

IN BRIEF

Key Achievements: 2018–2025

WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT
IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS

Photo: UN Women/Tako Robakidze

Women's economic empowerment is increasingly considered a prerequisite for realizing gender equality, strengthening women's agency and achieving sustainable development for all, in line with the aim of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to reduce inequalities and 'leave no one behind'.

The "Women's Economic Empowerment in the South Caucasus" (WEESC) project—funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) and implemented by UN Women across all project phases—has been carried out since 2018. The first and second phases (2018–2024) were led by UN Women Georgia in close partnership with UNDP in Armenia and Azerbaijan. The third phase (2024–2026) continues under UN Women across Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. The project's overarching aim is to ensure that women—particularly those who are poor or socially excluded—are economically empowered and participate meaningfully in relevant decision making processes.

Implementation strategy

The project brings transformative change through a holistic approach, enabling linked interventions at three levels: the grass roots, policies and legislation, and institutions. This is achieved through the consistent dialogue and participation of women so that relevant institutions, policies, legislation and services respond to women's needs and enable them, with strengthened capacities, to empower themselves economically. The project supports capacity development to mainstream gender in relevant laws, policies, programmes and services, making sustainable contributions to women's economic empowerment.



Thea Darbaidze in her garden, Chiauri, Lagodekhi. Photo: UN Women/Tako Robakidze

Project outcomes

Outcome 1: Women, particularly the poor and socially excluded, use skills, economic opportunities, relevant information, networks and support to become farmers/entrepreneurs or to join the formal labour sector in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia.

Outcome 2: Armenia and Georgia implement adequate legislative and policy reforms and frameworks to enable women's economic empowerment.

Outcome 3: The government, public and non-governmental institutions are strengthened to develop and deliver gender-responsive programmes, policies and services for women's economic empowerment in Armenia and Georgia.

How we make a difference: Step by step

Outcome 1: Women, particularly the poor and socially excluded, use skills, economic opportunities, relevant information, networks and support to become farmers/entrepreneurs or to join the formal labour sector in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia (grass-roots level)

Across all three countries, the WEESC project strengthens women's social mobilization and awareness of their economic rights, as well as enhances their skills for self-employment and formal employment. Moreover, in Armenia and Georgia, the project promotes gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) and mobilizes domestic workers. WEESC also provides capacity development and technical support to private sector companies in Armenia and Azerbaijan to promote the effective implementation of the Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs).

Key achievements

- ▶ **2,997 women** in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia have increased their awareness of gender equality and **strengthened their capacities to participate in the economy** (Armenia: 1,022; Azerbaijan: 1,008; Georgia: 967).
- ▶ **796 women** have become self-employed by receiving assets to **increase their incomes from entrepreneurial activities and agricultural production**, including 25 through vocational courses in Georgia (Armenia: 287; Azerbaijan: 168; Georgia: 341).
- ▶ **290 women** across Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia have secured **new or improved employment opportunities** (Armenia: 55; Azerbaijan: 155; Georgia: 80).

Social mobilization efforts: A total of 1,614 women were engaged across Phases I and II.

Self-help group (SHG) development: In total, 101 SHGs have been created, with 79 active by the end of Phase II.

Women in local decision-making: Overall, 592 women across Armenia and Georgia have actively participated in GRB activities to address their socioeconomic needs (Armenia: 179; Georgia: 413).

WEPs signatory companies: A total of 63 companies have become WEPs signatories, with a focus on implementing gender-responsive corporate policies and practices (Armenia: 31; Azerbaijan: 32).

Promotion of the Decent Work Agenda for domestic workers

- ▶ The Association of Nannies and Domestic Workers was formally registered in 2023 in Georgia, with 379 members as of 2025.
- ▶ The association's hotline was made available to domestic workers in Georgia in 2024.
- ▶ The communication campaign on labour rights for domestic workers significantly increased awareness among both domestic workers and the broader society in Georgia.

- ▶ Through advisory workshops, a total of 242 domestic workers in Georgia have enhanced their understanding of their labour rights and of the legislation and pathways for formalizing their work.
- ▶ The new [Employment Service](#) of the Association of Nannies and Domestic Workers became available to domestic workers, helping to improve the process of creating working agreements and standards for nannies and families in August 2025 in Georgia. 41 domestic workers secured new or improved employment in 2025.
- ▶ [Georgia's first Labour Union of Domestic and Care Workers](#) was officially registered in 2025, with 92 members as of 2025, a transformative step towards the formal recognition and protection of care work.
- ▶ An online education and awareness campaign titled '[Decent Work for Domestic Workers](#)' was conducted in Armenia.

"They used to think we wouldn't be able to accomplish anything on our own. Now that we have achieved some early results, we feel more confident and can think about what else we might be able to achieve."

