



# **WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT PRINCIPLES IN GEORGIA:**

STORIES OF CHANGE,  
STORIES OF SUCCESS,  
STORIES OF INSPIRATION

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**WOMEN'S  
EMPOWERMENT  
PRINCIPLES**

Established by UN Women and the  
UN Global Compact Office



Norwegian Ministry  
of Foreign Affairs



UN Women is the UN organization dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. A global champion for women and girls, UN Women was established to accelerate progress on meeting their needs worldwide.

UN Women supports UN Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes and services needed to implement these standards. It stands behind women's equal participation in all aspects of life, focusing on five priority areas: increasing women's leadership and participation; ending violence against women; engaging women in all aspects of peace and security processes; enhancing women's economic empowerment; and making gender equality central to national development planning and budgeting. UN Women also coordinates and promotes the UN system's work in advancing gender equality.

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# OVERVIEW

The Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs) are a set of principles offering guidance to businesses on how to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in the workplace, marketplace and community. Established by the UN Global Compact and UN Women, the WEPs are informed by international labour and human rights standards and are grounded in the recognition that businesses have a stake in, and a responsibility for, gender equality and women's empowerment.

UN Women, with the support of the Norwegian Ministry for Foreign Affairs, implemented the project "A Joint Action for Women's Economic Empowerment in Georgia" (JAWGE) from 2017 to 2020 to empower women economically and strengthen the private sector's engagement in women's economic empowerment activities. The key tool utilized in this work is the WEPs. Overall, the project increased the private sector's understanding of the gender dimensions of corporate sustainability and strengthened the capacities of 80 companies to implement the WEPs.

As the project draws to an end, we are pleased to share with you stories of success and inspiration of WEPs signatory companies in Georgia that demonstrated exemplary practices of empowering women, brought change to corporate culture, achieved inclusive growth and considered equality as both the right thing to do and good for business.

Many companies were the first to respond to the COVID-19 crisis. Not only did they continue operating, maintaining staff and remunerating workers fully but they also took a leading role in the response effort by helping their employees, women entrepreneurs, single mothers and victims of domestic violence.

We hope that the promising practices featured in this booklet will inspire other companies in Georgia and elsewhere to join the WEPs movement and make women's empowerment a reality in 2021 and beyond.

**Read our stories here!**

# THE SEVEN WEPs EXPLAINED



**Principle 1: Establish high-level corporate leadership for gender equality.** By stressing the leadership's role, this principle provides a basis for the successful implementation of all seven principles. The principle advises corporate leaders to offer consistent leadership at every level of the organization, establish company goals for achieving equality and ensure these goals will be reached.



**Principle 2: Treat all women and men fairly at work – respect and support human rights and non-discrimination.** This principle focuses attention to equal wages, benefits, access to childcare and women's participation in decision-making at all levels and across all business areas. All contribute to mutual respect and support for non-discrimination in the workforce.



**Principle 3: Ensure the health, safety and well-being of all women and men workers. It is the employer's obligation to create healthy and safe working environments.** This includes ensuring safety when working with hazardous materials and respecting and providing time off for employees' medical care, in addition to ensuring freedom from violence through designing and implementing a zero-tolerance policy on sexual harassment.



**Principle 4: Promote education, training and professional development for women.** This can be achieved by encouraging women to enter non-traditional jobs and by expanding women's access to education, skills development programmes and networking opportunities. This is not only important for the personal development of employees but also critical in empowering the corporation.



**Principle 5: Implement enterprise development, supply chain and marketing practices that empower women.** This principle expands the company's efforts towards women's empowerment beyond the workplace. It advises companies to expand business relationships to women entrepreneurs, respect women in the company's marketing materials and ensure that company products, services and facilities are not used for human trafficking and/or labour or sexual exploitation.



**Principle 6: Promote equality through community initiatives and advocacy.** It is important for corporations to share their experiences, successes and knowledge with the wider public and to assume a pioneering role in emphasizing the significance of gender equality. Each corporation can play a crucial role in achieving gender equality and women's empowerment through community projects as well as through other initiatives such as grant programmes.



**Principle 7: Measure and publicly report on progress to achieve gender equality.** This principle stresses the importance of accountability and transparency. Companies are advised to make their policies public, establish benchmarks that quantify the inclusion of women at all levels, and measure and report on progress.

## CRYSTAL – SUPPORTING FEMALE ENTREPRENEURS AND EMPLOYEES

Increasing women's access to financial services remains a strong business opportunity. Globally, women are less likely than men to have access to financial institutions or have a bank account. While 65 per cent of men report having an account at a formal financial institution, only 58 per cent of women report the same.<sup>1</sup> Not only does a lack of access limit these women's economic potential, but it hampers the well-being of their families and communities as well. Research shows that small and medium-sized enterprises run by women are better at reinvesting profits in the business, investing in their families' health and education, and strengthening local communities.<sup>2</sup>

Crystal, a financial inclusion organization, was one of the first companies that joined the WEPS movement in Georgia in 2016. It has been taking several steps to promote gender equality ever since. "There is more than enough evidence that promoting gender equality and women's empowerment is not just the right thing to do, but it is also a smart business decision, and at Crystal we deeply believe in it," notes CEO Ilia Revia.

