



WFD



**An assessment of the challenges, needs,
and opportunities** for the advancement of civil
society and community organizations engaged
in climate change and environmental protection
within Georgia

An assessment of the challenges, needs, and opportunities for the advancement of civil society and community organizations engaged in climate change and environmental protection within Georgia



The research was carried out by the Center for Strategy and Development (CSD), commissioned by the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD). The views expressed in this research may not necessarily reflect the views of the UK Government and the Westminster Foundation for Democracy.

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I Overview

In order to examine the challenges and needs of civil society and community organizations addressing the matters concerning climate change and environmental protection in Georgia, the measures proposed by the Center for Strategy and Development, along with desk research, encompassed such a qualitative method of data collection as conducting in-depth interviews with subject matter experts on climate change and environmental protection, representatives of the non-governmental sector (civil society and community organizations) and universities. Within the framework of the ongoing research, the Center for Strategy and Development, along with an assessment of the concern with the available statistics on thematic civil societies and community organizations, identified challenges and needs related to the perceived lack of thematic interest among organizations, operating difficulties, relationships with donors, and fundraising. The identification of challenges and needs allowed the research team of the Center for Strategy and Development to provide recommendations adjusted to the experience of the units studied, taking into account available resources and aimed at enhancing the productivity of organizations.

I Concerning the Research

The Center for Strategy and Development (CSD), at the request of the Westminster Foundation and funded by the Government of the United Kingdom (UKaid), conducted qualitative research between September and December 2022 on the challenges, needs, and development opportunities of civil society and community organizations operating in the field of climate change and environmental protection in Georgia. The primary aim of this research was to provide relevant assessments and recommendations based on data gathered from desk and field research (i.e., in-depth interviews with subject matter experts (7), representatives of the non-governmental sector (12), and universities (4)). The objective of this document is to apprise interested parties of the research findings.

-The Center for Strategy and Development extends its sincere gratitude to all individuals who participated in the research for their valuable contributions.-

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List of Abbreviations

BUR - Biennial Update Report

UNCBD - United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity

UNFCCC - United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

UNCDD - United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification

NDC - Nationally Determined Contributions

1. Introduction

In the course of gaining access to information on climate change and environmental protection issues by the public, thematic civil society organizations serve as a conduit between research institutes and society. Thematic advocacy organizations possess the opportunity to elevate the demands, needs, and challenges of vulnerable groups pertaining to climate change and environmental protection onto the political agenda. The endorsement of accountability principles by the aforesaid organizations constitutes a salient factor in fostering superlative and lucid involvement in the political realm across diverse spectra of actors. Simultaneously, the active engagement of civil society and community organizations facilitates coordination among various institutions, both at local and national, regional, and international levels. Therefore, against the backdrop of climate change and modern environmental protection predicaments, robust civil society organizations and community organizations are of utmost significance in terms of devising, implementing, and monitoring counteractive measures.

In the 80s-90s of the 20th century, the interest of civil society and community organizations in issues concerning climate change and environmental protection in Georgia arose immediately after the international community became concerned in this focus area. Notable is the formation at the national level in 1989 of the Green Party, which, unlike the European green movements, concentrated only on environmental protection matters. The noted party not only contributed to the actualization of environmental issues at the national level but also managed to win a parliamentary mandate in 1992. Furthermore, the party became part of the ruling coalition in 1995.¹ Georgia's 30 years of activity, on the one hand, the engagement in such international initiatives as the **United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (UNCBD), United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention), Kyoto Protocol, the Bali Guidelines, EU initiative - Covenant of Mayors, Paris Agreement, and European Union Association Agreement, and on the other hand, the measures taken forward at the national level, which involve the formation of new thematic institutes and the strengthening of existing capacities according to international recommendations, the development and implementation of the thematic legislative framework, have had a positive impact on the participation of the non-governmental sector in the field of climate change and environmental protection policy. At various times, non-governmental organizations provided consultations, as well as were directly involved in the development of the documents, such as the National Communications of Georgia, the Biennial Update Reports (BUR), the Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), the Law of Georgia on Environmental Protection, the Environmental Assessment Code of Georgia, etc. However, despite the increasing interest and engagement of the non-governmental sector in the development of climate change and environmental protection policy, the activities of thematic civil society and community organizations² in Georgia still encounter several issues.**

1 Heinrich Boell Foundation (2013) Georgia: History of Green Politics. Available at: https://ge.boell.org/sites/default/files/mcvaneebi_160x230mm.pdf

2 **Note**¹: Hereinafter referred to as "Target Group"

The objective of the present document is to determine the challenges and needs of thematic civil society and community organizations in Georgia based on data acquired from desk research and fieldwork, allowing the research team to provide recommendations aimed at improving the work efficiency adjusted to the target group.

2. Research methodology

The research aims to assess the challenges faced by civil society and community organizations engaged in the field of climate change and environmental protection in Georgia and provide recommendations adapted to their experience, acknowledging the complex essence of the challenges and needs cited. As a part of the study of operational difficulties and needs of the target group, this research includes the following tasks:

1. Identification of civil society and community organizations (as a target group) operating in the field of climate change and environmental protection in Georgia.
2. Classification of challenges and needs encountering an identified target group and their comprehensive analysis.
3. Based on the experience of the studied target groups, provide recommendations aimed at improving the performance efficiency of these units.

To answer the research question - **what are the main challenges and needs faced by civil society and community organizations working in the field of climate change and environmental protection in Georgia?** - the team of the Center for Strategy and Development implemented a project that included, on the one hand, desk research, and, on the other hand, various components of Qualitative Data Collection Methods.

