Country Update
Georgia

As of April 16, 2020, Georgia has confirmed 336 cases of COVID-19, including 3 deaths.[1] On March 30, the Prime Minister announced new, stricter measures to prevent the spread of the virus, including more stringent restrictions on movement, suspension of all public transportation, mandatory curfew between 9pm and 6am and prohibition of gatherings of more than three people, except for “essential” purposes. Citizens aged 70 and over have been banned from leaving their houses, and checkpoints for thermal screenings have been set up in different parts of the country.[2]

Impact on women and on peace and security:

In addition to the health and economic challenges, Georgia has faced the following challenges:

1. The risk of domestic violence has increased;
2. Hate-speech is also on the rise: whenever a foreign citizen or representative of ethnic minority tests positive for the virus, the hate-speech intensifies.
3. In September 2019, a checkpoint between the country and South Ossetia was closed, which has made access to information, medical supplies and food challenging, especially for the elderly. When first cases of COVID-19 were announced, all other checkpoints were also closed, making the flow of aid and information impossible.[3] In Gali, Abkhazia, doctors do not have access to sufficient protective equipment and hygiene products. The Georgian government opened a hospital dedicated to COVID-19 patients from Abkhazia in the neighboring Zugdidi municipality, but civil society has expressed concerns over the guaranteeing safe transport of patients through the checkpoints.[4]

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Response by women peacebuilders:

IDP Women’s Association “Consent” is leading an advocacy campaign targeted at the Government to ensure that IDP needs and vulnerabilities are adequately addressed amid the COVID-19 crisis. The advocacy is based on the IASC Guidance on Scaling-up COVID-19 Outbreak in Readiness and Response Operations in Camps and Camp-like Settings.[5]

“Consent” is also started a disinfection campaign in IDP collective centres in Shida Kartli – providing large containers of disinfectants and raising awareness about the importance of disinfecting hands and surfaces. “Consent” volunteers are also distributing information booklets among IDPs and elderly, and delivering medicine and food to the elderly. “Consent” also supplies women’s groups with materials to sew protective masks for distribution in IDP centers in Shavshvebi, Zeda Etseri and Zugdidi.

Women’s Information Center (WIC) has begun campaigns to raise awareness about domestic violence and the available services for victims and survivors, in particular among ethnic minorities, as they often do not have access to information due to a linguistic barrier. WIC is also leading an advocacy efforts targeting the co-chairs of the Geneva International Discussions, other international actors, as well as the Prime Minister in Georgia to raise awareness about the situation in Gali, Abkhazia and Akhalgori, South Ossetia/Tskhinvali region, as they tend to live in double isolation.

However, GNWP partners have noted the shortage of financial resources and an urgent need for rapidly accessible emergency grants.