Aligned with the implementation of Principle 5 and to support women's access to finance, the company announced the issuance of Women's Corporate Bonds worth GEL 15 million (more than USD 5 million) for the economic development of thousands of female customers, providing them with financial products and equal access to capital in order to grow their small businesses. So far, that meant developing special proposals for female entrepreneurs and reducing their credit service fees by 5 per cent. As a result, more than 2,300 women received loans that amounted to a total of GEL 4.7 million (more than USD 1.5 million).

Crystal has also raised the bar on getting the best value from financial donations to women's communities and achieving greater social impact. Through a partnership with the TASO Foundation, Crystal implemented three community projects: potable water was provided to 25 households in Tsageri municipality; a medical ambulatory was opened in the village of Guliani in Lanchkhuti, Guria; and a public library in the village of Pipileti in Oni, Racha saw the light of day.

Companies have been struggling to embrace employee well-being in the workplace for a long time now. Historically, well-being initiatives were not considered so important, nor were they a priority for many employers. However, things are changing. The COVID-19 pandemic and the related restrictions are having a significant impact on employees' well-being. Since the COVID-19 pandemic arrived in Georgia, Crystal started planning well-being initiatives. The company surveyed employees to find out what are their real needs during the pandemic. Based on the survey results, Crystal started delivering webinars and trainings to increase employee awareness of the new epidemiological regulations – but mostly to work on employee happiness, engagement and satisfaction.

Maya Kobalia, Head of the Environmental and Social Division at Crystal, explains what the company gained from caring about and responding to employees' happiness, engagement and expectations, from the corporate responsibility and sustainability point of view: "It's valuable that during the crisis, many companies are getting a better understanding that employee well-being encompasses much more than just physical health. Even though it may not be easy to become an employee-centric company and put your people first, these unprecedented times have shown us that this approach is an absolute must! When people have a positive sense of well-being at work, they are able to develop their potential, be productive and creative, build positive relationships, better cope with stress, make meaningful contributions and take better care of their customers."

Within the framework of the U.S. Women's Global Development and Prosperity Initiative and with the financial support of USAID/Georgia, the School for Young Entrepreneurs programme has been extended until 2024. Through YES-Georgia (the Supporting Youth and Women Entrepreneurship in Georgia programme), in 2020, Crystal was able to promote personal growth, social-economic empowerment, business/finance management and awareness-raising activities for 794 women. Moreover, 69 top business projects of the USAID YES-Georgia programme were provided with full funding to implement their start-ups, and 64 female participants were trained in the School for Young Entrepreneurs. Buzz

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1 Asli Demircug-Kunt and others, "The Global Findex Database 2014: Measuring Financial Inclusion around the World", Policy Research Working Paper, No. 7255 (Washington, D.C., World Bank, 2015). Available at <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/187761468179367706/pdf/WPS7255.pdf>.

2 UN Women, *Progress of the World's Women 2015-2016: Transforming Economies, Realizing Rights* (2015). Available at [http://progress.unwomen.org/en/2015/pdf/UNW\\_progressreport.pdf](http://progress.unwomen.org/en/2015/pdf/UNW_progressreport.pdf).

Georgia, a new solely women-oriented component of USAID YES-Georgia, provided virtual training to more than 400 women from all over Georgia in personal growth, the importance of self-esteem and entrepreneurship.

After receiving training in mentorship from UN Women's partner Creative Development Center (CDC) in 2019, Crystal took steps to implement Principle 4 and initiated a workplace mentorship programme for women employees.<sup>3</sup> The programme is considered a valuable tool in improving employee retention and productivity as well as advancing workplace diversity and inclusion and increasing performance. A total of 107 female employees were promoted in the company in 2020.



3 For a video about the programme, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nF-1haalH2g>.



## MICRO BUSINESS CAPITAL - CLOSING THE GAP IN WOMEN'S FINANCIAL LITERACY AND RESETTling EMPLOYEES' CONCEPT OF WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Sentiments around “work-life balance” have always been divided. A financial service organization, Micro Business Capital (MBC), started contributing to the well-being of its employees by teaching them how to master a work-life balance and prioritize the various aspects of their lives, whether professional or personal, by **notifying the employees of the end of business at 6:30 o'clock sharp every day**. “We are operating in an unimaginably competitive and demanding work environment, so how well we balance aspects of our work and lives, determines our success and productivity,” notes Eter Chachibaia, Director of Operations at MBC.

