



**WOMEN'S
EMPOWERMENT:
A KEY TO
BUSINESS
SUCCESS**

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2025

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ARE CHANGING THE WORLD



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WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT: A KEY TO BUSINESS SUCCESS

Since 2016, UN Women has been actively collaborating with the private sector, with much of this partnership based on the international platform of the United Nations Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs). Currently, 288 companies in Georgia have signed on to this initiative, which is a remarkably high number given the scale of the country. The platform remains open to new members.

Companies that implement the WEPs undertake numerous initiatives in line with this framework. Through mentorship, professional training, grants, support for rural women, promotion of entrepreneurship and various other projects, WEPs signatories have already improved the lives of 71,363 women in Georgia as of the end of 2024.

Among these changes, particularly noteworthy are the initiatives that the private sector implements beyond their own organizations to empower women. These stories vividly illustrate how businesses strive to increase women's access to finance and healthcare services, integrate women into technology and other high-paying industries, break gender stereotypes and turn aspirations into reality.

This publication highlights only a fraction of the positive changes achieved, yet the impact is far greater. We believe that the stories shared in this booklet will not only provide a clear picture of the private sector's contributions but also serve as a motivator, a guide or an inspiration for other companies looking to take new steps towards women's empowerment.

Finally, we would like to thank the private sector for its partnership and initiatives. In today's world, women continue to face numerous challenges, making it critically important to build upon these achievements and sustain these critical efforts. Progress is not possible without finding new allies and maintaining unity. Most importantly, the continuous advancement of women's empowerment must remain a priority, as supporting women means supporting prosperity and progress.

In this journey, we place our trust in every company that, like us, believes that business and women's empowerment go hand in hand.

WOMEN IN TECHNOLOGY ARE CHANGING THE WORLD

“I have tried my hand at many fields – first in the wine and hospitality industries, then in law, sometimes in banking – but I couldn’t find my place anywhere. I always felt that I had to keep going and find a job that would bring me joy. And finally, I really found the best version of myself in digital technologies,” recalls 29-year-old Salome Gigniashvili.

For Salome, taking her first steps in the digital industry was motivated by curiosity. In 2021, when COVID-19 restrictions were imposed all around her while still a student in the Faculty of Philology at Ivane Javakhsishvili Tbilisi State University, she decided to find a profession that would allow her to easily work remotely. It was then that she first heard about digital design, searched for relevant information and then listened to podcasts on the subject, which made her even more interested in this business.

“I liked the complexity of UI/UX design,” explains Salome. “This profession involves researching user needs and emotions and translating them technically, and it [helps you] develop many skills as a designer. It so happened that the ‘500 Women in Tech’ project appeared at that very moment. I decided to apply and, fortunately, found myself among the participants.”

The implementation of the “500 Women in Tech” project was launched in 2021 by UN Women, with the support of the Norwegian Government, in cooperation with Business and Technology University and partner tech companies. The initiative involved providing free training to 500 women across the country in popular information and communications technology professions, but the project aroused such unprecedented interest that the number of participants eventually increased to 1,000. Among them were Ukrainian women and girls who had been forced to leave their homeland due to the war.

“500 Women in Tech” was a six-month course. It combined intensive English language training, practical assignments, a career boot camp, entrepreneurship seminars, one-on-one mentoring and internships, along with training in various professions. The project, which ended in May 2023, also offered participants job fairs and industry work opportunities.

Salome was a participant in the first round of the project and was learning about her new profession while studying at university. It was her first time dealing with technical details, and none of the subject matter was easy for her, but

Salome Gigniashvili, a UI/UX designer and a participant in the first cohort of the “500 Women in Tech” project.





Salome Gigniashvili, a UI/UX designer who mastered digital design through the “500 Women in Tech” project and is successfully working in this field.

she worked hard and always achieved results.

“For me,” she says, “the most memorable meetings were the ones with senior designers who told me it didn’t matter whether I was a beginner because, if they liked my portfolio, they would take me on as an employee. This gave me a lot of motivation. As a final project, a watch company trusted me to create their website, which also became my portfolio, and, ultimately, with its help, I was hired as a junior UI/UX designer within six weeks of graduating.”

Salome really likes her new profession. She is especially attracted to working on those visuals and applications that simplify

people’s lives and that are intuitive, easy to use and focused on solving problems.

“Technology allows you to sit quietly by the fireplace somewhere and get an education, become a leading employee of some organization, find yourself, and squeeze the maximum out of a single screen, and so, we must definitely use these opportunities,” notes Salome. “I believe that society will develop even faster with such an approach – by empowering and giving girls the opportunity to realize [their own potential], because women are changing the world of technology.”

According to the International Telecommunication Union, the share of women



Nino Enukidze

Rector of Business and Technology University:

Technology is the most powerful tool for supporting women. It can truly bring about rapid and transformative changes in reducing gender inequality, [including] overcoming the injustice that girls face not only in technology but also in general, due to their gender. Therefore, using the opportunities of this industry is critically important.

employed in information and communications technology in Georgia is 12 per cent, while only 14.5 per cent of graduates of relevant faculties are girls. Salome believes that projects like “500 Women in Tech” are of great importance in changing existing stereotypical approaches and increasing the participation of girls in technology – and in strengthening them to thrive in this sector.

“In six months, everything fell into place: I found a job I love that is innovative, inexhaustible and progressive,” says Salome. “I feel that this profession has strengthened me. Most importantly, I discovered other project participants who, regardless of their age, wanted to learn a new profession. Seeing these girls always excited me. We still maintain our relationships; we strengthen each other, help each other and share advice and experience. What could be more precious than that? If it weren’t for this project, I might not have discovered my abilities, nor these people.”

In addition to her main job, Salome is also a freelancer and is currently working

at a Georgian start-up. She has big plans ahead: She wants to experience new types of businesses, work with even larger teams and make her journey to becoming a senior UI/UX designer as interesting and diverse as possible. ■

→ Business and Technology University (BTU) is an active supporter of girls’ participation in technology. After signing on to the United Nations Women’s Empowerment Principles (WEPs), the university, with the support of USAID, launched the “Coding School for Women” initiative. The project helped train more than 2,500 girls in technological professions, with 75 per cent of them finding employment in this industry. In addition, in cooperation with UN Women and with the support of the Government of Norway, the “Women in AI” initiative is currently under way and aims to strengthen and promote women’s participation in technology. Within its framework, 200 women across Georgia will be trained in artificial intelligence and web development over nine months. It is worth noting that in parallel, BTU, with the support of UN Women and funding from the Government of Japan, is implementing the project “Empowering Ukrainian Refugee Women in Tech”, which aims to share technological education and strengthen the practical skills of Ukrainian refugee women in various areas.

