

## IN BRIEF

### FINAL EVALUATION OF THE UN WOMEN PROJECT

# GOOD GOVERNANCE FOR GENDER EQUALITY IN GEORGIA (PHASE II)

*Evaluation Period: July 2023 – October 2025 | Report Date: 23 January 2026*

## OVERVIEW OF THE INTERVENTION

The **Good Governance for Gender Equality in Georgia (Phase II)** project ran from **July 1, 2023** with expected completion on **December 31, 2025**, with a budget of **USD 2,791,996** (NOK 30,000,000) provided by the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad). The project aimed to ensure that women and girls in Georgia benefit from gender-responsive governance and participate fully and equally in decision-making and economic life.

The project operated through **two interconnected outcomes**. The first outcome focused on gender-responsive governance, working to ensure that legislative and policy frameworks promote gender equality and women's participation in decision-making at all levels. This was achieved through three outputs: developing laws, policies and capacities for gender mainstreaming; integrating gender equality into public sector human resource management; and improving availability of gender data and analysis. The second outcome targeted women's economic empowerment, creating opportunities for women to access entrepreneurial and employment opportunities through gender sensitive private sector and entrepreneurship ecosystem in Georgia. This outcome operated through three outputs: expanding business implementation of Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs); empowering women-owned enterprises through an enabling ecosystem; and helping marginalized women gain skills and access to economic opportunities.

Key stakeholders **included** government institutions (**Ministry of Finance (MoF), Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development, National Statistics Office, Enterprise Georgia, local municipalities**), **civil society organizations** working on gender equality and women's rights issues, **private sector companies** implementing gender equality commitments, and **women beneficiaries** public servants, entrepreneurs from urban and regional areas of Georgia, as well as rural women. The project operated nationally across all **64 municipalities** in Georgia, with intensive women's economic empowerment activities in western regions (Imereti, Guria, Racha-Lechkhumi, Samegrelo) and Shida Kartli.

## EVALUATION PURPOSE, OBJECTIVES, SCOPE AND INTENDED AUDIENCE

This summative final evaluation was conducted for accountability and learning purposes. The scope of the evaluation included assessing outcome and output-level results, validating the project's theory of change, and capturing lessons learned from implementation during a period of significant political change in Georgia. Main users of the evaluation include **UN Women Georgia Country Office** for strategic learning and future programming design, and the **Government of Norway** as the donor supporting accountability for the USD 2.79 million investment. National stakeholders including government partners, civil society organizations, and women beneficiaries will use findings to inform their ongoing gender equality work.

## EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The evaluation used a **mixed-methods approach** combining qualitative and quantitative research methods. The theory of change was reconstructed and validated, testing design assumptions against implementation realities. Data collection occurred between **September and October 2025** through multiple sources: desk review of approximately 80 documents, **33 key informant interviews** with 47 participants, **9 focus group discussions** with 71 participants, and field visits to Tbilisi, Kutaisi, and rural Guria region villages. In total, **118 stakeholders** were consulted (91.5% female, 8.5% male), including government officials, civil society representatives, private sector partners, implementing organizations, and women beneficiaries.

Figure 1. Data Collection Methodology



Source: UN Women Georgia GG4GEG II Evaluation Report

The international consultant led the evaluation and conducted analysis, with two national consultants supporting data collection activities in Georgian language.

Key limitations included evaluation timing before project completion (some activities ongoing through December 2025), absence of baseline

data with intersectional disaggregation for measuring change among marginalized groups, and minimal participation from women with disabilities (1 participant) and ethnic minorities (4 participants) despite active outreach efforts<sup>1</sup>. These limitations were addressed through triangulation across multiple data sources, use of secondary national data from National Statistics Office of Georgia (Geostat) and government reports, and explicit acknowledgment of gaps in findings.

## KEY FINDINGS

### Relevance

The project demonstrated strong alignment with Georgia's gender equality commitments at design. Both outcomes addressed gaps identified in CEDAW concluding observations (February 2023) and SDG 5 targets. The governance component targeted women's participation in decision-making and institutional gender mainstreaming mechanisms, while the economic empowerment component addressed barriers in women's economic rights and entrepreneurship.