[About the Desk Research]

Within the scope of the assessment of the challenges and needs of civil society and community organizations operating in the field of climate change and environmental protection in Georgia, the research presented by the Center for Strategy and Development implies a qualitative content analysis of respective secondary data (the so-called content analysis). For the purposes of the research on the thematic activity of the target group, the research team of the Center for Strategy and Development thoroughly examined the data available on online platforms (including academic literature), such as JSTOR, Google Scholar, Microsoft Academic, ERIC, Semantic Scholar, BASE, and Core. Within the scope of the qualitative research of secondary data, the research team extensively utilized the textual contents of international agreements - United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (UNCBD), United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCDD), Aarhus Convention, Kyoto Protocol, the Bali Guidelines, Covenant of Mayors, Paris Agreement, and European Union Association Agreement. Along with familiarization with international as well as local assessments of the involvement of target groups, the research team, based on information published in the Legislative Herald of Georgia, examined the opportunities envisaged by law for representatives of the target group.

Along with the present document of the Center for Strategy and Development, a desk research report is provided as an appendix. This report is based upon a comprehensive analysis of 22 sources conducted through the content analysis of secondary data.

[About primary data collection]

The primary data collection process by the research team of the Center for Strategy and Development included in-depth interviews with subject matter experts in the field of climate change and environmental protection, representatives of the non-governmental sector, and universities. Due to the various constraints, including the physical inaccessibility of respondents, limited project budget, and tight deadlines, the research team of the esteemed Center for Strategy and Development resorted to conducting in-depth interviews for the collection of primary data online via the Zoom platform (see table 1).

Table 1. Distribution of respondents of semi-structured interviews

Respodent Unit Type	Number of Respondents
1. Expert on climate change issues	4
2. Expert in environmental protection issues	3
3. Representatives of Tbilisi-based non-governmental organization	5
4. Representatives of NGOs based in the regions	7
4.1 Civil society organizations	4
4.2 Community organizati	3
5. University working on climate change and environmental protection matter	4
5.1 Ivane Javakishvili Tbilisi State University	1
5.2 Ilia State University	1
5.3 The International School of Economics at Tbilisi State University (ISET)	1
5.4 Georgian Institute of Public Affairs (GIPA) Georgian Institute of Public Affairs (GIPA)	1
	Total: 23 Respondents

As a result of the paucity and unavailability of potential respondents for the semi-structured interviews conducted within the scope of the research, the Center for Strategy and Development’s research team relied on a non-probability sampling method. Along with the proportional, convenient, and purposive sampling method, the research team actively used the so-called “snowball” principle in order to identify the respondents.

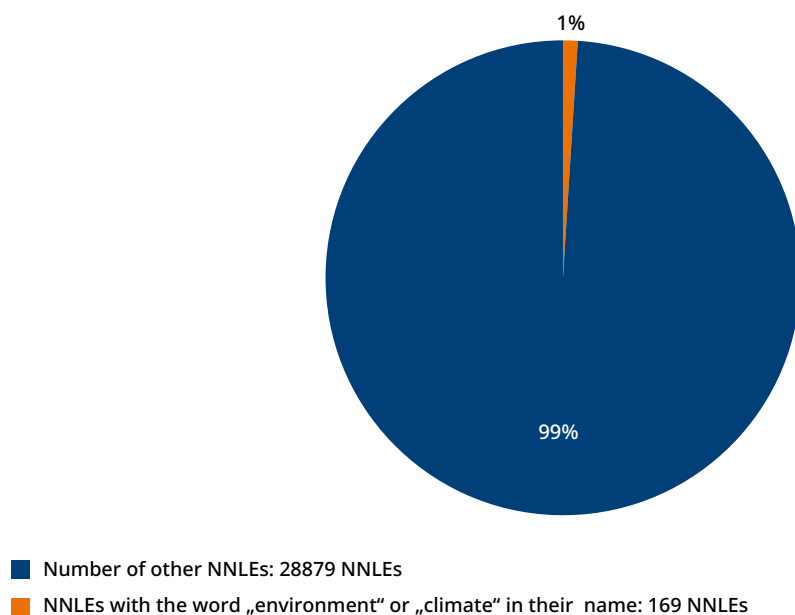
The research team of the Center for Strategy and Development proposed 3 types of questionnaires to the respondents identified through the sampling method. These questionnaires were specifically designed for [1] experts in the field of climate change, [2] experts in the field of environmental protection, and [3] representatives of universities/civil society and community organizations.

3. Assessment of the activities of civil society and community organizations engaged in the field of climate change and environmental protection in Georgia

Notwithstanding the active assessment³ of target groups under secondary data sources examined in the desk research, the research team of the Center for Strategy and Development, based on the latest statistics and insights derived from in-depth interviews, opines that the current statistics on civil society and community organizations with a vested interest in climate change and environmental protection matters do not reflect the actual picture. The research team examined the “Data of registered non-entrepreneurial (non-profit) legal organizations as of June 2022” of the National Agency of Public Registry of the Ministry of Justice of Georgia and the record of organizations registered on CSOGEORGIA.ORG, wherein the reflected statistical data not only evince a palpable incongruity but also, as per the expert consensus, create misconceptions of a large number of target groups (see Fig. 1, Fig. 2, Fig. 3).

Figure 1. Data of registered non-entrepreneurial (non-commercial) legal entities as of June 2022.

Source: [National Agency of Public Registry of Ministry of Justice](#)



3 DecisionWare Group LLC (DWG) (2017). Enhancing Capacity For Low Emission Development Strategies (Ec-Leds) Clean Energy Program Georgia's Low Emission Development Strategy (Leds) Draft. page 8 available at: <https://policy.asiapacificenergy.org/sites/default/files/Draft%20Georgia%27s%20Low%20Emission%20Development%20Strategy%20%28LEDS%29%20%28EN%29.pdf>

Figure 2. Non-governmental organizations registered on CSOGEORGIA.ORG.