‘AMAZING GRACE’: AN INSPIRATION STANDS THE TEST OF TIME

In 1944, when United States Navy Reserve officer Grace Hopper began working on the Mark IV electromagnetic computer, no one was surprised to see a woman in technology. In those days, it was mostly women who worked with computing, collecting data for scientific projects and performing the functions that today’s computers do so easily. However, only because they were women, they received much less pay for this work than their male counterparts. Then attitudes changed: The promising and highly profitable technology industry became completely dominated by men.

It was in this reality that Grace Hopper, an American mathematician, scientist and programmer, was able to create an impressive, exemplary career and become the first woman to receive the United States’ highest technology award in 1991. She earned this recognition for her pioneering contributions to the development of computer programming languages and inventions that have significantly simplified the use of technology and made it widely available throughout the world. However, Grace Hopper’s greatest achievement is even more extensive and impressive: With her determination and exemplary professional path, she became a role model for many

women. “Amazing Grace”, as she was called, is still a source of motivation and inspiration for many girls today.

Unfortunately, despite the fact that almost a century has passed since Grace Hopper’s work, women in Georgia and around the world are still underrepresented in STEM. Stereotypes reinforcing that this field is more suitable for men keep many women and girls from promising, innovative and high-paying careers. Women’s unrealized opportunities as well as the absence of their different points of view are a great loss for the industry itself, which is missing out on many talented people and innovative ideas.

The Grace Hopper Award has one main goal: to showcase and recognize the contributions of people, start-ups and organizations that play an important role in diversifying the tech field – and making it clear through their work that stereotypes have no place in an industry that turns even the most incredible ideas into reality. This focus certainly empowers girls and motivates them to further realize their potential in this field.

TBC Bank is currently the main organizer of the Grace Hopper Award in Georgia. The record number of nominees in 2024 confirms the special interest in the annual award. In July, winners were announced in

The Grace Hopper Award.

Photo: TBC/Rezi Kenia



five categories: Tech Leader, Discovery of the Next Generation, Outstanding Scientist, Innovative Tech Product, and Leading Company for Women's Empowerment.

Grace Hopper embodies the values that are important to the TBC brand. It is a tech-

nology company that strives to maximize digital opportunities. At the same time, the environmental, social and governance (ESG) direction, which includes the empowerment of women and the achievement of gender equality, is strategically important

Tamta Kupradze
TBC Strategic Communications Leader:

No company or country in general has a future if half of the population does not fully participate in the labour force. In this context, promoting the involvement of women in the tech industry is particularly important. Courageous women in tech need encouragement, recognition and support. This is what the Grace Hopper Award is for, and I hope that over time, more women will become interested in technology.



The 2024 Grace Hopper Award ceremony.
Photo: TBC/Rezi Kenia

Maka Bochorishvili
TBC Environmental, Social and Governance Coordinator:

The existence of the Grace Hopper Award motivates people of different ages and experiences, companies and projects. It shows women that your place in technology is real, you have opportunities, and, to some extent, the environment is conducive as well. At the same time, a professional community is being formed around the award, the members of which strengthen both each other and the industry. TBC tried to create a start-up, sustainable project that could develop in many directions and would impact a large part of society.

to TBC. The bank operates an IT Academy, and almost half of its 4,000 graduates are women. At TBC, women make up more than 30 per cent of the tech workforce, and ultimately, these statistics as well as the brand's growth strategy explain why TBC supports the Grace Hopper Award and other projects that empower women in tech.

Since its inception, 23 people and organizations have received the Grace Hopper Award. Behind these victories are success stories that have become even more widely known. Moreover the public has seen the capabilities of women and their contribution to the development of technologies, which had never been recognized before.

When Grace Hopper was asked in a television interview in 1983 about the end of the computer revolution, she replied: "We are only at the beginning." Women are also just starting out in technology, and the Grace

Hopper Award will continue to be a shining inspiration for many of them. ■

→ Within the framework of the strategic partnership memorandum signed with UN Women, TBC Bank is implementing a number of initiatives to empower women and promote gender equality outside the company. TBC was a partner of the "500 Women in Tech" project, which helped women and girls prepare for technological professions. TBC retrained the participants at its IT Academy and, through lectures and individual mentoring, helped them gain the knowledge necessary for employment in high-paying positions and career advancement. In addition, TBC actively supports women entrepreneurs; an example of this is evident in its annual large-scale event, the TBC Business Awards. In 2022, UN Women and TBC created a special category at the Business Awards to recognize the promotion of gender equality. In parallel, for the past two years, TBC has been supporting the international community via the Women in Data Science initiative, originally launched at Stanford University, and organizes events dedicated to the participation and role of women in data science.

Nino Kapanadze, founder and director of Fruit Logistics, at the company's warehouse.



AN INNOVATOR IN AGRICULTURE

In 2005, art historian Nino Kapanadze returned to Georgia from the United States as an economist. Having graduated from the University of Central Florida, she worked in various fields, but her heart was especially drawn to agriculture.

“At that time, I often visited customs and saw how many vegetables were imported from other countries, and then, on the shelves, these products were labelled as Georgian!” Nino recalls. “I was surprised

because I had heard since childhood that Georgia is an agricultural country. I became interested and discovered that, as it turns out, many problems arise due to disorganized logistics. I realized that this niche could be well exploited, so in 2017, I tied my professional career to agriculture.”

Nino is 50 years old. She has two children and is currently the Director of Fruit Logistics, a distribution and logistics company for agricultural products. She took her first

steps in agriculture with Fruit Logistics. At that time, the company had only one business and helped farmers sell fruits and vegetables. At first, Nino was an investor, but she later took over the full management of Fruit Logistics, which at that time was going through a crisis.

“When I started my business, I travelled to all of the regions, met with each farmer and listened to their problems,” Nino recalls. “That’s when I learned that more than 600 types of fruits and vegetables are grown in Georgia. I realized that this was an important, diverse industry for the country, so I decided that I would never abandon it and would do whatever it took to get this business on its feet.”

Achieving this goal required specific actions, so in 2019, Nino turned to the private investment fund Gazelle Finance and asked for funding to expand the warehouse. At that time, her company was already cooperating with large markets. It brought in fruits and vegetables from farmers, sorted them, stored them in special refrigerated rooms and then distributed them to networks for sale. The scale of the products that needed storage was so large, however, that the company needed infrastructure development and fast financing.

Gazelle Finance then entrusted the start-up with half a million U.S. dollars. “With this money, we built a new production facility, created a modern refrigerated warehouse, purchased the necessary equipment and

successfully continued partnering with 1,000 farmers,” Nino says. “Now, we can store more than 1,000 tons of products in our four refrigerated rooms.”

Alongside Fruit Logistics’ infrastructure development, the company’s work expanded even further. Farmers were focused on growing high-quality crops while Fruit Logistics helped them with sales, and this help often involved knowledge-sharing. Nino herself advised them on which varieties to grow, shared the necessary forecasts and statistics, offered a guaranteed price in exchange for consistent quality and connected many of the farmers directly to online markets. She says that in this process, she has discovered many innovative female farmers: “Whenever I notice any unusual, interesting products for our market – for example, baby aubergines, jalapeños, multicoloured broccoli – I find out that they are always grown by women. [Female farmers] have a hand in everything. [They] love experiments and innovation.”