However, the project operated during significant political changes that were not fully anticipated at design. Between April 2024 and April 2025, Georgia abolished mandatory electoral gender quotas, adopted the Law on Transparency of Foreign Influence requiring civil society organizations receiving foreign funding to register as pursuing the interests of a foreign power. Further, standing structure – the Parliamentary Gender Equality Council was dissolved and instead a Temporary Commission on Women's and Children's Issues was established and the title and decree of the Inter-Agency Commission on Gender Equality, Violence against Women and Domestic Violence Issues was changed into Inter-Agency Commission on Equality Between Women and Men, Violence against Women and Domestic Violence Issues. These changes occurred after project design was finalized in mid-2023.

Despite political challenges, the project maintained relevance to beneficiary needs. **Demand exceeded capacity across women's economic empowerment activities**, with implementing partners reporting that for every

<sup>1</sup> During the evaluation report revision process, the project team noted that more than 4 ethnic minority women were reached as beneficiaries. However, progress reports (2023-2024) do not disaggregate beneficiary data by ethnicity.

woman who received Self-Help Group support, three to four additional women expressed interest. Agricultural sector programs received 380 applications for 65 initial slots (later expanded to 85). Women entrepreneurs valued business support even more during economic difficulties, as Georgia’s economic challenges made market access and business skills increasingly valuable.

### Coherence

The project aligned well with UN Women’s triple mandate (normative, operational, coordination). Normative work included supporting development of Georgia’s Beijing +30 Review Report and facilitating strategic dialogue on protection of women human rights defenders. Operational work delivered capacity building for 866 stakeholders (exceeding the 200 target by 433%). Coordination work operated through the Gender Thematic Group with approximately 40 development partners and international organizations.

UN Women’s coordination role gained increased importance during 2024 when several international actors reduced Georgia engagement following political developments. While USAID’s Good Governance Initiative and NDI programs downsized, **UN Women maintained partnerships and coordination functions**, making it perhaps more relevant than ever. Civil society organizations particularly valued UN Women’s ability to continue engagement when organizations labeled foreign agents faced operational constraints.

However, **internal coherence between governance and economic empowerment components remained limited**. The two components operated largely independently with separate teams, distinct partner networks, and minimal cross-component beneficiary participation. Of 118 stakeholders consulted, only three individuals engaged with both components. Gender-responsive budgeting represented the most direct potential bridge, but deliberate integration mechanisms were not developed.

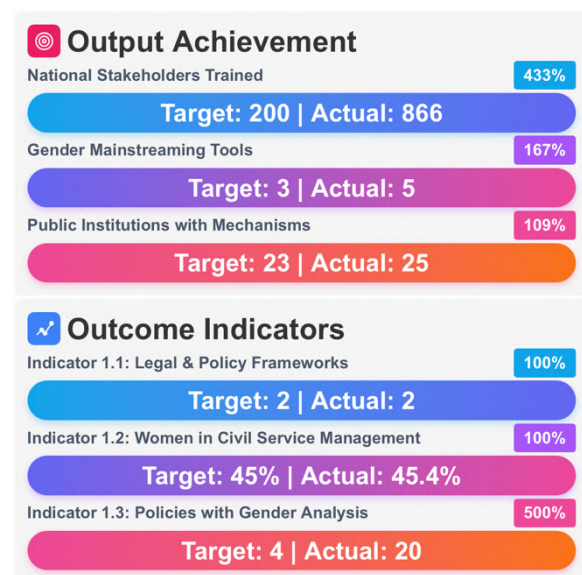
This operational distance meant the project’s theory linking governance reform to economic empowerment remained untested.

### Effectiveness

From a results-based management perspective, **both components successfully delivered planned results**. Five of six outcome indicators achieved 97-100% of targets, with one indicator (policies integrating gender data) exceeding targets by 500%. Output achievement ranged from 109% to 433% fulfillment across all indicators.

For the governance component, **866 national stakeholders received capacity building** (433% of the 200 target), **five gender mainstreaming tools were developed** (167% of the three targeted), and **25 public institutions adopted prevention and response mechanisms** for workplace discrimination (109% of target)<sup>2</sup>.

