

EXTERNAL FINAL EVALUATION

“WOMEN’S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS” A REGIONAL PROJECT OF UN WOMEN



Submitted to: UN Women Georgia Country Office



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Cover Photo: Woman beneficiary in Kvemo Kartli, Georgia. Photo: UN Women/Maka Gogaladze.

Evaluation Team:



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ACRONYMS

ADA	Austrian Development Agency
ADC	Austrian Development Cooperation
AMFA	Azerbaijan Micro-Finance Association
APMA	Agricultural Projects Management Agency of Georgia
ARDA	Agricultural and Rural Development Agency
ARMSTAT	National Statistical Service of the Republic of Armenia
AWEDA	Association for Women Entrepreneurship Development in Azerbaijan
CEDAW	International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CERD	International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
CGEP	Country Gender Equality Profile
COVID	Coronavirus-19
CMW	International Convention on the Rights of Migrant Workers and Their Families
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CRRC	Caucasus Resource Research Centres
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DWCP	Decent Work Country Program
EMG	Evaluation Management Group
EPIC	Equal Pay International Coalition
ERG	Evaluation Reference Group
EU	European Union
Eurostat	European Statistical Office
EU-STEP	Statistics through Eastern Partnership
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GBA+	Gender-Based Analysis Plus (re: intersectionality)
GEC	Gender Equality Council of the Parliament of Georgia
GEOSTAT	National Statistics Office of Georgia
GEWE	Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
GFA	Association of Finance Officers of Georgian Local Self-Governing Units
GIA	Gender Impact Assessment
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
GPG	Gender Pay Gap
GRB	Gender Responsive Budgeting
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
ILO	International Labour Organization
ISET	International School of Economics at Tbilisi State University
Jawe	Joint Action for Women's Economic Empowerment in Georgia (UN Women Georgia's cost-share project)
KRDF	Kakheti Regional Development Foundation of Georgia
LFS	Labour Force Survey
LGA	Local Government Authority
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation

MLSA	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of Armenia
MoESD	Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia
MoFA	Ministry of Finance Training Academy of Georgia
MoIDPOTLHSA	Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MRDI	Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure of Georgia
MTAI	Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure of Armenia
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OECD-DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation & Development - Development Assistance Committee
PGA	Participatory Gender Audit
PPP	Public-Private Partnership
PwC	PricewaterhouseCoopers
RIA	Regulatory Impact Assessment
RBM	Results Based Management
RRF	Results and Resources Frameworks
SCFWCA	State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs of Azerbaijan
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SHG	Self-Help Group
SIL	Social Innovation Lab
SME	Small and Medium Enterprises
TASO	TASO Foundation
Toc	Theory of Change
TUS	Time Use Survey
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
VAW	Violence Against Women
WEE	Women's Economic Empowerment
WEEI	Women's Economic Empowerment Index
WEF	World Economic Forum
WEESC	Women's Economic Empowerment in the South Caucasus
WEPs	Women's Empowerment Principles: Equality Means Business
WIC	Women's Information Center
Women Count	Making Every Woman and Girl Count (UN Women's global flagship project)
WRC	Women's Resource Center



Beneficiary women in Armennia. Photo?

Executive Summary

Women's economic empowerment (WEE) is increasingly considered to be a prerequisite for realizing gender equality, strengthening women's agency and achieving sustainable development for all as agreed in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with an aim to reduce inequalities and to "leave no one behind".

There has been some progress in recent years in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia in terms of reducing gender inequality. Yet, several international indices such as the World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report (2017) and the Social Progress Imperative Index (2018) show that work remains to be done to remove gender-based discrimination and achieve the full and equal participation of women in society. Social and cultural barriers, gendered division of work and unpaid care work, as well as weaker financial incentives for women to work as reflected in the pay gap, prevent women from engaging in income generating activities in the three countries.

To address these challenges, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) Georgia launched a first main phase of the "Women's Economic Empowerment in the South Caucasus" (WEESC) project in August 2018, with the goal of ensuring that women, particularly the poor and socially excluded, in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia are economically empowered and participate in relevant decision-making. The 3-year project is being implemented by UN Women Georgia, in close partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Armenia and Azerbaijan from August 2018-July 2021. WEESC is funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the Austrian Development Agency (ADA).

The primary purpose of this formative evaluation is to assess Phase One performance and achievement of anticipated results with impartiality and rigor in order to highlight lessons learned, and to draw conclusions and develop recommendations that can be utilized in designing Phase Two of the project.

The information generated by the evaluation will be used by different stakeholders to: 1) contribute to building of a consolidated evidence base on effective WEE strategies in all three countries; and 2) facilitate deep reflection, learning and strategic planning for further WEE programming at grassroots, law and policy, as well as institutional levels, including the promotion of women's participation in decision-making within their respective communities.

The overall structure of the evaluation is based on a utilization-focused and mixed methods approach that examine a number of criteria central to OECD-DAC's method for evaluating development interventions including relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability. This approach takes into account both the existing project Theory of Change by examining the outputs and outcomes against the program's key indicators of success and the socio-economic and WEE contexts of the three countries. The evaluation has also been informed by feminist, rights and responsibilities-based and inter-cultural theories and has also considered the broader WEE policy and legal systems both regionally and nationally which the WEESC project is seeking to influence.

Relevance - Is the Intervention Doing the Right Things?

The three-pronged approach to addressing women's economic empowerment is viewed as highly relevant within the participating countries. The programming was considered important by stakeholders for improving the enabling environment for women's participation in the economic activities and aligned well with the international and national priorities in relation to WEE.

The project design is highly relevant in terms of targeting women with multiple vulnerabilities. Under Outcome 1, women beneficiaries shared positive feedback related to grants for start-up businesses and gender responsive budgeting; however, they indicated the need to improve the training component to better align with existing economic activities and growth opportunities in their regions. While the policy level work under Outcomes 2 and 3 is viewed as highly relevant, stakeholders including women beneficiaries, have expressed the need to better include issues around 'unpaid care', 'gendered norms', in addition to 'policies and services targeting entrepreneurship'.

There is also a need to better connect Outcome 1 with Outcomes 2 and 3 and adopt a more strategic approach to targeting priority economic sectors for women's economic activity and similarly, for engagement with the private sector.

Coherence: How Well Does The WEESC Project Fit?

There is ample evidence that the WEESC Project is very compatible with other GEWE interventions in the South Caucasus Region. The WEESC Project threefold mandate is clearly aligned with UN Women's Strategic Plan and with UNDP priorities in the South Caucasus Region. The Project has developed many synergies within the UN system, UNCTs, other projects of UN Women and UNDP, in addition to coordinating with government entities in each country in order to avoid duplication of efforts. UN Women and UNDP are seen as having a distinct comparative advantage in the region around WEE given their combined expertise in GE and sustainable development.

The UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks that were agreed upon with all three national governments in 2016 laid the foundation for project implementation, according to their respective priorities for achieving SDGs, thereby improving each country's international human rights commitments under CEDAW and other legal instruments, particularly related to equitable economic development.

Effectiveness: Is the Intervention Achieving Its Objectives?

There have been variable results across the three Outcome areas in the countries of implementation. Under Outcome 1, the Project has achieved 87% of its target as of December 2020 across the three countries in terms of the 'number of self-(employed) women for at least 6 months, with six months remaining in project implementation. The majority of benefits to women achieved under Outcome 1 relate to self-employment which also includes grants provided by the project to support the establishment of women's businesses. However, there is a need to further enhance targeting criteria and the training being provided to women, by incorporating learner-centered models that facilitate the development of different learning pathways and related support services (i.e. self-employment), thereby enabling customization at country and local levels to ensure the content is relevant to local needs.

Securing employment was viewed as one of the greatest challenges under Outcome 1 as women continued to face difficulty in securing jobs, a pattern further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The training and economic opportunities provided by the project resulted in increased self-confidence of women beneficiaries. However, there has been little to no change observed in decision-making, control/power relations and gendered perceptions of women's roles.

Fifteen companies have endorsed the WEPs (11 in Armenia and 4 in Azerbaijan) and their engagement in the project has helped to increase networking among like-minded companies. However, project activities with the private sector have been experimental and there is no clear evidence yet on the

application of the changes emanating from adoption of the WEPs. Going forward, accompanying incentives for the private sector to implement these changes will need to be explored and additional demonstration activities tested together with the private sector in these countries.

In Georgia and Armenia, under Outcomes 2 and 3, significant work has been undertaken at the local governance and policy level, with a particular focus on formal employment and GRB. However, stakeholders expressed the need to continue work on the institutionalisation of the policies and to also focus on policies geared towards self-employment, in addition to wage employment, to ensure better integration across the Outcome areas.

Efficiency: How Well Are Resources Being Used?

The WEESC project delivers results in a reasonably economical and timely fashion overall given the constraints caused by the COVID pandemic, conflicts, and changes in governments. The strategic allocation of project resources to the implementing agencies has been equitably spread between the three countries, with almost half of the net budget addressing the needs of poor and socially marginalized women in the rural regions who are the primary direct beneficiaries. The timeliness of outputs and activities implementation has been reasonable given the negative impacts of both the COVID-19 pandemic and the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Project planning and implementation with stakeholders and other actors have proven to be significantly effective, yet there are a number of areas which call for strengthening. Project leadership and management also received a high approval rate from key implementing staff; however, a clearer definition of roles and responsibilities and management structure was identified as requiring some adjustment to enhance overall efficiencies.

The assessment of cost-efficiency proved difficult due to a lack of financial data based on a breakdown by budget line item due to UN Women's centralized financial reporting processes, however the analysis that was undertaken did not surface any key issues.

Project M&E mechanisms put in place are standard practice, however there is a need for a consistent tracking tool to improve the efficiency of results reporting and assessment and a need for designated M&E personnel in each country. The utilization of M&E data has been limited in that the performance measurement indicators established at the Project's outset were all quantitative in nature and do not capture the gender-sensitive qualitative measurement of GE and WEE results.

Sustainability: Will the Benefits Last?