Today, Fruit Logistics, under its own brand and in compliance with international standards, produces 60 types of products – tkemali, adjika and lecho sauces, salad dressings, tomato paste, compotes, preserved fruit and jams, 22 of which are exported to the Baltic countries and are very popular. Each type has a production run of about 5,000–10,000 jars. Moreover, the company’s business process is completely eco-friendly: Solar panels are installed on the roof of the Fruit Logis-



Nino Kapanadze with products manufactured by Fruit Logistics.

tics warehouse, and the enterprise uses only renewable energy.

In addition to production, close cooperation with farmers inspired Nino to have another idea. She decided to open Fruit Logistics stores and offer consumers a small number of products that could not be sold in large chains. Thus, it was in 2022 that the first branch of Euromart was opened in the village of Patara Gori in Lagodekhi Municipality, where locals could purchase imported consumer goods along with fruits and

vegetables. Gradually, the chain of stores expanded. Today, four branches of Euromart are already operating in Kakheti, and six Fruit Logistics stores have opened in Tbilisi. In the capital, they are known as the brand Gurmania.

Gurmania offers consumers products from farmers, as well as products from Fruit Logistics itself. The enterprise creates ready-made food products, including freshly baked bread and pastries for its Tbilisi stores. Other consumer goods are also sold



Natia Janelidze

Managing Director and Chief Investment Officer of Gazelle Finance:

According to a World Bank study, if we can increase the participation of women in the global economy, the world's gross domestic product will increase by 28 trillion U.S. dollars by 2025. We and the world economy have such a great resource in the form of women, and with joint efforts, I believe that we will gradually improve this result.

there: cosmetics, clothing and home-care products.

During the expansion and development process, Fruit Logistics has always been supported by Gazelle Finance. It was precisely this investment fund whose partnership made it possible to launch Gurmania. As of today, Nino has already met all of her financial obligations to Gazelle.

"Access to finance remains a problem for many women," Nino explains. "If it weren't for Gazelle Finance, an international organization that has a different policy towards female borrowers, I might not have been able to get the necessary amount at the initial stage. Getting financing is very important for a start-up business. Even the best idea, if it drags on for a long time, may lose its effectiveness and become unprofitable, so the trust shown in us played a big role. Developing women's entrepreneurship, using their different perspectives, is very important."

Today, 180 of Fruit Logistics' 200 employees are women. "I also work physically with my girls. I am always by their side, and I want

them to believe strongly in my support for them," Nino says.

In the future, she wants to expand the chain of stores even further and increase their number to 20 in Tbilisi and 30 across the country. As the head of Fruit Logistics, Nino also aims to develop products for export and intends to export Georgian fruits and vegetables outside Georgia, as well as open local production in the regions. ■

→ At Gazelle Finance, women hold 66 per cent of managerial positions; 50 per cent of its partners are women; 40 per cent of its Investment Committee are also women; and, in general, more than 50 per cent of its workforce is staffed by women. Gazelle Finance plays a particularly active role in providing access to finance for small and medium-sized enterprises both in Georgia and abroad. The company's work enables more and more women to obtain the financing they need to both start and expand their businesses. Gazelle Finance has invested in 46 portfolio companies, 27 per cent of which are owned or managed by women. Moreover, 1,081 of the 1,657 jobs created in these portfolio companies, or 65 per cent, are held by women.



WOMEN JOINING THE MARITIME INDUSTRY

“When I was little, I would watch my grandmother, who was an accountant and would sometimes bring her work home,” recalls Maia Mikaberidze, Sales Operations Manager at APM Terminals Poti. “I liked her work so much that I wanted to do the same. However, I ended up at the port, like my grandfather, and I have been working there for eight years now.”

Maia is 30 years old and lived in Germany after graduating from the Faculty of Business Administration at Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University. Having temporarily returned to her homeland, she learned that APM Terminals Poti was looking for candidates for an internship programme. Like most of the city’s residents, her heart eventually led her to the port. She sent in her résumé and became a participant in the programme’s first cohort. Maia was 23 at the time.

Sales Operations Manager Maia Mikaberidze and Terminal WoW Partner Diana Khakhutaishvili at the port of Poti.



Maia Mikaberidze and Diana Khakhutaishvili at the port's berth.

"Not only my grandfather but also my brother has worked there for a long time," she recalls, "so everyone would ask me, 'Are you going to the port too?' – probably because they thought I would choose a different profession. During the internship, I was finally convinced that this was where I belong. I fell in love with the port,

its people, the relationships and even the equipment, like my own family."

Poti Seaport is the largest and most multifunctional port in Georgia. It is 165 years old and has a strategic importance not only for the country but also for the entire region. The port of Poti is managed by APM Terminals (a member of

the Maersk Group), which has been implementing the InPort talent acquisition and development programme since 2017. This programme is also where Maia's career began. After completing her internship, she was first hired as a customer service officer, then became a customer care partner and later a sales representative. Today, she is a sales operations manager who now leads the team she first joined as an intern. Along with 16 employees, Maia leads both customer service and billing.

"Some of our employees have been working at the port for more than 20 years," she says. "I've learned a lot from them, so this position is, first and foremost, a big responsibility for me. However, I think my example is also a good motivator for other young people who come to us as interns."

The story of 28-year-old Diana Khakhutaishvili – a Terminal Way of Working (WoW) Partner who started working at the port of Poti through an internship programme as well – also provides an example of career development. When she learned about this internship opportunity, Diana was finishing her bachelor's degree in ecology at Ivane Javakishvili Tbilisi State University and was planning to continue on to her master's degree in ecology in Georgia or Germany. "Although I grew up nearby, in Kobuleti, I had only been to Poti when travelling through,"

Diana recalls. "So, I thought, 'I'll give it a try. I'll go to a real interview.'"

She successfully passed the interview, was among the 14 participants of the programme and, at the same time, enrolled in a master's programme in sustainable environmental development. After completing her internship, Diana was offered the position of Support Officer in the Health, Safety, Security and Environment (HSSE) Protection Department. "Of course, I agreed," she says. "I was 22 years old at the time, taking my first steps and trying to learn more about the company's work. I was fortunate to be given the opportunity to do so."

She had already become HSSE Coordinator when the COVID-19 pandemic began. At that time, Diana's department was entrusted with a special responsibility: The country's strategic facility had to stay open, while also protecting the health of its employees as much as possible.

"It was a crisis that we handled very well," Diana recalls, "and it gave me an experience that I am proud of. I then realized what it means to work at a strategic facility and how important a port is for your country."

Soon, she was promoted to the position of Business Partner in the HSSE Department. At the same time, she joined the company's Lean Academy and trained as a trainer. Now she shares her knowledge of managing and improving business

processes with her employees, including those abroad. She also participates in coordinating and improving business processes together with her employees and helps the company's management team implement pre-established policies.

