutrality and ensuring transformative, equitable land management in Georgia.

5.4 National Validation Workshop on Pastureland Management and LDN Targets (24-26 December 2025, Kvareli)

As a further milestone in the stakeholder engagement process under LDN TSP 2.0, REC Caucasus organized a three-day working meeting at Kvareli Lake Resort, Kvareli, Georgia.

The event brought together 18 participants (44% women) representing the Parliament of Georgia, the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture (MEPA), the National Agency for Sustainable Land Management and Land Use Monitoring, the National Agency of State Property, the National Food Agency, and the Ministry of Regional Development.

Key outcomes of the workshop directly relevant to the gender assessment include:

Adoption of updated national LDN targets: The workshop validated significantly more ambitious national targets for 2030. These include expanding protected and conservation areas to cover 30% of Georgia's territory (up from 12%), afforesting 1,500 hectares and restoring 20,000 hectares across the Kakheti, Samtskhe-Javakheti, and Guria regions, restoring 70,000 hectares of degraded land, and ensuring 60% of all forests are managed under sustainable principles.

Explicit recognition of gender dimensions in LDN implementation: The presentation of updated targets by MEPA's Land Resources Protection Division specifically acknowledged that women and men in rural Georgia play different roles in land management, with women primarily engaged in household farming and men in commercial agriculture. The presentation identified barriers women face in land ownership and access to financial resources, and called for equal participation in decision-making and the integration of gender-specific indicators into all LDN monitoring systems.

Validation of the draft Law on Pastureland Management: The draft law was formally validated by participants and recommended for submission to the Government of Georgia. The law carries important implications for gender equality, as pasture governance structures – including Pasture User Unions established in pilot villages – will need to ensure women's meaningful representation and voice, given their documented roles in small livestock management and household food security.

Follow-up actions with gender relevance: Among the recommended follow-up actions, several carry direct implications for gender-responsive implementation, including institutionalizing Municipal Pasture Management Planning with secured

budgets, strengthening national extension and advisory capacity, and integrating sustainable pasture management into rural development support programmes – all areas where women's participation and access to resources remain constrained.

This workshop reinforced the importance of integrating gender-responsive approaches not only into planning documents but also into the legislative and institutional frameworks governing land and pasture management in Georgia.

5.5 Focus Group Discussions

As a critical component of the Gender Assessment for the Land Degradation Neutrality Target Setting Programme (LDN TSP 2.0) in Georgia, a series of targeted focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted in geographically diverse areas. These locations were strategically selected to represent Georgia's various ecological zones and to capture a comprehensive understanding of gender dynamics in different land degradation contexts.

The focus groups were organized between July and September 2024, with separate sessions held for women and men to ensure that gender-specific concerns could be freely expressed without social constraints. Each focus group consisted of 8-12 participants representing:

- Small-scale farmers and livestock keepers
- Members of agricultural cooperatives
- Representatives from local women's associations
- Community leaders and municipal representatives
- Internally displaced persons (IDPs)
- Youth engaged in agriculture and natural resource management

The discussions were facilitated using a semi-structured questionnaire that explored the following key themes:

- Roles and responsibilities in land management and natural resource use
- Perceptions and experiences of land degradation
- Decision-making processes in land use and community resource management
- Access to and control over productive resources, including land, water, and forests
- Knowledge and practices related to sustainable land management
- Barriers to participation in land governance and restoration initiatives
- Recommendations for gender-responsive LDN implementation

5.6 Key Findings from Regional Focus Groups

Shida Kartli Region

The focus groups in revealed that women are primarily responsible for household gardens, fruit production, and processing of agricultural products, while men dominate field crop production and livestock grazing. Women participants in Gori

emphasized that while they contribute significant labor to agriculture, they are rarely included in decisions about land use planning or water distribution.

A female participant from Gori stated: "We know the land best because we work with it every day, but when officials come to discuss irrigation projects, they speak only with our husbands or sons."

In both municipalities, land degradation was perceived differently by gender groups:

- Women identified soil fertility decline, water scarcity, and reduced biodiversity as primary concerns
- Men focused more on pasture degradation, erosion on steep slopes, and forest degradation

Participants noted that after the 2008 conflict, many agricultural lands near the administrative boundary line have been abandoned, leading to increased degradation. Women from IDP communities reported having particularly limited access to land and agricultural inputs.