Source: CSOGEORGIA.ORG

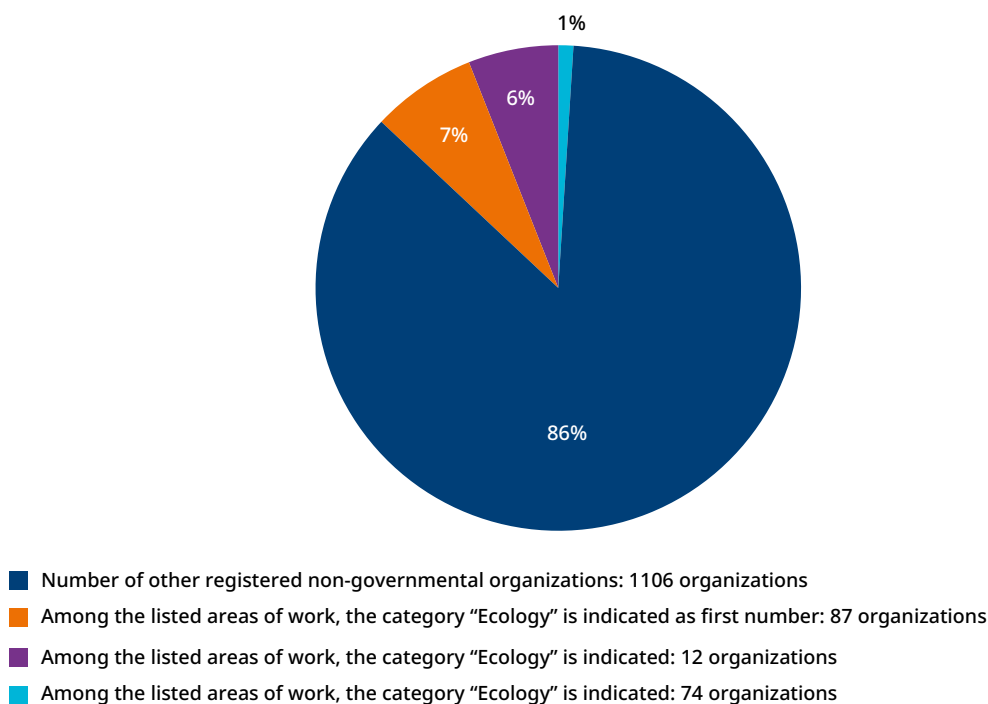
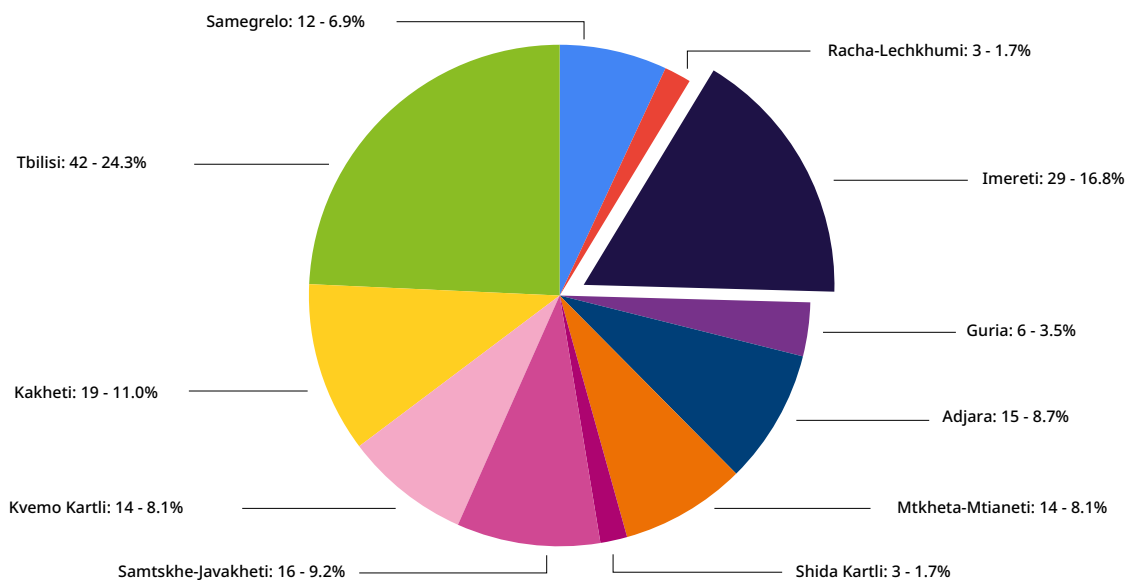


Figure 3. Distribution of non-governmental organizations registered on CSOGEORGIA.ORG by region.

Source: CSOGEORGIA.ORG



It is worth noting that of the 173 thematic community organizations depicted in Figure 3, only 6 (3.4%) pertain to the Women’s Initiatives Supporting Groups, while 21 are associated with various other types of associations (12%).

The Center for Strategy and Development's research team accorded particular significance to the expert perspective, asserting that existent statistics on thematic non-governmental organizations fail to mirror the precise picture. The aforementioned suspicion was partially confirmed by the research team during the identification process of the community and civil society organizations. Remarkably, most of the thematic non-governmental organizations reflected at CSOGEORGIA.ORG and in the database of non-entrepreneurial (non-commercial) legal entities registered as of June 2022 declined to participate in the interviews. These organizations justified their refusal by citing the termination of the activities of the organizations or their insufficient expertise in executing projects pertaining to climate change and environmental protection. As per the Center for Strategy and Development's deduction, alongside other enumerated circumstances, the discrepancy between statistical data and the actual picture may be attributed to the simplified procedures for registering the non-entrepreneurial (non-commercial) legal entities in Georgia.