Figure 2. Outcome 1- Target vs Actual Performance



Source: Progress Report January-December 2024, UN Women Georgia  
Results Monitoring System Report Q3 2025, UN Women Georgia

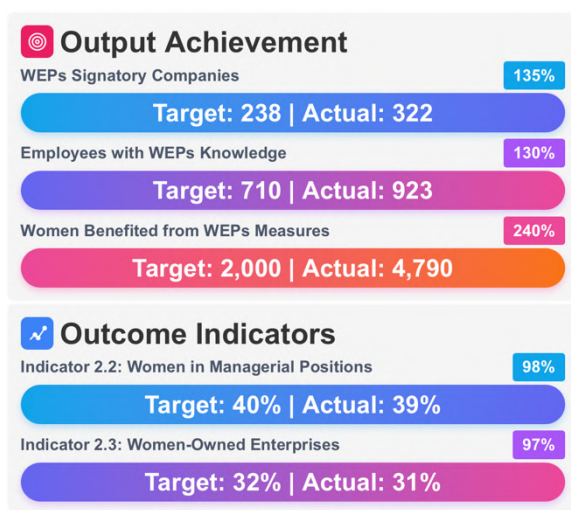
The MoF developed and adopted a gender tagging methodology integrated into Georgia’s e-budget system, enabling tracking of budget allocations promoting gender equality for the first time. By 2025, 19 state programs and 18

<sup>2</sup> During the revision of the evaluation report, the project team indicated that currently 26 public institutions have adopted prevention and response mechanisms. This report uses the figure of 25 institutions as officially documented in the Progress Report January-December 2024, UN Women Georgia, Output Indicators 1.1.1, 1.1.2, and 1.2.1, which reflects the data available during the evaluation period.

subprograms were analyzed and tagged as gender-relevant.

For the economic empowerment component, **WEPs signatories reached 322 companies** (135% of target), **923 company employees increased WEPs knowledge** (130% of target), and **4,790 women benefited from company measures** (240% of target). Through social mobilization activities, **579 rural women were organized into 37 Self-Help Groups**, and **768 women entrepreneurs received business development support** (102% of target).

Figure 3. Outcome 2 - Target vs Actual Performance



Source: Progress Report January-December 2024, UN Women Georgia  
Results Monitoring System Report Q3 2025, UN Women Georgia

However, evaluative assessment reveals that **indicator achievement does not automatically mean deep transformation or sustained change**. While the proportion of women in civil service management achieved its 45% target (reaching 45.4% in 2024 with steady increases from 43.3% in 2022 and 44.4% in 2023), political changes in 2024-2025 created a constraining environment for broader gender mainstreaming work. Government officials gained gender mainstreaming skills but faced reduced organizational support for applying them more broadly as political prioritization of gender equality weakened.

**Economic empowerment results proved more resilient to political volatility**. Women entrepreneurs continued generating income, Self-Help Groups maintained operations independently, and WEPs companies sustained commitments based on business performance

rather than political mandates. This differential resilience suggests direct service delivery and private sector engagement pathways withstand political pressure better than public sector institutional reform.

An important unintended positive effect emerged: **peer networks among women beneficiaries became self-sustaining**. Women across all nine beneficiary focus groups described continuing to meet, share information, and support each other's economic activities without external facilitation. Women valued these relationships more than formal training content, noting they now have trusted peers who understand their business challenges and can provide ongoing advice and emotional support.

Unintended negative effects centered on **limited reach to the most marginalized**. Despite design intentions for intersectional targeting, only one woman with disability and four ethnic minority women participated across all evaluation activities. Fear of losing social protection status discouraged some women from full participation in income-generating activities, as women receiving government assistance worried documented income would disqualify them from benefits, creating a poverty trap the project did not address.

### Efficiency

Resource allocation divided the budget between governance (43%) and economic empowerment (57%), with **cumulative expenditure reaching USD 1.15 million by December 2024** (41% of total budget after 18 months of the 30-month implementation period). Partner co-financing extended program reach, with implementing partners contributing staff time, technical expertise, and direct financial investments. WEPs signatory companies invested 3.4 million GEL (approximately USD 1.26 million) in gender equality work during 2024, demonstrating substantial leverage of project resources.

Most outputs were delivered within planned timeframes despite some delays. Partnership agreements with agricultural and business sector organizations finalized during the second half of 2023 compressed implementation timelines. The Law on Transparency of Foreign Influence created a two-month slowdown in rural mobilization

work during mid-2024 as implementing partners navigated the changed operating environment.