The company's WEPs journey included almost all seven principles, though Principles 2, 3 and 5 deserve particular attention. MBC was one of the first companies to respond to the COVID-19 challenges by fully equipping its front-line employees and consumers with facial masks purchased from a vulnerable woman, a single mother who had recovered from family-based violence.

As COVID-19 widened gender gaps and even increased cases of family-based violence, MBC started taking actions to support victims of violence. The company launched a new support programme/initiative to provide help to victims of violence to recover from trauma. The first such assistance was offered to a woman from a shelter; she received financial support needed to rent an apartment when leaving the temporary housing.

During the pandemic-induced lockdown, MBC surveyed employees' well-being and inquired about their specific needs. This time, another support mechanism, the “Special Financial Support Fund”, was established exclusively for MBC employees and their family members. The first seven families supported by the company were from the regions. In line with Principle 6 and through its “Financial Advisor” initiative, MBC trained women residing in the villages of Jgali and Muzhava in Samegrelo's highlands (western Georgia) and beneficiaries of the TASO Foundation in financial literacy and business plan writing in 2019. The Financial Advisor service is a fully funded social project initiated by MBC to increase the level of financial literacy of the population, mainly in rural areas.

As a member of the Pro-Bono Network of Georgia, MBC is actively supporting women entrepreneurs in dealing with communications and branding. Through its “MBC Friend” initiative, female entrepreneurs are assisted in branding and content boosting. In addition, women probationers and former prisoners working at the social enterprise Poteria received trainings in communications strategies and social media presence.

The company fully acknowledges the importance of the commitments undertaken by signing the WEPs as well as the role it has to play in promoting gender equality among the private sector and stakeholders. By sharing information about gender equality work and making regular statements about the importance of women's participation in the economy, MBC encourages other companies to join the WEPs community. According to Gia Petriashvili, company CEO, “Women entrepreneurs are enhancing the living standards of their households and contributing to the development of the country's economy.”



## LAB – PROVIDING ACCESS TO TECHNOLOGIES TO WOMEN AND GIRLS DURING COVID-19

Global research has proved that furthering gender equality and gender diversity helps business perform better, both in terms of productivity and output and in improving the working conditions of all employees.

After joining the WEPs in 2019, the IT company LAB invested in improving the working conditions for women and men. The company introduced gender-sensitive policies in the workplace aimed at attracting and retaining talent as well as raising the bar on preventing gender-based inequalities. Anna Katchiuri, Executive Manager of LAB, explains: “Gender equality and women’s economic empowerment is our company’s headline. We believe that companies with more equal representation of women and men in both the workforce and in management positions have better insights into their consumers’ needs and preferences.”

With the aim of running a responsible business based on universal human rights and non-discrimination, the company has communicated to the employees and stakeholders its commitment to the WEPs and has trained its employees on the aspects of equality and women’s empowerment. LAB declared zero tolerance for sexual harassment in the workplace, established a reporting mechanism and trained its employees in sexual harassment prevention issues.

LAB is signaling its obligation to the WEPs agenda by also empowering women outside the workplace.

Facing the COVID-19 pandemic, girls and women residing in the regions are experiencing greater difficulty accessing vital services and opportunities in education and employment. Having access to technologies has become even more important because a lot of information and skills-building opportunities, and even markets, are only accessible online. LAB provided free Internet packages for two months to ensure the provision of uninterrupted online education for 50 female students who live in rural locales and were studying at Business and Technology University.

In collaboration with the non-governmental organization TASO Foundation, nine women from different regions of Georgia were trained and certified by LAB in sales management, digital marketing, budgeting and related topics. The women used the lockdown period effectively and acquired new skills in online sales management.

In 2020 LAB hosted an online event “Women in IT” to scale up young women’s and girls’ participation in IT sector. During the event representatives from private and NGO sectors discussed women’s role in technology, including challenges and opportunities, and how women can change IT world.





## GEORGIAN AUDIT COMPANY – SHARING ITS EXPERIENCE TO SUPPORT FEMALE ENTREPRENEURS

Georgian Audit Company (GAC) is a fully women-staffed company that is run and owned by a woman. “I always believed that women should be empowered to fully participate in the economy, so I established a company, hired women and work to help women out there,” explains company CEO Tea Aduashvili.

After joining the WEPs in 2020, the company decided to focus on supporting women entrepreneurs, start-uppers and survivors of domestic violence. Training, counselling and legal services are some of the measures that GAC offered to women-owned SMEs to tackle gender inequalities in Georgia’s entrepreneurial sector.