There is evidence of commitment to sustainability in the form of institutionalisation across all levels, however, progress has been variable. As it relates to sustainability at the grassroots level with women beneficiaries, their ability to network through the women's group has the strongest potential to continue. Evidence also suggests an increase in income of women who have been able to secure self or wage employment; yet, for self-employed women, continuity of economic activity remains subject to vulnerability due to inconsistent markets in the current context and their limited ability to expand into new alternative markets. Wage-employed women, on the other hand, are concerned about the nature of their contract as many of them have service contracts which tend to be precarious and lack benefits.

In terms of private sector interventions, there is acknowledgement by the private sector of the importance of gender inclusive practices. However, at this point, the private sector is still in the process

of adopting such practices and further work is needed to demonstrate how the WEPs and inclusive business models can be applied and operationalized in each country.

As it relates to local and national government interventions, there is acknowledgement and commitment from local and governments to be more gender responsive. Certain progressive practices such as GIAs and GRB are in the process of being institutionalised. However, there is a risk of discontinuity given the relatively high turn-over of government officials and further work is needed to reinforce GE and WEE mechanisms.

Summary: COVID-19 Situation for Women in the South Caucasus Region and WEESC Implementation:

Overall, the project has successfully adapted to the new reality, launching timely and innovative initiatives to assist women beneficiaries and their families cope with the pandemic, while also adjusting project implementation modalities and re-profiling budget resources to facilitate maximum support. For example, most of the planned activities since March 2020 have been conducted virtually and the savings derived from under-utilized travel budgets and face-to-face events were re-allocated to supporting WEE during the crisis.

However, there are also ongoing challenges and obstacles posed by the pandemic, particularly for self-employed women whose ability to put into practice benefits derived from the Project are currently undermined as many of their activities have been suspended due to shutdowns. Although the project adapted to a virtual modality and achieved some important successes, women were not able to fully attend the training sessions due to financial, technical and family constraints, although the Project has attempted to address these issues and will need to do so in the foreseeable future. Finally, the COVID-19 lockdown and travel restrictions have had a negative influence on the regional dimension of the project, although this can be counter-balanced by replicating some of the key innovations and best practices at county level in the design of Phase Two of the project.

OVERALL PROJECT RECOMMENDATIONS	ACTIONS TO CONSIDER	TIMEFRAME & RANKING (L = low, M = medium, H = high priority)
<p>1. Strategic: Ensure that implementing partners, key stakeholders and a representative sample of women beneficiaries are proactively engaged in the design of Phase Two through participatory processes.</p>	<p>Hold virtual brainstorming sessions on Zoom with women from each WRC or Women's Room, including the Coordinators during the project design and review process.</p> <p>Conduct participatory mapping exercises in the inception phase to ensure more social inclusion as well as participatory action research to promote local ownership of research results (designing research questions, identifying risks and mitigation strategies, validating assumptions and findings, etc.).</p>	<p>Immediate: H</p> <p>Short Term: M</p>
<p>2. Strategic: Refresh the inception analysis to look more closely at the factors that facilitate and limit women's ability to secure (a) wage employment, and (b) self-employment across the three countries and the policies and the service provisions that are necessary to facilitate both types of economic activities.</p>	<p>Conduct new baseline studies and/or needs assessments that take into account the gendered relations and family dynamics by consulting both females and males from different age, ethnic, and religious groups. Ensure disabled, migrant and other disadvantaged people are included.</p>	<p>Immediate: H: As part of the transition to Phase 2 <i>before deciding</i> project activities</p>
<p>3. Strategic: Obtain a clear understanding of market potential or growth prospects for a wide range of economic activities before offering grants to women for self-employment, vocational training, or wage employment.</p>	<p>Conduct an economic analysis in each country to identify the sectors or economic activities that have growth opportunities both for formal employment and self-employment for women in the target rural regions and also those economic activities where women are currently active in. Use the analysis to decide which sectors or activities should be prioritized for project activities.</p>	<p>Immediate: H: As part of the transition to Phase 2 <i>before deciding</i> project activities</p>
<p>4. Strategic: Align Phase Two with new 4-year UNSDCFs for three countries (2021-2025) along with their commitments under international human rights treaties, conventions, and relevant national legislation.</p>	<p>Incorporate/address recommendations from UN human rights committees under CEDAW, CERD, ICSECR, ICCPR, CMW, CRPD, and Special Rapporteur reports on Violence against Women as they relate to GE and WEE particularly.</p> <p>Work more closely with UNCT members such as OHCHR and UNHCR within each country, as well as national government authorities.</p>	<p>Immediate: H</p> <p>Ongoing: H</p>

<p>5. Strategic: Strengthen the regional dimension of WEESC based on the comparative advantage of UN Women and UNDP in the region in knowledge management by formalizing a WEE sub-regional knowledge hub within UN Women Georgia.</p>	<p>Allocate specific resources to support a hub and an associated online platform to facilitate knowledge management and sharing.</p> <p>Create a regional level and country level knowledge sharing mechanism for stakeholder coordination whereby implementation partners and key stakeholders (including other relevant donor projects) can discuss the progress and coordinate activities to prevent duplication, share tools and amplify impact.</p>	<p>Short Term: H</p> <p>Medium Term: M</p>
<p>6. Operational: Enhance the involvement of local partners with expertise in GEWE or WEE and ensure they are allocated resources sufficient to enable their participation in the project.</p>	<p>Expand partnership networks especially in the targeted rural communities, to ensure WRCs and Women's Rooms have more frequent contact with knowledgeable resource people. As it relates to the WRCs in Azerbaijan, more detailed recommendations are provided in Section 5.2</p>	<p>Short Term: M</p>
<p>7. Operational: Enhance the involvement of local governments and private enterprises at the grassroots level, with the objective of creating jobs for women.</p>	<p>Assess opportunities for job shadowing and volunteering for young women (and men) as part of a career development strategy for the next generation of gender-sensitive workers.</p> <p>Work with the local school authorities and chambers of commerce to create pilot GEWE projects in commercial sectors that enhance the resilience of the rural communities (i.e. that meet basic needs such as food, water, medicine, shelter, clothing, safety, and access to health facilities).</p> <p>Identify "champions" within these organisations to spearhead the programs and serve as role models in promoting gender inclusive and sexual harassment free workplaces. Mentorship could also be tested with more mature entrepreneurs to</p>	<p>Short-Medium Term: M</p>

	<p>provide motivation and advisory support to other women.</p> <p>Where in-kind resources are provided by any partners, they should be both recognized and reflected in cost-efficiency analyses.</p>	
<p>8. Strategic: Develop further partnerships to facilitate awareness on gendered norms, and collaboration with market actors or other organisations who can offer services to support poor rural women in reducing their load of unpaid care</p>	<p>A range of models could be tested:</p> <p>(a) Models with the private sector, particularly with those companies that have endorsed the WEPs to promote flexible work hours so that women are encouraged to engage in formal employment.</p> <p>(b) Support services to meet unpaid care responsibility for women. For e.g. this could be part of the Women's Rooms or WRC's business model and be linked to the "care economy".</p> <p>(c) Establishment of daycare support in the community as a social enterprise so that women can help themselves).</p> <p>(d) Consider engaging men and other household/community members to promote positive gendered norms and reduce traditional perceptions of women's roles.</p> <p>This can also be linked to potential expansion of project scope to include social and civic empowerment.</p>	<p>Short-Medium Term: H</p>
<p>9. Strategic: Demonstrate some form of "graduation" to break the cycle of grant dependence in order to continue to further support and sustain self-employed women, especially those who are currently establishing their businesses and obtaining small grants from the WEESC project.</p>	<p>Identify strategic partners who can be long term sources of working capital for women. Engage with service providers or market actors (e.g. raw material suppliers, agro-dealers/retailers, financial institutes, etc.) to pilot models for products or services that enable women to access finance or credit using buyer contracts as a guarantee, or value chain financing.</p>	<p>Medium Term-Long Term: H</p>

<p>10. Operational: Adjust the training program to be more learner-centric and better aligned with the needs, current level of understanding and experiences of the target groups in each country, and include the use of accelerated digital technology, including online courses and creation of videos for core modules.</p>	<p>Conduct a training needs assessment across two groups (self-employment and wage employment) in different areas and also identify the level of willingness and skill to engage with different medium, particularly, digital platforms.</p> <p>Leverage WRCs and Women's Rooms to bring small groups together for digital training of those impoverished women who lack the facilities for online learning at home and provide related budget support for connectivity, and where required, devices.</p> <p>Identify strategic partners (e.g. vocational training services providers, knowledge providers and or other businesses who could outsource supply and also train women) who have the incentive to provide training or advisory/mentorship support. Collaboration with local or international service/knowledge providers might solve the certification or validation challenge and ease the way of women to wage-employment.</p> <p>Develop more modular training that includes core foundational or generic modules such as digital skills, book-keeping, management/business planning and advisory. This should be separated from advanced trainings (e.g marketing and those specific to sectors or technical skills such as production or quality control, with more practical examples); mentorship or linkages with experienced businesses/entrepreneurs. WEESC could also consider modules specific to the two WEE pathways (self-employment and employment).</p>	<p>Short Term: H</p>
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<p>11. Operational: Develop systems to ensure closer monitoring of training to assess relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the learning</p>	<p>Consider contracting of specialized instruction design expertise, a blended approach to learning once COVID restrictions are eased and a higher level of resource allocation for training than has been currently allocated in Phase One.</p> <p>Conduct short tracer studies at least 6 months to 1 year after the training is complete with different cohorts to see what skills women have been able to apply in practice (why or why not) and track their progress with (self-) employment pathways in an effort to accelerate the uptake of skills and percentage of women who secure (self-) employment.</p>	<p>Immediate & Ongoing: M</p>
<p>12. Strengthen the M&E framework for Phase Two by harmonizing the tracking system of enhanced performance indicators as well as ensuring there are gender-sensitive qualitative indicators also built into WEESC LogFrame.</p>	<p>Designate specific M&E teams or personnel within each country and develop country-specific outputs mapped to the overall Theory of Change.</p> <p>Review the assumptions and indicators and strengthen the measurement around behaviour change and sustainability.</p> <p>Engage the regional UN Women Evaluation Unit in Istanbul to deliver capacity-building exercises for local personnel to further develop M&E competencies in the field and with implementation partners.</p> <p>Explore the use of cloud-based platform(s) for housing data and also presenting results in a user-friendly across multiple countries and partners.</p>	<p>Short Term: H</p> <p>Ongoing: M</p>
<p>13. Strengthen the program TOC and interventions to reflect linkage between Outcome 1 and Outcomes 2 and 3. This inter-linkage amongst the outcomes is a core element of the WEESC project design.</p>	<p>Currently, the majority of institutional interventions are geared towards employment, whereas, to date, there has been a greater uptake of women in self-employment, for multiple reasons. These include, but are not limited to,</p>	<p>Immediate: H</p>

