

# Public Voices in the Environmental Decision-Making in Georgia

By Marina Chichua<sup>1\*</sup>, Lia Matchavariani<sup>2</sup>

## ABSTRACT:

The article presents the results of the scientific research and gives the ways to solve the problems dedicated to PP (public participation) in the process of EDM (environmental decision-making) in Georgia. Several obstacles were found, by studying the environmental non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Georgia. All necessary information was collected through interviews and questionnaires. The study discusses the existing legislation on this issue and aims to find answers to these obstacles. Four hypotheses were developed - transparency in the decision-making process promotes successful public participation, effective cooperation with one another is a better way for NGOs to participate in the environmental decision-making process, Georgian NGO's successful participation in the process of DM (decision-making) was related to the development of an environmental legal system, self-financing helps the Environmental NGOs in Georgia to improve their financial status and increase their flexibility in the EDM process. The Soviet regime caused the nonexistence of PP approaches in EDM. Currently, many international and trans-boundary projects are taking place and will be completed shortly in Georgia. The participation of the public, especially non-governmental organizations is a key point and crucial element in decision making as most of these developments entail additional environmental problems and to prevent damage to the environment and foster sustainable development when such projects are completed. The research gives key provisions that require improvement to increase the effectiveness of PP in EDM process.

*Keywords: public participation, environment, decision-making, NGOs*

## 1. Introduction

The ability of decision makers to improve citizens' understanding of the processes for resolving problems through which they fix and resolve them will be facilitated by participation of public. The public participation of the decision making process is an easy way for these issues to be accepted, and it could also help find sustainable solutions. Participation of citizens in the decision-making processes and citizen mobilization shall be part of the PP process under EDM. "Civil participation in policy development, including participation of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), is a key element of participatory democracy in Europe" (Golubović, 2021). However, participation in EDM does not itself ensure that participation will occur or be meaningful. There are numerous barriers to effective and successful PP.

In 1990 the United States, the European Commission, and Hungary founded the Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC) with a mission to promote cooperation among governments, NGOs, businesses, and other environmental stakeholders by supporting the free exchange of information on PP in EDM. REC

<sup>1</sup>Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, Department of Exact and Natural Sciences, Tbilisi, Georgia,

<sup>2</sup>Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, Department of Exact and Natural Sciences, Tbilisi, Georgia

\*Corresponding Author.

regularly published reports on the state of PP in the EDM process. Unfortunately, REC ceased functioning in 2020.

Reports on the implementation of the Aarhus Convention (Aarhus Convention, 1998), adopted in 1998, are the most comprehensive and accurate information on public participation in environmental decision-making in countries of Eastern and Western Europe and the former USSR.

Recent articles on public participation envisaged the European Ombudsman's public consultation on balanced interaction with civil society and industry representatives on environmental matters (European Ombudsman, 2023) and compared US environmental laws with those of the European Union (EU) and the Netherlands. It did appear that US environmental laws more often allow the public to take part in environmental decisions than the EU and the Netherlands (Akerboom, Craig 2022). One example of NGO coordination and collaboration could be multiple NGOs responding to environmental disasters and performing relief operations (Sohrabizadeh et al. 2023). In China, the ENGOs created a new system of participation that is in line with state development strategies (Wang, Lo 2022) and successful (aka agro-ecotourism) development in different countries, highlighting the importance of sustainable practices, community involvement, and cooperation between stakeholders (Ostapenko, Bryantsev 2023). Some examples underlined the significance of PP on the different executive levels (Adams et al. 2021), public engagement for environmental justices (Finewood et al. 2023), and collecting information from the affected public for planning decisions (Muller 2022, Tiwari 2023). Large-scale land projects implemented by foreign investors helped developing countries, like Tanzania, to achieve their economic and development goals with PP into decisions (Nkansah-Dwamena, 2021). NGOs' effectiveness, long-term stability, and good reputation in the community are directly connected with the organized finances and funds of NGOs (Mikeladze, 2021). However, modern professional NGOs consist of paid staff, not volunteers, and depend significantly on donors (Paturyan 2023).

Our research indicates that neither the Aarhus Convention reports nor recent publications were able to provide accurate and comprehensive information on public participation in the EDM process. Some authors encouraged future reviews with widely participatory mechanisms aimed at joint problem-solving in South and European countries (Suškevičs et al. 2023).