You can often hear in Asureti that the residents have gotten to know one another better over the past few years. Outdoor lighting was installed thanks to women's activism, and the lighting and paving of the roads have illuminated the darkened village, revived the place and made it safe to get around. So today, the locals walk along the historic streets of Asureti in the evenings and often meet up with one another.

"At first, many people in the village thought that we had a material interest [in the improvements]," explains Shorena Metreveli, one of the locals involved in social mobilization. **"They would ask us directly, 'How much money do they pay you?' because they used to think that we wouldn't be able to accomplish anything on our own. Now that we have achieved some early results, we feel more confident and can think about what else we might be able to achieve."**

Source: Excerpt from the UN Women publication "We Women Have Power"



Women in Asureti now able to walk along the streets because, as a result of their activism, the roads have been paved, outdoor lighting has been installed, and travel has become safe. Photo: UN Women/Tako Robakidze

Outcome 2: Armenia and Georgia implement adequate legislative and policy reforms and frameworks to enable women's economic empowerment (policy and legislation level)

The WEESC project supports various national partners in Armenia and Georgia in advancing legislative and regulatory frameworks aligned with international labour standards, emphasizing the collection and utilization of sex-disaggregated data for informed policymaking.

Key achievements in Georgia

- ▶ Supported the approval of the Ministerial Decree on ['Guidelines on Harmful and Hazardous Work for Pregnant, Post-partum and Nursing Women'](#) in 2020, impacting over 230,000 women of reproductive age who are wage employees in Georgia.
- ▶ Introduced changes to the Labour Code of Georgia in 2020 to define 'pay' and establish the principle of equal pay, and enacted a new Law on the Labour Inspection Service to monitor labour rights, including equal pay for equal work. Nearly half a million women have benefited from these amendments to Georgia's Labour Code.
- ▶ Supported Georgia's membership into [the Equal Pay International Coalition \(EPIC\)](#) in 2021, contributing to a slight decline in Georgia's gender pay gap in recent years.
- ▶ Conducted a pilot of the Eurostat Structure of Earnings Survey (SES) in 2024 in partnership with the National Statistics Office of Georgia (GEOSTAT); and in 2025, initiated development of the first full-scale SES to enable a more precise and comprehensive analysis of the gender pay gap.
- ▶ Supported amendments to Georgia's Labour Code in 2022 that eliminated the maximum ceiling of 1,000 Georgian Lari (GEL) for the State-provided maternity benefit. Additionally, in 2023, the State-provided maternity benefit was doubled through a Ministerial Decree, and teachers' maternity leave was aligned with the standard for public servants, providing 100 per cent of their salary for six months.
- ▶ Introduced an occupational minimum wage in 2023 for specific positions within State-funded healthcare facilities.
- ▶ Provided technical support to the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia in 2024 to integrate strategically important gender considerations into the 2024–2028 Employment Strategy.

Key achievements in Armenia

- ▶ Conducted a Gender Impact Assessment of Armenia's 2019–2023 Gender Strategy to inform the development of the 2025–2028 Gender Strategy, with a strong focus on economic empowerment.
- ▶ Provided technical support to the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of Armenia in 2023 on the Employment Strategy and broader social strategy, resulting in the incorporation of recommendations.
- ▶ Supported Armenia's ratification of the ILO Violence and Harassment Convention (No. 190) in 2025.

Advancing women's economic empowerment through maternity and parental leave reform in Georgia

UN Women, in partnership with the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia, has advocated for enhanced maternity, paternity and parental leave policies since 2020. This collaboration included a Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) of the ILO Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183). The RIA identified two major issues: (1) Georgian labour legislation did not ensure adequate income for mothers during paid maternity leave; and (2) there was inequality in terms of maternity benefits between different workers' groups, notably between civil servants and other sectors, with civil servants being provided 100 per cent of their salary for six months, while everyone else is entitled to GEL 1,000 for the whole duration of leave (six months) from the State. This RIA allowed UN Women to refine its advocacy messages as well as its technical support to the Government of Georgia to amend the Labour Code to accommodate the change. At the end of 2022, the Labour Code was amended to remove any reference to the amount of maximum eligible compensation from the State (GEL 1,000). In February 2023, Georgia doubled the amount of compensation for maternity, parental, newborn adoption and additional parental leave for formally employed women—from GEL 1,000 (approx. USD 380) to GEL 2,000 (approx. USD 760).

This increase raised the State budget allocation for this benefit from GEL 15 million (approx. USD 5.6 million) to GEL 30 million (approx. USD 11.2 million). It is estimated that about 14,000 women benefited from this provision in 2023, and around the same number will also benefit in the coming years.