4. Assessment of the challenges and needs of civil society and community organizations engaged in the field of climate change and environmental protection in Georgia

In order to conduct a structured assessment of the challenges, needs, and opportunities for the development of civil society and community organizations operating in the field of climate change and environmental protection in Georgia, the research team of the Center for Strategy and Development considers it essential to provide a conditional classification of these entities based on data acquired within the scope of the research. Observation of the type of organizations' activities facilitates a systematic classification. Based on the processing of the information provided by respondents in the course of in-depth interviews, and respective secondary and tertiary sources, the Center for Strategy and Development divides civil society and community organizations engaged in the field of climate change and environmental protection per their activities in the following manner:

1. Non-governmental organizations specializing in consultancy and advocacy concentrate efforts on aiding diverse public sector agencies and government entities by offering technical consulting services through their expert resources. The aforementioned type of organizations participated in the development of strategic documents at different times (see Appendix 1). Based on the information gathered from interviews conducted by the Center for Strategy and Development, it can be inferred that these categories of organizations generally possess significant financial and human resources, contrary to regional organizations, thus making them less prone to the resource-related concerns described below. Moreover, the noted resources enable these organizations to engage in advocacy activities.
2. The Center for Strategy and Development's interviews with representatives of regional organizations demonstrated that civil society and community organizations' advocacy roles were notable. The interviewees emphasized their aspiration and expertise in protecting the interests of local groups. In the course of the interviews, the representatives of the regional advocacy organizations, acting as respondents, accentuated the challenges entailed by the resources at their disposal.
3. The interviews conducted by the Center for Strategy and Development with representatives of purported organizations, such as Watchdog, have reviled the formidable cooperative obstacles they encounter. Regarding this category of challenge, the respondents underscored the arduousness of cooperation with the public sector at the regional level.
4. By virtue of the distinctive nature of the fields of climate change and environmental protection, research and analytical organizations, known as Think-Tanks, are engaged in advocacy activities alongside their research and analytical endeavors. These organizations are relatively impervious to challenges emanating from human resources with technical expertise.

Regarding the classification of organizations operating in the field of climate change and environmental protection, it is imperative to differentiate between those based in Tbilisi and those located in the regions.

The data amassed by the Center for Strategy and Development through both desk and field research has enabled the research team to classify the obstacles confronting civil society and community organizations dedicated to climate change and environmental protection into four categories - [1] challenges related to the perceived lack of interest among organizations in climate change and environmental protection issues, [2] factors impeding the activities of target groups, [3] issues arising during the relationship with a (potential) donor, and [4] financial matters. While challenges alluded to may vary contingent upon the respective categories of organizations aforesaid, the objective of this chapter lies in determining the multifarious obstacles within the outlined categories and assessing each of them. This approach enables the research team to develop recommendations congruent with the unique experiences of the target group.

4.1 Challenges related to the perceived lack of interest among organizations in climate change and environmental protection issues

The data acquired as a result of the development of a desk research report by the Center for Strategy and Development and in-depth interviews completed with subject matter experts on climate change and environmental protection, representatives of civil society and community organizations and universities, facilitated the research team in establishing a structural model of deficiency of thematic interest perceived by civil society and community organizations. As per the evaluation of the respondent non-governmental organizations, the indicated model illustrates the lack of thematic interest in climate change and environmental protection issues.⁴ The model reflecting the perceived lack of thematic interest among research respondents emphasizes the perceived lack of interest among 5 actors (international society, government, non-governmental sector, society, and international (and local) donors) (see Figure 4).

4 **Note³:** Although the Center for Strategy and Development disagrees with the thesis on the lack of thematic interest, it definitely considers the exchange of information on the perceived lack of interest among research respondents.

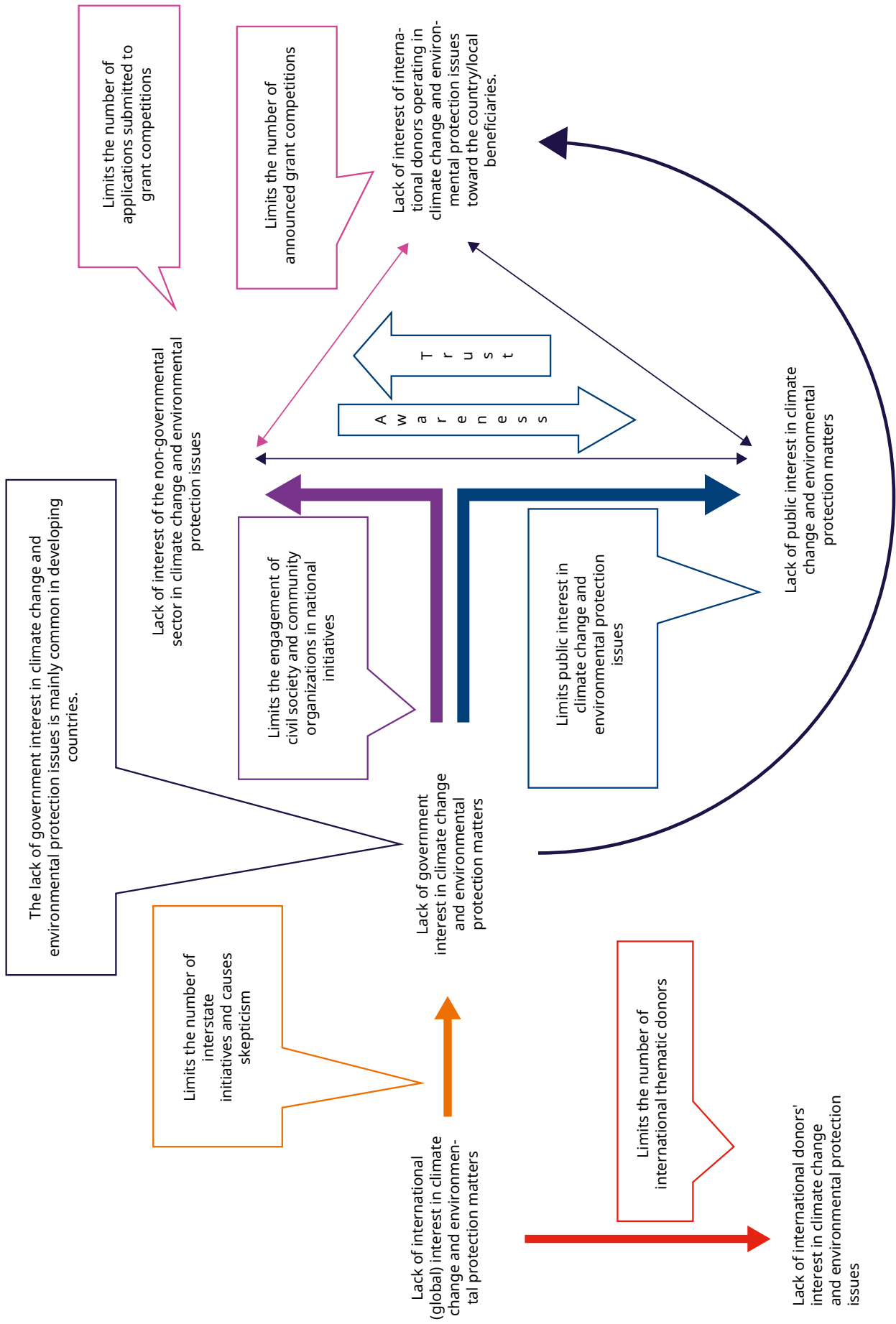


Figure 4. Structured model of the perceived lack of interest of civil society and community organizations in climate change and environmental protection. Source: Center for Strategy and Development (CSD)