PP in the DM process is the key instruments to develop democratic values in developing countries like Georgia. The Soviet regime caused the nonexistence of the PP approaches in EDM in the country. PP in the DM process, especially concerning the environment, was a new approach for Georgian society. The adoption of the new democratic approaches in the country was the main purpose for the NGO sector fast growth in Georgia. At that time the number of NGOs in Georgia was high, and large numbers of them were connected with environmental issues. The majority of environmental NGOs faced numerous problems, one of which was often ineffective participation in the DM process. Urgent engagement of the NGO sector was needed to address an increased number of environmental challenges in Georgia. To this end, it has been useful and interesting to find new ways of encouraging NGOs' participation in the process.

In the 1990s, new environmental legislation in Georgia envisaged and encouraged public participation in the environmental decision-making process, but substantial gaps remained. The laws did not provide a detailed procedure for PP, and the consequences of PP were not binding. The future development of the country was directly connected to the implementation of several international projects that would require an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process. During that time, the legislation contained some provisions for public participation in EIA, but it was necessary to adopt a separate law on EIA with particular emphasis on the procedure of public participation.

The new millennium brought a low level of transparency to the parliamentary and executive phases. The lack of democracy in the country combined with a public non-willingness to cooperate with decision-makers (government, authorities, etc.) and with one another in solving environmental problems resulted in only a few examples of successful participation to date. The economic, social, and other conditions in Georgia did not support the development of public participation, although the tax system favored NGOs to some extent. Most environmental NGOs were surviving on foreign donations, and there was a need to obtain NGO self-sustainability. Some environmental NGOs were trying to control the environmental conditions in Georgia and to provide public involvement in decision-making.

Georgia located in the South Caucasus, between the Black and Caspian seas with a population of more than 3 million and an area of 70,000 square kilometers, has a quarter million refugees from conflicted zones that caused economic worsening of the country (Fig 1, 2).



Fig.1 Physical Map of Georgia, source, <https://www.freeworldmaps.net/asia/georgia/map.html>



## 2. Research significance

The significance of the research is directly connected with the geo-political location of Georgia (Fig. 1, 2). Currently, many international and trans-boundary projects are taking place and will be completed shortly in Georgia. The involvement of the public, particularly NGOs, is an essential element in these developments bringing additional environmental challenges and preventing damage to the environment and supporting sustainable development as projects come to a close. These research findings and recommendations will get rid of harmful impacts on the environment and fill the gaps in the above-mentioned processes.

## 3. Legal tools for public participation in the environmental decision-making process

### 3.1. Constitutional rights of PP in the EDM process

The Constitution of Georgia guarantees the right of PP in the EDM process (not only) (Table 1).

**Table 1** Article 29, Right to Environmental Protection, Constitution of Georgia (1995), as amended to 2020

Article 29.1.	“Everyone has the right to live in a healthy environment and enjoy the natural environment and public space. Everyone has the right to receive full information about the state of the environment on time. Everyone has the right to care for the protection of the environment. The right to participate in the adoption of decisions related to the environment shall be ensured by law
Article 29.2.	Environmental protection and the rational use of natural resources shall be ensured by law, taking into account the interests of current and future generations.”

### 3.2. National legal tools for PP in the EDM process in Georgia

A literature study indicates that in most cases, particularly in developing countries, legislation on environmental impact assessments is a measure of public participation. However, the level of public involvement that raises doubts as to the reliability and validity of such decisions differs from country to country. The lack of historical public involvement in decision-making and the number of legislative weaknesses still pose many challenges to most newly emerging democracies, even though countries with strong democratic values are much advanced in those respects (Antidze, 2013).

Georgian Law on Environmental Protection (articles #6, #7) and the Georgian Law on Environmental Assessment Code (articles #12, #13), envisage the right to take part in the EDM process. These laws allow citizens to establish environmental NGOs, and movements, participate in the DM and EIA processes, observe the decision in the frame of environmental protection, get compensation for the violation of different laws on environmental protection, and, take cases to the court and change decisions on designing, building, deposition, reconstruction, avoid actions that are dangerous from an ecological point of view and finally ensure environmental NGOs’ participation in the EDM process in Georgia(Chichua, 2023).

