



Assessing the Needs and Attitudes of Women, Youth and Local Civil Society Organizations in the Context of the New Political and Legislative Environment

The following fact sheet was prepared based on a survey conducted by the Association HERA XXI in 2024-2025 within the framework of the MAP project "Democracy Starts with your Body" © All rights reserved, 2025

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The Goal of the Research: The primary objective of this study is to examine the needs and attitudes of women, youth (aged 14–29), and local civil society organizations within the evolving political and legislative context in Georgia.

Specific Research Objectives

- To evaluate the level of awareness and prevailing attitudes among the target groups concerning recent political and legal developments.
- To investigate the current human rights situation, with a particular focus on identifying key challenges faced by women, youth, and civil society actors.
- To explore existing opportunities and systemic barriers related to accessing accurate information and essential services.

Introduction- Situation Overview

The Georgian government introduced several legislative regulations in 2023 and 2024, which raised many questions in society. To date, it has not been possible to present a comprehensive argumentation regarding the need for the implemented changes. Also, the harm that the implemented changes may cause to fundamental human rights, including health, has not been properly assessed.

Within the framework of the study, the initial discussion topics were defined around the assessment of three changes, namely, the regulation "On Approval of the Rules for the Implementation of Artificial Termination of Pregnancy", the "Law on Transparency of Foreign Influence" (the so-called "Russian Law") and the "Law of Georgia on Family Values and Protection of Minors" (the so-called "Anti-LGBT" Law); However, participants also discussed the abolition of gender quotas in the "Election Code" and the decree "On the Implementation of Substitution Treatment Programs for Opioid Addiction", which has been amended several times in recent times and now requires daily visits to the clinic for program beneficiaries. According to the study participants, these laws directly affect their lives and well-being.

For the majority of participants, these laws are known by the names by which civil society and activists refer to them (e.g., "Russian law", "anti-LGBT law"), the original names were unknown to a large part of the participants.

In addition to individual risks, legislative changes have a negative impact on Georgia's long-term European integration process, which included political, economic and legal changes aimed at closer integration with the European Union. The recent legislative amendments are inconsistent with the principles of the rule of law and a democratic society, as confirmed by the decision of the European Court of Human Rights on a similar law in Russia, the decision of the Court of Justice of the European Union on a similar law in Hungary, and also the conclusion prepared last year by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) on a draft law initiated in the Georgian Parliament.

RESEARCH METHOD

Group Discussion Cafe Methodology

- Number of group discussions: 10 group discussions
- Number of participants in the group: 10-13 people (total 95 people)
- Duration of discussion: 3 hours and 15 minutes



KEY FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Low awareness

The level of awareness about legislative changes is low among target groups.

The impact of disinformation

Existing disinformation is fueling fear and uncertainty among the population.

The need for solidarity

Strengthening solidarity between different groups is essential for effective resistance.

The results of the study reveal that there are significant gaps in awareness, which contribute to the spread of misinformation and negatively affect the rights of target groups.

The results show that it is necessary to provide objective information about the impact of laws and create a safe communication space for different groups.

KNOWLEDGE OF THE LAWS

Order on the Artificial Termination of pregnancy (so called "Anti-abortion Order")

- Scarce and fragmented information about the legislative framework related to abortion, reproductive health issues, and available services.
- High interest in reproductive health issues. However, they were unable to satisfy their interest and obtain information as needed.

Law of Georgia on Family Values and Protection of Minors (so-called "anti-LGBT" law)

- After being provided with information about the law, participants noted that the information disseminated by the media did not describe the actual restrictions imposed by the law, such as the ban on hormone therapy.
- The law was associated with censorship, the Soviet Union, and authoritarianism among its participants.

Foreign Influence Transparency Act (so-called "Russian Law")

- The highest interest and awareness
- The participants' knowledge was superficial and they lacked information on many aspects related to the actual content of the law.
- Fragmentary knowledge of the law was related to its similarity to Russian legislation and its punitive measures, which also included discrediting NGOs and their employees. The scale of punitive measures and fines provided for by the law was new to the participants.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION



The main sources of information are social media, digital platforms, acquaintances, television.

- Young people received information from social media - TikTok and Instagram
- Among the older generation participants - Facebook, Instagram and traditional media
- Participants noted that they did not have timely access to accurate and reliable information through state channels (Parliamentary website, Public Broadcaster), which are responsible for informing citizens.
- Trainings and information meetings are an important alternative for obtaining information.
- There is taboo, self-censorship and fear.

PERCEPTION OF LEGISLATIVE CHANGES

- Laws are perceived as discriminatory, unconstitutional and incompatible with human rights.
- Legislation discriminates against NGOs, which will hinder the provision of services.
- The so-called "anti-LGBT law" incites hatred, legalizes oppression, and poses a threat to the entire society.

IMPACT ON THE SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS

Access to knowledge is limited. Organizations that were engaged in advocacy and awareness-raising work with young people and various vulnerable groups may be forced to cease their activities. The anti-LGBT law will fuel hatred against LGBT people, incite violence and discrimination, lead to the expulsion of this group from public spaces and push them towards isolation.

Access to services and barriers

- Geographical availability of services
- The problem of safe communication, fear and mistrust

"I think contraception should be funded by the state so that you can protect yourself and avoid facing abortion later" (Gori)

"Before, we were struggling with a waiting period of 5 days and advocating against it. Now additional barriers have appeared. No one, let alone the non-governmental sector, had any idea about it. Even the Experts of the Maternal and Child Health in the council of the Ministry of Health were shocked, because it happened without their informing and consent" (Tbilisi, FGD, civil organizations)

Geographical accessibility

Communication problem

SUPPORT NEEDS AND EXPECTATIONS

Since the participants' trust in state institutions is low, citizens still expect support in terms of human rights protection from the non-governmental sector. Informing, raising awareness, and providing services are the three areas where civil society organizations are considered the main supporters in the participants' expectations and short-term calculations.

Informational campaigning, empowerment and awareness raising were marked as the need for existing support and at the same time, a way to solve the problem from civil society perspective.

According to participants, non-governmental organizations should plan and implement reliable, qualified, impartial, and needs-based information campaigns to inform the public about the legislative changes that have been made.

"I would say that first and foremost, the most important thing is to survive physically, to be safe. Second, we need to maintain our mental health, either individually or as a team, in order to somehow be able to continue the fight. I would also say that it would be very good if these gatherings continued periodically, even online. It is not necessary to be physically in a physical space and share experiences with each other. That would be very good, solidarity towards each other." (Tbilisi, FGD, organizations)