

WOMEN IN SERVICE TO GEORGIA



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Author: Nino Natroshvili (UN Women)

Photo: Giorgi Grdzlishvili (Ministry of Defence of Georgia)

Andro Osadchev (Ministry of Defence of Georgia)

Editor: Michelle Minaskanian (UN Women)

Design: Teona Tsamalashvili

WOMEN IN SERVICE TO GEORGIA

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One of the key areas of the Women, Peace and Security agenda is to increase, support and advance the participation of women in the Defence Forces. For more than 10 years, UN Women has been working with the Ministry of Defence of Georgia to mainstream gender within the institution. This co-operation, among others, includes the promotion of women in the Defence Forces and the recognition of their contributions. This publication serves to fulfil this purpose.

This publication presents the profiles of 13 women on duty, reflecting on their courage, bravery, struggles and commitments. Their stories demonstrate the significant contribution women make in service to the defence of Georgia.

UN Women expresses its gratitude to the Ministry of Defence of Georgia for its support in preparing this publication and to the UK Government for its continued support.

Kaori Ishikawa

UN Women Country Representative in Georgia

“ At the UN Women Country Office in Georgia, we strive to advance women’s rights in all sectors, including through our support to the Ministry of Defence of Georgia to integrate a gender perspective. Women have the power to transform institutions when given equal opportunity. This publication is a testament to the invaluable contributions women make in active duty, as well as the effectiveness and efficiency they bring to the Georgian Defence Forces.”

Juansher Burchuladze

Minister of Defence of Georgia

“ We value and support equal rights, freedoms and opportunities of women and men within the Ministry of Defence of Georgia. We strongly believe that women’s meaningful participation is fundamental for strong and successful defence forces.”

Ellen Wichmann

Head of Programmes at the British Embassy in Georgia

“ Broadly speaking, the armed forces remain male-dominated around the world. Women in the armed forces can be subjected to emotional bullying, sexual harassment and physical assault, resulting in trauma and unfulfilled military career potential. The UK Government is committed to tackling the discrimination, violence and inequality that hold women back.

We fully support cooperation between UN Women and the Georgian Ministry of Defence to make sure the Georgian Defence Forces have effective mechanisms in place to address gender inequality.”



“Unfortunately, women in the military always have to prove their abilities and show that they can maintain a balance between career and family.”

LIEUTENANT-COLONEL **TAMAR KITIASHVILI**

NATO Sub-Registry Chief of Staff, senior officer

Tamar Kitiashvili, 47, is a lawyer by profession. She also holds a PhD in informatics and has been using this knowledge in the Georgian Defence Forces since 2011.

“I have always been aware of the obligation that every person has towards his or her own country,” Tamar explains. “When I was given the opportunity to become part of the Defence Forces due to my profession, it was this sense of duty that helped me make the decision. I wanted to use my knowledge and skills to serve my homeland, try on a military uniform and be among the defenders of my country.”

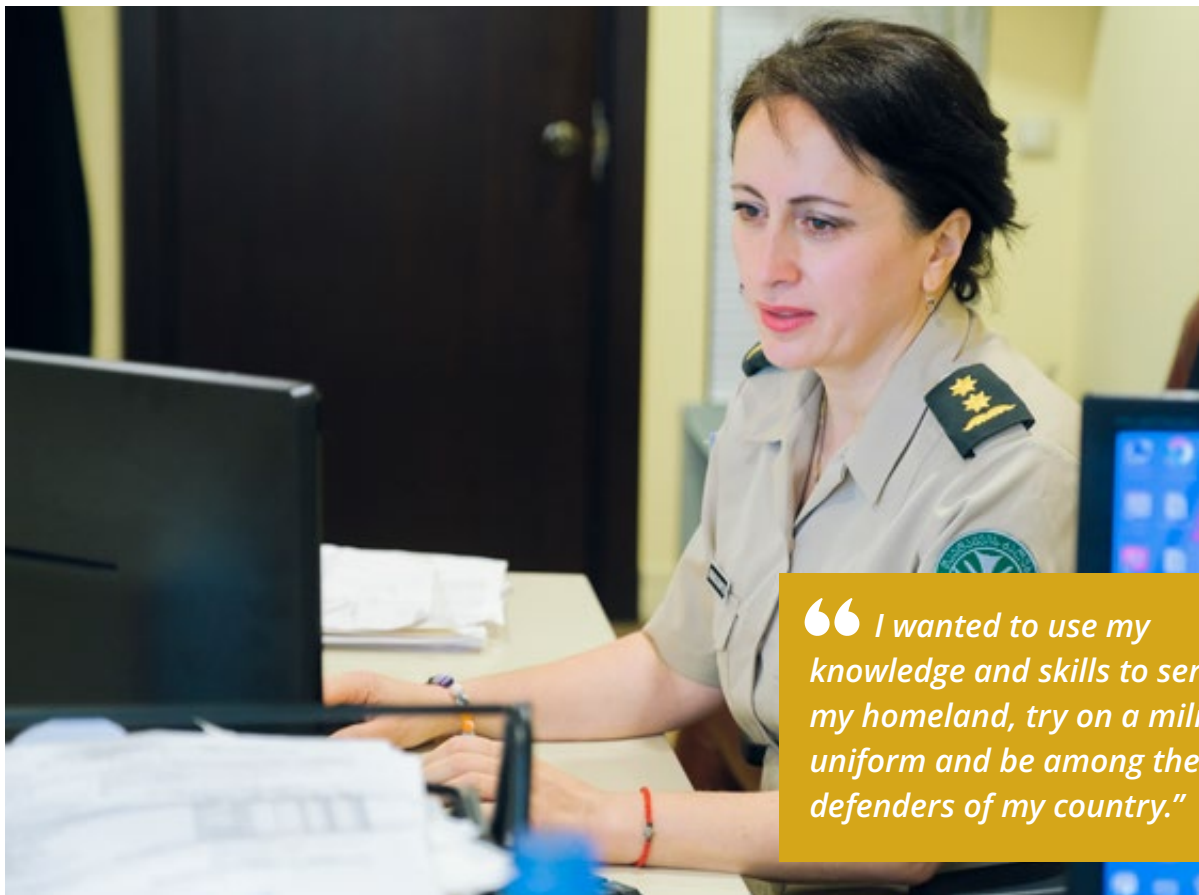
Tamar's family tried to convince her that she would not be able to serve in the Defence Forces and that the learning process would be too difficult for her. But for Tamar, hearing different views did not mean blindly believing them. Instead, she went through all the necessary steps to advance her military career: the initial combat course was followed first by the career course for captains and then by the command-staff course, which further fuelled her motivation.