The newly adopted Environmental Assessment Code finally fulfilled the requirements of the Aarhus Convention on the issues of environmental protection and ensured PP in the DM process related to environmental impacts. The Code regulates the EIA process in Georgia and consists of eight chapters, such as General Provisions (1), Environmental Decision (2), Strategic EIA(3), PP in EDM under the Code(4), Assessment of transboundary EI(5), Expert Commission (6), Supervision and responsibilities in the field EIAs(7), and Transitional and final provisions(9). All those chapters standardize the approaches for the cases where EIAs are required, as well as protecting public health and the environment.

### 3.3. International legal tool for PP in the EDM process

A group of representatives of NGOs, called the Coalition of NGOs, drafted the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making, and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (hereinafter - the Convention) in 1995. The convention was submitted in the Danish town of Aarhus in 1998 and came into force in 2001. The agreement was ratified by Georgia's Parliament the following year.

The rights of citizens are established in three areas(Fig.3) within the Aarhus Convention (Aarhus Convention 1998)

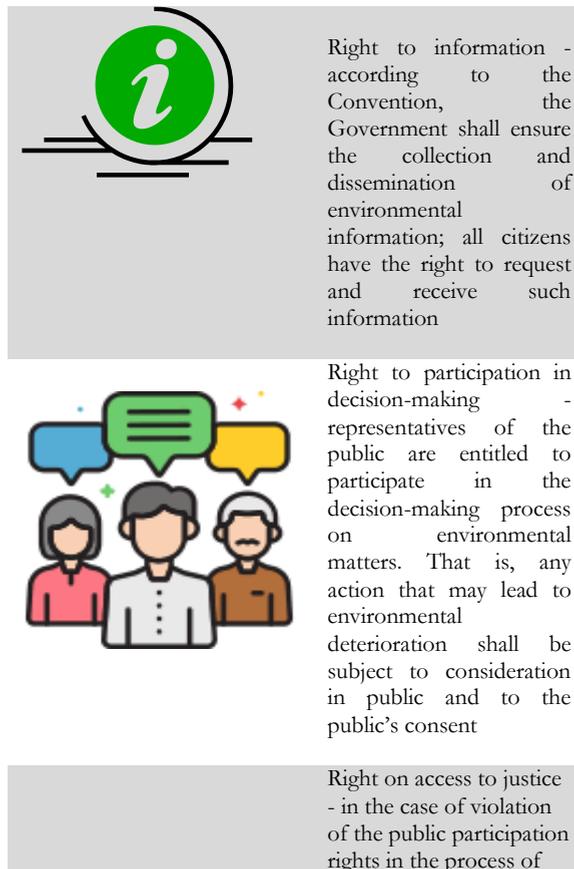




Fig.3 Rights of Aarhus Convention(1998)

### 3.4. PP in the EDM process: strengths and weaknesses of current environmental legislation

The adoption of the Environmental Assessment Code (Code) of Georgia in 2017 significantly improved the EIA scheme and instruments for guaranteeing PP in the DM process. The Code envisages screening and scoping procedures; and ensures mechanisms for PP for the different approaches, such as screening, scoping, EDM and developing recommendations for strategic documents. According to the new Code, decision-makers/state institutions oblige to deliver information to the public, organize public hearings, meetings, etc. Before the adoption of the Code, in most cases, decisions were made without informing the general public, civil society, and NGOs and based on formal administrative proceedings.

The government and the state institutions, over the years, considered the signing agreements with investors regarding large-scale projects, to be partial or complete commercial secrets and did not envisage public information and data availability legal instruments. After implementing the Code, some problems are not yet settled, for instance, for large infrastructure projects, where human rights abuses are always higher, it is more important to ensure that the public is involved in the DM process at a very early stage (Public Defender, 2021).

The last decade shows that besides the existence of EIA documentation and organizing the public meetings and hearings, in most cases dedicated to large-scale projects, legitimate questions remain unanswered related to different aspects of the projects' implementation (for example, the usefulness and practicality of their implementation). The public regularly(!) doubted about the quality of the conducted assessment. Unfortunately, despite newly adopted existing legislative regulations, public information and involvement in the DM process at an early stage regarding planned activities remain the main obstacles. For instance, in 2020 the Namakhvani HPP Cascade Project (Fig.4) attracted public attention (Fig. 5, 6).