According to the model presented by the research team of the Center for Strategy and Development on the perceived lack of interest among respondents (see Fig. 4), the relative lack of interest⁵ in climate change and environmental protection matters on the international political agenda limits the increase in the number of thematic international donors on a global scale. Furthermore, it also exerts a detrimental influence on the interest of national governments in prioritizing climate change and environmental protection issues. Consequently, this results in limiting the involvement of governments in intergovernmental endeavors and, at times, instills a doubtful disposition towards such initiatives. Per the respondents' views, the state's lack of interest in climate change and environmental protection issues is predominantly discernible in developing countries, where the resource allocation to address these pressing concerns is frequently cast doubt. The government's lack of interest has a twofold effect. Firstly, it adversely impacts the interest of international thematic donors in the cited country. Secondly, it restricts national-level initiatives aimed the raising public awareness and fostering trust of the local community in civil society and community organizations operating towards climate change and environmental protection through the engagement of civil society and community organizations. Moreover, the lack of interest displayed by the non-governmental sector in climate change and environmental protection issues further restrains the participation of the target group in a limited number of grant competitions. The stance held by the international donor with regards to the prospective local beneficiaries, who, owing to the aforementioned circumstances, may not enjoy high public trust, could potentially affect the participation of civil society and community organizations that fall within the target group. This, in turn, impacts the benevolence of the potential donor.

4.2 Factors impeding the activities

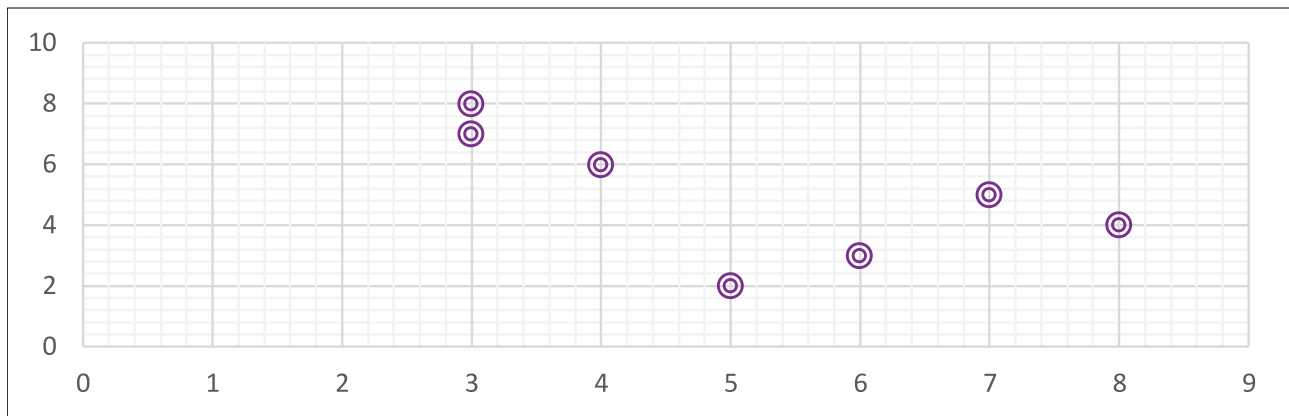
Based on the data gathered by the Center for Strategy and Development through interviews conducted with representatives of civil society and community organizations, the research team has identified the primary factors that hinder the functioning of the target group's representatives as follows:

- The absence of a vision, plan, or strategy for organization development - the interviewed representatives of civil society and community organizations denied the existence of the vision/plan/strategy or other type of thematic document for organization development that, per the respondents' belief, requires resources that are not available to their civil society and community organizations.
- Furthermore, the matter of delegation of responsibility and authority bears significant importance. The majority of the interviewed representatives of civil society and community organizations emphasized the absence of a well-defined division of responsibility and authority within their respective units. The respondents attributed the absence of delegation of responsibility and authority within their organization to the insufficiency of human resources. It is noteworthy that the number of interviewed (7 organizations) and additionally surveyed (29 organizations) employees of the majority (30 organizations) of regional civil society and community organizations (36 organizations in total) by the research team of the Strategy and Development Center did not exceed six individuals (see Figure 5).

⁵ **Note⁴:** As emphasized by particular in-depth interview respondents, despite the recent increased interest in climate change and environmental protection, the superiority of challenges in this field over other challenges on the global political agenda is uncertain.