	<p>issues related to unpaid care, continued perception of gendered norms which limit women from taking up formal employment and the current COVID-19 context.</p> <p>The project needs to take these into account and develop potential activities to help mitigate these challenges. Alongside policies for employment, the project should also consider what needs to be done to reduce entry and expansion barriers in self-employment. For example, if finance is a key problem, then partnerships could be developed with banks, MFIs, savings and loan groups to introduce alternative financing models into the project. If working capital to buy raw materials is an option, the project could test out value chain financing models.</p> <p>For the employment pathway, in addition to supporting an enabling policy environment, the project should also explore which sectors offer high potential for jobs and based on this landscape assessment, work together with partners (both private and public sector) to enable increased jobs for women in these sectors. These could include such sectors as the green economy (agri-business, waste recycling, renewable energy), the care economy (daycares, elder care centres, women's shelters), the health and safety sector (health care workers, personal support workers and emergency response workers).</p> <p>Increase engagement of implementing partners to facilitate linkages, particularly between Outcomes 1 and 2.</p>	
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14. Operational: Improve the use of the M&E data for decision making purposes, not only for reporting purposes. The project should also revisit how it measures sustainability across different levels and focus more on adoption and behavior change.	<p>Assess effectiveness and analyze (a) the variability of results from target and (b) the attrition rate from access to usage to benefit and the uptake/application (e.g. women applying the skills) and benefit (e.g. women securing jobs or self-employment). There should be a focus on assessing behaviour change and indicator(s) related to sustainability need to be revisited.</p> <p>Develop a clear sustainability and exit strategy, that is, how will these services and functions carry on in the long term without the support of external funding.</p> <p>Review and analyse findings against such indicators. See Figure 12 which illustrates recommendations for a revised TOC for Phase Two.</p>	Immediate & Short Term: M
15. Operational: Enhance transparency and accountability for the use of resources (financial, human and material).	Report on resources utilized by all implementing partners broken down by specific budget-line items to more effectively determine more the cost-efficiency of each output/activity in Phase 2.	Ongoing: M
16. Operational: Position UN Women & UNDP should act as a role model for other project stakeholders as it relates to disaggregating data by sex and vulnerability.	<p>UN Project Managers ensure disaggregated data by sex, age, minority status, disability, and income via agreements with implementing partners and any consultants hired.</p> <p>Share UN Women's & UNDP's corporate gender policies with all stakeholders, including gender-sensitive procurement policies, in order to contribute to the promotion of women-owned businesses and their legitimate place in the value chain.</p> <p>Encourage project stakeholders to model and promote their own gender-sensitive procurement</p>	Short to Medium Term: M

	<p>policies to enhance their credibility with local governments, civil society and private sector companies working within the rural communities.</p>	
17. Operational: Enhance the demand-driven aspect of the training provided to women to improve their business and their readiness for economic activities.	<p>Analyze the demand or market for high-priority those sectors/services/products and the demand-driven opportunities for women in the employment sector.</p> <p>Facilitate linkages so that buyers are connected to these suppliers and employers see the benefit of hiring women. Explore promoting women's involvement in investing in alternative initiatives such as small-scale renewable energy (solar, biogas, wind turbines), waste recycling operations (paper, plastics, glass, metals, and organic materials for composting, etc.).</p>	Short Term: H
18. Operational: Develop pilot activities to demonstrate a shared incentive for the private sector to adopt policies and practices to improve absorption and retention of women at the workplace.	<p>Conduct pilot initiatives with select private sector partners in relevant countries to capture and "demonstrate" the financial and social benefits of adopting the WEPs and resultant changes to corporate policies and practices.</p> <p>These initiatives could potentially include the following activities to be implemented directly with private sector partners (1) convene discussions to understand if companies are having issues with retention, absenteeism and employee turnover and also understand if there is scope for women's (increased) employment in the organisation and rationale for the companies to hire more women; (2) conduct brief exploratory research to understand if any of the above issues are specific to women; (3) interview current female staff separately to obtain their individual perspectives and identify potential female role model/champions within the company (4) develop models with interested private sector partners to</p>	Short to Medium Term: M

	<p>address above issues that may have been identified and align with international and regional best practice; and (5) share the learning with other private sector organisations and develop a community of practice of private sector partners committed to operationalizing the WEPs in the context of inclusive business models that embrace women's economic empowerment.</p> <p>Given the current COVID-19 context, partnerships with local companies active in rural areas should be prioritized in Phase 2 by conducting landscape assessments in the 3 countries. There may be an opportunity to prioritize collaboration with local companies engaged in agri-business (i.e. wage employment opportunities) in light of food security issues related to COVID, and also potentially those engaged in the medical supplies sector.</p> <p>Such interventions have been undertaken with strong success by IFC in Asia, Market Development Facility in the Pacific and the Arab Women Enterprise Fund in Jordan and Egypt.</p>	
<p>19. Strategic: Develop a specific WEESC Phase Two COVID-19 Action Plan, including priority activities and resource allocation requirements.</p>	<p>The action plan should continue to address the ongoing immediate needs of poor and excluded women and also focus on medium-term strategic policy and institutional initiatives, as well as post-COVID recovery considerations.</p> <p>Consider the creation of a COVID-19 Gender Response Tracker that defines gender-sensitive measures as those that seek to directly address the risks and challenges that women and girls face in the COVID crisis, notably violence against women, unpaid care work and economic insecurity. Measures currently included in the tracker are clustered into 4 categories: Social Protection,</p>	<p>Immediate to Short Term: H</p>

	Labour Markets, VAW and Economic and Fiscal Policies.	
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Source: Prepared by the Evaluation Team based on evaluation findings, conclusions and lessons learned.

GEORGIA: COUNTRY-SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS	ACTIONS TO CONSIDER	TIMEFRAME & RANKING (L, M, H)
1. Strategic: Capitalize on the achievements and results of Phase One and deepen/expand activities in Outcomes 2/3 for improved policymaking and legislation for WEE and recommendations to ensure that the legislation harmonizes with international standards.	Provide much needed support to the line Ministries in order to enhance their GE and WEE capacity and help them translate their strategies and action plans into policy documents and standard operating procedures.	Short to Medium Term: M
2. Strategic: Accelerate work with municipal decision-makers to raise the awareness of the benefits of GRB and influence the institutionalization of GRB related work	GRB has been positioned as an auxiliary strategy for social mobilization activities in Phase One of the project. It has been successful in this regard, and in Phase Two, the WEESC project should address the current expectations among rural and vulnerable women that their voices will be heard by municipal government as it relates to GRB. Phase Two should expand the interaction with municipal governments to include decision-makers who can drive increased awareness and also ensure commitment to institutionalization of GRB at a municipal level.	Short to Medium Term: M

Source: Prepared by the Evaluation Team based on evaluation findings, conclusions and lessons learned

ARMENIA: COUNTRY SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS	ACTIONS TO CONSIDER	TIMEFRAME & RANKING (L, M, H)
<p>1. Strategic: To strengthen the linkages between the grassroots, law and policy, and institutional levels, allocate additional resources to working with local governments on reforming their bylaws and policies to encourage WEE and GE.</p>	<p>Identify further capacity-building (training, mentoring, coaching, etc.) and institutional-strengthening needs related to good governance, including e-governance for transparency.</p> <p>Work with local male leaders and administrators to change their perceptions on women in the public workforce. Identify GEWE champions to change community perceptions as to women's roles in the economy and the "power of the purse".</p>	Short-Medium Term: M
<p>2. Operational: Encourage local government to embrace e-governance, especially in times of COVID and beyond the pandemic, so as to enhance transparency around GE and WEE.</p>	<p>Consider developing a radio or TV program in Armenian which reaches the rural populations as well to promulgate developments concerning GE & WEE in times of COVID and beyond.</p>	Short Term: M
<p>3. Operational: Raise the awareness of local leaders, private sector companies, and the general public at public events or via online media about best practices and innovative approaches to GE and WEE.</p>	<p>Consider the establishment of a new Center for Creative Technology in Azerbaijan and Georgia as pilot projects like the one in Vardenis, Armenia. Assess how each Centre incorporates lessons learned from Phase One and</p>	Medium Term: M

Source: Prepared by the Evaluation Team based on evaluation findings, conclusions and lessons learned.