During the year, there was a public objection to the planned implementation of this project. At the outset, local people had not been informed of or affected by the planned activity. The protests have not been responded to by the state institutions for many years, and no dialogue has begun with local or interested parties. The crisis was further aggravated by such an approach. The fact that for years the State authorities have not responded to legitimate questions from society has been confirmed in this case (Chichua, 2023).



Fig.4 Namakhvani HPP side, source <https://georgiatoday.ge/the-namakhvani-hpp-govt-and-enka-ready-for-constructive-talks-with-protesters/>



Fig. 5 Public protest against Namakhvani HPP cascade project in Tbilisi, the capital of Georgia, source <https://agenda.ge/en/news/2021/1391>



Fig.6 Protesters came from different cities and towns across Georgia, source [https://oc-media.org/in\\_pictures/in\\_pictures-anti-dam-protesters-gather-in-kutaisi/](https://oc-media.org/in_pictures/in_pictures-anti-dam-protesters-gather-in-kutaisi/)

Georgia has more than a decade of experience in EIA report development, but the quality of EIA reports and access to information are still problematic in the country. The public and professionals are concerned about the possible harmful impacts of the proposed projects, their alternatives as well as the aspects of the impact on the local's property. Unfortunately, questions raised are not always reflected in EIA documents. Additionally, EIA reports do not envisage the cost-effectiveness and the feasibility of the implementation of the project. It is becoming clear, that this mechanism does not attain the goal of the provision of public information.

On a policy level, public participation is becoming very important concerning energy projects in Georgia. Unfortunately, Georgia does not obtain the state, long-term energy strategy; following international obligations and national law, a 10-year state energy policy document is mandatory for the Parliament of Georgia to develop. The non-existence of such a document causes a low level of transparency, access to information, and PP in the EDM process (Public Defender, 2021).

#### 4. Study methods and analysis of the study findings

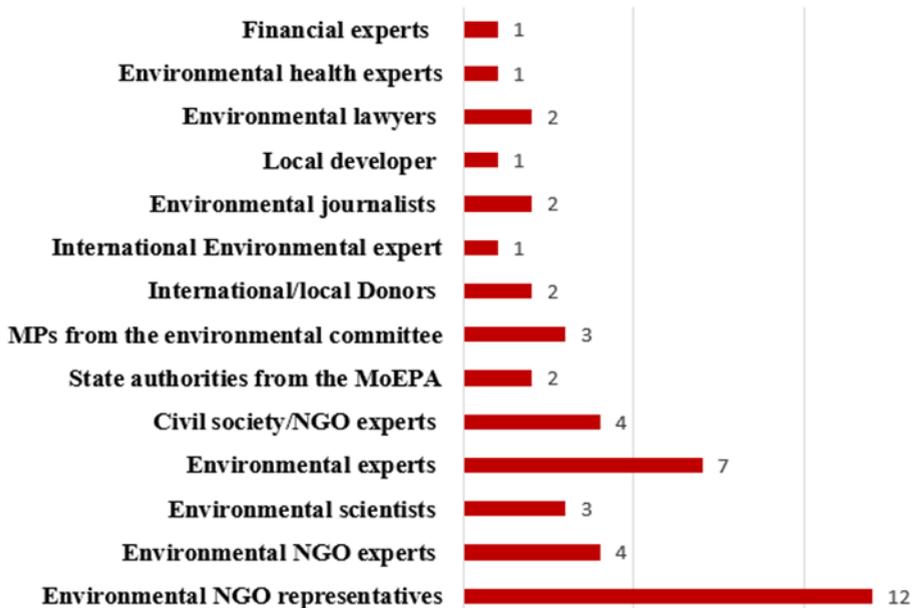
The study design included aim and objectives, research methodology, literature review, data collection, and analysis.

A qualitative method was chosen for the study because it gives a complete and comprehensive approach to people's beliefs, experiences, attitudes, and interactions.

All necessary information was collected through interviews and questionnaires (Table 2, Fig. 7). As the environmental NGOs are the most active part of Georgian society, a questionnaire was developed to cover diverse areas, such as status, a mission statement, implemented activities, financing sources, successful examples of participation in the environmental decision-making process and contact information/person.

