

INCREASING WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN GEORGIA

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Abstract. *The imbalance of representation of men and women in Georgian politics diminishes the problems affecting women in society, making them less prominent and more difficult for the authorities to address. Women account for more than a half of Georgia's population, while the overall number of women involved in politics in Georgia has little increased at legislative elections, going from 7% of MPs in 2008 to 16% presently. However, it has yet to reach the standard the UN recognizes: 30% minimum, there has been progress, but at the international level, Georgia has regressed.*

In the process of democratic state-building of Georgia partnership between women and men in the social and political decisions is extremely important. The political process and their participation in policy formation are fundamental characteristic of the subject, and its lack of social vulnerability of the primary product. Although the role of women in public life in Georgia recently increased significantly, unfortunately participation of women in politics still remains low. The reason is much more complex than it seems at first glance. Women's role in politics is hindered by the political, social, cultural and psychological reasons: the country's political culture, popular stereotypes, less access to financial resources, lack of coverage by media of women's public and political activities, non-existing women's consolidation in women's movement

hinders the formation women's movements. Political, institutional and economic issues limit women's engagement in decision-making process and political life more generally. For example, changing gender roles have affected how men and women deal with new realities, relating to burdens and opportunities for participation of both genders. A political division within society also creates barriers, in addition to a lack of consistent political will, institutional capacity, and coordination among key stakeholders. When it comes to women's political participation, first of all we should be viewed and perceived as the representative bodies of women in the recruitment process, also country's electoral system needs to be changed so that it could increase women's representation. Georgia's political parties are dominated by men, and they are characterized by a low level of internal democracy, the party of the mechanisms of promotion are often vague, which makes it advancement of women in the party even more challenging. The contemporary world has long agreed that women's participation in politics is one of the most important preconditions for democratic development of any Country. Without participation of women, it will be impossible to develop equal and fair policies tailored to interests of all groups. It is very difficult to achieve women's equal political participation by allowing equal representation to run its natural course. Therefore, to accelerate the process and eliminate the inequality created over the centuries, it is necessary to intervene at the legislative level. Georgia has ranked among the countries with the lowest female representation in decision-making and senior positions for more than two decades. The voluntary financial incentives for political parties that were introduced in 2011 in order to generate an increase of women candidates in election party lists have proven ineffective, as none of the dominant political parties has ever used it and it did

not affect the number of women in politics. One of the most effective ways to increase women's political participation is a temporary special measure known as a gender quota. If aligned correctly with the electoral system, gender quota can be very effective for fast-tracking women's participation in politics. Currently, Georgian society's demand for the greater involvement of women in politics is high: 70% of the population thinks the number of women in Parliament should be at least 30%. Given the failure of financial incentives, both local civil society and international organizations recommend mandatory party quotas to promote gender equality in politics. These policies must be designed to reach a critical mass of women in politics (at least 30%) to allow women the opportunity to have an impact on the decision-making process.

Gender quota is not the only way to eliminate the inequality; it is a mechanism that ensures women's representation in elected bodies in a few period of time. However, in addition to gender quota it is also important to widen women's movements, continue submission of recommendations about women's issues on the State Level and most importantly, conduct a large educational campaign for raising public awareness, in order to create a public demand to ensure gender equality in Georgia.

Key words: *women in politics, gender quota, women's participation in politics, political involvement.*

Introduction

Ensuring equal participation of men and women in decision making process is one of the main challenges of a democratic state. This requirement is related to compliance with gender fairness and equality principles and aims to eliminate current gender-unequal attitude towards women. The above issue is problematic for Georgia as well, since, according to global gender gap index 2017, Georgia occupies the 114th position among 144 countries by women's political participation and women's representation in parliament (Global Gender Map, 2017). According to Inter-Parliamentary Union data as of April 2017 Georgia occupies the 124th position among 193 countries with 24 women in the parliament (IPU 2017). If we observe the women's representation growth rate in Georgia we will see that women's representation in Georgian parliament grew merely by 5 % in 22 years. If the above rate persists, Georgia will probably reach the average point currently established throughout the world, i.e. 22%, within 44 years, while the objectives set by UN – 30% women's representation without extraordinary efforts will remain unachieved (Rusetskaya 2015).