Tamar currently serves as the Senior Officer at the NATO Classified Information Sub-Registry, in the Division of the Regime of Confidentiality Protection and the NATO Classified Information Sub-Registry, within the Administration Department of the General Staff. Lieutenant-Colonel

Kitiashvili's main duty is to obtain NATO-classified information, protect its security and organize the transfer to those responsible for its implementation.

"Unfortunately, women in the military always have to prove their abilities and show that they can maintain a balance between career and family," Tamar observes.

She herself has two children: Nikoloz, a cadet at the Cadets Military Lyceum, and Ioseb, a student at the Academy of Information Technology. By deciding to follow in their mother's footsteps, they have also showed that Tamar's career, which is aimed at continuous advancement, is an exemplary path for them as well.



“I wanted to use my knowledge and skills to serve my homeland, try on a military uniform and be among the defenders of my country.”



“ Every day, when I put on my uniform and leave the house, I feel proud. It is a great honour for me to be a role model for future generations to come and to show them by my own example that women are strong military unit commanders and leaders.”

LIEUTENANT-COLONEL
TAMAR MGHEBRISHVILI

Head of the Substantial NATO-Georgia Package (SNGP) Implementation Support Unit

Tamar Mghebrishvili was 7 years old when her mother took her to a demonstration on Rustaveli Avenue. She wanted to go on stage, but suddenly her mother ran into a friend who advised her to get the child away from the area. That night, Soviet soldiers brutally dispersed the peaceful demonstration in Tbilisi. Tamar and her mother managed to escape just in time. She recalls the impact on her life: “The emotions of that **tragic day of 9 April*** have been imprinted in my memory forever. I think my choice—to serve my country in a uniform—was shaped by those events.”

At first, Tamar wanted to become a lawyer, but her father's words—"women have no business practicing law"—made her change her mind. She entered the Faculty of Western European Languages at her university, but she soon realized that it would not lead to the career of her dreams. So, she managed to make her actual dream come true: after graduating from university, she enrolled in the David Aghmashenebeli National Defence Academy of Georgia, specifically the Junior Officers Training School programme.

But Tamar recalls that during her studies at the Academy, she would often hear the view that there is no place for women in the infantry. "Even later, when the time came for deployment to positions," she explains, "the brigade commander wanted me to be appointed to a position at headquarters. But he changed his mind after my firm response: 'I belong in the infantry.' That's how I became a platoon commander and a woman officer acting as a fully fledged member of a large military family, directly positioned in the field."

Her position as platoon commander was followed by her roles as a commander, Chief of Staff of

the Battalion and Brigade Staff Planning Officer, career training courses in the United States of America and two peacekeeping missions to Afghanistan. Tamar served in the infantry brigade for nine years and later held the position of Training Planning Officer at the NATO-Georgia Joint Training and Evaluation Center (JTEC). Today, the 39-year-old Lieutenant-Colonel is the Head of the Substantial NATO-Georgia Package (SNGP) Support Unit of the Ministry of Defence of Georgia. Her activities involve daily cooperation with Georgian and NATO leaders to ensure that each step is completed consistently and on time, in order to achieve the final result.

Lieutenant-Colonel Mghebrishvili continues to perform her duties with full determination. "Every day, when I put on my uniform and leave the house, I feel proud," she beams. "It is a great honour for me to be a role model for future generations to come and to show them by my own example that women are strong military unit commanders and leaders. The most important thing that counts is professionalism, not gender."





“ I serve in a structure that is a symbol of the country’s strength, How can I not be proud of that?”

LIEUTENANT-COLONEL **ANA LUKAVA**

Deputy Commander-in-Chief of the Defence Forces and Senior Assistant to the Chief of the General Staff

Ana Lukava, 49, is the Deputy Commander-in-Chief of the Defence Forces and Senior Assistant to the Chief of the General Staff.

Originally from the village of Dranda in Abkhazia’s Gulripshi district, Ana was a student at the Faculty of Philology at Sokhumi State University when the **war**** began, forcing her to flee to Tbilisi. “I lived with my relatives for three years,” she recalls. “I woke up every morning with the hope that I would get back to my district, but this happy moment has still not come.”