**Table 2** Bodies participated in the research via interviews and questionnaires

#	Type of Body	Type of Participation
1	Environmental NGO representatives	questionnaire
2	Environmental NGO experts	interview
3	Environmental scientists	interview
4	Environmental experts	interview
5	Civil society/NGO experts	interview
6	State authorities from the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture	interview
7	MPs from the environmental committee	interview
8	International Donors	interview
9	International Environmental experts	interview
10	Environmental journalists	interview
11	Local developers	interview
12	Environmental Lawyers	interview
13	Environmental health expert	interview
14	Financial expert	interview



*Fig.7 Number of bodies that participated in the research*

Two questionnaires were developed. The first questionnaire was distributed among 20 environmental NGOs (in the capital and provinces) and only 12 environmental NGOs were chosen for the research (priority was given to the ones who experienced the environmental decision-making process). The second questionnaire was developed to get enough information to build hypotheses and define the main obstacles to successful PP in the EDM process in Georgia. That is why the second questionnaire envisaged only one question about PP and several questions about NGOs' financial status, mission statement, main activities, etc .

The research was also based on 45 interviews with different bodies (Fig.7). The interviews were semi-structural and in most cases un-structural, which gave interviewees more opportunities to fully express themselves. The interviewees were asked about: NGOs' role in the decision-making process, which body should provide successful PP in the DM process, how adequate legal instruments are for PP in the EDM, obstacles connected with the development of NGO participation in the DM process, etc .

Based on the study of 12 environmental non-governmental organizations in Georgia and 45 interviews, several obstacles were found (Table 3,4,5). Four hypotheses were developed to find answers to these obstacles.

**4.1. Analysis of Study Findings**

**4.1.1 Hypothesis 1: Self-financing helps environmental NGOs in Georgia improve their financial status and increase their flexibility in the EDM process**

Part of this hypothesis is true, although it is not easy to assess the impact of self-financing activities on the financial status of each organization. Many other issues can also determine an organization's financial status such as the staff, management, and the political and economic situation of the country.

Most NGOs in Georgia survived on foreign donations and were not sustainable. Ten international donors located in Georgia have so far been the main supporters of environmental protection, education, and media activities. They funded only nine projects involving the environmental decision-making process, of which five were dedicated to environmental protection issues.

Existing legislation gave NGOs the possibility to become "self-sustainable." NGOs needed sufficient funds to solve current environmental problems through PP in the EDM process. Almost all representatives of the NGO sector shared this opinion.

NGOs with financial diversity due to self-financing became more independent of their financial sources and more flexible. Besides they continued to participate in the DM and increased their activity level in future. The NGOs with only one financial source, even if their current activity level was high, faced many more difficulties (Table 3).

**Table 3.** Financial data of ENGOs, 2023

#	Financial Data	Quantity of ENGOs'
<b>1.</b>	<b>Financial Status</b>	
1.1.	Good	XX
1.2.	Fair	XX
1.3.	Unstable	XXXXXXXXX
<b>2.</b>	<b>Financial Sources</b>	
2.1.	Self-financing	-
2.2.	Membership fees	X
2.3.	Foreign Grants	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
2.4.	Domestic Government Grants	-
2.5.	Domestic Private Donations	X

**Key:** X-ENGO

**4.1.2 Hypothesis 2: NGO’s successful participation in the DM process in Georgia was directly connected to the development of an environmental legal system**

This hypothesis is based on the results of the interviews. Twenty-four out of the 28 interviewees cited the inadequate legal system as the main obstacle to developing successful public and NGO participation in the EDM process in Georgia. According to the interviewees, the public cannot succeed in this field because of substantial gaps in Georgian legislation. This also causes many problems for NGOs (Table 4).