AZERBAIJAN: COUNTRY SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS	ACTIONS TO CONSIDER	TIMEFRAME & RANKING (L, M, H)
<p>1. Strategic: During Phase Two, explore the integration of Outcomes 2 and/or 3 in Azerbaijan, using a similar approach to collaboration with UNDP Armenia.</p>	<p>Recruit a designated UN Women focal point in country to manage these outcome(s), shares its expertise, and works closely with UNDP alongside a network of public sector stakeholders, and outsourced NGOs, local and/or international WEE</p>	Immediate-Short Term: H

	<p>experts.</p> <p>Develop gender-responsive entrepreneurship support mechanisms in collaboration with the Ministry of Economy and Industry and National Fund of Assistance for Entrepreneurship.</p> <p>Partner with the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Azerbaijan, to assess and facilitate gender-responsive social protection programming and early childhood care services, given the high unpaid care responsibilities of women that limit their economic engagement.</p> <p>Identify leading gender-responsive businesses in the project regions, as well as women's business associations.</p>	
<p>2. Strategic: Prioritize support to the Azerbaijani WRCs to build both governance and funding diversification models and options to lay the foundation for long(er) term sustainability.</p>	<p>Formulate both a capacity building/governance and exit strategy for the existing WRCs in order to develop a financially sustainable model(s) to enable independent operation.</p> <p>Test a number of alternative models such as contribution of a portion of income generated by women to support the services provided by the WRCs, social enterprise models and cooperative models (of profit sharing), etc.</p>	Short-Medium Term: H
<p>3. Operational: Engage private sector entities in the implementation of WRC activities, as well as in the design of capacity building and sustainability processes and models.</p>	<p>Use the WRCs to connect women to markets and, in exchange, a portion of the sales commission would support the WRC services.</p> <p>Connect the WRCs to broader women's business associations or their regional chapters to facilitate potential mentorship and angel investor opportunities.</p>	Short-Medium Term: M

Source: Prepared by the Evaluation Team based on evaluation findings, conclusions and lessons learned



Women from Qusar and neighboring villages participating in the opening ceremony, Azerbaijan. Photo: UNDP Azerbaijan

1. The WEESC Project and Evaluation Context

Women's economic empowerment (WEE) is increasingly considered to be a prerequisite for realizing gender equality, strengthening women's agency and achieving sustainable development for all as agreed in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with an aim to reduce inequalities and to "leave no one behind".

There has been some progress in recent years in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia in terms of reducing gender inequality. Specifically, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women recognized the advances made by Armenia such as amendments to their Electoral Code, the Law on Social Assistance, the Law on Identifying and Assisting Victims of Trafficking and Human Exploitation, the Law on Provision of Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, plus the establishment of the Council on Ensuring Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities between Women and Men and an employment strategy, to name a few.¹

Likewise, in Azerbaijan the same UN Committee acknowledged the gains made in the country, which included the Law on Amendments to the Family Code, the Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence, and the "Azerbaijan: Vision 2020" development strategy making gender equality a cross-cutting goal.² In December 2016, a package of strategic road maps was adopted in 11 areas by the Government of Azerbaijan, which was in line with the *Sustainable Development Goals* (SDGs), and 2 of the 11 road maps contained clauses about women and girls, namely the *Strategic Roadmap for Manufacturing and Processing of Agricultural Products in the Republic of Azerbaijan*, and the *Strategic Roadmap for the Production of Consumer Goods at the Level of Small and Medium Entrepreneurship*.

In Georgia, the UN Committee similarly recognized the country's adoption of an Act on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination, an Act on Internally Displaced Persons, Amendments to the Labour Code to enhance the protection of women's rights in the workplace, Amendments to the Election Code, an Act on Gender Equality, a National Action Plan on Gender Equality, and the establishment of a Gender Equality Council, as well as a Permanent Inter-Agency Coordination Council for the Prevention of Domestic Violence.³

Yet, several international indices such as the World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report (2017) and the Social Progress Imperative Index (2018) show that work remains to be done to remove gender-based discrimination and achieve the full and equal participation of women in society and in the economy.⁴ Overall, Armenia ranks 98 out of 153 countries, with a score of 0.684 on the Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI); however, they rank 79 in economic participation and opportunity, 45 in educational attainment, 148 in health and survival, and 114 in political empowerment. Azerbaijan ranks 94 overall, with a score of 0.687 on the GGGI; and 33 in economic participation and opportunity, 60 in educational attainment, 152 in health and survival, and 140 in political empowerment. And overall, Georgia ranks 74 with a score of 0.708 on the GGGI; and 61 in economic participation and opportunity, 29 in educational attainment, 68 in health and survival, and 94 in political empowerment.

The available statistics on women's labour force participation do not provide a complete picture, given the disproportionate engagement of women in the informal economy and vulnerable employment. However, data from the South Caucasus region does indicate that women in their productive years in the three countries in the region are less likely to participate in the labour force than men.⁵ The labour participation rates of the

¹ CEDAW/C/ARM/CO/5-6, 25 November 2016.

² CEDAW/C/AZE/CO/5, 12 March 2015.

³ CEDAW/C/GEO/CO/4-5, 24 July 2014.

⁴ See The Global Gender Gap Index and Country Profiles in the World Economic Forum, *Global Gender Gap Report 2020*. Available from <https://www.weforum.org/reports/gender-gap-2020-report-100-years-pay-equality>. See also: ILOSTAT, *Modelled Estimates, Labour force participation rate by sex and age*, 2016; and *Women's Economic Opportunity Index*, 2012.

⁵ Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia (2018), *Women and Men in Armenia*. Available at https://www.armstat.am/file/article/gender_2018pdf.

working population (aged 15-64) indicate a gap of 18% in Armenia, 17% in Georgia and 6% in Azerbaijan. Similarly, women on average earn less than men in the three countries, with women's earnings as a proportion of men's earnings as 62% in Armenia, 64% in Georgia and 50% in Azerbaijan.⁶

Social and cultural barriers (e.g. poverty, disability, migratory status, violence against women, and discrimination based on sex, age and ethnicity/race/religion), gendered division of work and unpaid care work, as well as weaker financial incentives for women to work as reflected in the gender pay gap⁷, cumulatively prevent women from engaging equitably in income generating activities in the three countries.⁸ These dimensions are elaborated in the learning briefs and country presentations found in the annexes to this report; however, they include unequal domestic labour, the prevalence of women in the informal economy which lacks job security, social benefits such as paid sick leave, pensions, and maternity leave, plus the lack of daycare and kindergartens for working mothers.

1.1 The WEESC Project Description and Theory of Change

To address these challenges, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) Georgia launched a first main phase of the “Women’s Economic Empowerment in the South Caucasus” (WEESC) Project in August 2018, with the goal of ensuring that women, particularly the poor and socially excluded, in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia are economically empowered and participate in relevant decision-making processes. The 3-year project is being implemented by UN Women Georgia, in close partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Armenia and Azerbaijan from August 2018-July 2021. It is funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the Austrian Development Agency (ADA). A second phase of the project is proposed for an additional 36 months to build on the results achieved during Phase One, lessons learned and recommendations from this evaluation, including an assessment of potential realignment of outcome areas across the three countries. A final exit phase is planned for an additional 12 months.

State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan (2018), Women and Men in Azerbaijan. Available at <https://www.stat.gov.az/source/gender/?lang=en>.

National Statistics Office of Georgia (2018), Women and Men in Georgia.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷At the WEESC Project's inception phase, the pay gap stood at 34 per cent in Armenia, 53 per cent in Azerbaijan and 36 per cent in Georgia according to the *Progress of the World's Women* report of 2015-2016.

⁸ Pro-Doc SDC-ADA October 2018.

Table 1 below outlines the 3 outcomes and 7 outputs that set the stage for achievement of the overarching goal of WEESC.

Table 1 – WEESC Project Expected Outcomes and Outputs

Outcomes	Outputs
1: Grassroots Level: Women, particularly the poor and socially excluded, use skills, economic opportunities and relevant information to be self-employed and/or to join the formal labour sector in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia	<p>1.1: Women, particularly poor and socially excluded, obtain skills and opportunities to be (self-) employed in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia</p> <p>1.2: Women and women's groups are empowered to participate in local planning and budgeting, e.g. Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) discussions</p> <p>1.3: Selected private enterprises are empowered to serve as opinion leaders in terms of Women's Economic Empowerment Principles (WEPS)</p>
2: Policy and Legislation Level: Armenia and Georgia implement adequate legislative and policy frameworks to enable WEE	<p>2.1: Data and evidence generated to develop legislative and policy frameworks that enable WEE in Armenia and Georgia</p> <p>2.2: National gender machineries of Armenia and Georgia supported to carry out changes in policy and legislative frameworks enabling WEE</p>
3: Institutional Level: Government and public institutions develop and deliver gender-responsive programs, public services, strategies and plans for WEE in Armenia and Georgia	<p>3.1: Targeted government and public institutions are strengthened to mainstream gender in their operations and develop gender-responsive programs, services and plans in Armenia and Georgia</p> <p>3.2: Employees of targeted government and public institutions have knowledge and skills to mainstream gender in respective programs, public services, strategies and plans in Armenia and Georgia</p>