The large-scale program of reforms envisaged during 2017-2020 under Association Agreement signed between Georgia and European Union obliges the Georgian government to increase political strength of women and their representation for the next parliamentary elections, among others (4th meeting of EU-Georgia Association Council). The main objective of the research is to study current political representation of women in Georgia, to what extent women's political participation growth is supported by the

current election system; whether the majority voting system enables the women to be presented as election candidates or not; how efficient is the so called financial incentive norm established for the political parties for local self-government and parliamentary elections and how well the above incentive norm regulates women positioning in top ten of party lists.

Study methodology

Present work is based on qualitative studies, namely in-depth interviews and content analysis of documents. In particular, using semi-structured questionnaires, 8 interviews were held with current and former female MPs of Georgian Parliament, as well as 8 male MPs; in addition, 5 interviews were held with non-governmental organizations working on gender issues. Following the interviews the transcripts were processed and analyzed. Interview transcripts were processed and coded according to selected topics. Georgian legislation (including political documents such as Election Code of Georgia, Law of Georgia on Political Union of Citizens etc.), National Statistics Office data, party lists and election programs provided by electoral subjects for parliamentary elections, official document of Central Election Commission (CEC) of Georgia, reports on studies implemented in Georgia by local and international organizations were also studied and analyzed. The main hypothesis of the study is that within the current mixed election system in the country, women's political representation growth cannot be reached in a natural course. Financial incentive norm established for political parties and of a non-mandatory character is similarly ineffective. Intraparty democracy is underdeveloped

and recruiting party members is often person based. Men dominate the political arena, consequently the organization and political activities of political parties are of masculine model (Shvedova N. A. 1994). Gender stereotypes existing in Georgian political parties and male domination in governing bodies of the parties are a hindering barrier for women's political activity.

Theoretical Framework

When analyzing women's political participation three theoretical schools of thought can be distinguished: socio-economic school, cultural and ideological school and political school. The first two attempt to explain changes in percentage ratio of women's representation in the legislative body. The argument of the socioeconomic schools is usually based on the opinion that socio-economic conditions of a state, including level of education, women's participation in labor power and gross domestic product, influence the number of women in the legislative body. Developed countries have higher women's representation at the legislative level. Although some studies reveal positive correlation between social-economic development and women's legislative development, there are also studies that exclude any relation between them. While culture and ideology influences women's representation in some countries, it is less likely to have similar impact on women's representation in the rest of the countries (Adams 2011). This is exactly why the theory of the above school is less expected to ensure universal explanation of the discrepancies across the countries. Social-economic argument fails to give clarity on why in many developing countries women's representation on a legislative level is

higher than in some most developed countries (Yoon 2004, 456). Though no consensus has been reached, the opinion of the political school has gained biggest support among researchers.

Cultural and ideological school: this school believes the culture and ideology of a country, particularly the factors such as egalitarianism, religion, national public opinion, and perception of gender roles, cultural heritage and gaps between generations affect the proportion of women in legislation. Researchers analyzing socio-economic causes have also assumed that in states where Protestantism is a dominant religion men have higher representation at the legislative level, while in Islamic countries we see low level of women's representation at the national level (Adams 2011). Research in this school seems to focus on national attitudes towards gender equality matters as the reason for women's participation in legislatures. Studies have revealed positive association between these two variables where "Egalitarian attitude towards women leaders influences the proportion of women actually elected to the office" (Inglehart and Norris 2001). However, there are some disparities which question the gender attitudes explanation, in the United States of America, for example, where there is a positive attitude towards women's political participation, but still the number of women in congress is limited. This casts doubt to whether national attitude is the main reason for high representation of women in legislature or vice versa (Bergh 2009). The facts that only western countries were selected for the research should also be noted and hence the results cannot be generalized for non-western countries. Researches state that cultural norms and current stereotypes on gender roles impact influx of

women and their placement in head positions. Patriarchal culture is one of the main barriers to female political representation (Yoon 2004, 459).