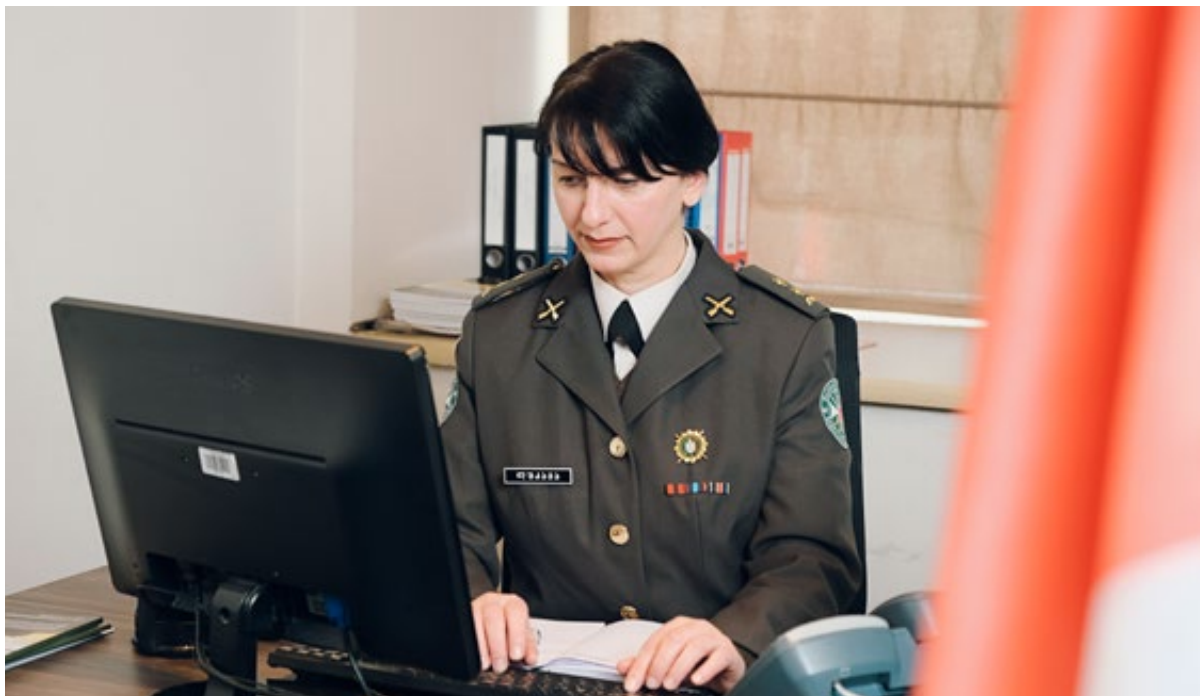
In 1995, Ana got an assignment protecting the security of government officials in Abkhazia, and she soon received the initial military rank of officer. In those early days, she did not think at all about serving in the Defence Forces, let alone about military uniforms and ranks. She thought that women in the military were just nurses and doctors, but things turned out differently. In 2004, already a captain in the state security sector, she decided to join the Defence Forces, and the first person she shared this desire with was her husband.

"My husband is a military sailor by profession and a captain," the Lieutenant-Colonel explains. "In those days, he too served in the Defence Forces. He didn't seem to be thrilled about my decision. But later, when I was going to the shooting range and the commander asked him how a mother of young children could stay away in the barracks for months, my husband supported my decision. I knew I had to be prepared for anything there, be it going out in the field, camping, training, shooting

or conducting warfare. And by the way, I must say that if not for my mother's support, I do not know what kind of career I would have had."

During her career, Ana has heard lots of different opinions about her profession. She has met men from both sides: those for whom a woman's presence in the military is unacceptable as well as those who do not discriminate against aspiring army personnel on the basis of their sex. Ana thinks that although there is now a lack of women in leading positions in the military, the number of girls wishing to master this profession is increasing, which gives her hope.

"I serve in a structure that is a symbol of the country's strength," Ana reflects. "How can I not be proud of that?" Although she will soon retire from the military, Ana says that the years she spent in the army will make her feel fulfilled for the rest of her life.





“At one point, I finally decided to go for it—to test myself in a completely different field and prove that, yes, women are strong enough to serve in the army.”

PRIVATE **ANA LEKVEISHVILI**

Machine gunner

After graduating from Akaki Tsereteli State University's Faculty of Agro-Food Technology and Expertise in Kutaisi, Ana Lekveishvili then successfully completed the professional programmes required to work in this field. But in 2021, she decided to change her career path and joined the Georgian Defence Forces.

At first glance, though, Ana's decision actually came as no surprise. Growing up in a military family, she developed a love and respect for the army from early childhood. "In truth, I always dreamed of this career," Ana explains. "At one point, I finally decided to go for it—to test myself in a

completely different field and prove that, yes, women are strong enough to serve in the army.”