**Table 4.** Obstacles to effective public participation defined by interviewees

#	Type of bodies	Type of obstacles		
		Incomplete environmental legal system	Lack of cooperation between ENGOs	Low level of transference in EDM process
1	Environmental scientists	X	X	X
2	Environmental experts	X	X	
3	Civil society/NGO experts		X	X
4	State authorities from the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture		X	
5	Environmental NGO experts	X	X	X
6	MPs from the environmental committee		X	
7	International Donors		X	X
8	International Environmental experts	X	X	
9	Environmental journalists		X	X
10	Local developers		X	
11	Environmental Lawyers	X	X	
12	Environmental health expert		X	X
13	Financial expert		X	

Georgia has created environmental laws that envisage some provisions for public participation. These rights are mainly concentrated in the Constitution of Georgia, Laws on Environmental Protection, and the last adopted Environmental Assessment Code. Thanks to these rights, NGOs have participated in the DM process. But having good environmental laws is not enough. It is essential to adopt decrees and orders for better laws and regulations because without them laws only provide general guidelines rather than precise regulation.

Besides the fact that the Georgian Parliament ratified the Aarhus Convention, NGOs do not submit claims to a court, because it is costly. Half of the interviewees identified financial problems as the main obstacle to taking the cases to court. Irakli Shavgulidze (NGO-NACRES) suggests that in addition to the adoption of the Aarhus Convention, the Parliament of Georgia should still adopt a Georgian law on public participation in the decision-making process.

Comments and recommendations prepared by the public are not binding according to the current legislation of Georgia. Furthermore, Georgian legislation does not give the right to lobby, although some environmental NGOs have lobbied informally for their decisions and proposed new draft laws/ amendments to the existing ones to the appropriate state institutions.

While some NGOs have taken part in EIA, many problems appeared during the rapid NGO participation in this process. More than half of NGOs blamed developers and state institutions for not informing NGOs on the early stage of proposed project development. Ramaz Golhelashvili (MS, international environmental expert) suggests that environmental legislation needs significant improvement in line with international

standards and stressed that, without these changes, public participation in the environmental decision-making process will not occur.

Georgian legislation has to create a way to include public participation in all types of decision-making.

**4.1.3 Hypothesis 3: Effective cooperation with one another is a better way for NGOs to participate in the EDM process**

A total of 19 out of 22 interviewees answered that cooperation between NGOs is disjointed. There is only one example of environmental NGOs' effective cooperation in Georgia. This is Emerald Network of Ares which involved two NGOs, NACRES and Green Alternative, cooperating to create three maps for Georgia (Table 5).

Disjointed cooperation among NGOs has weakened participation in the decision-making process, especially at the legislative level. Six interviewees defined the absence of relationships between NGOs as the main reason for this.

Lack of information has also caused ineffective cooperation among NGOs. Environmental NGOs know very little about each other. Nugzar Meladze (NGO "Green Earth"), shares this opinion and encourages environmental NGOs to cooperate more openly.

There are also cases when NGOs have information but choose not to cooperate. The Namakhvani HHP Project, which included NGO participation in the EIA process but was not joined by several influential NGOs, can serve as an example.

**Table 5.** Views on the process of environmental decision making

#	Bodies participated in the interviewee	NGO role in decision making process			who should provide successful public participation in decision making process		
		strong iii	fair iv	weak v	NGO vi	state vii	together viii
i	ii						
1	ENGOS		X				X
2	Environmental scientists			X		X	
3	Civil society/NGO experts		X				X
4	State authorities from the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture			X	X		
5	Environmental NGO experts			X			X
6	International Donors		X				X
7	MPs from the environmental committee			X	X		
8	International Environmental experts			X			X
9	Environmental journalists			X			X
10	Local developers			X	X		
11	Environmental Lawyers			X			X
12	Environmental health expert			X			X
13	Financial expert			X			X

#### **4.1.4 Hypothesis 4: Transparency in the decision-making process promotes successful public participation**

This hypothesis seems true, based on the results of a literary review and interviews. In the current survey, the low level of transparency was cited by 15 interviewees as the main obstacle to successful public participation. To achieve a high level of transparency, the government should follow the laws it has already made.

The issue of transparency is not addressed by current legislation in Georgia and any decisions made by public/NGOs are not officially binding. Despite low transparency, especially at the parliamentary and executive levels, environmental NGOs lobby for new draft laws and make their comments to the appropriate state committees. Decision-making using the EIA procedure is not transparent and shows the need for the creation of new legislation or further improvement of the existing ones.