Prior to the onset of COVID-19, GAC started implementing Principle 2 by revising policy documents and introducing amendments to its employment and service contracts. As a trailblazing company implementing solutions to promote women’s economic inclusion and support women entrepreneurs during the hard times of COVID-19, GAC provided pro-bono support to a total of 29 women. Depending on each woman’s needs, the support included free accounting services, consultations and mentoring on accounting and taxation issues and support in completing tax declaration forms.

As the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing gender inequalities, the company is taking further actions to ensure the economic inclusion and social well-being of women. This includes providing vocational training, which has already benefited a female victim of family-based violence.

“We are proud to talk about our WEPs experience, as our work is changing the lives of women. Supporting women is not only good for women, it’s good for business and the economy,” Ms. Aduashvili asserts.



## TERABANK – SUPPORTING CURRENT AND FUTURE FEMALE CUSTOMERS TO THRIVE

Communication and knowledge dissemination are important WEPs tools for promoting women in business and in the community. Although women play an active role in society, prevailing stereotypes tend to minimize women's contribution. Terabank in Georgia joined the WEPs in 2019. With a female CEO and women comprising more than 30 per cent of its management board, the company communicates a vision and commitment to gender equality and fostering business practices that empower women economically.

Since signing on to the WEPs, the company has promoted women entrepreneurs by creating inclusive business models and investing in women's economic empowerment. After exploring the business needs of small and medium-scale entrepreneurs in Georgia, mainly in the hospitality industry, Terabank identified communications and branding as the main bottlenecks for businesses. To address this problem, full packages of communication materials, including a brand name, logo, visual materials, brand history and concept, were developed for selected women-led businesses. In partnership with UN Women and the communications company Windfor's, Terabank also produced videos to support women entrepreneurs in promoting their businesses and to popularize the WEPs among the private sector in Georgia.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Terabank explored the needs of its banking clients – entrepreneurs – and, so far, has already provided trainings in e-commerce and branding, marketing and strategic communications services to 50 companies, of which 42 per cent are owned or managed by women.

The recent epidemiological developments assert that the working world is changing even faster than before – and women are changing with it. More women have started using media and digital technologies to learn, grow, promote their business and even sell their products. They are asserting their right to develop personally and professionally and certainly are not conforming to stereotypes.

“We want to make sure that what women entrepreneurs choose as a communications concept for their business resonates with their ambitions and aspirations perfectly. We helped them uncover business-focused content and preferences for advertising their products,” remarks Sophia Jugeli, Chief Financial Officer of Terabank.



## EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY – PROMOTING WOMEN’S LEADERSHIP TO FOSTER GENDER EQUALITY

Thirty-seven women CEOs lead Fortune 500 companies today, compared to only one in 1998. But this is a mere 7.4 per cent of all CEOs on the list.<sup>4</sup> Only in the past four years has the growth of women in these roles showed a general upward trend.

If one is asking how women assuming positions of leadership and decision-making can influence gender equality, including by setting the right priorities and allocating resources, European University based in Tbilisi can share its own experience. Women’s high-level leadership helps European University build better brand loyalty and sends strong signals that the company is progressive, recognizes merit and provides equal opportunities for women’s career advancement.

COVID-related school closures required the transition towards using digital technologies, particularly by teachers. European University responded to the emerging need of equipping educators with new pedagogical technologies and digital skills by providing trainings to teachers, tutors and lecturers on digital teaching and learning methods, allowing academic personnel to progress smoothly and uninterrupted in academic processes. Initially 10 trainers were trained with the purpose of further providing training to 100 women educators of different age groups and backgrounds to help them master various digital resources, online platforms, and how to upload and download educational resources. During the pandemic period, the Innovative Education and Research Institute of European University also responded to the needs of women entrepreneurs and trained them in establishing organizational structure, developing effective business strategies, managing risks and using digital technologies in organization management, among other skills. Women farmers and entrepreneurs were also provided with the opportunity to obtain pro-bono consulting and coaching in legal aspects of business management, such as dealing with contractual obligations during a force majeure event.

The university systematically carries out information campaigns for women and recruitment campaigns of upper-secondary schoolgirls about the prospects of education, women’s rights, gender equality and the importance of women’s empowerment.

The WEPs helped the company understand that the university can be more than a space in which people work or study. In many ways, it is a home away from home for many employees and students where they spend most hours of the day. For people to do their best work, the space should provide areas that can meet various needs and encourage inspiration, creativity and productivity.

As many of the university’s employees and students have small children, it became obvious that providing healthier work-life benefits could be highly valued by the vast majority of the university community. The idea of creating a space for small kids in the university was very well received.