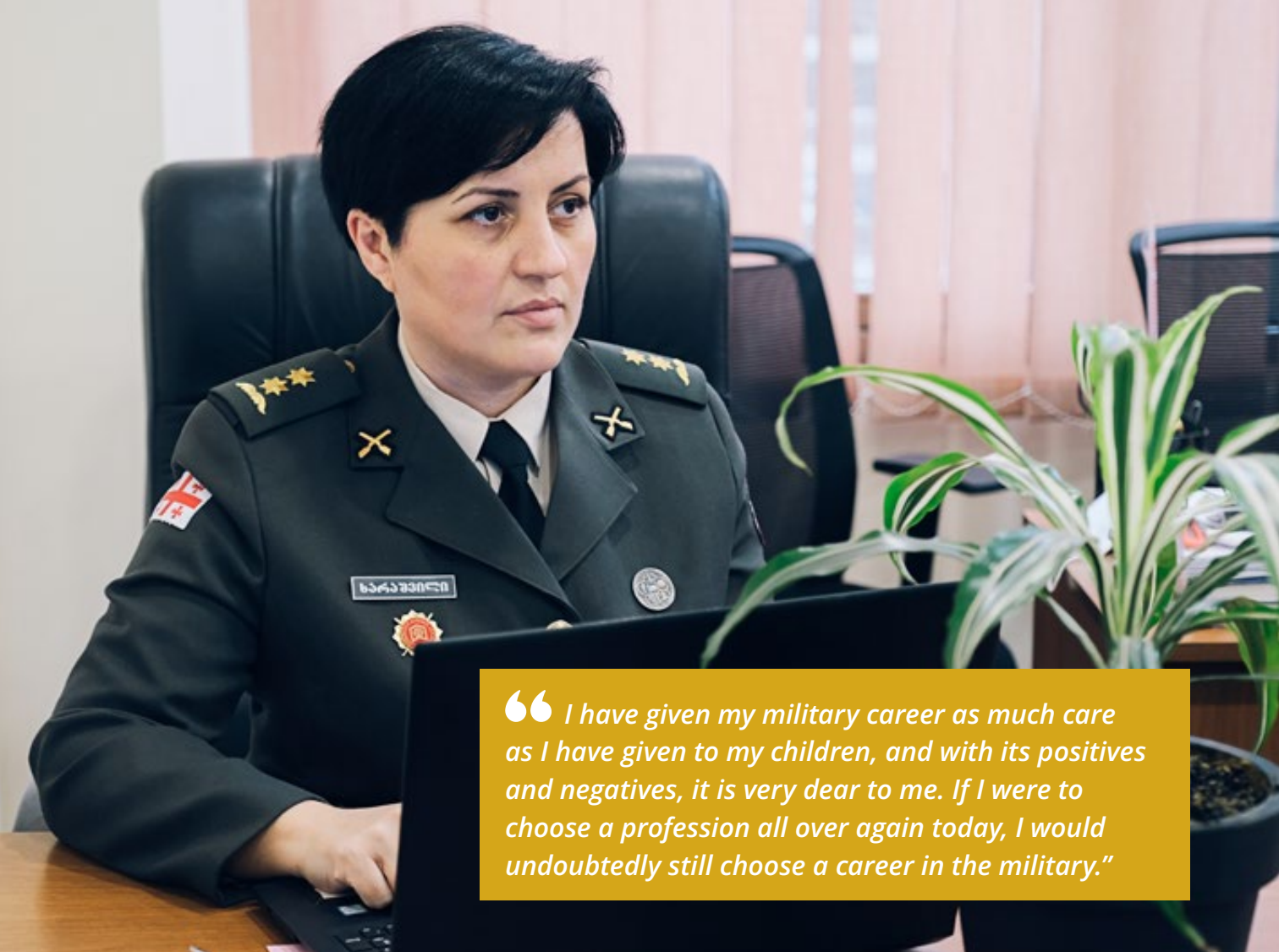
Although her parents were already quite familiar with military life, Ana’s decision was still difficult for them to accept. “They did not want their little girl in the army,” she says. “Here and there, I would hear the opinion that a woman’s place is not in the military, but today everything is different. My family is very proud of me and gives me tremendous encouragement to keep going and to advance in my career.”

Today, 24-year-old Ana is working in the position of the 1st fire count number of the 152mm “Msta-B” of the 51st Artillery Battalion of the 5th Artillery Brigade. Her job is to work with the artillery system and participate in both theoretical and practical training exercises.

Ana does a difficult job but proves to herself every day that she is more capable than she thinks. “Serving my country, Georgia, is a great honour for me,” she says. “I will definitely become an officer and will continue my career advancement in this capacity.”



“ My family is very proud of me and gives me tremendous encouragement to keep going and to advance in my career.”



“ I have given my military career as much care as I have given to my children, and with its positives and negatives, it is very dear to me. If I were to choose a profession all over again today, I would undoubtedly still choose a career in the military.”

LIEUTENANT-COLONEL **EKATERINE KHARASHVILI**

Deputy Head of the Human Resources Policy Division

Twenty years ago, when Ekaterine Kharashvili was just starting to work as a translator at the Ministry of Defence of Georgia, she could not have imagined that the military field would fascinate her so much that she would enrol in the National Defence Academy and pursue a career as an officer, let alone successfully serve on a peacekeeping mission.

Ekaterine currently serves as a Lieutenant-Colonel and Deputy Head of the Human Resources Policy Division of the Department of Human Resources, where her main task involves developing medium- and long-term