Kakheti Region

In Georgia's primary wine-growing region, the focus groups highlighted the gendered division of labor in viticulture, with men primarily responsible for vineyard management and women involved in harvest and post-harvest activities.

Women from ethnic minority communities expressed facing "double barriers" to participation in land management initiatives due to both gender norms and language constraints. Several participants noted that climate change has intensified water scarcity and heat stress on crops, requiring adaptation strategies that often increase women's workload.

A community leader observed: "When men migrate seasonally for work, women become de facto farm managers but without formal recognition or decision-making authority in water user associations or municipal planning processes."

Focus group participants highlighted the absence of gender considerations in existing land restoration initiatives, noting that project benefits, including training and subsidies, predominantly reach male landowners.

Samtskhe-Javakheti Region

The mountainous municipalities of Akhaltsikhe and Aspindza presented distinct gender dynamics related to high-altitude pasture management. Women in these communities reported having extensive knowledge of pasture plant species and animal health but noted that formal pasture user associations are dominated by men.

Seasonal migration patterns in these communities significantly impact gender roles, with women taking on additional agricultural responsibilities when men move livestock to summer pastures. However, this increased responsibility is not matched with increased authority in community decision-making.

In Aspindza, participants discussed traditional methods of soil conservation and water management that have been preserved primarily by women but are not recognized in formal extension services or land management plans. One elderly female participant shared: "Our grandmothers taught us how to identify soil quality by the plants that grow, but these methods are not valued in the new agricultural training programs."

Both men and women in these municipalities expressed concern about youth outmigration from rural areas, noting that sustainable land management requires intergenerational knowledge transfer that is being disrupted.

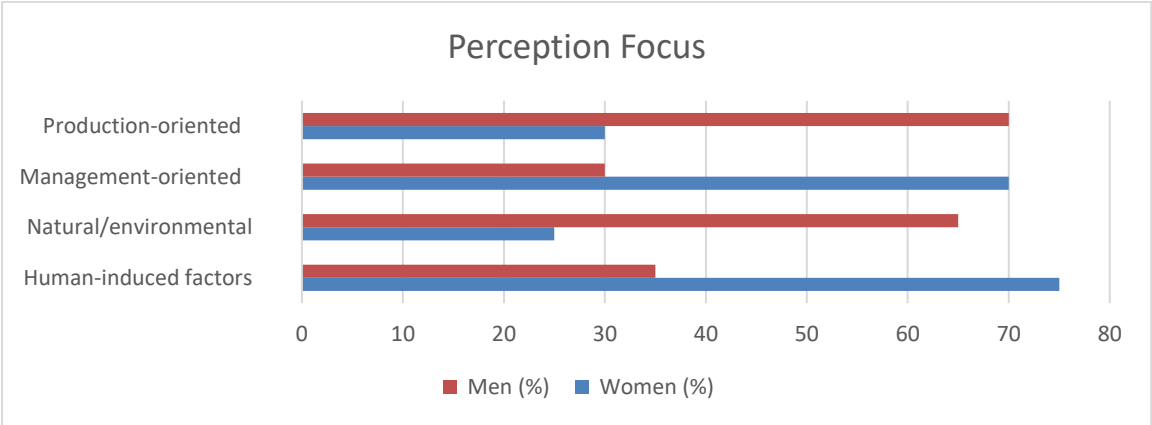
Cross-Cutting Themes and Findings

Several consistent patterns emerged across all six focus group locations.

Gendered Perceptions of Land Degradation

Women and men consistently demonstrated different perceptions of land degradation causes and impacts. Women participants across all regions showed greater concern for the impacts of land degradation on household food security, water availability, and medicinal plant resources. Men typically emphasized productivity losses in commercial crops, pasture carrying capacity, and timber resources. Women more frequently identified human activities (overgrazing, deforestation, improper irrigation) as primary causes of degradation, while men more often pointed to climatic factors and natural processes

Graph 1: Gender-Differentiated Perceptions of Land Degradation Causes



Decision-Making and Participation Barriers

All focus groups identified significant barriers to women's participation in formal land governance mechanisms.