Low-level transparency in the decision-making process could be avoided by improving the relationship between the government and the NGO sector. This improvement would open relationships and promote effective public participation in the decision-making process. Many government officials, particularly in the provinces, are still suspicious about the NGOs' role in decision-making. The government should learn how to take NGOs seriously.

Representatives of environmental NGOs share this opinion and advise the government to recognize the crucial role of NGOs in the decision-making process. However, it should be mentioned that without transparency in the decision-making process, the Georgian NGO sector and the public in general will not succeed in improving the participation process.

## **5. Discussions**

The current research defined that the level of PP in the EDM process in Georgia is low. There is a need to strengthen the environmental movement in Georgia through expanding public participation in the process of environmental decision-making. Chompunth (2016) and Matchavariani (2020) underlined, that ignorance of public participation in the environmental decision-making could create environmental problems and uninsured proposed project's implementation and sustainability.

Increasing pressures on local authority budgets are considered as innovative funding to contribute to the enhancement of the environment (Miyagawa et al. 2021), then the study showed that NGOs also need to develop staff management (a proper division of function between staff and volunteers), high diversity of financial activities (membership fees, small business, etc.), and proper division of financial sources both within and outside of the organization. In general, NGOs have little experience with organizational management. They require special training.

The history of economic development indicated a positive relationship between economic development and complete environmental legislation (Stef, Ashta 2023). All NGOs interviewed faced problems during participation in the decision-making process due to the inadequate environmental legal system in Georgia. Besides that Georgia adopted national and ratified international legal tools for public participation, and the quantity and quality of NGO participation will rapidly increase if this system improves.

Antidze (2013) and Chompunth (2023) described ineffective cooperation between the public and the governmental bodies and low level of environmental awareness and education as the barriers to effective PP in the DM process, therefore the current study defined low-level of transparency in the decision-making process and disjoint cooperation between NGOs. The provision of transparency in decision-making by government agencies is of great importance for successful public participation in Georgia. A high level of transparency can be achieved by the state recognizing and encouraging the NGOs' role in the decision-making process.

## 6. Conclusions

Namakhvani HPP Cascade Project can serve as an example, when the ignorance of the role of public participation in environmental decision-making by the government and the state institutions, ceased the proposed project's implementation and sustainability. The decision-makers are obliged to inform the public of the proposed project implementation at an early stage. Additionally, state authorities should recognize the importance of PP in the EDM and guarantee a high level of transparency in the DM process.

On the other hand side, Georgian environmental NGOs would define their role and necessity in the DM process and develop a strategy to become more respected by Georgian society.

Diversification and proper division of financial sources and activities within and outside of the organization could promote successful PP in the EDM as well.

It is the duty and responsibility of the policymakers to continue working on the adoption and ratification of appropriate laws for increasing the quality and quantity of NGO participation in the EDM process.

In conclusion, NGOs need to cooperate with each other as well as with state institutions and develop an environmental legal system. Within this system, NGOs need to act more effectively in the environmental decision-making process. All this is partly recognized by Georgian society and is an area that requires future development.

## References

- Aarhus Convention on access to information, public participation in decision-making, and access to justice in environmental matters. The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, (1998), pp.1-25
- Adams M., Blake S., Braun J., Cardona Y., Collins T., Dubay J., Elliott A., Epifanio A., Haile H., Robert Irving, Misner T., Nowak M., Price A., Richey I., Slager I., Coleman K., The Tapash Sustainable Forestry Collaborative: A Case Study on the Impact of Organizational Structure and Trust in Adaptive Governance, *Case Studies in the Environment*, (2021), 5 (1): 1425584, <https://doi.org/10.1525/cse.2021.1425584>
- Akerboom, S., & Craig, R. K., How law structures public participation in environmental decision making: A comparative law approach. *Environmental Policy and Governance*, (2022), 32(3), pp.232–246
- Alternative report of the Public Defender (Ombudsman) of Georgia on the Status of Implementation of the Aarhus Convention 2017-2020. Public Defender (Ombudsmen) of Georgia, (2021), pp.1-9
- Antidze T., *Public Participation in Environmental Decision-Making in Georgia: Current Practice and Recommendations for Improvement*. Central European University, (2013), pp. 1-97