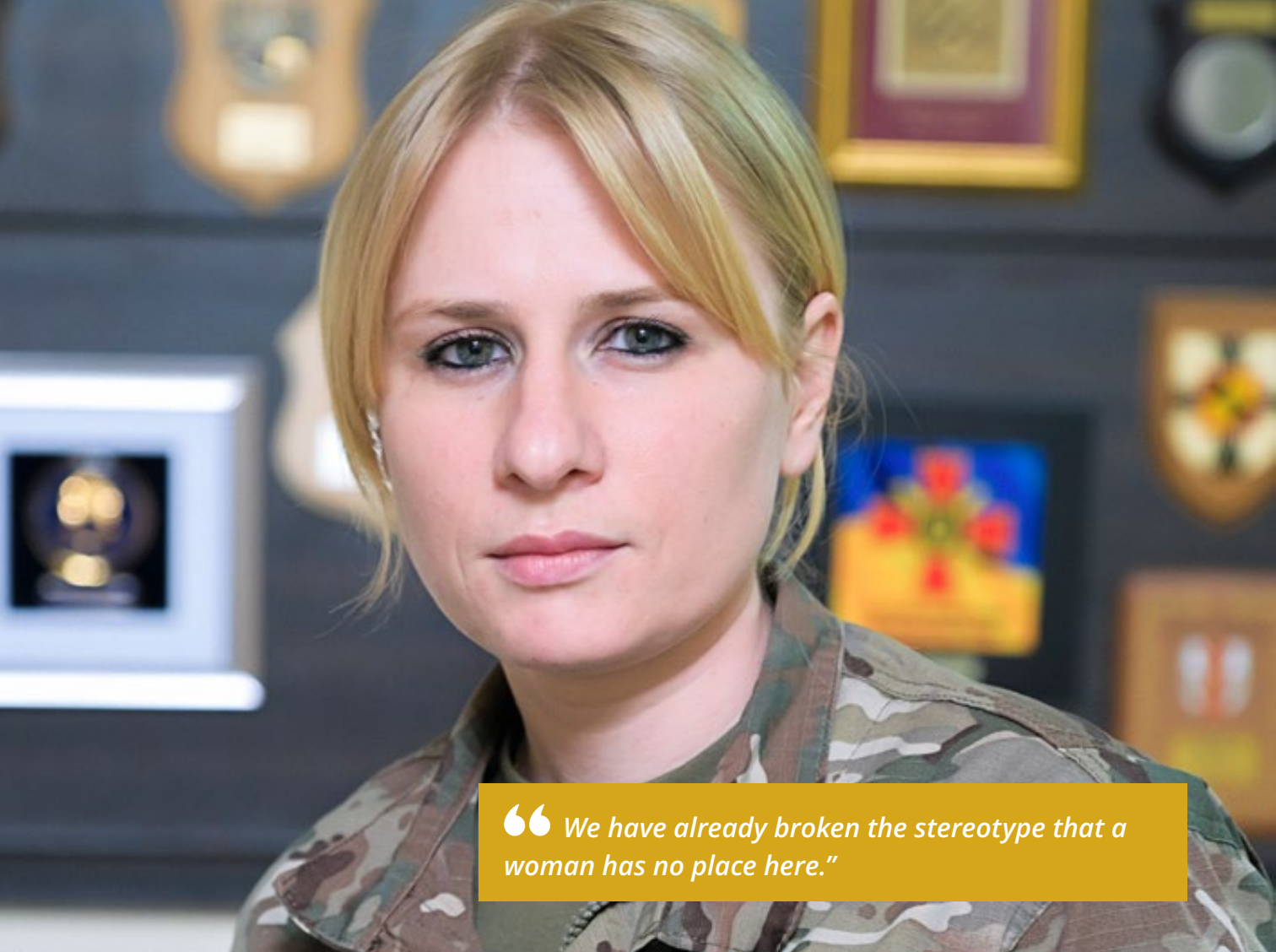
policies for military personnel and coordinating various processes. At the same time, she is a member of the Gender Equality Monitoring Group at the Ministry.

Because of the specificities of military service, gender stereotypes in the Defence Forces are even more striking. The Lieutenant-Colonel says that these widespread misconceptions create additional challenges for women: "From the moment a woman joins the military, as a rule, such phrases as 'she will run home as many times as her child gets sick' and 'her heavy backpack will need to be dragged by men' get thrown around.... It seems like from the very start, there is already an expectation that women in this field are destined for failure. So, we have to constantly prove our capabilities, make contributions and show that we are not an additional burden to anyone."

Ekaterine has three children, so she is often asked how she manages to combine family life with her strict military schedule. Although she herself does not see much distinction between the two, this is what she has to say about it: "I have given my military career as much care as I have given to my children, and with its positives and negatives, it is very dear to me. If I were to choose a profession all over again today, I would undoubtedly still choose a career in the military."

As for her military career goals, Ekaterine's priority is being as close to her homeland as possible, while also getting continuous professional development. Every little success and step forward in her career adds a lot to her self-confidence. Never stopping, Ekaterine always starts thinking about the next step straightaway. Her achievements always leave her wanting more, and even now, she is striving for a new goal.





“We have already broken the stereotype that a woman has no place here.”

CORPORAL
ELENE GOROZIA

Radio operator

“Mom, when I grow up, I will become a soldier just like you,” Elene Gorozia’s 5-year-old son would often say with a special sense of pride. Elene is a radio operator serving in the Signal Platoon of the Georgian National Guard Staff Company. The military environment has been as familiar to her as it has been to her son, because she too grew up with parents in the military field.

“I have been surrounded by people in uniform since my childhood, and I developed a special fascination with this profession,” says Corporal

Gorozia. “Then in 2008, when my brother was killed in the **August War**,*** I finally decided to continue his work.”

Before mastering this profession, Elene took several courses. Initially, she worked in the Personnel Department and later moved to the Signal Platoon of the Staff Company. “In general, the military sector is not easy, particularly for women,” she remarks. “It is difficult to achieve equality with men. A special love for the profession helped me overcome all these difficulties.”

Along with Elene, there are a number of women in the Defence Forces. “We have already broken the stereotype that a woman has no place here,” she declares. “Everyone should do what they like and what gives them happiness. For me, that’s being in service to my homeland.”

Elene thinks that communication, especially in the military, allows for constant development, so she often participates in field training. She wants to keep expanding her knowledge and growing professionally.



“ In general, the military sector is not easy, particularly for women. It is difficult to achieve equality with men. A special love for the profession helped me overcome all these difficulties.”



“ I decided to serve in the Explosive Ordnance Disposal Company to be able to do combat missions for my homeland even during peacetime.”