4 See <https://fortune.com/2020/05/18/women-ceos-fortune-500-2020/>.



## KANT'S ACADEMY – STRENGTHENING WOMEN'S VOICES THROUGH EDUCATION

The Education 2030 Agenda recognizes that gender equality requires an approach that ensures equal access to complete education cycles. Poverty, geographical isolation, minority status, disability, early marriage, gender-based violence and other traditional attitudes about the status and role of women are among the many obstacles that Kant's Academy assumes prevent women and girls from fully exercising their right to participate in, complete and benefit from education. "The academy is becoming more and more sensitive to women's issues," states Marekhi Gvaramadze, co-founder of Kant's Academy. "Female empowerment is now a priority direction for us. As an educational institution, we believe we can make transformational changes in girls' and women's lives."

As an education platform working with Georgia's youth since 2015 to enrich their emotional intellect and critical thinking, Kant's Academy rapidly responded to the COVID-19 pandemic by starting pro-bono work with adolescent groups on stress management and personal and professional development. In total, 1,500 young people were trained throughout Georgia. The work with youth in the regions included promoting strategies of resilience, empowerment, personal growth and peer-to-peer education. Female participation prevailed, comprising up to 70 per cent.

Kant's Academy also marked the 75th anniversary of the United Nations with a campaign that included talks on gender equality and women's rights. In addition, a series of coaching and capacity-building sessions on personal growth was delivered to almost 200 women from the regions of Kakheti and Kvemo Kartli.

The academy has also launched a training course on stress management techniques with school-age kids and their parents in response to pandemic-related problems. Kant's Academy continues implementing a parental coaching programme to improve communication between parents and their children and to help them cope with stressful environments and manage their emotions.

For the women from the Samtskhe-Javakheti villages of Sviri and Toloshi, the company carried out several workshops on motivation, target setting, career development and professional orientation, including CV writing and job interview techniques. Workshops and meetings with rural women included the topics of leadership, women leaders, self-empowerment and the importance of brand marketing and effective communication.

Kant's Academy is also making an effort to empower and support the skills development of employees inside the company through a mentoring programme, with a set of six mentor-mentee pairs. The aim is to help the employees build skills in organization management and support their personal development. The implemented activities are mostly aligned with Principle 4 and are aimed at empowering women employees.

After joining the WEPs family, the popular education platform started promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. Along with actions taken inside the company, such as adapting policy documents and conducting an internal gender audit, the academy started practicing gender-sensitive procurement, starting with signing three contracts with women-owned vendors and service providers.



## MTAVARI CHANNEL – ASPIRING TO BECOME A GENDER-SENSITIVE BROADCASTER

Mtavari Channel is the first broadcaster in Georgia that has decided, with the help of the WEPs, to empower and sensitize both men and women producers, content developers and journalists on gender equality. The aim is to make quality programmes that systematically take gender into account.

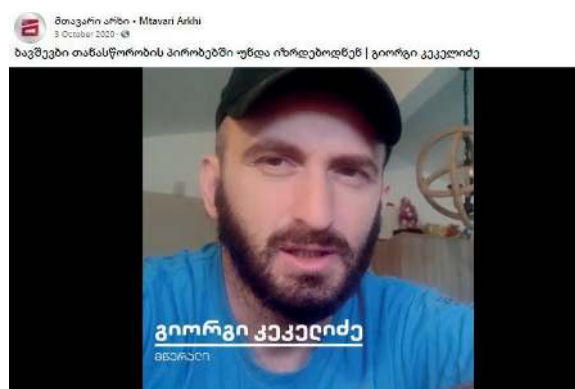
“The way that women and men are presented and represented in broadcasts can either break prevailing societal stereotypes or reinforce them. Compared to other businesses, TV can reach the widest audience possible,” notes Tamta Muradashvili, Director of Mtavari Channel. “We are proud to be a pioneer broadcaster that plays a very important role in advocating for gender equality, challenging stereotypes and changing attitudes and perceptions. The content we produce can really contribute to social transformation.”

Since joining the WEPs, the company has been very enthusiastic about revealing gender inequalities in the professional practice of staff both during production and in programming, with respect to the choice of content and people interviewed. Often, broadcasts are designed based on the premise that the intended audience is uniform. But as audiences are diverse, programmes should therefore be responsive to their varying expectations.

UN Women supported the company by advising on its internal policy documents, establishing preventive measures against sexual harassment and training staff in gender equality and women’s empowerment. During the COVID-19 lockdown in early 2020, the company wanted to contribute by addressing the increased threat of family-based violence. Mtavari produced and showed during primetime a PSA on violence against women, which included contact information for various support services available.

After hiring women on operator and driver positions, Mtavari also initiated a campaign to promote gender equality by printing T-shirts featuring boys as journalists and girls as camera operators to break the stereotypes associated with the jobs appropriate for men and women. A new broadcast, “Her Story”, was also made to familiarize the audience with feminism and promote positive messages on women’s empowerment. Also, a major part of the broadcast “Other Nanuka” is devoted to women’s stories.