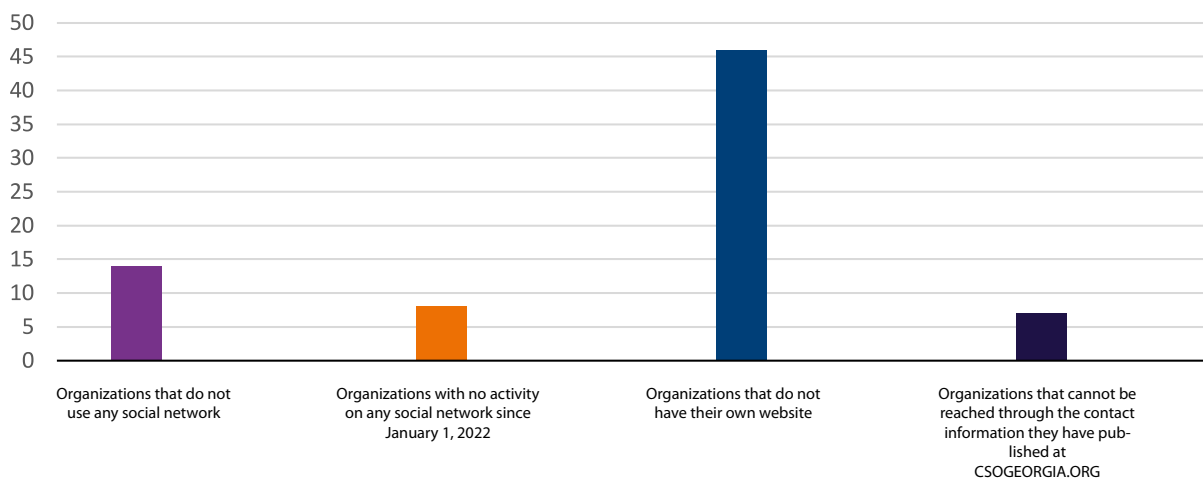
Figure 5. Number of organizations (X-axis) by the number of employees (Y) employed.

Source: Center for Strategy and Development (CSD)



- The absence of subject matter experts/competent individuals in the organizations - representatives of regional civil society and community organizations expressed the insufficiency of thematic experts in the regions, along with the emphasis on the lack of human resources. Some of the interviewed regional civil society and community organizations did not have employees of the proper expertise. According to representatives of the examined regional organizations, the absence of such employees in the organization has led them to seek the services of hired experts, resulting in increased expenditures for the organization.
- The digital awareness issue of civil society and community organizations - the research team of the Center for Strategy and Development examined the online activities of the above mentioned 173 organizations registered on CSOGEORGIA.ORG. The data processed by the research team demonstrate the misuse of digital resources by target groups, which, in turn, determines the insufficient awareness of the noted organizations and decreased levels of trust in them (see Fig. 6).

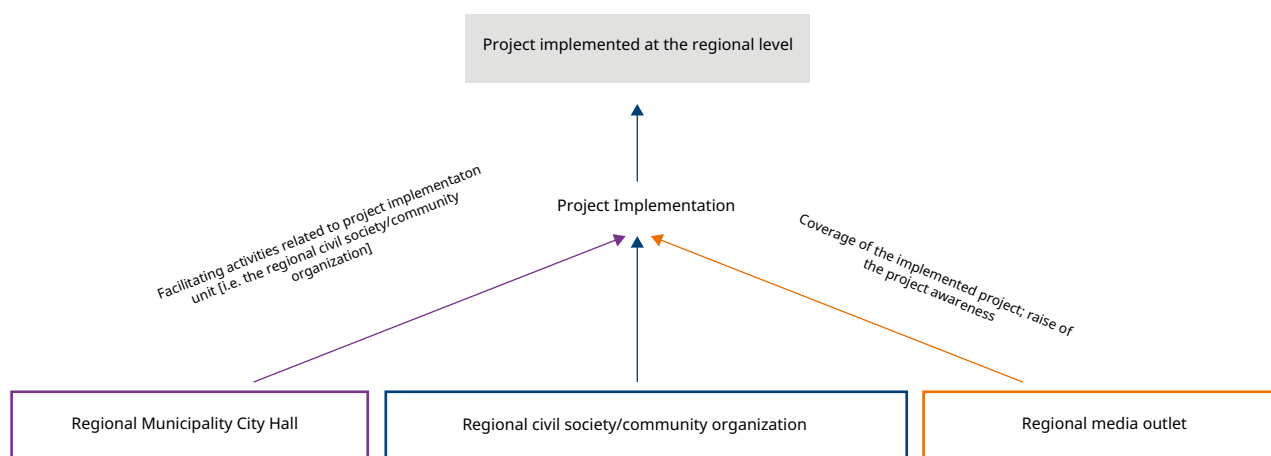
Figure 6. Thematic organizations registered on CSOGEORGIA.ORG



- Local competition as contributory and constraining factors – in semi-structured interviews conducted by the research team of the Center for Strategy and Development, representatives of the target group and subject matter experts assessed local competition as a factor impacting organizational performance. According to representatives of regional civil society and community organizations, heightened local competition can facilitate not only the self-development of the organization in question but also promote the successful execution of projects through cooperation with other organizations. The views of the interviewed experts on competition are noteworthy. According to their perspective, the competition with state units with the status of a non-entrepreneurial (non-commercial) legal entity registered in regions with relatively large resources is a deterrent for civil society and community organizations.
- Challenges related to local cooperation - the research team of the Center for Strategy and Development studied the experience of cooperation between regional civil society and community organizations with regional municipalities and the media. According to respondents, their cooperation with these units is limited, citing a lack of interest on the part of said agencies regarding climate change and environmental protection matters. The Center for Strategy and Development of Georgia, based on the exchange of experience in cooperation cases, has developed a model that reflects the experience of more or less effective cooperation between the mentioned entities (see Fig. 7).

Figure 7. Model of regional cooperation in the field of climate change and environmental protection.

Source: Center for Strategy and Development (CSD)



4.3 Issues arising during the relationship with a (potential) donor

Per the data acquired by the Center for Strategy and Development in the framework of examining the experience of interaction between the donors and civil society and community organizations participating in the research, the research team identified the following tasks:

- Lack of awareness of donor priorities – according to information provided to the research team of the Center for Strategy and Development, a lack of awareness of donor priorities represents a constraining factor hindering civil society and community organizations' interaction with the indicated donor. Representatives of civil society and community organizations participating in the research did

not confirm an attempt to acquire supplementary information regarding donor priorities in the process of filling out a grant application.