SERGEANT **EKATERINE MARIKASHVILI**

Senior deminer

Ekaterine Marikashvili, 48, serves as a Senior Deminer of the 3rd Light Platoon of the Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) Company of the Eastern Command Military-Engineering Battalion.

Sergeant Marikashvili's career choice was dictated by the situation in Georgia in the 1990s, the **war in Abkhazia**** and the severe civil strife. "It was then that I first developed a strong wish to contribute to the well-being of my homeland," she recalls.

Ekaterine's job is to inspect demined areas and monitor quality. She has to constantly come into contact with hazardous munitions, which is one of the most difficult operations. "I decided to serve in the Explosive Ordnance Disposal Company to be able to do combat missions for my homeland even during peacetime," says Sergeant Marikashvili, who is particularly proud of her choice.

Ekaterine's profession has always been highly respected and positively received by the public, although she has often heard gender stereotypes within the military: "There is less trust in women around the world today, which results in fewer opportunities for their career advancement. But this is undoubtedly a mistake, as bravery and endurance shouldn't be attributed to gender." And truly, her everyday devoted work serves as the best confirmation of her words.





“ Being in the military is not an easy task at all. Our way of life is completely different from that of an ordinary civilian.”

FIRST LIEUTENANT **TAMUNA JISHKARIANI**

Platoon commander

Tamuna Jishkariani, 28, is the Deputy Commander of the 41st Infantry Platoon B of the 4th Mechanized Infantry Brigade.

Tamuna has never thought about pursuing a different profession: the only profession she could imagine for herself was one in the military. “I have always liked the uniform,” she explains, “but I especially appreciated the people in uniform who were ready to defend their homeland at the cost of their own lives. The **war in August 2008**^{***} intensified my desire even more: I finally decided to be in the military and wear a military uniform with dignity.”

In 2015, Tamuna enrolled in the National Defence Academy and became a cadet. Alongside her military training, she also received civil education in the defence and security sector. After graduating from the Academy, she completed an infantry course and was promoted to platoon commander—already as a first lieutenant.

Family members knew about Tamuna's professional aspirations from an early age and helped her as much as they could. "Although they find it difficult when I am on duty or training and am sometimes even away from home for a month, they still support me," she says. "I know that many things that are completely understandable to the military are confusing to civilians. But it is quite natural: being in the military is not an easy task at all. Our way of life is completely different from that of an ordinary civilian."

The common belief that women find it difficult to serve in the army because of their physiology is simply a stereotype to Tamuna. She believes that in the case of both sexes, the primary factors that determine one's fitness to serve are training, work, psychological readiness, and the constant pursuit of personal development. "I cannot say that I haven't encountered difficulties because of my sex, but who can say that?" asks the 28-year-old platoon commander. "But I have never felt any kind of distrust caused by the fact that I am a woman and that I could not do this or that task because of it."

Like all members of the military, First Lieutenant Jishkariani thinks about career advancement: new courses and different experiences are ahead for her.



“ The war in August 2008 intensified my desire even more: I finally decided to be in the military and wear a military uniform with dignity.”



“What others called ‘manly’ was simply ‘human’ to me. How can a profession or heroism have a gender?”

MAJOR

MAKA KURPARASHVILI-SIMONS

Military doctor

Maka Kurparashvili-Simons, 43, is a doctor at a joint-use airfield.

Since childhood, she has heard the people around her say that men and women are not fit for the same professions—women for these, men for those. It was then that she started feeling the need to protest against these stereotypes for the first time. “I never believed in such myths,” Maka says. “What others called ‘manly’ was simply ‘human’ to me. How can a profession or heroism have a gender? Because of this internal need to protest, I combined the two most difficult professions—medicine and military service.”

In 2001, after graduating from the Faculty of Dentistry at Tbilisi State Medical University, Maka started working at the outpatient clinic in Vaziani. It was there at the military base that she saw a woman in uniform for the first time. “I suddenly felt such a strong desire to be in her place that I couldn’t breathe,” she recalls. “Although I knew for sure that it wouldn’t work for my family, that pull was so strong that I managed to quietly find out about everything one would need in order to become a military doctor.”

Around nine months after graduating from university, Maka got a job working as a dentist in the First Infantry Brigade. She had a difficult job to do: the two professions of dentistry and military service had to be carefully combined—alongside her other role as a mother, which also requires a lot of energy and responsibility—but she has never regretted her decision. “My mother did not want me to choose this profession,” Maka says, “but when I most needed her, she gave me amazing support. Without her, I would have struggled to succeed.”

Since then, she has been very busy with the strict schedule at boot camp, practice at the shooting

range, business trips, her many patients and four challenging peacekeeping missions. Major Kurparashvili was sent first to Iraq and then three times to Afghanistan. It was at one of those missions that she met her future husband, Larry Simons.

Maka thinks that in the beginning, when she was just starting out in this job, it was much more difficult to have a military career and move up the ranks, but a lot has changed over time. Her devotion to her favourite profession, though, has remained as strong as ever: “I have been wearing two uniforms for 20 years already, serving two favourite jobs. As time passes, I feel more tangibly what a great honour it is to stand guard for your homeland and to be able to contribute even if only a little—as a doctor and as an officer. I am proud that I was given such a chance.”

It is very difficult to make plans for the future in a military career. Major Kurparashvili is constantly expecting challenges and changes. The only thing she knows for sure is that she will always be there—wherever and whenever her work is needed.





“As I grew up and became an adult, I had already decided that I would definitely go into the military sector.”

MASTER SERGEANT
TAMAR TCHAAVA

Public Relations Division of the NATO-Georgia Joint Training and Evaluation Center (JTEC)

Tamar Tchaava, 38, is an internally displaced person from Abkhazia whose father died in **the war**.** The tragic events of her childhood had a profound impact on her choice of profession.