Women reported that household and care responsibilities leave little time for attending meetings or training sessions. Focus group schedules had to be adjusted to accommodate women's daily routines.

In more rural areas, participants noted that cultural expectations discourage women from speaking in public forums or questioning male authority in land management decisions.

Women in all locations reported having less access to information about government programs, extension services, and land rights compared to men, often due to limited mobility and digital connectivity.

The lack of formal land titles for women was identified as a fundamental barrier to their participation in decision-making. A municipal official confirmed that less than 15% of registered agricultural land in the municipality is owned by women.

Access to knowledge materials and innovation

The focus groups revealed rich, gender-specific knowledge systems related to sustainable land management.

Focus group participants from Kakheti, women demonstrated detailed knowledge of soil fertility management techniques adapted to vineyard contexts. Some women shared traditional methods for identifying early signs of pasture degradation through plant indicator species. Some women described water conservation practices for household gardens that could be scaled up for broader application. Despite this knowledge, participants across all regions reported that agricultural extension services and training programs rarely incorporate women's traditional knowledge or address their specific needs and constraints.

Recommendations from Focus Group Participants

Participants across all selected municipalities offered concrete suggestions for gender-responsive LDN implementation:

- Schedule land management meetings at times and locations that accommodate women's daily routines and responsibilities.
- Establish minimum representation requirements for women in local decision-making bodies, including pasture user associations and water management committees.
- Develop specific programs for women farmers, including dedicated credit lines, input subsidies, and extension services tailored to their needs and constraints.
- Promote and incentivize the registration of agricultural land in the names of both spouses to strengthen women's tenure security.
- Document and integrate women's traditional ecological knowledge into land restoration planning and implementation.

- Provide leadership training for women to strengthen their confidence and skills for participating in community governance.
- Conduct community-level awareness raising about women's rights and roles in sustainable land management.

Implications for LDN Target Setting and Implementation

The focus group discussions in the six municipalities provided critical insights that directly inform gender-responsive approaches to LDN in Georgia.

The findings demonstrate that meaningful gender integration requires going beyond simply ensuring women's presence at meetings to actively addressing structural barriers to their participation and influence.

The regional variations in gender dynamics highlighted by the focus groups underscore the need for locally tailored strategies rather than one-size-fits-all approaches to gender mainstreaming.

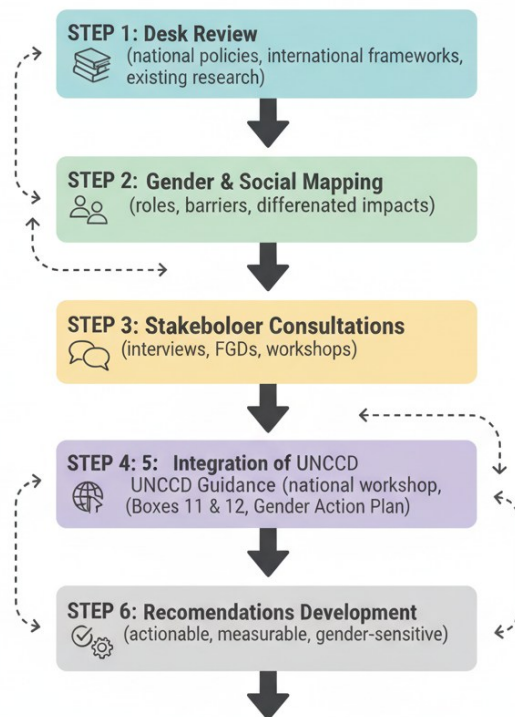
Women's ecological knowledge, particularly regarding soil fertility management, water conservation, and biodiversity, represents an underutilized resource for LDN planning that should be systematically documented and incorporated.

Addressing gender inequalities in land management requires coordinated interventions at household, community, and institutional levels, with particular attention to land rights, information access, and decision-making structures.

The development of gender-sensitive indicators for LDN monitoring should reflect the specific challenges and priorities identified by focus group participants in different regions.