- Chichua M., Role and Importance of PP in the EDM Process in Georgia, (2023), Grani, <http://doi.org/10.15421/172327>
- Chompunth Ch., Role of Public in Environmental Impact Assessment in Thailand, *Journal of GEOMATE*, (2016), vol.12, pp.109-113
- Chompunth Ch., Public Participation Practice within the Environmental and Health Impact Assessment System in Thailand, *Journal of GEOMATE*, (2020), Vol.19, pp. 137-144
- Constitution of Georgia, (1995), <https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/30346?publication=36>
- CSO Meter 2022: Georgia Country Report, (2022), pp.29-30
- Finewood M.H., Holloman D.E., Luebke M.A., Leach S., The Bronx River and Environmental Justice Through the Lens of a Watershed, *Case Studies in the Environment*, (2023), 7 (1): 1824941, <https://doi.org/10.1525/cse.2023.182494>
- Golubović D., European Practices Related to Participation of NGOs in Policy Development, *Expert Council on NGO Law, Council of Europe*, (2021), pp. 1-27
- Martus E., Building a Green State? Environmental Politics in Georgia, *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, (2023), pp.1-26
- Matchavariani L., Metreveli G., & Gulashvili Z., Assessment Scheme of Water-reservoirs Impact on Groundwater, *Journal of GEOMATE*, (2020), vol. 22, pp.110-117
- Mikeladze A., Financial Management Role for NGOs, *European Journal of Economics and Business Studies*, (2021), Vol. 7, p.77-98
- Miyagawa T., Olver C., Otsuka N., Abe H., Environmental Regeneration and Management in Partnership in the Northwest of England, *Journal of GEOMATE*, (2021), vol. 16, pp. 9-15
- Müller S., Flacke J., Buchecker M., Participatory Mapping and Counter-Representations in Wind Energy Planning: A Radical Democracy Perspective, *Case Studies in the Environment*, (2022), 6 (1): 1561651, <https://doi.org/10.1525/cse.2022.1561651>
- Nkansah-Dwamena E., Plural Valuation of Land and Insights for Achieving Sustainable Outcomes in Large-Scale Land Acquisition Projects: The Case of Eco Energy Project in Bagamoyo District, Tanzania, *Collections: Special Collection: Incorporating Plural Valuation of Nature into Environmental Decision-Making in the Global South, Case Studies in the Environment*, (2021), 5 (1): 1327914, <https://doi.org/10.1525/cse.2021.1327914>
- Open Budget Survey, (2021), p.1
- Ostapenko I. and Bryantsev A., Theoretical Aspects of the Territorial-Functional Organization of Agrotourism in Kazakhstan, *International Journal of GEOMATE*, (2023), Vol. 25, Issue 109, pp.109-116
- Overview of responses to the European Ombudsman's public consultation on transparency and participation in EU decision-making related to the environment, (2023), pp.1-2
- Paturyan Y.J., *Understanding Diversity of South Caucasus Civil Society, A Research Agenda for Civil Society*, Edward Elgar Publishing, (2021), p.251
- Stef N., Ashta A., Dynamics in environmental legislation, *International Review of Law and Economics*, (2023), Vol. 76, pp. 1-4
- Suškevičs M., Ehrlich T., Peterson K., Hiimäe O. and Sepp K., Public Participation in Environmental Assessments in the EU: A Systematic Search and Qualitative Synthesis of Empirical Scientific Literature, *Environmental Impact Assessment Review*, (2023), Volume 98, article 106944, pp.1-2
- Sohrabizadeh S., Shafei Moghaddam P., Nejadi-Zarnaqi B., Yousefian S., Pirani D., Sahebi A. and Jahangiri, K., Challenges and Barriers to the Participation of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Flood Management: A Qualitative Study from Iran, *Disaster Medicine and Public Health Preparedness*, (2023), 17, pp.1-2
- Tiwari S., Schelly C., Sidortsov R., Legacies Matter: Exploring Social Acceptance of Pumped Storage Hydro in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, *Case Studies in the Environment*, (2023), 7 (1): 2004414, <https://doi.org/10.1525/cse.2023.2004414>
- Wang X. and Lo K., Civil Society, Environmental Litigation and Confucian Energy Justice: A case study of an Environmental NGO in China, *Energy Research & Social Science*, (2022), Volume 93, Article 102831, ISSN 2214-6296, pp.1-2