“It all affected my future and my lifestyle,” Tamar says. “As I grew up and became an adult, I had already decided that I would definitely go into the military sector.”

Neither her relatives nor her friends welcomed her decision with much enthusiasm. They believed that there is no place for women in the military.

But Tamar proved through her work that women can do anything: they can be doctors, teachers, housewives—and defend their homeland.

“Little by little, it turned out that I am not the only exception—and that, of course, makes me feel proud,” Tamar reflects. “Back then, in 2005, gender equality in the defence sector was not as relevant as it is today. Now this topic attracts special attention. I think our Euro-Atlantic aspirations have also played a big role, prompting us to continue breaking stereotypes.”

Since 2005, Tamar has held a number of positions, working on operational and training planning as well as monitoring and evaluation. She currently serves as a Master Sergeant in the Public Relations Division of the NATO-Georgia Joint Training and Evaluation Center (JTEC) S-3 Public Relations Section.

Tamar has two children. Her family members—her husband and sister—also serve in the Defence Forces of Georgia. Looking towards her plans for career advancement, she wants to complete the next military career course and become a sergeant major.





“The military is a male-dominated field, so seeing women like me successfully take this path is particularly important for other girls and women.”

MAJOR
ZOIA KURTANIDZE

Career Manager at the Military Personnel Management Center and Gender Advisor to the Gender Equality Monitoring Group

Zoia Kurtanidze, 35, has been serving in the Georgian Defence Forces since 2007. An English translator by profession, she was inspired by a TV programme to join the army. The reality show *Barracks*, in which Zoia was one of the participants, was about military life. It was then when she first realized how much she liked this lifestyle. “I was the last of the girls to leave the show, and I immediately entered the military academy,” Zoia recalls. “This year, 19 November will mark the fifteenth anniversary since

I started to bear the Georgian flag on my shoulders—alongside the huge sense of responsibility to my homeland in my heart and mind.”

After receiving her first military rank of officer in June 2008, Zoia took her first steps towards a career in the Air Force, serving as an engineer-operator in an anti-aircraft missile unit when the **August War***** broke out. “As a newly appointed lieutenant, and as a combat officer, I went to war and came back with tremendous experience,” Major Kurtanidze recalls. “Three years later, I became interested in general staff activities. I wanted to learn more, to get an education in other areas and use my combat experience in military decision-making processes.”

The public’s attitude towards Zoia as a military woman has always been positive. Acquaintances and strangers alike have given her tremendous strength and encouragement. “The military is a male-dominated field,” she remarks, “so seeing

women like me successfully take this path is particularly important for other girls and women. With my lifestyle, I try to break down those outdated stereotypes that prevent women from choosing a military career and achieving success.”

Major Kurtanidze is currently a Career Manager at the Military Personnel Management Centre of the Ministry of Defence of Georgia and a Gender Advisor to the Gender Equality Monitoring Group. She also received a master’s degree in gender research last year and now uses this knowledge to introduce the principles of gender equality in the military.

“Serving this country makes me proud, and I would like to be proud of being a guardian of gender equality as well —proud that my contribution will help my peers or future military servicewomen in the Georgian army to serve without gender restrictions,” Zoia remarks.



“Serving this country makes me proud, and I would like to be proud of being a guardian of gender equality as well.”



“ I want to make a small contribution towards making Georgia unified. I am proud to wear the uniform and defend the dignity of my country.”

PRIVATE FIRST CLASS
NADIA BERIDZE

Military driver

Nadia Beridze, 28, is the first and only woman serving as a driver in the Georgian Defence Forces.

Nadia was born and raised in Sachkhere Municipality in the village of Per-evi, located right next to the dividing line. She was 16 years old during the **August War**^{***} when she first witnessed the internally displaced people from the Tskhinvali region; that's when she decided to serve in the Defence Forces.

"I can still vividly remember the situation of those internally displaced people," Nadia reflects. "I wanted to put on the uniform and go [help], but I was not sure where exactly. Years later, I have come to appreciate even more those who serve in the Defence Forces and stand to protect their country. Also, I want to make a small contribution towards making Georgia unified. I am proud to wear the uniform and defend the dignity of my country."

Nadia is a Private First Class. She has a husband who also serves in the same division, and they have two children. She drives a military vehicle every day, and she sees people surprised by her

job almost every day—why is a woman behind the wheel? However, she notes that often there are people who are excited by her work, and it gives her special motivation.

"There are many women who serve in the Defence Force today, which, of course, is noteworthy," Nadia says. "However, there is still much more to do on this front. I have seen many female soldiers who, because they are women, had to fight more to establish themselves."

Her plan is to advance her career. "I will try to achieve my goal because I am a woman, and I was born with the same rights and opportunities as men," she affirms.





“ We women have to invest more work and energy to prove that we deserve to be where we are: we can be commanders and combatants.”

FIRST LIEUTENANT **KHATIA GOGALADZE**

Combat platoon commander

Khatia Gogaladze, 24, is the Commander of a combat platoon in the 11th Infantry Battalion.