The maritime industry is dominated by men. The lack of women in this field is a global challenge that is largely due to the wrong attitudes prevalent in society – stereotypes that are familiar to all women working in this industry.

Maia recalls some of her experiences: "Once, when I stopped a ship for non-payment of tariffs, its agent came and asked me, 'Child, where are the elders? How can such a little girl know anything about loading and unloading a ship?' And sometimes, if a man called and heard a girl's voice [answer the phone], he would be silent at first, then hang up and call again, hoping that a man would answer the second time. It was as if he didn't trust you. Some people still think that since it's a port, a woman has no business being there, especially on the night shift. I also remember that when I gave birth to my child, I returned to work after four months because I love my job, and they started telling me, 'This is the time when you should be taking care of your child! Why should it be your business taking care of containers here?' But this is what happens sometimes: Women are told that if they wanted a career, they should

not have had a baby! But, in a proper [and supportive] environment, we women can do it all." However, Maia believes that there has recently been a progressive change in people's opinions – primarily due to women's professionalism, attitude towards work and sense of responsibility.

Recently, girls' interest in maritime professions has increased. "I like this trend," Maia remarks. "Moreover, the guys who come to interview see that there are many girls among their competitors. This is very good. The interview process itself is also important. A woman should not feel, through [the interviewer's] questions and approach, that there are no opportunities for her here, just because she is a woman."

Diana also draws attention to the correct approaches on the part of employers: "They should not put aside a résumé just because the applicant is a woman. On the contrary, it is better to consider all of the girls, and if you notice potential, hire them and help them master the work. The main thing is to set a goal to ensure that no one is left behind. When there are many examples like this, the stereotype will become just a memory."

The girls say that the presence of role models also helps change attitudes. Maia's acquaintances often call her for advice. They want to know what prospects an internship creates for girls. "I hope we can help the next generation of girls



Christian Roeder

Managing Director of APM Terminals Poti:

Promoting equality is not only the right approach but also a necessary factor in building an organization focused on customers, people and achieving results. We are a European company, so we have a responsibility to create equal opportunities for the career advancement of our employees. Our goal is to create a working environment where each of them can fully realize their potential. At the same time, we are aware of the challenges related to the employment and empowerment of women in the maritime industry.

to openly express their desire to work in such fields," Maia says.

Diana also speaks about the importance of real-life examples and information: "As a child, when I was thinking about a career, no one ever told me to consider the maritime industry. It was unthinkable to everyone around me, even though this job is so interesting in reality. I might have been the captain of a ship by now! I tell other girls my story to inspire them. I tell them that they can and should try out [this industry], and I will be the first to help them move forward."

Maia and Diana believe that the role and contribution of women in the development of any industry is vital. It is women's participation that has increased the global awareness of the maritime industry and ensured care for the well-being and satisfaction of employees, which ultimately affects the success of the business. ■

→ APM Terminals Poti has been implementing the talent attraction and development programme InPort since 2017. The programme allows up to 10 young people to complete a four-month-long theoretical and practical course at the port every year. During this period, along with gaining knowledge, the participants develop competitive skills, practise teamwork and prepare for other career challenges.

The programme ensures that participants get directly involved in the activities of each department. It helps them to better understand the specifics of the work of a particular service and make informed career decisions. Up to 70 local young people have already participated in the InPort programme. Out of 24 female interns, 12 have been employed by the company. APM Terminals Poti currently has 800 employees, the majority of whom are men. That is why, along with providing quality education, the company is trying to encourage the representation of women in technical positions. Most recently, APM Terminals Poti employed two women as port equipment operators and continues to actively promote women's interest in the maritime industry.

FROM A SMALL DRIVING SCHOOL TO A TRAFFIC ACADEMY

"I fell in love with cars in my childhood and became interested in them," says Sofio Gudadze. "Noticing my passion, my father taught me how to drive from an early age. By the way, I carried on this tradition and put both of my children behind the wheel. In general, I am a careful driver and have not had a single traffic accident yet. Even when I get into somebody else's car, I can't help myself from giving them advice on driving. Perhaps this is also a profession-related habit."

Sofio is 44 years old, lives in Gori and runs Rbola, a well-known driving school in the city. She also teaches the theory necessary for passing the driving test. In addition to having a CE licence to operate commercial vehicles with trailers, Sofio herself drives all types of vehicles – from trucks to buses.

A lawyer by profession, after graduating from college, she began working in 2004 as a teacher of civic education and history of state and law of foreign countries at Gori Vocational College, and in 2008, she moved to Zaza Panaskerteli Medical College as a chief specialist in business case management. Initially, she developed a driving course there and received authorization to also begin teaching the theoretical part. Later, after the college

closed down, Sofio opened her own driving school, Rbola, in a small room measuring only 15 square metres.

"I had one laptop, one monitor and one old desk, which I still have to this day," Sofio says. "Then I received a grant of 3,000 Georgian lari from Enterprise Georgia, purchased road signs and traffic cones, started teaching theory and turned my favourite job into a profitable business."

The driving school gradually expanded, continuing to operate in a larger space and offering practical driving lessons to those who were interested. Sofio recalls that she cleared customs for her first training car with a loan from the financial inclusion organization Crystal. She used the rest of the money to purchase monitors, laptops and other necessary equipment, renovate the premises and obtain the necessary licence to issue all categories of driving licences. A year ago, again with the financial support of Crystal, Sofio set up a training lot and purchased additional cars. Now, the school has all the material resources needed to teach any category of driving licence, including both theoretical and practical parts.

"Such an example of a modern [driving] school did not exist in Gori before," Sofio explains. "I have three training cars: one



Sofio Gudadze, founder and director of Rbola Driving School in Gori.

manual and two automatic. Before, I had no training lot, so I would send students to other driving instructors and, naturally, I lost income. Now, we train almost twice as many students – 30 per month. By the way, most of them are women." Sofio adds that access to finance played a major role in the development of the driving school:

"Unfortunately, getting a loan is a problem for women. Without it, it would have been very difficult for me. Receiving that lump sum was a game changer for my business."

The arrangement of Sofio's training lot was financed by Crystal after issuing gender bonds. The company issued the

first certified gender bonds in the amount of 25 million lari together with the Asian Development Bank in February 2023. The project was unprecedented not only in the country but also in the South Caucasus. Its social goal was to increase women entrepreneurs' access to finance and to fund their micro, small and medium-sized businesses in order to economically empower women in Georgia and promote gender equality.

Today, Sofio is already empowering other women herself. Since 2022, her driving school has been participating in a women's driver training programme supported by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). The initiative aims to ensure gender equality and equal opportunities by encouraging women to participate in the workforce. One of the components enables women to prepare for a category D driving licence and gain the opportunity to work as bus drivers in different municipalities. Sofia teaches the theoretical part herself.