Political school: current political school of thought on female political representation includes a variety of theories that deal with internal political conflict, types of electoral systems, political parties, gender quotas etc. Among opinions on female political representation the so called political school is one of the most widespread and popular though it attempts to clarify the interstate variations in women's representation. One of the most common explanations for disparities in women's representation is the type of electoral system of a particular country. Many researchers share the idea that multimember proportional representation systems in which the number of seats is proportional to the amount of its support among voters are more favorable to women than singlemember majority or plurality systems where the winner takes it all. (Adams 2011).

Another differentiating argument which certain number of researches considers in studying women's political representation is party systems, i.e. whether the system is party oriented or alternately candidate oriented. According to this argument with candidate oriented systems participation in elections is based on personal characteristics of the candidate, for which women may be considered as less attractive candidates, while in candidate oriented systems we find higher level of female representation (Thames and Williams 2010, 1581).

One of the final arguments used by political school of thought in relation to female political participation is application of gender quotas. Voluntary party quotas are often applied in proportional representation

systems, while reserved or special seat quotas are more often used in plurality/majority systems (Bauer 2012). All studies on gender quotas reveal positive association between the use of quotas and women's representation in national legislatures. (Bauer 2012). For the purposes of our study we used Matland and Montgomery theoretical framework which identifies relation between electoral system and women's representation in elected bodies. He expressed an opinion that a certain political development margin must be established so that women are able to effectively use the institution of electoral systems for protection of their rights (Matland and Montgomery, 2003). Georgia too has significant variations between proportional and majority systems in terms of women representation as proportional system allows better opportunities of participation for women, however parties demonstrate less support for women and usually position them at the bottom of the party list or a less successful positions. Therefore a coherent proportional representation system is crucial for achieving gender balance while in case of majority election system the candidate having good reputation in his/her community/society, good contacts and access to resources is selected – in most cases male candidates, who are considered to be more competitive candidates, therefore this increases the probability of them being elected (Matland 1998; Kohl 2010).

Electoral System and Female Representation

First steps towards empowerment of women and their political involvement were made in post-Soviet Georgia back in 1998 (Georgia, history of election, 2011). In 1994 Georgia joined The Convention on the

Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) undertaking to implement all relevant measures to eliminate current discrimination against women in political and social life. During president Shevardnadze's rule, as per his ordinance "National Committee for Improving Women's Conditions" was established and later on as per the president's decision a State Commission on Elaboration of the State Policy for Women's Advancement was established. In 1997-2004 the first Action Plan for Improving Women's Conditions was developed, however it was never actually implemented (Sabadashvili 2010). A bit later, in 2010 Law of Georgia on Gender Equality was adopted which defined the duties of central and local authorities for ensuring gender equality. Developing legal mechanisms for enjoyment of equal rights and freedoms, ensuring inadmissibility of discrimination in all spheres of public life and eradication of discrimination was identified as the legitimate purpose of the law. Following 2003 rose revolution the new government targeted even broader approaches towards gender matters which served as basis for initiating promotion of gender problematic, political involvement and empowerment of women. Gender imbalance is certainly most notable in political government, which clearly suffers from the impact of masculinity and is characterized by gender stereotypes and patriarchal viewpoints. Although according to constitution, legislative acts and norms women are equalized to men, their full inclusion in political sphere is unfortunately not ensured appropriately. Although over two hundred parties are registered throughout the country, there are only single political movements or unions which are headed by women. Women are underrepresented in the parliament as well. The analysis of programs of political Parties reveals that these programs of

the parties are completely gender-neutral, as the promises in them are equally important for men and women. Parties formally declare support towards women inclusion as well as gender equality, but have made no significant steps to demonstrate this support. The attitude of political parties towards gender equality and women's rights or political advancement is still incoherent and inconsistent (Bagratia and Badagashvili 2011).