Khatia has served in the Defence Forces since 2014. She was just a school-girl when she went to the National Defence Academy on its open day and was inspired by the military activities. While choosing the profession, she already knew that she would have to be ready for hard work, both physically and mentally. Khatia graduated from the David Aghmashenebeli National Defence Academy of Georgia with a bachelor's degree in defence

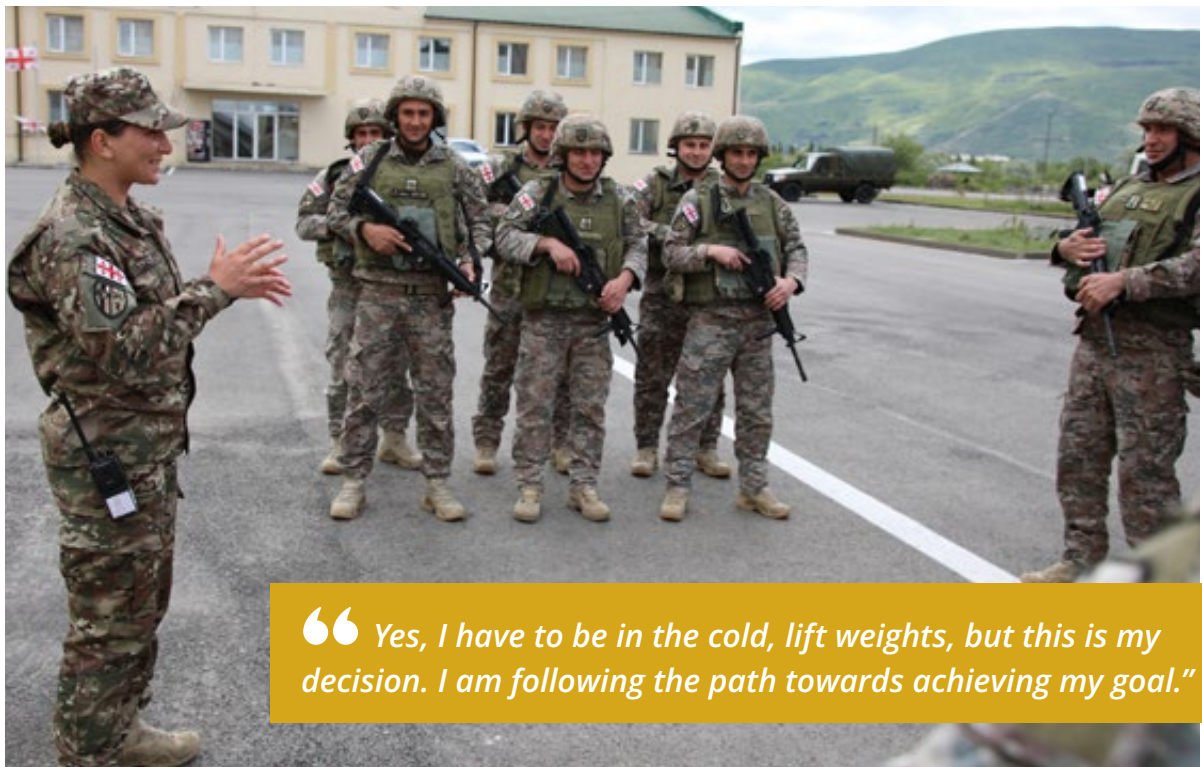
and security and then took an infantry training course for junior officers.

Commanding an infantry combat platoon turned out to be a laborious part of the job. "Military personnel could not imagine that a woman could be the commander of a platoon consisting only of men," Khatia says. "It took me a lot of effort to convince them that I truly deserved this position. The lack of confidence in general is a major global challenge for women in this field. We women have to invest more work and energy to prove that we deserve to be where we are: we can be commanders and combatants."

Despite numerous offers, Khatia refuses to serve at headquarters. She believes this is her choice in principle.

"Yes, I have to be in the cold, lift weights, but this is my decision. I am following the path towards achieving my goal," she affirms.

First Lieutenant Gogaladze is currently undertaking a variety of trainings with her subdivision. She wants to gain more knowledge and experience to become the commander of a much larger unit in the future.



“ Yes, I have to be in the cold, lift weights, but this is my decision. I am following the path towards achieving my goal.”

Notes

* The Tragedy of 9 April

In the late 1980s, during the collapse of the Soviet Union, the anti-Soviet movement in Georgia gained momentum. Peaceful demonstrations demanding the country's independence, attended by hundreds of thousands of citizens, reached a peak in April 1989. On 9 April, another rally on Rustaveli Avenue in Tbilisi ended in the dispersal and killing of peaceful protesters. Soviet military units physically assaulted civilians, most of whom were women and children, killing 21 people, including 16 women, and wounding, poisoning or injuring 427 citizens. Later, in 1991, the Supreme Council of the Republic of Georgia announced the restoration of Georgia's state independence symbolically on 9 April.

** The War in Abkhazia

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, armed conflicts in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region of Georgia broke out. Specifically, because of the conflict in Abkhazia in 1992 and 1993, more than 10,000 Georgians died, hundreds went missing, and up to 300,000 people were forced to flee their homes; they continue to live in exile in their own country.


*** The August War

In the late 1980s, a conflict erupted in the Tskhinvali region that escalated into the war of 1991–1992. According to different sources, up to 1,000 people were killed and more than 60,000 forcefully displaced as a result of the conflict. In August 2008, a new hotbed of tension emerged in the Tskhinvali region. It culminated in a five-day war between the Russian Federation and Georgia that ended on 16 August 2008, with the signing of a six-point ceasefire agreement between Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili and his Russian counterpart, President Dmitry Medvedev, mediated by French President Nicolas Sarkozy. As a result of the Russia-Georgia War, 412 Georgians were killed, more than 1,700 were injured, and 138,000 became internally displaced persons. Some of them became displaced for the second time and are still unable to return home.



87 Paliashvili Str., Office Suite 4
0179 Tbilisi, Georgia
Tel: (+995) 32 2 22 06 04 / 2 22 08 70

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