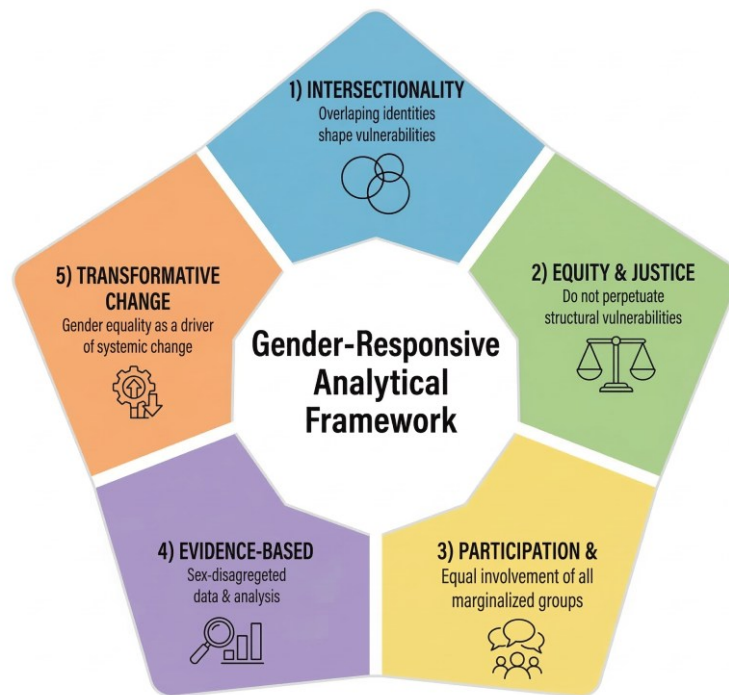
The focus group discussions have thus provided a foundation for ensuring that Georgia's LDN targets and implementation strategies respond to the lived experiences and priorities of both women and men, contributing to the dual goals of land degradation neutrality and gender equality.

6. METHODOLOGY



The methodology for the National Gender Assessment in Georgia was designed to ensure that findings are evidence-based, participatory, and aligned with the UNCCD's gender guidance under the LDN TSP 2.0 process. It combined desk-based research, participatory consultations, and gender and social mapping to generate practical insights for refining LDN targets and designing transformative, gender-responsive projects and programmes.

1. Guiding Principles



The methodological approach was anchored in the following principles:

- Gender equality as a cross-cutting enabler of sustainable land management and land degradation neutrality (LDN).
- Participation and inclusivity, ensuring that women, men, youth, and marginalized groups were actively engaged.
- Evidence-based analysis, drawing on both quantitative and qualitative data sources.
- Alignment with international standards, including the UNCCD Gender Action Plan (2017), Boxes 11 and 12 of the UNCCD Supplementary Guidelines, CEDAW, the SDGs, and national legislation.
- Context sensitivity, acknowledging the socio-economic and cultural dynamics of rural Georgia, where traditional norms and structural inequalities persist.

2. Steps in the Assessment

Step 1: Desk Review

- Reviewed national legislation (e.g. the Law on Gender Equality 2010, the Law on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination 2014).
- Examined national policies and strategies (agriculture, rural development, climate, biodiversity).
- Analyzed international commitments (CEDAW, Beijing Platform, SDGs, EU integration, UNCCD Gender Action Plan).

- Mapped out existing research and statistical data on gender, land, and rural livelihoods. Purpose: To establish a baseline understanding of the policy context and institutional framework.

Step 2: Gender and Social Mapping

- Conducted an assessment of gender roles, responsibilities, and access to resources in rural livelihoods.
- Identified structural inequalities (land tenure, access to finance, participation in governance).
- Mapped differentiated impacts of land degradation on women, men, and vulnerable groups (e.g. IDPs, women-headed households, rural youth).
- Applied a mixed-methods approach:
 - Quantitative data: sex-disaggregated land ownership and agricultural statistics.
 - Qualitative data: community case studies, participatory discussions, stakeholder inputs. Purpose: To generate a nuanced picture of gender dynamics in land and natural resource management.

Step 3: Stakeholder Consultations

- Organized two national workshops in 2024 (Inception and Validation) with balanced gender representation.
- Facilitated focus group discussions with women farmers, civil society organizations, and professional associations.
- Engaged technical experts from MEPA, academia, and local governance.
- Used participatory facilitation techniques (small group work, gender-sensitive framing of questions, open space for women's voices). Purpose: To ensure inclusivity and capture diverse perspectives from policy to grassroots level.