Although the number of women has insignificantly increased during the last parliamentary elections, women representation in the legislative body still remains very low, similar to the previous convocation of parliament. The situation is particularly grave in local self-governances where the number of women is as low as 13%. According to Central Election Commission (CEC) total of 227 (13.4%) women and 1781 men (86.6%) were elected following the first round of election in the capital and 64 municipalities of Georgia. However, the number of women elected during 2017 local self-governance exceeds the general rate of 2014 local self-governance elections (11.6) only by 1.8% (Central Election Commission). The results of the last local self-governance elections showed that among 64 directly elected mayors only one is a woman and not a single woman among 9 governors.

Political parties represent main subjects of political relations in a democratic society. Their role is of ultimate importance in establishing social justice and gender equality as well as protection of woman's rights. Women's representation in a political party is an indicator of internal democratic development of the political organization and democratic maturity of the society. They remain to be the key instruments for

advancement of women in politics as they play a leading role in candidate recruitment and nomination process (Caul, 1999). Consequently it is actually impossible to imagine the growth of number of women in representative bodies of the country without the support of political parties and relevant steps taken by them in this regard. Parties and their internal policies play significant role on the rout to candidacy from the point of desire to be nominated as a candidate, which is influenced by procedures incorporated in the charters of the parties and attitudes towards women's involvement in politics within the party. In the beginning of the given process the number of men and women wishing to nominate their candidacy is almost equal, but when it comes to number of the legislative body members, the number of women significantly decreases (Matland, 2003).

As we have already noted there is a so called systemic relation between the election system and women's representation in Georgia. Georgia has a mixed electoral system which implies election to the national legislative body by proportional representation system, i.e. party list and by majority system. Regulation of the election system may become one of the tools to support or hindering gender balanced political composition at various levels (Matland, 2005). Starting from 1991 after restoration of independence of Georgia when mixed electoral system was established in the country within the given election system more women have been elected to the parliament and local self-governance bodies by proportional representation system as compared to the majority election system.

According to Central Election Commission (CEC) data total of 227 (13.4%) women and 1781 men (86.6%) were elected following the first round of election in the capital and 64 municipalities of Georgia. The number of women elected during 2017 local self-governance exceeds the general rate of 2014 local self-governance elections (11.6%) only by 1.8% (Central Election Commission, 2014). Following the 2017 local self-governance elections women made 19.59% of the candidates elected through proportional representation system, and only 8% of the candidates elected through majority election system. In fact, women earned twice more mandates by proportional representation system.

As for 2016 parliamentary election results, women won 16% of total mandates (24 mandate) in the elections. Gender analysis of the results reveals that women stood at 17% of the total number among majority candidates and 37% in party-list proportional representation (Central Election Commission, 2016). Following the elections 23.38% of women MPs were elected to the legislative body by proportional representation and 4.35% of women MPs were elected in 48 districts after the second round of majority election.

Gender Quotas as Tools for Increasing Female Representation

Taking additional temporary measures to boost inclusion of women in politics is considered to be one of the basic and effective mechanisms and gender quota is a widespread method among them. Scientific works on gender quotas emphasize that quotas are of utmost importance in supporting gender equality. (Dahlerup, 2006). Today many countries

employ quotas as mechanisms for ensuring active involvement of women in politics.