- Lack of donors' awareness of the local context – the representatives of the organizations who participated in the research shared their experiences of interacting with a donor [e.g. Donor organization]. According to these respondents, the donor organization had contradictory views on different aspects of the project, which they attributed to insufficient knowledge of the local context.
- The flexibility of regional civil society and community organizations to changing circumstances - the representatives of civil society and non-governmental organizations participated in the research recalled cases when the donor made modifications to the activities to be carried out in the course of the project. Per the respondents' view, such changes often require supplementary resources from regional organizations, which are mostly unavailable to them.
- Challenges associated with limited transparency and inappropriate reporting - subject matter experts involved in the research expressed their concerns regarding transparency and accountability issues in regional civil society and community organizations. This may lead to the reluctance of donor organizations to interact with potential beneficiaries. The representatives of civil society and community organizations engaged in the research also accentuated the difficulty of meeting the reporting standards required by international donors.

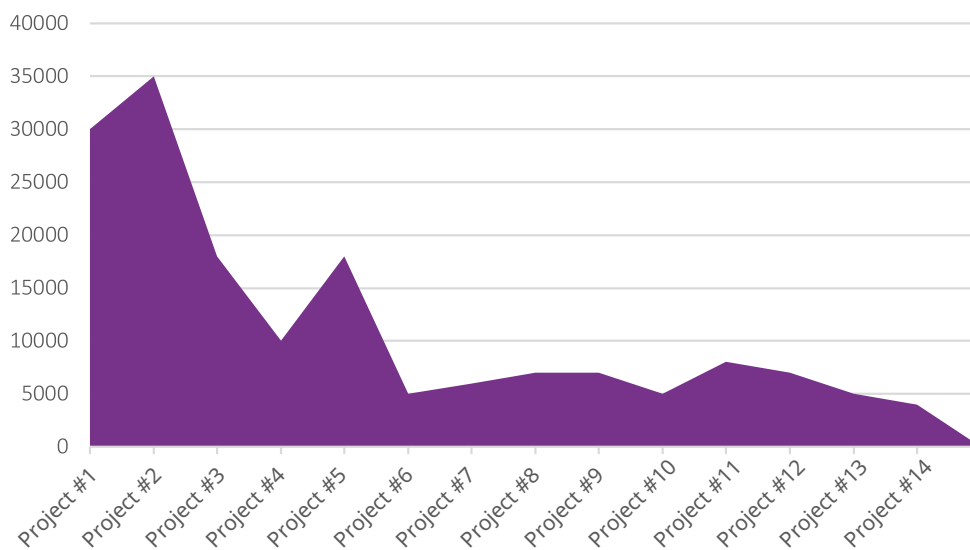
4.4 Financial matters

As part of the the study of financial challenges, the Center for Strategy and Development concentrated on the experience of thematic civil society and community organizations in the indicated direction. The following paragraph examines the five main challenges faced by non-governmental organizations from a financial perspective:

- A small amount of grants provided to regional organizations - when discussing with the research team, representatives of civil society and community organizations emphasized the limited grant funding they have previously received, which has impeded their capacity to operate over extended periods. It shall be noted that the average amount of grants issued for 14 different projects undertaken by thematic civil society and community organizations, as surveyed by the Center for Strategy and Development, did not exceed USD 15,000 (see Fig. 8).

Figure 8. Amount of grants awarded for projects of the interviewed non-governmental organizations.

Source: Center for Strategy and Development



- Issues related to the received grant management - during the interaction with non-governmental organizations that implement subgrant programs or projects, the representatives placed their attention on grant management concerns pertaining to their respective beneficiary regional civil society and community organizations. The respondents in the in-depth interviews implied that their organizations have previously provided assistance to their sub-grantees regarding the financial management aspects of the project.
- The existing issues related to project continuation - the research team at the Center for Strategy and Development has gathered information indicating that regional beneficiary organizations encounter challenges in demonstrating the project value (performance efficacy) to donors within the short-term (up to 6-12 months) projects due to the changes in the area of focus concerning climate change and environmental protection. As a consequence, such organizations often encounter difficulties securing continued project funding.
- The issue of obtaining long-term financing (i.e. core funding) - within the scope of in-depth interviews conducted by the research team of the Center for Strategy and Development, the subject matter experts discussed the Core Funding, the absence of which is a significant determinant of the continued existence of regional civil society and community organizations, which often rely on “project-to-project” funding.
- Competence and Fundraising Efforts – the Center for Strategy and Development interviewed representatives of regional civil society and community organizations participating in the research regarding their fundraising efforts. As per the experience shared by the respondents, regional civil society and community organizations predominantly rely on donation systems (i.e., Crowdfunding, Community Fundraising, individual donations, etc.) to raise additional funds. It ought to be remarked that none of the regional civil society and community organizations interviewed by the Center for Strategy and Development is familiar with (has no experience in using) such alternative sources of funding, such as state grants, corporate financing, research funds, government contracts, social enterprises, etc.

5. Recommendations for civil society and community organizations operating in the field of climate change and environmental protection in Georgia

The following paragraph determines recommendations that will assist civil society and community organizations working in the field of climate change and environmental protection in Georgia to address the challenges identified in the research. The recommendations outlined below consider the various constraints encountered by civil society and community organizations and are adapted to their capacities and circumstances:

In order to address the factors hindering the activities of the organization, as identified in the research, the following recommendations are proposed:

- Establishment of an organizational structure with clearly designated responsibilities and authority, as well as a documented vision/strategy for the organization development and a corresponding action plan (which provides for a precise definition of the purposes and objectives of the organization). Organizations operating in the realm of climate change and environmental protection may avail themselves of the prospect to participate in donor-sponsored organization development programs.
- In order to address the challenges posed by the lack of human resources, it is recommended that civil society and community organizations operating in the realm of climate change and environmental protection take the following actions:
 1. The implementation/encouragement of the remote work practice, which will allow these units to hire appropriate personnel from different locations; organization's personnel located in Tbilisi and working remotely, will entitle regional organizations to save on organizational expenses incurred in attending meetings arranged in Tbilisi.
 2. The development of an internship program (including distance learning) in the areas of climate change and environmental protection shall generate a notable rise in the augmentation of the said units' memberships, thereby strengthening their cooperation with Tbilisi-based and regional universities. Simultaneously, the inclusion of students hailing from the regions and those attending regional universities into the organization's internship programs shall facilitate the fortification of the cooperation between the cited organization and universities.