Source: UN Women WEESC Programme Document

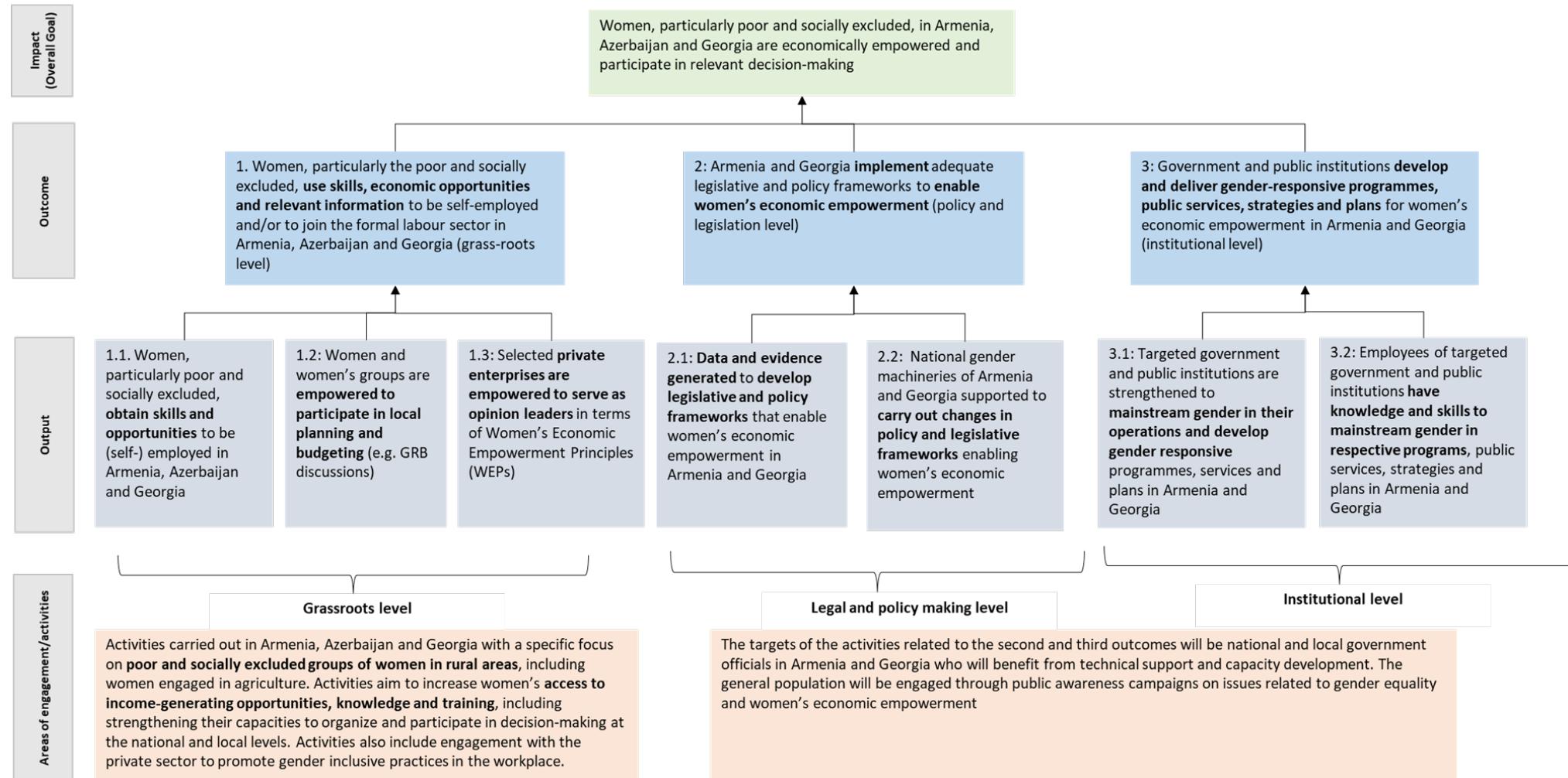
This three-pronged and holistic approach to enhance gender equality (GE) and WEE is designed to bring about interrelated and transformative change within each country at multiple levels -- local, regional and central -- while promoting coordination and inclusive good governance within the public sector, civil society as well as the private sector.⁹

It is intended that this formative evaluation test the viability of this integrated approach with impartiality and rigor in order to inform future programming. The principal donor, SDC, has also indicated that the design of Phase Two could potentially go beyond the current scope of Phase One, to encompass, for example, the civic and social empowerment of women at the grassroots level and relevant responses to the continuing COVID pandemic, in addition to peace and security issues affecting women and their families in the region.

As part of the inception phase work, the evaluation team constructed a visual Theory of Change (see Figure 1) based on the WEESC Programme Document Annex 1 Log-Frame, for reference throughout the evaluation process. The graphic is followed by a summary of assumptions and risks that were extracted from the ProDoc. The evaluation continually refers to the Theory of Change throughout the evaluation, testing ideas and mapping possible adjustments to better understand the possibilities for outcomes. Based on triangulation of evaluation evidence and findings, some suggested revisions to the Theory of Change and its associated indicators have been identified in Section 6 Recommendations.

⁹ WEESC ProDoc.

Figure 1 - Project Visual Theory of Change Constructed by the Evaluation Team



Source: A graphical illustration prepared by the Evaluation Team based on the WEESC ProDoc Annex 1 Project LogFrame.

Level	Key Assumptions	Sustainability Angle
Outcome 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Women can be inspired to participate in project activities and in becoming more active economically and socially ▪ Understanding of the concept of decent work for women among all stakeholders ▪ There is decent work opportunities for women, especially the poor and socially excluded 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Women who successfully transitioned from informal to formal decent jobs and/or whose incomes increased as a result of the project's support ▪ Women's networks (country and regional) that have been created and/or strengthened as a result of the project.
Outcome 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There is political will to undertake policy & legislative reforms aimed at WEE ▪ Reforms are not slow and addresses all dimensions relevant for WEE. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Adopted laws and policies that remove discriminatory barriers for women to participate in and benefit from economic opportunities (Armenia and Georgia)
Outcome 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Govt. institutions engage women in local planning and budgeting ▪ Organisations can be convinced of the need to integrate women 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Institutionalized capacities and mechanisms delivering gender-responsive programmes and services (Armenia and Georgia; national and local levels)

Source: Prepared by Evaluation Team based on assumptions included in WEESC ProDoc

1.2 South Caucasus Regional and Country Context

There are a number of factors that influence the implementation of the WEESC Project, namely socio-economic conditions within the South Caucasus Region, demographic considerations in both rural and urban environments, civil and political climates within each country and between countries, and in different levels of institutional capacity for WEE and GE. A full description of the implementation environment in which the WEESC Project has been rolled out within each country can be found in the Country Reports for Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia, as well as their respective Learning Briefs. See Annexes A, B, C. Additionally, the contributions from other state and non-state actors to the attainment of positive results can be found in the report's Findings Section 4.2 on Coherence.

In addition to recommendations from international human rights bodies such as the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women's (CEDAWs) Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women and evidence-based research, and global and national evaluations of UN Women's work on WEE, the design and selected priorities of the WEESC project have been informed by the commitments of UN agencies in all three countries. These undertakings are defined within the multi-year agreements between the UN Country Teams (UNCTs) and the Governments of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, and thus are linked to their respective national priorities. The three UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCFs) are core instruments for providing coherent, strategic directions for UN development activities by all UN entities at country levels, particularly UN Women and UNDP for this project.

The South Caucasus Region has made considerable headway towards achieving Sustainable Development Goals 5 and 8 of Agenda 2030. Leading up to the WEESC project, the UN Women Georgia Country Office undertook a number of GE and WEE initiatives, in particular the establishment of a broader Gender Theme Group (GTG) in 2012 and a Task Force on WEE in 2017.

In Armenia, the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF-Armenia) 2016-2020 paved the way for UN Women and UNDP-Armenia to work diligently towards the promotion and attainment of Sustainable Development Goals 1, 5 and 8. The latest CEDAW Committee report highlighted a number of calls to action for the Government of Armenia to address with respect to women's employment and economic empowerment as well as participation in political and public life, which are the two main goals of the WEESC Project.¹⁰ The community consolidation process over the more recent past has seen the numbers of jurisdictions reduced from 915 to 250 by 2019, which has also had a major impact on project implementation, especially as regards Outcomes 2 and 3.

In Azerbaijan, the UN-Azerbaijan Partnership Framework (UNAPF) 2016-2020 laid out some key steps to achieve Sustainable Development Goals 1, 5 and 8 during Phase One of the WEESC Project. The most recent CEDAW Committee report made a number of recommendations for the Government of Azerbaijan to address regarding WEE and employment, participation in political and public life, as well as gender equality in rural areas.¹¹ The International Labour Organization (ILO) has also established a

¹⁰ UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Concluding observations on the combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of Armenia, 2016, CEDAW/C/ARM/CO/5-6

¹¹ UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of Azerbaijan, 2015, CEDAW/C/AZE/CO/5

Decent Work Country Program (DWCP) to promote satisfactory jobs, empower young females and males, and to enhance self-employment for budding entrepreneurs. A gender-balanced National Tripartite Commission mechanism for social dialogue was to be established, and e-governance has been recommended for outreach and extending social partners' networks for DWCP.

In Georgia, the UN Partnership for Sustainable Development in Georgia (UNPSD-Georgia) 2016-2020 integrated Sustainable Development Goals 5, 8, 10 and 12 in its priorities for the period. The last CEDAW Committee report called on the Government of Georgia to strengthen a number of areas.¹² These included employment, rural women, disadvantaged groups of women, participation in political and public life, and the legal framework for non-discrimination and GE that align with WEESC Project priorities. Additionally, the ongoing Joint Action for Women's Economic Empowerment (JAWE), UN Women Georgia's cost-share project funded by Norway, creates a synergistic effect and strengthens both projects.

However, during the course of WEESC implementation, project activities have been negatively affected by external events, specifically the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan and the onset of the COVID-19 global pandemic. The conflict has had serious consequences throughout the South Caucasus Region, with an increase in numbers of internally displaced people (IDP) and spontaneous arrivals (in Armenia), of refugees (Azerbaijanis and Armenians in Georgia) and migrant workers. The global COVID-19 pandemic has further hampered the economies of all nations, with a rise in health and welfare issues, mortalities, lockdowns, travel restrictions, and an increase in domestic violence.

Similar to the rest of the world, the South Caucasus Region cannot avoid the pandemic. However, the COVID pandemic and the development of corresponding innovative measures to respond to the situation have also led to a number of positive impacts. For example, there has been an accelerated use of digital technologies for communications, business enterprises, learning platforms and governance to name just a few. Other issues that have gained prominence are the importance of national food security, robust medical services, well-prepared emergency management systems and reliable energy sources which in turn create potential economic opportunities for the poorest rural regions in the South Caucasus given their location.

1.3 WEESC Project Boundaries and Complexity

There are a significant number of components within the project making it a challenge for the parties responsible for its design, delivery, monitoring and evaluation. Foremost is the focus on three neighbouring countries south of the Caucasus mountain range with many similarities in demographics yet important differences to be accommodated in terms of project design and customisation. To address overall project management, a Steering Committee which meets every six months to guide project implementation and financial oversight.

Table 2 below summarizes the resources and expenditures for the first two years of project implementation, but does not include funds committed for the final year of Phase One.