Gender quotas represent temporary and compulsory measures applied by multiple countries and political organizations for securing growing role of women in political and governmental processes. They aim to overcome the current situation of isolation of women from politics and include women in political processes. For active women involvement they held responsible the structures controlling recruitment processes in politics, therefore the quotas may be defined by state legislation, i.e. be compulsory, or be allocated through intra-party regulations, voluntarily, which is widespread enough throughout European democracies. Quotas are used for both elective and appointed positions. Legislative quotas and reserved seats may vary in quantity, for example the 30% quota, a „critical mass” concept allowing women to influence state policy. There are 40% as well as 50% quotas in European countries like France, Germany and Norway. Gender quota is effective not only in Western developed democratic countries, but in parts of the world where democracy and consolidated, poliarchic democracy, in particular, is probably difficult to imagine. For example Rwanda, Ecuador, South African Republic and Mozambique have allocated 40 and 50% quotas for women (IDEA 2017). It is important for countries to match the quotation form with the electoral system depending on types and influences of gender quotas so that their application proves to be efficient. It is crucial to consider country context and public sentiments in this regard (Gerald R, 2017).

Political party leaders, including women politicians in Georgia have varied attitude towards gender quotas. The attitudes are same within

general public. There may be several reasons for this. The fact that the advocates of quotations were not able to convince the society in merits of the women representation tool for various reasons, including shortage of resources/time, may be one of them. It should also be considered that in a country where the majority of the population lives in poverty and women represent the poorest part of the society, political representation of women is perceived among the problems of women having higher social-economic positions.

In regards with the attitudes of the politicians, the arguments of the quota opponents mostly refer to artificiality of the quotas and that their introduction is a gross interference in the life of political parties, bringing many less qualified women in politics. Women politicians believe more women are needed in politics, but are reluctant to support special measures as they deem it offensive to be included in the party lists merely for their gender and not the qualifications and are less engaged in this regard. Indeed, though women politicians in many post-soviet countries realize the need for women inclusion, they avoid taking the initiative in this direction (Galligan and Clavero 2003).

Georgia has mixed electoral system with both proportional representation as well as majority system. Multiple studies reveal that majority electoral system provides less chances for women to come in politics. Experts working in this direction for many years believe that incoherent election system is one of the hindering factors in the integration process. Representatives of governmental and civil sectors actively involved in this matter think that electoral system needs to be modernized (Bagratia and Badagashvili, 2011). For years opposition parties

believed that due to majority electoral system only the candidates of the ruling political powers had the advantage and insisted on complete abolition of majoritarian system and conduction of parliamentary elections by proportional representation system only. Following the constitutional reforms which will become effective by 2024 in its finalized form majority electoral system will be abolished for the parliamentary elections and solely the proportional representation system will be used (IFES, 2017).

Qualified election subjects' lists registered in Central Election Commission in 2016 evidence that the further we go from top positions, where not only the chances for women, but the chances for winning an MP mandate generally decreases, the number of women increases. Due to pitfall of the incentive norm, namely the absence of obligation to position women in top ten of the list, women representation fails to grow in proportion to funding. Women can often be seen on 8th , 9th or 10th positions which deprives them of the chances to win, particularly during local self-governance elections, when the number of Municipal Assembly members totals to 15 and participant parties can only win maximum 5 seats.

Before parliamentary elections of 2016 almost every party declared in its program it recognized need for inclusion of women in politics. However, political inclusion and empowerment of women was not actually a priority for them. This was once again demonstrated in legislature, as well as immediately prior to the elections, when only a few women found place in active politics. Specifically, „Georgian Dream” presented only 4 women majoritarian candidates and 6 in the top twenty of the party list. Complete party list of „Georgian Dream“ included only 18 women out of 155

candidates. „Free Democrats“ and „Republican Party“ presented themselves much better in this regard complying with 30% quota requirement. Each of them nominated 9 women majoritarian candidates and 7 in the top twenty of the party list, sadly, though these parties were not able to reach the 5% threshold and get any seats. „Burchuladze–The Sate for the People“ presented 8 women majoritarian candidates, however, did not include any women in the top 20 of the party candidates list.