"For the first time, we retrained nine women from Bakuriani and Tbilisi," she says. "I was so inspired by the participants that I learned to drive a bus and took the test with them. Now, we have already trained 35 women in total, and of course, I accompanied them to all the tests to support them. These women have to overcome a lot of stereotypes, so I am not only a teacher to them but also a friend. They

know that they can always count on me."

Currently, all of the women trained at the driving school work in new professions. One of them is also an instructor at Rbola and is already teaching other participants in the programme how to drive a bus. Sofio's most important plan for now is to transform the driving school into a traffic academy. She wants to get a licence to teach tachograph courses, retrain international truck drivers and issue appropriate documentation for them. ■



Sofio Gudadze, founder and director of Rbola in Gori, at the driving school's training lot.

Maya Kobalia

Head of the Environmental and Corporate Sustainability Department at Crystal:

In addition to issuing the first gender bonds, Crystal was the first among the initial five companies in Georgia to sign on to the United Nations Women's Empowerment Principles and believe in these principles back in 2016. We are glad that together with our international partners and investors, we are taking important, concrete steps to achieve gender equality in our country. The priority strategic direction of the company's future plans remains fostering the personal and economic empowerment of women. In this way, we believe that we are making our small but significant contribution to the economic strengthening of the country.

→ Promoting gender equality, increasing access to finance for women entrepreneurs and sharing important knowledge and necessary experience with them are among Crystal's strategic priorities. The company's long-term cooperation with the international platform Buzz Women is also worth mentioning. Between 2020 and 2024 alone, 4,700 women underwent personal, entrepreneurial and economic empowerment trainings within the framework of Buzz Women Georgia.

It is noteworthy that with the help of Crystal Consulting – a subsidiary of Crystal – from 2020 until early 2025, women entrepreneurs throughout Georgia were able to benefit from consulting services and mentoring within the framework of the USAID programme "Supporting Youth and Women's Entrepreneurship in Georgia" (USAID YES-Georgia). Crystal Consulting provided them with business consulting and mentoring on issues such as business management, customer relations, branding, marketing, human resource management and more. With the help of Crystal Consulting, entrepreneurs have acquired the knowledge, information, skills and connections necessary and critically important for economic success.

HELPING WOMEN WHO HAVE FLED DANGER

Mariam is 36 years old* and lives in a rented apartment in Tbilisi with her three minor-aged children. She was a student when she got married and had her first child. As she had no one to look after her children, she was forced to quit school. “Then I had two more children and, unfortunately, I was no longer able to get a higher education,” she recalls.

Mariam came to the shelter of the non-governmental organization Anti-Violence Network of Georgia five years ago, on the advice of a social worker. “It so happened that after a family conflict, I was left alone with young children. I was hopeless: I had no job, no education, and I could not pay the rent. At that time, I had no idea about any shelters. I did not know how I would survive, and I was very worried, but then everyone here stood by me,” recalls Mariam, who spent five months in the shelter.

During this period, she and her children received medical, psychological and legal assistance. Most importantly, Mariam also acquired a new profession. She had been good at cooking and baking before, so she started working at the shelter’s social enterprise, Gemometria. Then she took courses and learned how to make pastries, canapés and buffet dishes.

In 2017, the Anti-Violence Network of Georgia first held culinary and pastry masterclasses for women living in the shelter. The organization purchased the necessary equipment with the help of donors and soon set up a modern kitchen in the building. In 2019, again with funding from partners and donors, a separate building was constructed for the social enterprise on the shelter’s property. Thus, Gemometria was created and began offering catering services.

The social enterprise has always employed women who have experienced violence. Even now, 10 past and present shelter residents are employed there, including Mariam. Although she no longer lives in the shelter, she comes to Gemometria every day. She prepares orders from 8am to 4pm, then goes to the kindergarten to pick up her 5-year-old son. This employment supports her in every way. Now Mariam’s only income is her salary from Gemometria. With this money, she can both pay the rent and raise her children.

“Of course, I felt heavy responsibility while preparing buffets for the first time,” Mariam recalls. “I remember how I searched for information on the Internet and studied



The process of preparing food at the social enterprise Gemometria.

independently. I will never forget how nervous I felt about my first big order. It was a hard task, but I kept telling myself that I had to do it at any cost and pass this test successfully. And in the end, all turned out well, and we managed to prepare everything properly.”

The importance of women’s economic empowerment increases even more when it comes to women who have experienced violence. Often, they have neither a profession nor any education, and those left without support often have to return to their abusers due to a lack of income. The goal of



An employee of the social enterprise Gemometria prepares an order.

creating Gemometria was precisely to empower them and protect them from the risk of repeated violence.

In general, improving and increasing access to services for victims of violence and women who have experienced violence in Georgia is one of the country's current challenges. Although women and girls ex-

perience various forms of gender-based violence due to stereotypes, the lack of social support and insufficient trust in relevant systems and bodies mean that some cases remain unreported. In such instances, the smooth and high-quality functioning of shelters and crisis centres is of particular importance. In this pro-



Nino Chikhladze

Head of HR and Administration at Liberty:

We all need to tackle this problem together: the State, business and non-governmental organizations. It is gratifying that awareness of violence against women is rising in society from year to year, but this is not enough. All of us, as citizens of this country, must get involved and take concrete steps - do concrete work to help people who have experienced violence.

cess, the involvement of the private sector can play a tangible role.

The steps taken by Liberty Bank to support women who have experienced violence have once again demonstrated this role. After visiting the shelter of the Anti-Violence Network of Georgia, the head of the bank's HR and Administration Department, Nino Chikhladze, told the bank's employees about the needs of the women and children living there. Informing her colleagues soon yielded results: Within a few days, Liberty allocated funds for the shelter, and employees also collected additional money and items. At the same time, the bank decided to order a buffet service from Gemometria, thus expressing its support for the employees of the social enterprise. It was Liberty's first order that made Mariam feel the weight of responsibility.

"It is very important that the shelter is also supported by business," says Mariam. "After all, there are women here who have escaped severe violence, danger or perhaps even death. When organizations use

our catering, the money they pay goes to the women living in the shelter. When I prepare orders, I always think that I am helping the people here through my work, and I remember the time when other women acted in the same way for my sake."

Liberty Bank plans to continue using Gemometria's services. Mariam wants to prepare for law school, become an investigator and work on domestic violence cases. ■

** Mariam's name and age have been changed to protect her privacy.*

→ Liberty Bank is actively working on the empowerment of women outside the organization and focuses on their education, training and professional development. On the initiative of the bank, an online training platform has been created for women entrepreneurs that serves to improve their entrepreneurial skills and share knowledge. In addition, the Back to Education initiative has been implemented, helping women who want to return to the labour market through appropriate training.



Liana Shanshashvili, 59, a teacher from Dedoplistskaro.