Knowledge of action: Key research papers driving policy change

- [Regulatory Impact Assessment of ILO C183 - Maternity Protection Convention in Georgia](#)
- [Regulatory Impact Assessment of ILO C183 - Maternity Protection Convention in Armenia](#)
- [Regulatory Impact Assessment of ILO C156 - Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention in Georgia](#)
- [Regulatory Impact Assessment of ILO C156 - Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention in Armenia](#)
- [Assessment of the Social Protection System in Georgia](#)
- [Assessment of the Social Protection Floor in Armenia](#)
- [Regulatory Impact Assessment of ILO C189 - Domestic Workers Convention in Georgia](#)
- [Invisible Hands: Formalization of Domestic Work in Georgia](#)
- [Analysis of the Gender Pay Gap and Gender Inequality in the Labour Market in Georgia](#)
- [Analysis of the Gender Pay Gap and Gender Inequality in the Labour Market in Armenia](#)
- [Assessment of the Models for the Implementation of the Equal Pay Review and Reporting \(EPRR\) Methodology in Georgia](#)
- [How to Eliminate the Gender Pay Gap in Georgia](#)

Outcome 3: The government, public and non-governmental institutions are strengthened to develop and deliver gender-responsive programmes, policies and services for women's economic empowerment in Armenia and Georgia (institutional level)

The WEESC project supports State entities in developing and delivering gender-responsive programmes, policies and services for women's economic empowerment in Armenia and Georgia, aligning with international best practices and lessons learned.

Key achievements in Georgia

- ▶ Enhanced women's access to finance through implementation of the [first stand-alone programme for women](#) by the Rural Development Agency in 2022 and the transition of the programme from a one-time effort to an institutionalized initiative, managed by the State in Georgia.
- ▶ Developed the Equal Pay Review and Reporting (EPRR) Methodology and Instructions to enable the Labour Inspection Office to assess equal pay for equal work at workplaces, aiming to reduce the gender pay gap in Georgia.
- ▶ Developed [guidelines](#), checklists and an e-course for the Labour Inspection Office of Georgia to assess harmful and hazardous work conditions for pregnant, post-partum and nursing women.
- ▶ Institutionalized UN Women's [Gender and Economics course](#) for bachelor's degree students at the International School of Economics at Tbilisi State University in 2024.
- ▶ Supported the adoption of the Gender Equality Strategy and Action Plan at the Rural Development Agency in 2022 and at the Environmental Information and Education Centre in 2024.
- ▶ Integrated gender equality priorities into the State Employment Support Agency's (SESA) two-year action plan in 2024, and developed and institutionalized the Gender-Aware Employment Consulting Guideline in 2025.
- ▶ Strengthened the capacity of GEOSTAT to develop and make available [sex-disaggregated data](#), regularly calculate and monitor [the adjusted gender pay](#) gap using internationally recognized methodology and launch [the Georgia Time Use Survey \(TUS\)](#) in 2022.

Key achievements in Armenia

- ▶ Launched a communications campaign by the Health and Labour Inspection Body of the Republic of Armenia in 2024 focused on women's labour rights, including targeted awareness-raising efforts addressing the rights of women and workers with family responsibilities, as well as the obligations of employers.
- ▶ Conducted data collection in 2023 for the Armenia Time Use Survey (TUS), led by the Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia (ARMSTAT) in cooperation with the UN Women Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia.
- ▶ Supported the adoption of the 2025–2028 National Gender Strategy and Action Plan in 2025 at the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, with women's economic empowerment embedded as a central pillar.



Naira Bolkvadze, one of the beneficiaries of the Greenhouse Pilot Programme for Women, in her greenhouse in Maradisi, Marneuli. Photo: UN Women/Tako Robakidze

Supporting Georgian women farmers' access to finance through implementation of the first stand-alone support programme for women and its transition from a one-time effort to an institutionalized State-managed initiative

In 2022, Georgia launched an innovative pilot programme aimed at empowering women through greenhouse initiatives, established in partnership with UN Women and the Rural Development Agency (RDA). Following the successful implementation of the first stand-alone Greenhouse Pilot Programme in Marneuli and Lagodekhi municipalities, the RDA expanded its support to women farmers in Chkhorotsku, Vani and Chokhatauri municipalities. This new phase of the programme was fully funded by State resources.

Under the initial pilot in Marneuli and Lagodekhi, 37 women were financed. In the new municipalities of Chkhorotsku, Vani and Chokhatauri, contracts have been awarded to 63 women, marking a significant step forward in economic empowerment and sustainability efforts.

Knowledge of action: Key research papers driving policy change

- ▶ [Time Use Survey in Georgia 2020–2021](#)
- ▶ [Gender Impact Assessment of the State Programme Plant the Future](#)
- ▶ [We Women Have Power](#)

UN Women exists to advance women's rights, gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. As the lead UN entity on gender equality, we shift laws, institutions, social behaviours and services to close the gender gap and build an equal world for all women and girls. We keep the rights of women and girls at the centre of global progress – always, everywhere. Because gender equality is not just what we do. It is who we are.

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