Mtavari Channel dedicated its social network and morning broadcast to the new project “Toloba”, which was launched by three women, Sopho Liluashvili, Tamta Muradashvili and Teona Chemia. The aim of the project is to present strong women to the audience and to raise issues such as feminism, gender equality and women’s empowerment for public discussion.





## BTU STRENGTHENS FEMTECH TOGETHER WITH LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS

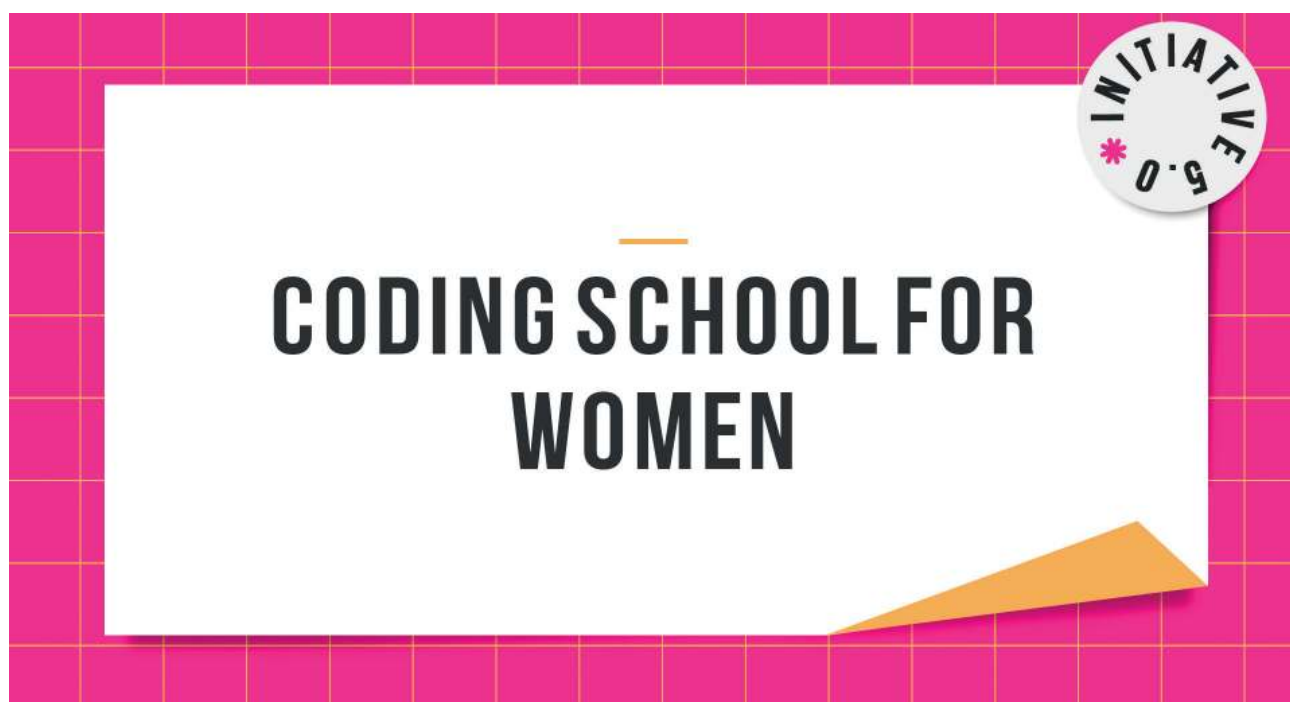
When one woman helps another, amazing things can happen. Professional careers leap forward. That is what “Women in Technology” is all about. Business and Technology University (BTU) is a professional institution for women in the technology industry that seeks to address the unique challenges women are facing. Every year, the university suggests education and training programmes exclusively for women. Nino Enukidze, Rector of BTU, supports women entering a man’s world, saying, “No matter where girls are in their professional development, or what technology-related field they are in, our university offers girls and women a broad range of support, programmes and resources to advance women in technology from the classroom to the boardroom.”

BTU has recently launched “5.0 Initiative” that aims to strengthen the digital economy in Georgia. Through this initiative BTU strives to attain domination in the region and promotes integration of technology in advance sectors. In collaboration with local and international partners, BTU implements large-scale projects in various prominent sectors, including FEMTECH and carries out multiple projects on reinforcing women in technology and programming and increasing the level of their digital literacy. The flagship partnership of BTU and Women in Tech (a global movement to enhance women’s role in technologies) offers a sound platform for implementing different projects that equip women with digital skills and open new avenues in the world of technology. BTU has a strong focus on engaging young women from the regions.