Current election code of Georgia is a gender neutral document as it does not consider relevant mandatory mechanisms for supporting gender equality and political involvement of women. Person (candidate) based systems for developing party candidate lists/candidate nomination, as well as totally vague and non-transparent mechanisms for women promotion within the parties, still constitute serious challenges for the country which are hindering obstacles to women promotion and their representation growth in legislature in Georgia.

Georgian Legislation on Gender Quotas

As it has been demonstrated throughout the past decade many states of the world apply various gender quota systems to fast track women's political involvement or eliminate gender imbalance. Gender quota is a temporary tool for reaching gender balance which was previously effectively used by Scandinavian countries and now by African countries. It was after introduction of the 30% quota that Rwandan parliament started its transformation and today 63.8% of Lower Chamber of the legislative body of this country is constituted by women (IDEA, 2017). However, even

Scandinavian countries did not abruptly shift to quota system and implemented number of preparation activities preliminarily.

Discussion on gender quota was initiated back in 2003 in the Georgian parliament. Only 67 MPs participated in voting following the discussions of the initiative in August 2003 and consequently the initiative did not pass. Similarly the legislative initiative triggered by 32 thousand voters remained unaddressed.

Neither constitution, nor the electoral code obliges the political parties to comply with the gender balance requirements in party candidates lists submitted for legislative body elections today. The composition of the candidates' lists is regulated by parties and electoral blocks. When compiling party lists, complying with the gender balance is incentive based and not mandatory, as it will result in additional funding as per Organic Law of Georgia on Political Unions of Citizens. Consequent to huge efforts of various international and local non-governmental organizations and with expectations of positive transformation, amendments were made to the Organic Law of Georgia on Political Unions of Citizens (ISFED, 2012). In 2011 the Organic Law of Georgia on Political Union of Citizens was amended to provide financial incentives to those political parties that voluntarily include candidates of different sex in their party lists. Initially the law provided 10% additional funding if the party list was composed of at least 20% women candidates. This law now provides a 30% increase in the supplement from the state budget if the party list includes at least 30% women distributed within every ten candidates (Organic Law of Georgia on Political Union of Citizens, Article 30 (71)). The law became effective immediately upon announcing the 2014 local self-

governance elections results. However, this mechanism failed to be efficient and the parties that took advantage of the opportunity did not get any seats in the parliament at all but only received additional funding. The results of the parliamentary elections and local self-governance elections in particular, demonstrate that the above incentive had no impact on improvement of gender statistics in our country.

It was due to the relevance of the issue that in 2015 two initiatives related to the gender quota were submitted to the Georgian parliament. One of them was initiated by local women's NGOs who were part of Task-Force on Women's Political Participation. The above legislative initiative envisaged 50% quota in the proportional representation system, i.e. maximum 38 women out of total 150 MPs in Georgian parliament, which equals to total of 25% of the MPs. Amendments were to be made to Electoral Code of Georgia. The composition of the party list was to be regulated by political parties and electoral blocks so that every second candidate had to be a woman. Unless 50% balance with every second opposite sex members was compiled, the party list would be reverted to the party for correction.

Unlike the above initiative the second project was authored by the member of the Gender Equality Council of the eighth convocation of Georgian parliament and former Member of Parliament Nana Keinishvili. The above draft bill did not stipulate mandatory legal mechanisms for ensuring women's representation growth. According to the draft incentive norms were to be developed at the legislative level to support solving gender inequality. According to the draft bill every third and sixth candidate among the first six candidates of the lists submitted by parties

for proportional representation elections were to be an opposite sex. Article 30, Clause 71 of the Organic Law of Georgia on Political Unions of Citizens was to be formulated as follows: The party receiving funding will receive additional support in the volume of 40% of the basic funding, provided that every second candidate of the first, second and following 10s are of opposite sex. Sadly, none of the projects was supported by the Human Rights Commission and both projects failed to pass at the commission hearing level.