## Sustainability

**Sustainability prospects vary dramatically depending on actor and component.** Private sector engagement through WEPs shows the strongest continuation likelihood. All five companies consulted committed to continuing gender equality practices based on business case rationale (talent attraction, retention, productivity, reputation). Companies spent 3.4 million GEL on gender equality work in 2024, up from previous years, indicating increasing rather than decreasing commitment.

Women's peer networks demonstrate high sustainability potential through self-organizing structures that emerged across all beneficiary focus groups. Women maintained contact, shared resources, and supported each other's economic activities without external facilitation. These networks operate through participant commitment and mutual benefit rather than programmatic support.

Government commitment presents mixed prospects. Among 18 government partners consulted, approximately half showed strong commitment likely to persist, while six showed weak engagement suggesting discontinuation risk. Tools institutionalized in systems, such as gender tagging in the e-budget, appear likely to continue because they now form part of established procedures. However, broader gender mainstreaming faces sustainability threats from political environment changes and absence of permanent institutional structures.

**Civil society sustainability faces immediate threats** from funding dependency and operational constraints under the Law on Transparency of Foreign Influence. While civil society organizations confirmed intention to continue gender equality work aligned with their missions, they acknowledged resource constraints limiting intensity and geographic reach without project funding. Several

organizations noted they would focus on urban centers where they have established presence, potentially reducing rural outreach.

The project developed **no organized exit strategy**. While activities generated valuable capacity, tools, and networks, transition planning for who will maintain these assets after project completion remained largely unaddressed. Some continuation partnerships exist informally, but formalized handover agreements, knowledge transfer processes, and sustainability support mechanisms were not established systematically.<sup>3</sup>

## Human Rights and Gender Equality

The project achieved **significant individual-level empowerment**. Women beneficiaries (67 of 69 across focus groups) reported increased confidence, enhanced decision-making power within households, and greater economic independence. Self-Help Group women described shifts in household power dynamics, with husbands increasingly consulting them on decisions and showing greater respect for their income-earning capacity.

Institutional policy changes occurred in both components. Government partners implemented new gender equality policies including sexual harassment prevention mechanisms and gender-responsive HR practices. Seven public institutions developed and adopted prevention and response mechanisms for workplace discrimination. WEPs signatory companies showed gradual workplace culture shifts toward greater gender awareness.

However, **structural gender inequality proved resistant to change within the project timeframe**. While tools and capacity exist to challenge systemic barriers, actual transformation requires sustained political commitment beyond project scope. Women's economic empowerment did not reduce expectations about care and domestic work responsibilities. Women added income-earning activities on top of existing care work rather than renegotiating household labor division.

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<sup>3</sup> During review of the evaluation report, the project team noted that UN Women develops exit strategies only when phasing out work in a specific area. Given ongoing donor negotiations for project continuation, developing a formal exit strategy was not considered necessary at this stage. However, OECD-DAC guidance identifies exit planning as a key aspect of sustainability, recommending that evaluations assess whether appropriate exit strategies have been developed to ensure continuation of positive effects, regardless of whether project continuation is anticipated.

The project applied **Leave No One Behind principles with mixed results**. Geographic and socioeconomic inclusion succeeded, reaching rural women in remote areas and lower-income women through Self-Help Groups. However, disability inclusion and ethnic minority inclusion remained limited. Mainstream programming expanded access for some marginalized groups but could not reach all excluded populations equally. Disability and ethnic minority inclusion remained limited because these require specialized approaches that standard project budgets do not accommodate.

## MAIN CONCLUSIONS

The Good Governance for Gender Equality in Georgia Phase II successfully delivered planned results and built valuable capacities during an increasingly restrictive political environment.