The company has launched three rounds of its Coding School for Women and trained up to 60 girls and women, including those from the regions. The training provided a unique opportunity for female students to master information technologies, artificial intelligence and web design. The goal of the project was to enhance the role and increase the number of women in the field of technology, with a focus on women aspiring to study information and communications technology (ICT). With this initiative, BTU made its first attempt at scaling up women’s participation in ICT, diversifying the workforce in the tech industry and, more importantly, increasing employment opportunities for women. The project turned out to be very successful and popular among girls and women.

The university also created an online platform for Women in Technology, podcasts and tutorials for educational and awareness-raising purposes, as well as organized job fairs to place female students in ICT-related careers.

With the support of the U.S. Embassy in Georgia, BTU organized three regional camps for high school students to inform youth from Batumi, Kutaisi and Telavi about tech, to nurture their talent and to establish a strong community of women in technology. Mentoring sessions included those on leadership and motivation that can be applied to both their personal and professional lives.



## SOPLIDAN.GE – SUPPORTING WOMEN’S USE OF E-COMMERCE STRATEGIES

Soplidan.ge is a women-led digital platform that directly connects women farmers to information and buyers. Established in 2015, the company decided to feature quality agricultural produce online and support customers by making buying and selling easier through e-commerce.

“By supporting other women producers, women contribute to their economic empowerment,” remarks Natia Ninikelashvili, founder of Soplidan.ge. “Empowered women can easily help other women grow. All together, they make a chain that strengthens our economy.”

It is well established that women make most consumer spending decisions. After signing the WEPs, the Soplidan.ge team figured out that consumers may prefer to buy from women producers exclusively. By adding a separate product category – “Produced by Women” – the company has made identifying and buying from women producers easier.

The company also makes a conscious effort to attract more buyers to the women-produced products, in this way boosting not only their own sales but also the sales of the women producers. Together with UN Women, the company has disseminated stories about the women behind many of the products to shed light on the human side of the industry. The stories disrupt the common misconception that farmers are men and reveal women’s contributions to agriculture.

Being a conscious consumer is one of the best ways to invest in women. For women and men who want to support other women, Soplidan.ge accumulates both products and people on a single platform to make it easier to shop with intention.



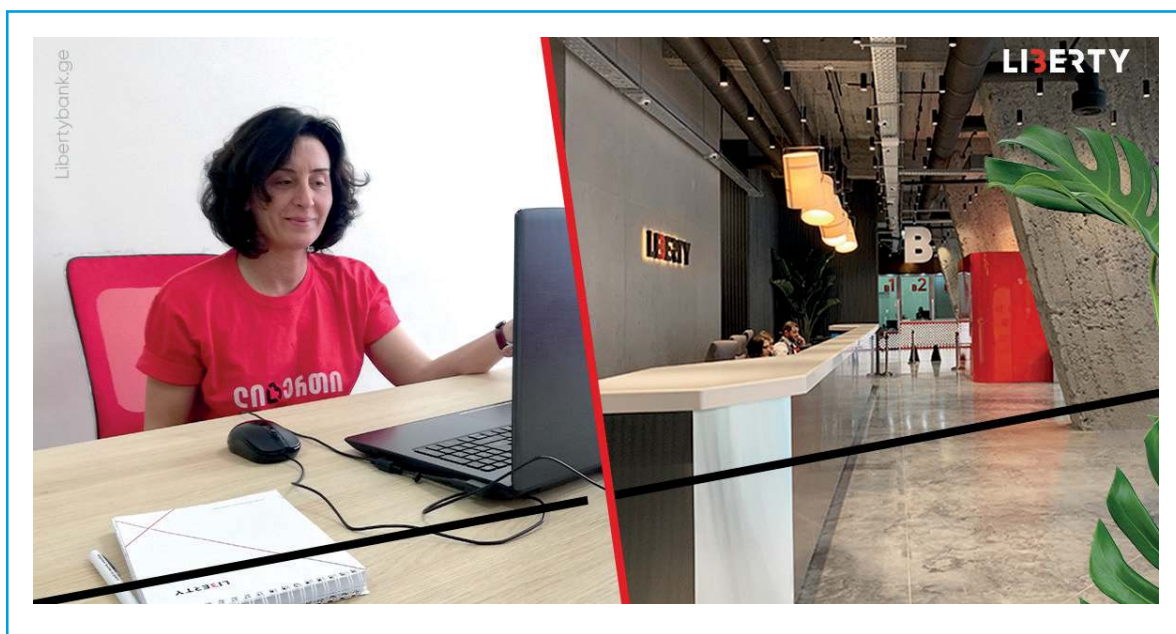
## LIBERTY BANK – CHAMPIONING WOMEN’S EMPOWERMENT THROUGH TRAINING AND EDUCATION

In the context of a “knowledge society”, the empowerment of women is understood as the process of building their abilities and skills. Those abilities and skills then help women build capacity and make informed decisions to overcome social and institutional barriers and strengthen their participation in economic and political processes for the overall improvement to their quality of life.