Step 4: Integration of UNCCD Guidance

- Applied Box 11 (Steps to increase gender inclusiveness in LDN project lifecycle) as a guiding framework for project design.
- Applied Box 12 (Critical steps to enhance gender equality and social inclusion when revising LDN targets) to identify specific entry points in Georgia's LDN TSP 2.0.
- Linked the assessment methodology with UNCCD's Gender Action Plan (2017), the Doha workshop outcomes (2024), and the SDG framework. Purpose: To ensure consistency with global best practice and comparability with other national processes.

Step 5: Validation and Feedback

- Draft recommendations were refined based on stakeholder feedback.

- Cross-checked consistency with Georgia's ongoing LDN target revision, climate commitments (NDC), and biodiversity strategies (NBSAP). Purpose: To ensure accuracy, ownership, and alignment with national priorities.

Step 6: Development of Recommendations

- Synthesized insights from the desk review, gender mapping, and consultations.
- Developed concrete, actionable recommendations to strengthen gender responsiveness in Georgia's LDN targets and future transformative projects.
- Framed recommendations to be measurable, realistic, and aligned with existing monitoring frameworks, including gender-disaggregated indicators. Purpose: To provide a roadmap for implementation and monitoring.

3. Data Sources and Tools

Primary sources: National workshop proceedings, stakeholder interviews, focus group discussions, and direct inputs from rural women's associations.

Secondary sources: National statistical data (sex-disaggregated), academic studies, policy documents, and UNCCD reports.

Analytical tools:

- Gender analysis matrix for identifying roles, access, and benefits.
- Stakeholder mapping for institutional and community engagement.
- Policy gap analysis comparing national frameworks with UNCCD and SDG gender commitments.

4. Limitations and Mitigation Measures

Data gaps: Limited availability of sex-disaggregated data in some sectors. Mitigation: triangulated with qualitative inputs and international datasets.

Cultural barriers: Women's participation sometimes constrained by traditional roles. Mitigation: targeted outreach and scheduling to accommodate care responsibilities.

Geographical challenges: Difficulties in reaching remote communities. Mitigation: use of online consultations and partnerships with local NGOs.

5. Outcomes of the Methodology

This multi-layered approach ensured that the Gender Assessment:

- Identified gaps between policy commitments and practice.
- Captured lived experiences of rural women and men.
- Built consensus through inclusive consultations.

- Produced actionable, UNCCD-aligned recommendations to guide the revision of Georgia's LDN targets and design of transformative gender-responsive projects.

The methodology employed both quantitative and qualitative approaches, combining national statistics with participatory research to ensure that the assessment captures both the measurable gaps and the lived experiences of women and men in rural Georgia.

7. PROJECT GOALS AND GENDER EQUALITY PRIORITIES

The Land Degradation Neutrality Target Setting Programme (LDN TSP2) provides a framework for countries to set voluntary targets to achieve Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) by 2030. Recognizing that land degradation disproportionately affects women and marginalized groups, the programme emphasizes integrating gender considerations into national strategies and projects. This approach ensures that restoration and sustainable land management interventions not only address environmental challenges but also promote gender equity and empower women in natural resource governance.

In the context of Georgia, national policies and international commitments provide important entry points for aligning project goals with gender equality priorities:

National Laws and Policies: The Law on Gender Equality (2010) and the Law on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination (2014) provide the legal framework guaranteeing equal rights and opportunities. Strategic frameworks, including the State Concept of Gender Equality and the State Concept on Economic Empowerment of Women (2023), address structural inequalities in access to resources, unpaid care work, and informal employment. Sectoral strategies, such as the Agriculture and Rural Development Strategy (2021-2027), National Strategy on Agricultural Extension (2023-2027), and draft Strategy on Aquaculture (2023-2027), reference gender inclusion, though with limited actionable measures. Climate and biodiversity frameworks, including the NDC (2021-2030) and the Second NBSAP, include gender-responsive provisions.

International Commitments: Georgia has ratified CEDAW, committed to the Beijing Platform for Action, and pledged to achieve SDG 5 alongside SDGs relevant to rural livelihoods (1, 2, 6, 15). As a Party to the UNCCD, Georgia is expected to implement the UNCCD Gender Action Plan and operationalize gender-responsive approaches through LDN TSP2. EU integration requirements also reinforce alignment with international gender standards.