The project met accountability commitments to donors and beneficiaries, with outcome indicators achieving 97-100% of targets. However, the evaluation reveals a critical distinction between delivering outputs and

achieving lasting transformation. Political changes during 2024-2025 constrained the depth and sustainability of institutional changes in governance, while economic empowerment results proved more resilient through business case rationale and self-sustaining peer networks. The project generated important lessons about programming in politically volatile contexts: direct service delivery and private sector pathways withstand political pressure better than public sector institutional reform; peer networks among women prove more durable than formal mechanisms; and technical tools embedded in systems offer better protection than capacity building alone when political support weakens. Future programming should design flexibility to shift approaches based on political conditions, leverage the sustainability potential of peer networks and private sector engagement, operationalize integration between components through deliberate mechanisms rather than assumptions, and plan exit strategies from the start. The project's value lies not only in what was delivered but in what was learned about maintaining gender equality programming effectiveness when political commitment falters.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1

**HIGH PRIORITY:** Design governance programming with built-in flexibility to shift between direct institutional engagement and alternative implementation approaches based on political conditions

*Responsibility for Implementation:* UN Women Georgia Country Office should lead flexible governance programming that shifts between direct institutional engagement with government partners (Ministry of Finance, municipal governments) and civil society-led approaches based on annual political environment assessments, working with donors to establish appropriate funding modalities.

Conduct annual political environment assessments to determine whether conditions support direct gender mainstreaming work with government or require alternative approaches through civil society partnerships, technical tool development, and evidence compilation. Track government engagement levels, legislative developments, and political statements on gender issues. During enabling periods, provide targeted technical assistance on gender-responsive budgeting and gender impact assessment. During restrictive periods, support civil society as evidence collectors and advocacy actors while maintaining relationships with committed government champions and preparing materials for when political windows reopen.

2

**HIGH PRIORITY: Enhance women's economic empowerment programming by leveraging peer networks and private sector collaborations**

*Responsibility for Implementation: UN Women Georgia Country Office should strengthen women's economic empowerment programming by prioritizing peer network development and private sector engagement, working in partnership with implementing partners (TASO Foundation, business associations, technology education institutions), WEPs signatory companies, and women entrepreneur networks.*

Shift resource allocation from classroom training to relationship-building activities including study tours, peer exchanges, and mentorship programs. Formalize women entrepreneur and Self-Help Group alumni networks through digital platforms and periodic gatherings. Develop training-of-trainers models enabling accomplished beneficiaries to mentor subsequent cohorts. Expand WEPs platform engagement by framing business cases (talent attraction, retention, productivity) and creating peer learning platforms where companies share gender equality practices and business outcomes. This leverages the finding that peer networks proved more sustainable than formal mechanisms and private sector commitment stems from business performance rather than political mandates.

3

**MEDIUM PRIORITY: Operationalize integration in multi-component programming through deliberate design and dedicated coordination mechanisms**

*Responsibility for Implementation: UN Women Georgia Country Office should design future integrated multi-component programmes with specific operational mechanisms and unified management structures, working in partnership with implementing partners to execute integration activities.*

Design future programs combining multiple components with specific mechanisms connecting them from the start. Integration requires three elements: deliberate design of operational linkages beyond conceptual coherence; dedicated resources and staff time for making connections happen; and accountability mechanisms tracking integration outcomes, not just component outputs. Create unified program management with coordination responsibility built into team structures, a single results framework tracking integration outcomes, and joint planning processes. Design integration activities as specific deliverables: platforms where women entrepreneurs and government officials engage together; gender-responsive budgeting analysis connecting government resources to women entrepreneurs seeking capital; joint learning events where governance and economic empowerment beneficiaries participate together.

# 4

## **HIGH PRIORITY:** Integrate exit and transition planning into program design with progressive ownership transfer

*Responsibility for Implementation: UN Women Georgia Country Office should integrate exit and transition planning from project inception, working with implementing partners to identify continuation partners and establish progressive ownership transfer mechanisms for both the current project and future programming.*

For the current program approaching completion, immediately conduct a sustainability inventory identifying what requires continuation and who will maintain it. Identify specific continuation partners for each tool, platform, and network (gender tagging methodology, GIA frameworks, WEPs platform, Working Group on Gender Equality in the Financial Sector, Self-Help Groups). Formalize handover agreements and transfer knowledge products during remaining project period. For future program design, identify ownership and maintenance plans for each intervention during the design phase; if no plausible continuation partner exists, reconsider including the intervention. Establish formal agreements with continuation partners in Year 1 specifying implementation roles, transition processes, and post-project resource mobilization. Use phased ownership transfer: UN Women leads with partner observation (Year 1), co-leadership with UN Women providing technical support (Year 2), partners lead with UN Women backstopping (Year 3).