In order to build confidence in the organization at the local level, it is advised:

- Establishing a communication plan pertaining to climate change and environmental protection is vital for organizations to achieve transparent communication of their objectives and purposes.
- Holding regular information meetings with representatives of the residents and community.
- Forming the subject matter advisory groups composed of the local community and cooperating with local action groups (LAG) (if any).

- Integrating community leaders (clerics, elders, etc.), where feasible, in projects implemented in the field of climate change and environmental protection for the purposes of strengthening communication.
- Collecting and disseminating the affirmative feedback regarding the organization, as conveyed by the representatives of the local community.
- Executing a memorandum of cooperation with educational institutions (schools and universities) for the purpose of active communication and collaboration.
- Holding regular information meetings with students of partner schools and universities regarding the organization's activities in the field of climate change and environmental protection.
- Organizing competitions and establishing scholarships for students of schools and universities on climate change and environmental protection, subject to the availability of appropriate resources.

In order to foster cooperation on climate change and environmental protection at the regional level, it is strongly encouraged that civil society and community organizations undertake the following measures:

- Per the positions adopted during the regional project implementation, as depicted in Figure 8, it is recommended to execute memorandums of cooperation with other non-governmental organizations and local media outlets. First of all, this measure will intensify cooperation amidst non-governmental organizations and, furthermore, with the assistance of media, will amplify public awareness of thematic projects.
- To provide technical or expert consultancy to Municipalities' City Halls to further enhance cooperation on thematic issues. The cooperation with Municipalities' City Halls may entitle non-governmental organizations in municipalities that are parties to the Covenant of Mayors to manage the implementation/transfer of existing best practices in the field of climate change, adaptation, and environmental protection from sister cities within the scope of cooperation with organizations operating in the field climate change and environmental protection in the cited cities in Europe.

In order to establish (enhance) relationships with (potential) donors, the beneficiary civil society and community organizations are recommended to:

- Develop the organization's (potential) donor base and regular assessment of their preferences.
- Offer visits to (potential) donors to get acquainted with the organization's activities

In order to establish (enhance) relationships with (potential) beneficiaries, donors are encouraged to:

- Provide capacity-building training for civil society and community organizations operating in the field of climate change and environmental protection by potential donors within the framework of capacity-building of non-governmental organizations and expansion of organizational capacity development programs.
- Apply the principle of sub-granting in implemented and intended projects in the area of focus of climate change and environmental protection, implying regional thematic civil society and community organizations as sub-grant units.

- For the purposes of accurate assessment of the goals and objectives set in the applications submitted by a donor organization under grant competitions announced in the area of focus of climate change and environmental protection, it is recommended that the donor pursue local context research.

To address the financial challenges encountered by the organization, it is advised that the following actions be taken:

- Incorporation of organization development expenditures, as far as practicable, into the budget of project applications submitted in the scope of calls announced in the field of climate change and environmental protection.
- Implementation/encouragement of a culture of sustainable financial management in the organization.
- The use of donation systems, along with the raise awareness of funding sources such as state grants, corporate financing, research funds, government contracts, social enterprises, etc.

6. Conclusion

Within the scope of the assessment of challenges of civil society and community organizations interested in climate change and environmental protection in Georgia, the challenges specified by the Center for Strategy and Development are conveniently classified into 4 categories:

1. Challenges caused by the lack of thematic interest of international society, governments, international donors, target groups and society perceived among civil society and community organizations operating in the field of climate change and environmental protection;
2. Factors hindering the work of the target groups, such as - the lack of a vision/plan/strategy for organization development, the delegation matters of responsibility and authority, the absence of subject matter experts/competent individuals in organizations, the digital awareness issues of civil society and community organizations, the local competition, matters related to local cooperation.
3. Challenges that emerge during interaction with (potential) donors, which in turn enclose the lack of awareness of donor priorities, the lack of donors' knowledge concerning the local context, the lack of flexibility of regional civil society and community organizations to changing circumstances, matters associated with limited transparency and inappropriate reporting.
4. Financial issues include the small amount of grants provided to regional organizations, challenges related to the management of the acquired grant, concerns with regard to the continuation of the project, and the issue of obtaining long-term funds (i.e. core funding), fundraising competence, and applied efforts.

According to the challenges and needs identified, the research team of the Center for Strategy and Development provided a list of recommendations adjusted to the target groups. According to the challenges and needs identified, the research team of the Center for Strategy and Development provided a list of recommendations adjusted to the target groups. The stated list aims to increase the performance efficiency of these units by taking concrete measures for the structural development of the organization, building trust and awareness, as well as raising awareness of alternative ways of financing the organization.

■ Incorporated Materials

Appendix 1. Engagement of Civil Society and Community Organizations in Georgia in Policy Development on Climate Change and Environmental Protection: Desk Research Report

DecisionWare Group LLC (DWG) (2017). Enhancing Capacity For Low Emission Development Strategies (Ec-Leds) Clean Energy Program Georgia's Low Emission Development Strategy (Leds) Draft. pg. 8 Available at: <https://policy.asiapacificenergy.org/sites/default/files/Draft%20Georgia%27s%20Low%20Emission%20Development%20Strategy%20%28LEDS%29%20%28EN%29.pdf>

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United Nations (1992). United Nations Framework Convention On Climate Change. Available at: <https://unfccc.int/resource/docs/convkp/conveng.pdf>

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United Nations (2015). Paris Agreement. Available at: https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/english_paris_agreement.pdf

UNFCCC (2021). Fourth National Communication of Georgia. Pg. 377 Available at: https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/4%20Final%20Report%20-%20English%202020%2030.03_0.pdf

United Nations (1996). United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. Pg 3. Available at: https://catalogue.unccd.int/936_UNCCD_Convention_ENG.pdf



An assessment of the challenges, needs, and opportunities
for the advancement of civil society and community
organizations engaged in climate change and environmental
protection within Georgia