“Education is the key factor for women’s empowerment, prosperity, development and welfare,” asserts Nino Chikhladze, Head of the Human Resources Department. “In order to fight against the socially constructed gender biases, women have to swim against the system, and that requires more strength. Such strength comes from the process of empowerment, and empowerment will come from education. Hence, it is of utmost importance to raise the level of education among women.”

Liberty Bank signed the WEPs at the end of 2019 and began with implementing Principle 4. The company has since developed an online training platform for women entrepreneurs (via Skype) on the topics of negotiations, basic tools of business management, marketing and sales strategies. The training series was provided to women entrepreneurs and farmers selected from the pool of beneficiaries cooperating with the TASO Foundation.

As women better navigate every aspect of the economy and access a wider range of job opportunities, they can find sources of income and improve their social standing. Liberty Bank helps women be considered as a qualified workforce that has the potential to fully transform the developing economy of Georgia.





## GEPRA – USING TRAINING AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP TO EMPOWER WOMEN AND REDUCE INEQUALITIES

Companies that signed the WEPs are making commitments to foster business practices that empower women and carry out meaningful and responsible communication. They can play an important role in advocating for gender equality, challenging stereotypes and changing attitudes and beliefs through gender-sensitive communication.

Gepra was one of the pioneer companies that joined the WEPs movement as early as 2016. After signing on to the WEPs, the company developed its WEPs implementation action plan, trained the staff in gender equality and prevention of sexual harassment, and launched mentoring programme to promote women's education and professional development. Specializing in PR, marketing communications and strategic communications, Gepra facilitated women's empowerment by providing training in establishing personal business models, marketing, communications and various other services they required.

Gepra's employees undertook an online training course in preventing sexual harassment in the workplace, and the company adopted a sexual harassment complaints mechanism. Gepra is also continuously categorizing the suppliers according to gender in order to support women producers and service providers.

In 2020, Gepra was also actively engaged in the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence and assisted UN Women Georgia in designing visual materials for use during the campaign that were dedicated to ending violence against women.

During the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown period, Gepra took a step towards promoting women's economic empowerment in the world of entrepreneurship and business by launching online webinars in various areas of expertise. The first COVID-19-relevant initiative was the training of women farmers and women entrepreneurs in post-crisis communications that aimed at equipping participants with the necessary skills of promoting their businesses by branding and communicating via various media channels. The training was delivered to the beneficiaries of TASO Foundation and the Georgian Farmers' Association.

As branding and marketing were found to be the most needed services for women in business, Gepra provided such services to three women entrepreneurs identified by the TASO Foundation from the pool of project beneficiaries. The services included the creation of a brand name, logo and other visual designs.



## GEOLAB – OPENING UP NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR GIRLS IN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES

The world today is in the midst of a knowledge revolution, where the entire society tends to become a “knowledge society”, which opens up a new spectrum in the area of technology.

GeoLab, a mobile and web applications laboratory, is a space open for different innovative projects and tech-education in design, web programming, mobile programming, coding, communications and related subjects. After joining the WEPs, GeoLab created the slogan **“Women bring kindness, caring and light into technologies”** to express the company’s commitment to gender equality and women’s empowerment. The company carried out a social media communication campaign to inform stakeholders and the broader public about being part of the larger WEPs family. GeoLab also made public introductions of its female staff engaged in technologies with the purpose of popularizing women role models working in the sphere of technology and breaking negative stereotypes that discourage girls and women from pursuing STEM areas of education and employment.

By implementing various activities under the WEPs, GeoLab aims at changing society’s mindset that innovations are not for women; as such, the company aims to assist hundreds of talented girls and women with finding their path and aspiring to gain STEM skills and education. The company also started producing gender-disaggregated data.

GeoLab assisted six women entrepreneurs with branding their businesses and communicating effectively through social media channels. These women were identified in partnership with the TASO Foundation and the Business Federation “Women for Tomorrow”. The final brand books and stories behind the collaboration between women entrepreneurs and GeoLab were presented online to UN Women.

Six more women from the regions were provided with the opportunity of taking a certified online training course on the basics of social media management.





# THE WAY FORWARD

At the end of 2020, the number of WEPs signees in Georgia has reached 80. In addition to the companies presented in this booklet, many other companies that subscribe to the principles also took actions for women's empowerment by developing their own WEPs action plans, communicating and disseminating WEPs news and enacting sexual harassment complaints mechanisms within the workplace, among other measures. Several companies took dedicated actions to increase women's representation in their male-dominated professions or supported women's businesses in many ways, including branding, training, and promotion. UN Women's WEPs work in Georgia will continue in the future. We look forward to seeing the number of WEPs signatories and the range of promising practices for women's empowerment increase.