¹² UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Concluding observations on the combined fourth and fifth periodic reports of Georgia, 2014, CEDAW/C/GEO/CO/4-5

Table 2 – WEESC Project Financial Resources (August 2018 to June 2020)

WEESC Resources	Steering Committee Budget (USD)			Expenditures from August 18, 2018 to June 30, 2020		Percentages Expended & Projected	
Donors	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Years 1 & 2 Total	Year 3 Projection	Years 1 & 2 Expended	Year 3 Projected
SDC @78%	.999 m	1.09 m	1.17 m				
ADA @ 22%	.319 m	.322 m	.285 m	2,019,785 USD	2.17 m	48%*	52%
Total	1.32 m	1.41 m	1.46 m				

Source: Prepared by Evaluation Team based on WEESC Interim Semi-Annual Financial Reports. *An additional amount of USD 382,002 in partner advances and USD 69,010 in other expenses have been committed as of June 2020. Thus, total projected spent and committed funds as of June 2020 are USD 2,930,879 (69%). Source: WEESC Interim Financial Reports I to IV for Phase One (UN Women to SDC/ADA Donors) and updates from UN Women.

1.4 WEESC Key Project Stakeholders

The key stakeholders involved in project implementation, including the implementing agencies and partners, are illustrated by the WEESC Partner Map included as Annex D and summarized in Table 3. Within each country, these entities form stakeholder groups that meet annually and function as an Evaluation Reference Group (ERG) for the evaluation team, providing feedback during preliminary findings presentations and thereafter.

Table 3 - Stakeholder Groups in Each Country

Countries	Stakeholder Sector	Stakeholder Group Participants
Georgia	National Government Local Government Organizations	RDA, MOH, Geostat, Gender Commission, Parliamentary Gender Committee Kakheti, Kvemo Kartli, Samtskhe-Javakheti Regions ILO, ISET
Armenia	National Government Local Government Organizations Private Sector/Other	ARMSTAT, Ministry of Labour and Social Issues and its Department for Women, Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure Gegharkunik, Shirak Regions 3R Strategy LLC and Green Lane NGO consortium and SDA Armenia, ILO Coca Cola CJSC, IBIS Hotels, C-Quadrat
Azerbaijan	National Government Local Government Organizations Private Sector/Other	State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs Khazar, Gusar, Sabirabad Regions WRCs, AWEDA, Azerbaijan Micro-Finance Association PwC Azerbaijan, SOCAR AQs, and Deloitte Azerbaijan, EU Azerbaijan

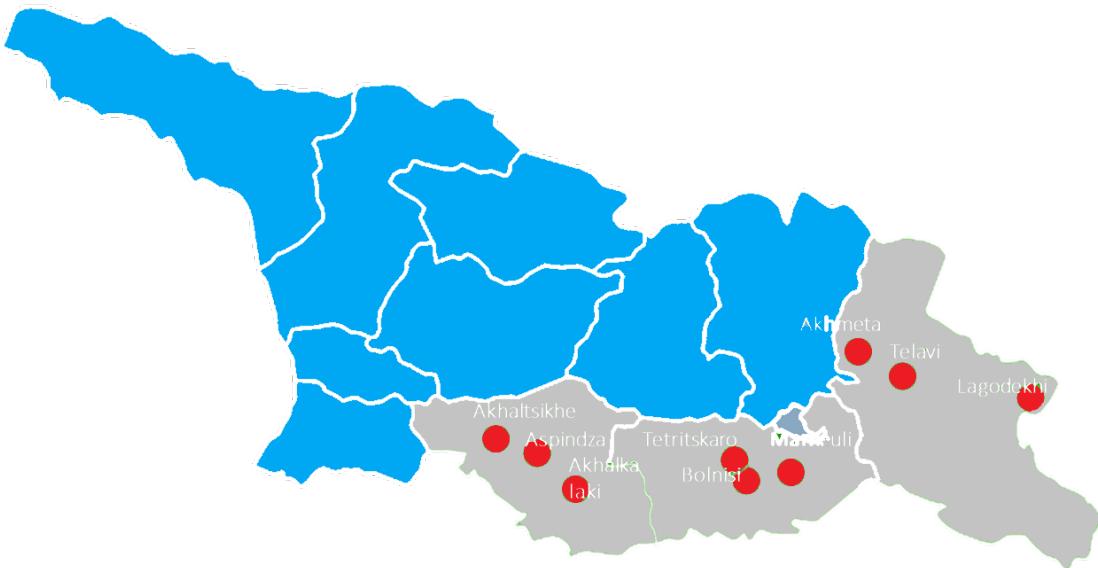
Source: Prepared by Evaluation Team based on WEESC project documents.

1.5 Implementation Status of the WEESC Project

The WEESC Project focuses on Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia in the South Caucasus Region. Grassroots-level/Outcome 1 is being implemented across all three countries, whereas the Policy and Legislation-level/Outcome 2 and Institutional-level/Outcome 3 areas are being conducted in only Armenia and Georgia.

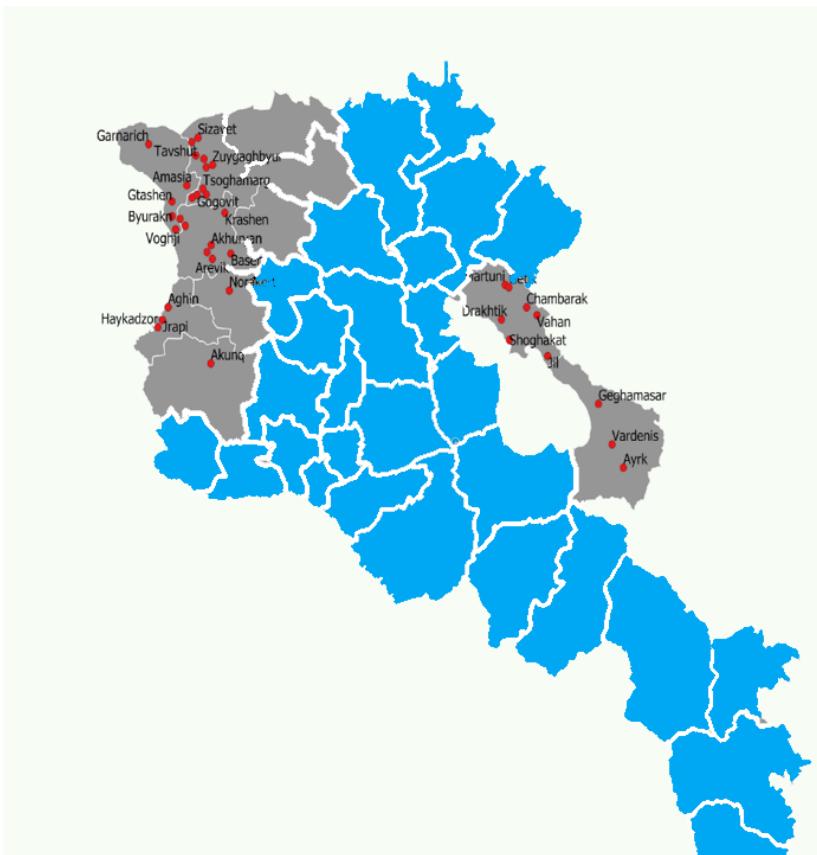
An analysis of progress towards results achieved to date is included in Annex E (Results Tracker). The highlights of the cumulative progress to date organized by outcome areas as of June 30, 2020, and updated with data collected from July 1 to December 31, 2020, are summarized in Findings Section 4.3 on Effectiveness. The maps below illustrate the project's geographic reach in each of the three countries.

Figure 2 - WEESC Project Implementation in Georgia



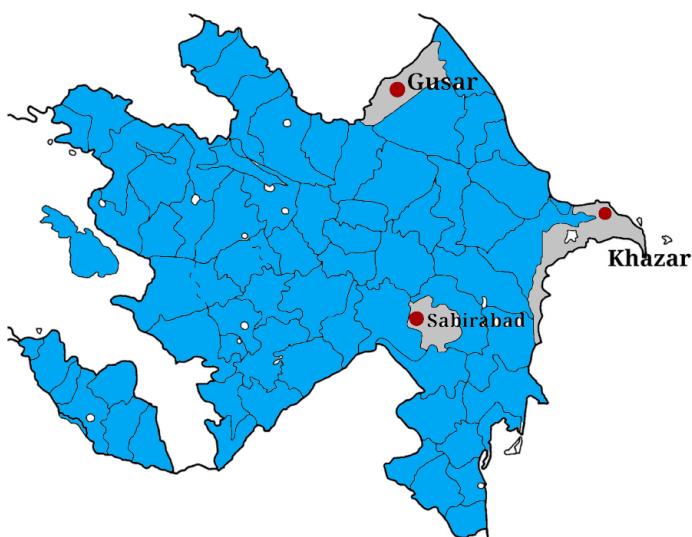
Source: Prepared by Evaluation Team

Figure 3 - WEESC Project Implementation in Armenia



Source: Prepared by Evaluation Team

Figure 4 - WEESC Project Implementation in Azerbaijan



Source: Prepared by Evaluation Team

In order to accomplish project activities, Table 4 illustrates how the donor funds were spent up until June 2020. The December 2020 Interim Financial Report V to donors will not be available until April 2021.

Table 4 - Project Expenditures to Date by Outcome, Project Management & Program Support

Total Expenditures as of June 2020 (USD), excluding funds committed*							
	Outcomes				Project Mgmt & Depreciation	Program Support	Total Spent Years 1 & 2
	1 AZ AM GE	2 AM GE	3 AM GE	Total			
Project-Wide activity	283,150	419,442	165,297	867,889			
Armenia Specific	135,763		136,124	271,887			
Azerbaijan Specific	302,321			302,321			
Georgia Specific			69,712	69,712			
	721,234	419,442	371,133	1,511,809	270,322	237,654	2,019,785
Proportion - Total Expenditure	35.7%	20.8%	18.4%	74.8%	13.4%	11.7%	100%
Total 3 Year Budget Allocated (USD): USD 3,262,429 from SDC & EURO 800,000 from ADA							USD 4.2 m
Proportion of Total Budget Spent (%)*							48.2%

Source: Prepared by Evaluation Team based on WEESC Interim Semi-Annual Financial Reports.

*An additional amount of USD 382,002 in partner advances and USD 69,010 in other expenses have been committed as of June 2020. Thus, total projected spent and committed funds as of June 2020 are USD 2,930,879 (69%). Source: WEESC Interim Financial Reports I to IV for Phase One (UN Women to SDC/ADA Donors) and updates from UN Women.