Despite strong opposition the gender quota supporters faced, Task-Force on Women's Political Participation once again submitted bill on gender quotas in September 2017, which was signed by 37 455 supporters this time. The above bill envisaged amendments to Electoral Code of Georgia and Law of Georgia on Political Unions of Citizens. Parties and electoral blocks would have been obliged to comply with gender equality principles and compile their lists so as to have every second candidate of an opposite sex and if, for any reasons, the elected candidate's authority was terminated, the seat of the given MP was to be transferred to the following candidate of the same sex from the list. The bill on mandatory gender quotas was not supported at the first hearing at the plenary meeting of the parliament on March 23, 2018 and regrettably the project failed once again.

Upon studies, researches and generalization of results of recent legislative and local elections held in Georgia, the following flaws and challenges were revealed, once again emphasizing that:

- Female political representation growth cannot be achieved in natural course. Specifically, after 2017 elections number of

- women, compared to previous local self-governance elections, insignificantly increased, namely by 1.5% and constituted 13.46% growth. The same can be said about 2016 parliamentary elections when women's political representation increases only by 2 %;
- 2017 local self-governance elections once again demonstrated that majority representation system does not support women's involvement growth rate. Since the number of women elected by majority system is 8%, which as compared to the proportional representation system is significantly low. The same refers to legislative elections where female representation in proportional representation system is 23.38%, while in majority system only 4.35%;
 - The absence of incentive and stimulating norm for women's political participation, specifically absence of mandatory positioning of women in top ten of the lists, accounts for failure to ensure the growth of number of women in proportion to funding. We often see women on 8th, 9th and 10th positions, which deprives them of the chances to win, particularly during local self-governance elections, when the number of "Sakrebulo" (representative body) members totals to 15 and participant parties can only win 5 seats;
 - Gender bonus (The voluntary financial incentives) received by the parties in case on compliance with financial incentive norm is not used for women's political empowerment. Out of 18 political parties receiving budget funding 15 parties receive gender bonus today. However, following the analysis of recent elections we can

deduce that number of women at both, local and legislative levels is still very low.

Conclusions

Woefully, women's political involvement rate is still a challenge in Georgia. In addition, the paucity of initiatives taken by the government and lack of will to support women empowerment on behalf of the political parties remains a problem. Consequently, little involvement of women at decision-making level negatively impacts the process of advocating gender sensitive issues and results in no support to implementation of gender balanced policy. It is crucial that the government develops various mechanism in this regard and is consistent in supporting women through incentive programs and initiatives and most importantly sustain career advancement of women in political parties' structures and their active involvement in representative bodies of the country. Political parties need to recognize their role and responsibility in regards with gender equality promotion within both, their internal structures as well as elected bodies. They must strengthen internal democracy, transparency, accountability and legitimacy. The number of women in the parliament of Georgia today cannot create the „critical mass“ which is significant in decision making process. Therefore it is necessary to overcome reluctance of women in political and social spheres which is caused by disadvantageous economic conditions, on the one hand, and patriarchal norms still remaining in the country, on the other.

It is doubtless, that the incentive norm developed for the parties during the recent years in order to encourage them to increase women

representation in their party lists in return for the financial bonus did not work in Georgia and the gender imbalance in Georgian legislature has not been overcome until today. For this reason the struggle of Georgian women for gaining political representation is still relevant and continues. Recent studies have revealed that readiness of Georgian population to see much more women in politics is high and the society supports introduction of gender quotas. Public disposition is important for Georgia as a democratic state and therefore it is essential for politicians to develop relevant legislative base so as to significantly increase women representation in representative bodies of the country, where the will of Georgian population is shaped.

Considering current reality we envisage introduction of mandatory gender quotas within the electoral system as the only solution to eliminate the imbalance. In addition the order of distributing candidates of opposite sexes within the party lists has to be stipulated and efficient sanctions for incompliance with the quotas introduced.

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