WOMEN'S HEALTH IS IMPORTANT FOR EVERYONE

“One thousand teachers across the country will benefit from free medical services.” This was the information that 59-year-old Liana Shanshashvili happened to hear on television one day. She searched for additional information online and discovered that at the initiative of New Vision University, teachers could receive a variety of medical examinations absolutely free of charge at the university’s hospital.

Liana lives in Dedoplistskaro and teaches Russian at Secondary School No. 2 in the village of Nukriani in Signaghi Municipality. She has two children and four grandchildren. Working as a teacher for 37 years already, she has many colleagues both in the regions and the capital. So, as soon as she found a Facebook link to the information on how to register for the medical examinations, she shared it with her professional groups immediately and sent it to some colleagues and the head teacher in private messages.

“I wrote to everyone I knew,” recalls Liana. “I also registered myself and went to Tbilisi.



Liana Shanshashvili, who benefited from the Personalized Health Programme for Women and introduced many of her colleagues to this programme.

I liked that I could receive such important medical services comfortably – in one location. Later on, other teachers also noted the same and thanked me for letting them know.”

The social campaign, which involved providing 1,000 female teachers with free medical services, is part of New Vision University’s Personalized Health Programme for Women. As part of the campaign, teachers have an opportunity to undergo free endocrinological, gynaecological, dermatological, mammographic, dental or laboratory-imaging

examinations and schedule a visit to see a counsellor. So far, more than 600 teachers have already taken advantage of these free medical services. The initiative has also proved popular among teachers Liana knows.

“When I told my colleagues that it was a very good programme, they became interested and went in pairs, in threes,” says Liana. “Going together and using all the services was also a good example to others. By the way, the medical examinations revealed some things that required several of my colleagues’ attention, so they had



Tinatin Gabrichidze

Head of Strategic Development at New Vision University, Dean of the School of Education:

For New Vision University, the empowerment of women is a priority, both within the university and in the wider community. We promote equal opportunities in education, health care, sports and other areas through both daily activities and focused programmes. Among them, one of the outstanding initiatives is the Personalized Health Programme for Women, which promotes women’s well-being.

a chance to check them out in a timely manner.”

Preventive medical care is not very popular among women in Georgia. According to a survey on attitudes towards gender equality conducted by UN Women and CRRC-Georgia, only 29 per cent of women say that they undergo regularly scheduled medical check-ups for prevention purposes. Thankfully, Liana’s and her colleagues’ active participation in the programme has motivated other women as well.

“You know, a teacher’s words have more value as a rule,” Liana observes. “When women find out that we’ve been getting medical tests, they become more thoughtful about their own health; they also want to go and get a check-up. This is a very good trend, because a woman’s health is important for everyone: Children always look to their mother, and when she is healthy, the whole family is happy.”

Another important factor in the low prevalence of preventive health is the high cost of health services. This is precisely the fac-

tor that hinders many women, Liana notes: “Teachers try not to pay attention to their health, but if you are not healthy, you cannot teach. And because the analyses, medical examinations and visits to doctors are so expensive, women sometimes find it difficult to pay for prevention.” She believes that the New Vision University initiative should become a model for other clinics. ■

→ To empower and support women, New Vision University has been implementing the Personalized Health Programme for Women since 2022. Its goal is to popularize mandatory preventive examinations, raise awareness about the importance of regular preventive health check-ups and promote health care. Within the framework of the programme, women have the opportunity to undergo important endocrinological, gynaecological, dermatological, mammographic, dental or laboratory-imaging examinations in one place, at an affordable price. The programme was created with the idea of social responsibility in mind, and one of its main goals is to provide access to preventive examinations, which will give women additional motivation to undergo mandatory preventive examinations annually and take care of their health.

Khatuna Chkhaidze, a 51-year-old beekeeper from the village of Supsa in Lanchkhuti Municipality.



HOW A GURIAN BUSINESS WAS DIGITALIZED

Khatuna Chkhaidze gets up at 7 o'clock every morning, first looking after the cows, then the pigs, then the chickens. Then it is time for her favourite activity: caring for the bees.

"When I go to the beehives, I forget everything," Khatuna says. "I really like being there and working. Sometimes, [the

bees] even sting me, but I can't do anything about that. They have different personalities: Some are naughty, some are lazy, some are diligent. In any case, I relax and get great pleasure from being with them. Do you know how organized and fascinating they are? Each one performs their own duties and tasks."

Khatuna is 51 years old. She lives in the village of Supsa in Lanchkhuti Municipality and is a beekeeper. She studied nursing but has never worked in this profession. Soon after getting married, she had two children and devoted most of her time to looking after them and taking care of her family.

"My children were still young when I started feeling that I needed to create something of my own," Khatuna recalls. "At first, I raised pigs, about 60 of them. Unfortunately, they caught a disease and most of them died. We had some money saved, so I told my husband, 'Let's buy a hive and start beekeeping.'" That was 10 years ago.

The first steps began with reading books and studying. Khatuna then attended trainings, participated in various projects and, finally, mastered her new job well. She did not miss a single training or informational meeting. In the beginning, when there was a need to divide the first hive into two, she asked a friend of hers to help her. The next time, though, she managed to do it herself, without anybody's assistance. By and by, Khatuna increased her quantity of hives to 50. Last year, almost half of the bees died due to pests, but in the spring, she intends to restore their numbers to their previous levels.

There is a forest near Khatuna's house. Her garden is covered with plants and flowers, which is a stroke of luck for beekeeping. She currently has about 30 hives and collects honey three times a year,

about 1 ton per season. She also makes candles and collects propolis, which is highly beneficial for health. Khatuna likes to experiment. Because of her curiosity, she makes creamed honey: She came across a recipe on the Internet and, on her very first attempt, was able to make this product that is popular with so many consumers.

"Honey made from ivy blossoms crystallizes quickly," Khatuna explains, "but if you whip it with a mixer, it forms a creamy texture, becomes fluffy and tastes great, so many people like it this way."

She mainly sells her products from home or at various fairs, and she receives positive feedback from everyone. "Natural honey does not only mean honey made from bees," she explains. "It is important how you take care of the bees, how you clean the hive, how much hygiene you maintain. And this requires a lot of work and energy."

Khatuna is still as active as ever, attending all training events and participating in trade fairs. She says that beekeeping itself is limitless, so if she herself does not expand, she will not achieve success: "At the same time, [beekeeping] is a difficult task requiring much attention and care. You have to fight diseases and pests and follow hygiene and care rules, so I built a two-storey bee house and will soon start working on all the products."

Khatuna was one of the participants in the UN Women project "A Joint Action



Khatuna Chkhaidze tending to her bees.

for Women’s Economic Empowerment in Georgia”. The initiative, which was supported by the Norwegian Government and in partnership with the TASO Foundation, helped Khatuna undergo a training course, improve her communication and presentation skills, learn how to present herself, and share important knowledge and experience. Because of her participation in this project, the digital university Skillwill also involved her in the development of their own idea.