Armenian private sector learns about Women's Empowerment Principles. Photo:
<http://georgia.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2019/06/armenian-private>.

2. Evaluation Purpose, Objectives and Scope

2.1 Evaluation Purpose

As mandated in the Project Document, this final external evaluation is being conducted by UN Women in the last year of Phase One WEESC project implementation. Its formative focus is expected to yield a number of recommendations that will be utilized in designing Phase Two of the project. Consistent with the OECD-DAC guidelines, the evaluation considered relevance, effectiveness, organizational efficiency and sustainability criteria, as well as coherence. Furthermore, the evaluation incorporated the principles embedded in the United Nations Evaluation Group's (UNEG's) New Norm 9: National evaluation capacities; Norm 2: Utility; and Norm 14: Evaluation use and follow-up.

An Evaluation Management Group (EMG) composed of five individuals is responsible for supporting the independent evaluation team with their tasks.¹³

The primary evaluation users are the WEESC Project Steering Committee consisting of representatives from the UN Women Georgia Country Office, as well as Phase One project donors, SDC and ADA. Secondary evaluation users include national stakeholders such as the UNDP in Armenia and Azerbaijan, civil society and private sector partners, parliamentary counterparts, key state agencies, and local governments within the eight targeted and impoverished rural regions in the South Caucasus. In Azerbaijan and Armenia, companies within the private sector who have been serving as opinion leaders for WEPs are also considered stakeholders, while in Georgia, this private sector work is largely being covered by a separate UN Women WEE project being funded by Norway¹⁴.

The quantitative and qualitative data generated by this evaluation is intended to be used by different stakeholders to: 1) contribute to building of a consolidated evidence base on effective WEE strategies in all three countries; and 2) facilitate deep reflection, learning and strategic planning for further WEE programming at the grassroots, law and policy, as well as institutional levels, including the promotion of women's participation in decision-making within their respective communities.

The findings, lessons learned, conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation are expected to contribute to Phase Two of the WEESC Project and to influence overall effective programming on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) in the South Caucasus Region. Furthermore, the data collected and analyzed by the evaluation team will be used to engage policy-makers and other stakeholders at local, national and regional levels in evidence-based dialogues and to advocate for practical gender-responsive strategies to economically empower women.¹⁵

2.2 Objectives of Evaluation

The overall objective of this final evaluation is to assess the achievement of anticipated results and performance of the WEESC Project – Phase One. The specific objectives are:

- To analyze the relevance of the implementation strategy and approaches;
- To assess organizational efficiency in progressing towards the achievement of the project's results as defined in the intervention;

¹³ Tamar Sabedashvili, Mehjabeen Alarakhia, and Isabel Suarez Garcia of UN Women; Natalya Harutyunyan of UNDP Armenia, and Gulara Humbatova of UNDP Azerbaijan.

¹⁴ Joint Action for Women's Economic Empowerment in Georgia (JAWE), UN Women Georgia's cost-share project

¹⁵ UN Women Terms of Reference

- To validate the project results in terms of achievements and/or weaknesses toward the outcome and outputs;
- To assess the potential for sustainability of the results achieved;
- To document lessons learned, best practices, and challenges to inform future work of UN Women on WEE;
- To identify strategies for scaling up and replication of best practices;
- To provide actionable recommendations for the implementation of WEESC Project - Phase Two and maximize various partners' ownership within Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia in order to foster sustainability of the WEE intervention;
- To assess how the project and its results relate and contribute to commitments and achievement of SDGs in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, with a focus on SDGs 5 and 8.¹⁶

Key performance principles include UNEG's General Norms for Evaluation (Norms #1 to #10) and Institutional Norms for Evaluations in the UN System (Norms #11 to #14), including New Norms #1 on internationally agreed principles, goals and targets; #8 on human rights and gender equality; #9 on national evaluation capacities; and #10 on professionalism, with a stronger emphasis on the utility and use of the evaluation (Norm #2). Norm #4 on independence was adhered to and UNEG's performance standards 1 through 5 were foremost in the minds of the EMG and the evaluation team, especially Standard 4 on the conduct of the evaluation, and Standard 5 on quality assurance and control.

2.3 Evaluation Scope

Phase One of the WEESC Project commenced implementation in August 2018 and extends to July 2021. This evaluation was initially intended to cover the period starting from August 13, 2018 and ending July 31, 2020, however UN Women provided additional data for the period August-December 2020 that has been incorporated into the evaluation scope. The WEESC project targets eight regions of the South Caucasus within the three countries as identified in Section 1.5.

The evaluation includes a review of WEESC Project documents for Phase One, including project design documents, annual work plans, periodic reports to SDC and ADA, project-related knowledge products (e.g. manuals, reports, studies, articles, etc.) as well as performance measurement and logical frameworks. The evaluation also considers the broader WEE policy and legal systems both regionally and nationally which WEESC programming seeks to influence in compliance with international human rights law (e.g. CEDAW, the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (CCPR), etc.).

Finally, the evaluation considers the dimensions of stakeholder involvement in each country, both at the national and regional levels, particularly in light of the COVID pandemic and the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict. Gender equality and human rights considerations are mainstreamed throughout the evaluation and include the connection between the COVID-19 pandemic and potential increases in domestic violence (section 2.5 below). Other than grants made to women for wage or self-employment initiatives and/or vocational training, the evaluation did not cover a cost-benefit analysis for expenses related to activities scheduled for the final year of Phase One.

¹⁶ Ibid.

2.4 Evaluation Criteria

The OECD-DAC criteria as outlined in the DAC Principles for Development Assistance are the main evaluation criteria for this formative evaluation, including the revised and updated version.¹⁷ Specifically, these criteria are the following:

Relevance: Is the WEESC Project doing the right things given contextual changes and a greater emphasis on relevance to beneficiaries' priorities and needs? What is the appropriateness of the intervention's objectives to the real problems, needs and priorities of the target groups/beneficiaries and the quality of program design through which these objectives are achieved?

Coherence: How well does the WEESC Project fit with a view to capture perspectives from partnerships and linkages, as well as to understand interventions within broader systems? What is the compatibility of the intervention with other interventions in a country, sector or institution?

Effectiveness: Is the WEESC Project achieving its objectives, including by examining differential results and encouraging analysis of equity issues? What is the extent to which the intervention is expected to achieve its objectives and its results, including any differential results across groups?

Efficiency: How well are the resources used (human, financial, material), including the notion of timeliness, and whether efficiency applied throughout the results chain? What is the extent to which the intervention delivers, or is likely to deliver results, in an economic and timely way?

Sustainability: Will the benefits last, focusing not on external funding, but on continuation of benefits and highlighting the multidimensional nature of sustainability? What is the extent to which the net benefits of the intervention continue, or are likely to continue?

One final OECD-DAC criteria, *Impact*, which examines the difference the intervention is making and focuses on higher-level changes in terms of significance, transformative potential, scope and/or time scale, was not called for by the EMG. Impact will be better assessed in the evaluation of WEESC Project Phase Two when there has been more time for implementation once the COVID pandemic has ended. However, early signs of project impact are incorporated into the criteria above wherever found, especially with reference to gains made towards SDGs 1, 5 and 8.

2.5 Gender Equality and Human Rights Considerations

In alignment with the new UNEG Norm #8, the evaluation objectives and scope included numerous questions that address issues of GE and human rights.¹⁸ Furthermore, compliance with UNEG Standard 4.7 called for a human rights-based approach and a gender mainstreaming strategy with respect to the conduct of the evaluation. As mentioned above, GE and human rights matters were embedded in all the

¹⁷ *The DAC Principles for the Evaluation of Development Assistance*, OECD (1991), *Glossary of Evaluation and Results Based Management (RBM) Terms*, OECD (2000), and *Better Criteria for Better Evaluation*, OECD (2020).

¹⁸ *"The universally recognized values and principles of human rights and gender equality need to be integrated into all stages of an evaluation. It is the responsibility of evaluators and evaluation managers to ensure that these values are respected, addressed and promoted, underpinning the commitment to the principle of 'no-one left behind'.*

questions to be answered by the evaluation, including matters related to the COVID-19 pandemic and its increased potential for domestic violence with consequences for WEE.

The design of the WEESC Project incorporated a strong human rights and gender equality approach; the strategy emphasizes the rights of women and pays particular attention to poor rural women, ethnic minorities, internally displaced people, migrant workers and disabled people. These marginalized groups within the targeted regions of Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia were the primary focus of Outcome 1 activities and they are the direct beneficiaries of numerous interventions. The women empowered at the grassroots level were also indirect beneficiaries of Outcome 2 and 3 activities in both Armenia and Georgia. Many of the Project's initiatives related directly to the recommendations of the UN treaty bodies overseeing the international human rights instruments: CEDAW, CERD, ICESCR, and ICCPR for all three countries, as well as the International Convention on the Rights of Migrant Workers and Their Families (CMW) for Azerbaijan and Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) for Armenia.¹⁹

In terms of implementation, the WEESC Project embraced a GE perspective throughout by engaging with the Gender Theme Group of the Task Force on Gender Equality in Tblisi, Georgia, as well as the Prime Minister's Advisor on Human Rights and Gender Equality Issues, the Gender Commission of the Government of Georgia, and Parliamentary Gender Committee. In Yerevan, Armenia, the Project implementers engaged with the Department of Family, Women and Children's Issues within the Ministry of Labor and Social Issues while in Baku, Azerbaijan, project engagement was with the State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs and Association for Women Entrepreneurship Development in Azerbaijan (AWEDA).