Despite these foundations, challenges remain: gender mainstreaming is not systematically operationalized, enforcement is weak, and rural women face barriers to land access, credit, and decision-making.

7.1 Strategies for Aligning Project Goals with Gender Equality

To ensure projects under LDN TSP2 are gender-responsive and transformative, the following strategies are recommended:

1. Conduct Gender Analysis

- Assess differentiated roles, responsibilities, and access to resources between women and men in target communities.
- Identify barriers to participation, decision-making, and benefit-sharing.
- Use the analysis to inform project design and ensure interventions address specific gender needs.

2. Integrate Gender into Policy and Planning

- Align project objectives with national policies (laws, strategic frameworks, sectoral strategies) and international commitments (CEDAW, SDGs, UNCCD Gender Action Plan).
- Include gender-specific targets, indicators, and actionable measures in project plans.
- Ensure project interventions strengthen institutional capacity to implement gender-responsive governance.

3. Promote Women's Participation

- Ensure women's representation in decision-making bodies related to land, forest, water, and natural resource management.
- Establish platforms for women's voices and leadership in planning and implementation processes.
- Provide training and capacity-building to enhance women's engagement and influence.

4. Implement Gender-Responsive Monitoring and Evaluation

- Develop frameworks capturing gender-disaggregated data on access, participation, and benefits.
- Track progress against measurable gender-specific targets.
- Use monitoring results to adapt interventions and address gaps in gender equality outcomes.

5. Build Capacity and Awareness

- Train stakeholders at all levels—including government officials, community leaders, and civil society—on gender equality in natural resource management.
- Promote understanding of the links between gender, sustainable land management, and LDN objectives.
- Encourage institutions to adopt gender-sensitive practices and policies as part of routine governance.

7.2 Implications for LDN TSP2 Projects in Georgia

For projects aligned with LDN TSP2, the integration of gender priorities is essential to ensure that restoration efforts are inclusive, equitable, and effective. Key implications include:

- Leveraging national laws and strategies as a foundation while strengthening enforcement and accountability.
- Utilizing international commitments as strategic entry points to guide gender-responsive project design and monitoring.
- Moving beyond declarative references to gender by adopting actionable measures, measurable targets, and gender-sensitive indicators within LDN-aligned interventions.

By embedding gender considerations into project goals, LDN TSP2 initiatives can enhance women's empowerment, improve resource governance, and contribute to sustainable land management and resilience in rural and resource-dependent communities.

Table 5. Aligning Project Goals with Gender Equality Priorities

Policy / Commitment	Key Gender Priority	LDN TSP2 Objective Link	Practical Project Actions
Law on Gender Equality (2010)	Equal rights, protection against discrimination	Ensure equitable participation in land governance	Include gender quotas in project decision-making bodies; ensure equal access to training and resources
CEDAW	Economic empowerment of rural women; land and credit access	Support inclusive land governance	Facilitate women's land tenure security; provide access to microfinance for restoration projects
UNCCD Gender Action Plan / LDN TSP2	Mainstream gender into LDN planning and monitoring	Achieve transformative LDN outcomes with gender equality	Include gender in baseline assessments; set gender-sensitive LDN targets; monitor and report progress by gender

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ANNEX 1: METHODOLOGICAL TOOLS

A. Interview Guide

Section 1: Introduction & Awareness

Objective: Assess understanding of LDN concepts and willingness to participate

Have you heard of Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) or similar concepts (such as soil conservation, pasture management, reforestation)?

If yes, what do you understand by LDN?

If no, [explain briefly] what do you think about these kinds of initiatives?

In your opinion, is land degradation (e.g., soil erosion, pasture overuse, forest loss) a problem in your community?

How does it affect women and men differently?

Can you give examples from your own household or village?

Would you (or other women/men in your community) be willing to participate in LDN-related activities (such as pasture rotation, tree planting, water conservation)?

What factors would encourage your participation?

What barriers might prevent participation?

Section 2: Roles and Responsibilities

Objective: Understand gender-differentiated roles in land use and natural resource management

What are your main daily activities related to land use and natural resources?

(e.g., farming, livestock, water collection, household duties, trading, forest product collection)

How much time do you spend on these activities?