For women in Georgia who are engaged in micro, small or medium-sized businesses, presenting their products and services online, promoting them through online communication channels and increasing their brand awareness are significant challenges. Despite the fact that technological solutions play a crucial role in the development of modern businesses, most female entrepreneurs often have neither enough time nor the finances to digitalize their activities. The Skillwill initiative responded to this very problem.

Lana Chkhartishvili
Country Director of Skillwill:

Skillwill, the first neo-university in Georgia, is a signatory to the United Nations Women’s Empowerment Principles. We are fully aware of the role we can play in the economic empowerment of women, and we are trying to encourage these approaches among students. At the same time, through our projects, we help girls and women to receive education and get jobs in technology. In this way, we want to contribute to achieving UN Sustainable Development Goal 5 both in Georgia and in our international offices.

For two months, university students studied the business needs of women entrepreneurs living in different regions of Georgia and then created corresponding digital products for them. A total of 10 entrepreneurs participated in the initiative, and all of them were also participants in the UN Women project.

Three Skillwill students – Nutsa Kandelaki, Natuka Tsereteli and Mariam Kereselidze – came up with a new name for Khatuna’s business: Taplovana. They then created a logo and launched social media accounts, where they posted all the necessary information. The girls also prepared visual materials based on real products, wrote out a content calendar and conducted an online advertising campaign. Their work increased the brand awareness of Khatuna’s Taplovana and presented the business positively on social media platforms.

“Promotion was necessary – I know how important it is to selling honey,” Khatuna

acknowledges. “I’m able to sell the product precisely because of awareness and trust. However, attention was no less important to me. The fact that young people cared about women living in rural areas strengthened and encouraged me. I realized that I am also a role model for others.” Khatuna says that she plans to increase her quantity of bees and make other products from them. ■

→ In addition to supporting women entrepreneurs and the digitalization of their businesses, Skillwill actively cares about women’s participation in technology and improving their skills. It participates in the Women in Cyber Georgia initiative, which, with the support of the British Embassy, brings together university representatives in Georgia’s regions to discuss the importance of technology and new, high-demand areas, such as cybersecurity, web development, IT project management and other important sectors of the future.



Members of Kvartali Football Club. From left to right: Mariam Mamporia, Lizi Gogaladze, Nini Beridze and Lizi Kankia.

GIRLS SCORE THEIR GOAL ON A FOOTBALL PITCH

When football player Lizi Kankia goes to the stadium for training, she meets up with a football team of 11-year-olds on the field. The little girls play with great enthusiasm and have been following their favourite sport from an early age. “When I look at these kids and see how happy they are,” Lizi says, “I realize that when they are the same age as me and my teammates, they will be much stronger [than us]. This feeling also

motivates me even more to continue setting an example for other girls.” Lizi plays for both Kvartali Football Club and the Georgia women’s national football team.

When she was 11 years old herself, she played football only in the garden; the neighbourhood boys would ask her to stand in the goal. Of course, she preferred to play a different position, but they told her that she was a girl and could do nothing

else. Time passed, and Lizi gradually fell in love with football more and more, watching videos, memorizing the tricks of her Brazilian idol, Neymar, and then trying to imitate them on the field.

Soon, her passion and talent were noticed by her physical education (PE) teacher. When the children were playing football in the gymnasium, he would definitely notice Lizi, and one day, he even suggested that she should get involved in a project of the Georgian Football Federation (GFF). Her parents then realized that football was more than just fun to their daughter: “They told me, ‘You know, there’s no time for that – you have to learn at school,’ but after my head teacher called them, my parents agreed. I met football player Nino Sutidze at that [GFF training] camp. It was she who took me to Kvartali. And I’ve been here since the first day of the team’s creation.”

Now she sometimes plays as a midfielder, sometimes as a striker. At the same time, she is studying law at Ilia State University. She says that her chosen profession was influenced by her desire to fight injustice: “I think that girls in Georgia face a lot of stereotypes – not only about football but also, for instance, about driving: If a woman drives a car and makes a mistake, they always point out that she is a woman and that’s why she can’t drive properly. If a man makes a mistake, they justify it and say that it happens sometimes. The same happens with football. Of course, our bodies and

physical structure are different, but this does not mean that we are not as capable at playing football as men – or that it does not suit girls at all.”

Lizi was first called up to the U-17 team, then to the U-19 team, and this year, she was invited to the Georgia women’s national football team. Her debut game was memorable not only for her but also for her entire family: “They already used to support me all the time, but when I was called up to the national team, when they saw my name on that jersey, they had a completely different emotion. When I entered the stadium, the whole family cried. It was a very happy moment for them – especially for my grandmother, who is my biggest fan and goes to every match.”

Another ardent fan who never misses a Kvartali match is the grandmother of Lizi’s teammate, Mariam Mamporia. The two girls’ grandmothers are also friends; they attend matches together and cheer for their granddaughters so loudly that everyone in the stands becomes just as enthusiastic and starts to cheer on the girls as well.

Mariam is 17 years old. She is a college student and wants to continue her studies at the Faculty of Psychology. Football became part of her life from a very early age: Her grandfather, a former football player and now a coach, instilled in Mariam a love for the game early on. “He would take me with him, play football with me, train me with the boys,” Mariam recalls. “I liked it very



Members of Kvartali Football Club during training.

much and wanted to play. My parents were not very happy about it, but my grandfather and I always won.”

When she first came to Kvartali and played on the big pitch, she was very nervous. However, she gradually overcame her anxiety and developed into a dependable supporting midfielder. At first, she played for the U-17 national team, and now she is a member of the U-19 national team.

“Grandma and Grandpa are my biggest fans,” Mariam says. “Grandpa always gets very nervous, to such an extent that

sometimes, it’s even hard for him to watch, so he sometimes misses some matches, but Grandma never does.”

Lizi Gogaladze also started playing football at school, in PE classes. She was only 8 years old at the time, but she already knew that she preferred the game above all else. Her parents were against her wishes at the start; they first enrolled her in Georgian dancing, then in swimming, but nothing could replace football for Lizi. “I still continued to play football at school all those years,” she recalls. “Then the Georgian Football

Federation’s ‘We Play Strong’ project for girls was starting, and I asked my father to let me participate. The coach, Salome Khubuluri, also talked to him and said that she would be with me, she would take care of me, and my dad couldn’t object. That’s how I went to play in Gori.”

She is now 18 years old, studying in Business and Technology University’s Faculty of Business, and is a player for Kvartali for the second season. Lizi is also a member of the U-19 national team. “I was first called up when I was in the U-17s,” she says. “Do you know what it means to be on the national team? It breaks all stereotypes. I remember my father being against [my playing football] at first, but after that day, he proudly told everyone, ‘My daughter was called up to the national team!’ And since that day, [my parents] have stood by me and supported me. Now everyone cheers me on and praises me: ‘It’s good that you followed your own dreams,’ they say.”