What roles do women and men typically play in managing land, water, and forests in your community?

Who does what?

Who owns what?

Are there differences between young women/men, elderly, or vulnerable groups (IDPs, single mothers, poor households)?

Section 3: Access and Decision-Making

Objective: Identify barriers to access and participation in decision-making

Who usually makes decisions about land use, farming, or pasture management in your household?

Men, women, jointly?

Has this changed over time?

Do women in your community have access to:

Land ownership?

Credit or subsidies?

Agricultural extension services or trainings?

Local pasture/forest user groups or cooperatives?

Are women's voices heard in community meetings or local councils?

Can you give examples where women's opinions changed decisions?

Section 4: Perceptions, Knowledge, and Participation

Objective: Capture gender-differentiated knowledge and perceptions

How do women and men in your community perceive the causes of land degradation?

Natural (climate, drought, floods)?

Human-induced (overgrazing, deforestation, poor practices)?

What knowledge do women and men have about ecosystem services?

Women: soil fertility, biodiversity, water conservation?

Men: fuelwood, grazing, crop productivity?

What kind of trainings or support would help women and men participate equally in LDN initiatives?

Section 5: Norms, Barriers, and Opportunities

Objective: Understand structural and cultural constraints

Are there traditions or cultural restrictions that limit women's role in farming, decision-making, or resource management?

What challenges do women face in participating in land and natural resource management?

Time poverty (household responsibilities)?

Lack of land ownership?

Mobility constraints?

Are there examples where women-led initiatives improved land or natural resource management in your community?

Section 6: Recommendations and Future Participation

Objective: Gather actionable recommendations

What would make it easier for women and men to participate equally in land restoration and LDN projects?

If an LDN project is implemented here, how would you like to be involved?

(Planning, implementation, training, monitoring, leadership)

In your opinion, what should project organizers do to ensure that women benefit equally with men?

B. Focus Group Discussion Protocol

FGD Structure

Duration: 90-120 minutes

Participants: 8-12 persons per group

Composition: Mixed groups where culturally appropriate

Location: Accessible community space

Opening (10 minutes)

Introduction of facilitators and participants

Explanation of purpose and consent process

Ground rules (confidentiality, respect, equal speaking time)

Main Discussion Topics (70-90 minutes)

Topic 1: Daily Activities and Land Use (20 minutes)

- What are your main activities related to land, farming, and natural resources?
- How much time do you spend on these activities?
- What changes have you observed in land quality over the past 5-10 years?

Topic 2: Decision-Making and Participation (20 minutes)

- Who makes decisions about land use in households and communities?
- How are women and men involved in community meetings about land management?
- What prevents equal participation?

Topic 3: Knowledge and Perceptions (15 minutes)

- What do you know about sustainable land management practices?
- What causes land degradation in your area?
- What ecosystem services are most important to you?

Topic 4: Barriers and Challenges (15 minutes)

- What are the main barriers women face in land management?
- What are the main barriers men face?
- How do these differ for vulnerable groups (IDPs, elderly, youth)?

Topic 5: Opportunities and Recommendations (15 minutes)

- What would help you participate more in land restoration projects?
- What training or support do you need?
- How should LDN projects be designed to benefit everyone equally?

Closing (10-20 minutes)

- Summary of key points
- Opportunity for final comments
- Thanks and next steps

C. Life Story Protocol

Purpose

To capture in-depth individual narratives about experiences with land management and gender dynamics

Structure

Duration: 45-60 minutes

Setting: Private, comfortable location

Recording: Audio recording with consent

Key Questions

Life History

- Tell me about your life growing up in this community
- What role did agriculture/land play in your family?

Current Situation

- Describe a typical day in your life
- What are your main responsibilities?
- How has your role changed over time?

Land and Resources

- Tell me about your relationship with land
- Do you own or have access to land? How did this come about?
- What resources are most important to you?

Challenges and Opportunities

- What are the biggest challenges you face in managing land/resources?
- Have you tried to overcome these? How?
- What opportunities do you see for the future?

Gender Dynamics

- How do gender roles affect your work and life?
- Have you experienced discrimination or barriers because of your gender?
- What would you change if you could?

Future Aspirations

- What are your hopes for the future?
- How could LDN projects help you achieve these?