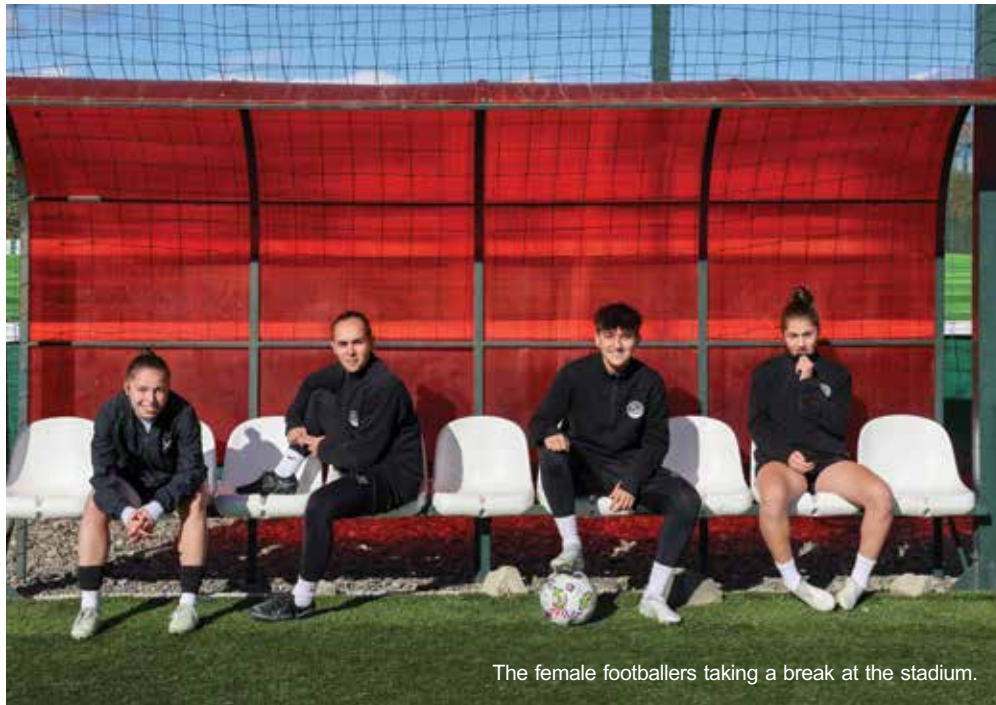
Nini Beridze, another 17-year-old player for Kvartali, also followed her heart towards her goal. At first, she would watch football on TV with her cousins, but then she started playing it herself in the garden and in the school gymnasium with the boys. It was then that the PE teacher, who was also the coach of the Batumi girls’ football team, noticed her. Nini recalls: “He praised me and said, ‘You have special skills, so, if you want, you can join the team.’ Of course, I was very happy! That’s how I started playing, but I

couldn’t tell my parents. I knew they would be against it.”

The truth came out when the teacher called her mother. It was then that her parents discovered that instead of doing her English lessons, Nini was practising football. Despite her parents’ opposition, Nini went on going to football practice. Before participating in her first big tournament, she once again told her family members that she wanted to play football. Her grandmother was the first to support her: “She told my father, ‘Let the child try. She will get bored and stop,’ and that is how they agreed [to me playing]. I will never forget the first moments, the first steps and that entire match. Plus, with my pass, we scored a goal and won the game, so the emotions and excitement of that game have stayed with me to this day.”

Soon after this first tournament, Nini was called up to the U-17 national team. That day, her family saw tears of joy in her eyes for the first time. Her parents realized that football would bring their daughter real happiness. “It happened to me the same way it did to others,” Nini says. “The recruitment was a turning point. From that moment on, [my parents] became fans and still support me.” Nini, who is already a member of the U-19 national team, is also studying sports management at the Georgian State Teaching University of Physical Education and Sport while playing for Kvartali.

The girls now happily reminisce about their stories and say that they have over-



The female footballers taking a break at the stadium.

come stereotypes by pursuing their dreams. “When you first express your desire to play football, you are sure to encounter resistance from the very start. It shouldn’t be like that,” says Nini.

Kvartali Football Club, where Lizi Kankia, Mariam Mamporia, Lizi Gogaladze and Nini Beridze now play, was created in 2016 precisely to interest as many girls as possible in football and, together with them, to break the stereotypes that many of them face in sports. Both Tegeta Holding and its subsidiary, Toyota Center Tegeta, support Kvartali’s players to achieve

that same goal. Tegeta Holding’s care platform, available at <https://tegeta.care/>, allows any volunteer to contribute to the team’s support and be among those people or organizations that aspire to develop women’s football in Georgia.

Tegeta has also established scholarships for the girls of Kvartali. All four of the girls are among them. They say that this support is a great motivator and incentive to do even more – not only for their own careers but also for those little girls who train at the stadium and who dream to be called up to the national team. ■



Tatia Khorbaladze

Head of Strategic Communications at Tegeta Holding:

At Tegeta, we believe that women’s empowerment is essential for achieving sustainable development and eradicating poverty. Strong women contribute to the well-being and productivity of families and communities, as well as improve the future prospects of the next generation. One of our strategic priorities is to reduce gender stereotypes and barriers in professions, so we try to contribute to overcoming this challenge and achieving gender equality, both within and outside the organization, by creating appropriate policies, various projects and inclusive activities.

→ To overcome gender stereotypes, Tegeta Holding is trying to involve more women in the automotive industry. The company currently has a programme for training and employing female mechanics. In collaboration with the online publication AT.ge, Tegeta also implemented the FemmeAuto project, which educated the public about the achievements and importance of women in the automotive industry by sharing the role of women employed in the company – and once again reminding everyone that the profession has no gender.

At the same time, Tegeta supports the participation of women interested in off-road racing in Rally Adventure Georgia and is a sponsor of one of the women’s crews, No. 52. Rally Adventure Georgia is the largest automobile competition in the country. Georgian and foreign female racers participate in the week-long race, driving 1,500 kilometres throughout Georgia. The goal of the rally is to show the public that women can also drive in off-road conditions and that they cope with this difficulty in the best way possible. Another important project is being implemented by Tegeta Holding, together with the neo-university Skillwill and the charitable founda-

tion Charte. Its goal is to increase access to digital professions and economic empowerment for girls living in the regions. Tegeta Holding is funding a seven-month course for 10 female beneficiaries of Charte who are interested in digital professions. After completing their studies, three exemplary participants will have the opportunity to undergo a three-month internship in Tegeta’s information technology and digital marketing departments with the prospect of employment.

Tegeta is also known for engaging in responsible procurement. When thinking about New Year’s gifts for 2024, the company wanted to somehow support women, and this idea led Tegeta to the social enterprise Potteria. For years, Potteria, in addition to supporting traditional Georgian crafts, has been promoting the employment of women in conflict with the law and women who have experienced violence and supporting their integration into society. Tegeta purchased more than 70,000 Georgian lari worth of products from the enterprise for the New Year for more than 2,500 recipients, thereby also contributing to the empowerment of women.