With respect to Phase One results achieved, a gender-based analysis plus (GBA+) approach was foremost in the evaluation team's methodology related to its assessment of the data collected by numerous document reviews, and 40+ KIIs, 16 FGDs involving 92 participants, and 1 online survey. As spelled out in the EU 2016 report on intersectional discrimination, due to its synergetic nature, such discrimination is extremely difficult to monitor and national statistics do not include data disaggregated for instance by both sex and ethnicity or sex and disability. As indicated in the WEESC ProDoc, this concept of intersectional discrimination uncovers the problems faced by those who are have multiple disadvantages and allows for addressing these problems. It has been incorporated both in project implementation and in the conduct of the evaluation.²⁰

¹⁹ The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention on the Rights of Migrant Workers and Their Families, and the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities

²⁰ WEESC Project Pro-Doc



From right to left: Diana Imedashvili and her mother-in-law are welcoming guests at Diana's – Café Birkiani, Georgia.
Photo: UN Women

3. Methodology

3.1 Evaluation Approach and Methodology

Adopting a utilization-focused and mixed methods approach, the evaluation examines a number of criteria central to OECD-DAC's method for evaluating development interventions including relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability. This ensures the evaluation is transparent, inclusive, participatory and responsive to the information needs of evaluation users. This approach takes into account both the existing Theory of Change by examining the outputs and outcomes against the Project's key indicators of success, in addition to the socio-economic and WEE contexts of the three countries. The evaluation has been informed by feminist, rights and responsibilities-based and inter-cultural theories and has also considered the broader WEE policy and legal systems, both regionally and nationally, which the WEESC Project is seeking to influence in compliance with international human rights law, as discussed above.

This approach is focused on the information needs of evaluation users to assess project performance to date and to provide evidence and advice to support future programming. It requires an analysis of the assumptions behind the WEESC Project Theory of Change as well as the implementation strategy and approaches used. This accommodates the complexity of relationships in a development context and ensures the use of culturally appropriate, participatory and inclusive processes. Utilization focused evaluation also prioritizes measures to reach disadvantaged groups and ensure the collection of diversity and sex-disaggregated data to allow for appropriate GBA+ analysis.

Within this framework, the evaluation used a mixed methods approach combining qualitative and quantitative methods in order to triangulate the data. The evaluation incorporated the following methodologies: document reviews; semi-structured interviews; focus group discussions (FGDs); three learning briefs (case studies); a survey and a visually constructed theory of change developed by the Evaluation Team.²¹ Due to the COVID-19 context, all data collection was conducted online and by telephone, Skype and Zoom, with multiple lines of evidence triangulated in order to provide an evidence-based narrative that connects GBA+ analysis, findings, conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned.

The evaluation used the Evaluation Matrix (EM) as the primary tool to collect, analyse and assess data and information to answer the key evaluation questions. The EM was structured according to the above OECD/UN criteria, and under each of these, UN Women identified initial key questions to address during the evaluation within the Terms of Reference. During the evaluation's inception phase, these questions were reviewed and further refined as indicated in the Final Evaluation Matrix which is included in Annex F. The UN Evaluation Group's Guidance on Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation was also taken into account and embedded in evaluation questions and data collections methods, sources and instruments.

3.2 Data Collection and Sources

The evaluation used five data collection tools described below, with the data sources summarized in the table on the following page. The data collection tools are included as Annexes I and J.

²¹ See section 2.3 for details.

Document Review – A wide range of **117 program documents** were reviewed, including the WEESC Project logical framework, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plan and progress reports. In addition, selected UN Women and UN documents have been reviewed that focus on strategic frameworks for the region and each country as well as broader GEWE agreements. Other country-specific documents have also been reviewed for Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia, including reports, knowledge products attributable to the WEESC Project, and work plans. Given the current COVID-19 context, several resources have been identified to support the assessment of COVID-19 in the respective countries and related analysis of implications for the WEESC Project. A final bibliography of documents reviewed is included as Annex L.

Key Informant Interviews (KII) – A key source of qualitative data were the **62 semi-structured interviews** with implementers and key stakeholders across the following groups: (a) project staff and donors, (b) public sector partners both at the national and local levels, (c) private sector entities collaborating with WEESC, (d) local community organizations/NGOs and national human rights institutions, and (e) other programs collaborating with the Project. Interviews were conducted virtually and included both descriptive questions seeking quantitative data or factual insights related to programming contexts, plus normative questions seeking perceptions on project planning, implementation and results against expectations. KII also probed behavioral changes or modifications to existing practices as a result of the project activities.

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) – **16 FGDs were conducted with 92 women beneficiaries** at the grassroots level in 12 different locations, representative of the 8 target regions of the Project in the 3 countries, in order to understand the benefits of WEESC program activities both in terms of their economic and social change. A FGD discussion guide was developed and customized for three groups to understand respondents' own accounts of attribution of change as a result of their engagement with the Project, namely: (a) self-employed (i.e. those who have established businesses), (b) those who secured employment as result of project support, and (c) those who went through training(s) but have not yet secured employment nor established businesses. However, as noted below in the sampling strategy, the locations for the FGDs were strategically selected to compare and contrast performance and learnings across these three groups, with an emphasis on intersectionality. In Georgia, an FGD was also conducted with women who received Gender Responsive Planning and Budgeting training. A list of people interviewed is included as Annex M and covers both KII and FGDs.

Survey – A short survey was administered in English to **28 staff of UN Women and UNDP and principal implementation partners** working on WEESC programming across Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. Although the response rate was rather low (39%) due to the compressed timeline for data collection, the survey did provide additional perspectives on the relevance of the overall WEESC approach, coherence and synergies, and efficiency issues within their country and for the WEESC project more broadly.

Learning Briefs – Three short learning briefs were also developed to further highlight project relevance, performance, innovations, challenges and best practices across the different outcome areas in the three countries. The cases embedded in the briefs focused on capturing the relevance of project activities to achieve the broader objectives as defined by the Theory of Change (ToC), particularly in relation to: a) the socio-economic benefits to women and community members across the relevant WEE dimensions defined by the project, b) their contribution to addressing some of the key systemic constraints for women's employment and income earning opportunities through change in the behavior of system actors, and c) the key lessons learned and suggested ways forward for Phase Two. In Azerbaijan, the case study addresses Outcome 1 and contrasts learning between a mature Women's Resource Centre (WRC) and two new WRCs. In Georgia, the two case studies delve into the learning, interlinkages and project

success related to Outcome 2, specifically the Labor Code and Gender Responsive Budgeting. In Armenia, the case explores the interconnection between the three project Outcomes.

Figure 5 - Data Collection Methods and Sources

Data Collection Methods and Sources	
Key Informant Interviews (KIs) N = 62 in person and via telecom	Focus Group Discussion (FGDs) n = 16 FGDs with 92 women participants
<p>Semi-structured interviews with representatives from (a) national government, (b) local government, (c) private sector, (d) community organizations/NGOs, (e) donors and (f) UN agencies/project staff</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Armenia: 16 • Azerbaijan: 14 • Georgia: 13 • UN Women Georgia Staff: 6 • Donors: 4 • Inception Phase: 9 	<p>FGDs were conducted focused on (a) women trained and self employed, (b) women trained and secured jobs and (c) women trained but economically inactive and (d) women trained in GRB</p> <p>FGDs completed per country:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Armenia: 5 covering Geghakunik, Shirak, Amasia, Chambark (31 participants) • Azerbaijan: 6 covering Gusar, Khazar, Sabirabad (30 participants) • Georgia: 5 covering Marneuli, Akhaltsikhe, Lagodekhi, Telavi, Aspindza (31 participants)
Document and Data Review n = 117	Structured Survey n = 28
<p>Detailed review of international, regional and country - level document:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project documents • Inception reports/studies • Strategic documents • M&E documents and trackers • Progress Reports • Financial Reports 	<p>Structured questionnaires were sent to 28 staff of WEESC and Implementing partners</p> <p>Response rate: 39%</p>
Learning Briefs N = 3	
	<p>Armenia: focused on interconnection between three outcomes</p> <p>Azerbaijan: focused on outcome 1 and contrasting learning between a mature and 2 new WRCs</p> <p>Georgia: focused on the success and learnings on WEESC's work on the Labor Code and Gender Based Budgeting</p>

Source: Prepared by Evaluation Team based on the Data Collection Phase.

3.3 Sampling Framework and Data Analysis

Sampling Framework

The evaluation methodology and the ToC are the basis for the GBA+ analysis of data gathered from primary and secondary sources which have been triangulated and linked to the specific evaluation questions in order to identify trends, themes and patterns.

The evaluation employed a purposive sampling approach, based on the extent of work with different stakeholders and impacts reported across the three outcome levels. It took into account the spread of beneficiaries and partners across different regions. The sampling approach was also informed by the inception phase interviews to identify priority areas for query, given limitations related to evaluation scope and timelines.

The sampling framework is presented in Table 5 for each country and describes the rationale for, and mechanics of, sample selection, diversity of stakeholders based on GBA+ analysis to ensure that the evaluation is inclusive and respectful of all stakeholders (rights holders and responsibility bearers).

Due to COVID-19 restrictions and the fact that all data collection was virtual or by telephone, the implementing partners were responsible for selecting the participants for all of the FGDs in the 3 countries. Purposive sampling was applied to identify a representative number of self-employed, wage-employed and unemployed women in urban and rural settings. All of the 16 FGDs comprised 5-6 participants who were selected by the implementing partners on the basis of criteria provided by the Evaluation Team. These criteria included: previously defined vulnerability criteria, family status, ethnicity

and age. An additional FGD related to GRB was also conducted in Georgia with municipal-level representatives who had been involved in GRB activities.

For the KIIs, a preliminary list of respondents was identified and approved in the Inception Phase Report (Table 5, p. 20 reproduced below). This list identified organisations in the following sectors and the approximate number of interviews to be conducted in each: Private Sector, National Government, Local Government, CBOs, other Stakeholders and project Management. As mentioned previously, given the virtual and telephonic nature of the data collection, UN Women and UNDP staff worked with the Evaluation Team to identify the appropriate respondents in each country across the various categories. A semi-structured survey, that included a mix of response choices and open-ended questions for comment, was also administered online to staff from UN Women, UNDP and principal implementing partners.

Table 5 - Evaluation Sampling Framework for Each Country

Country	Sampling Framework	Description
Georgia	Overview	In Georgia, due to COVID-19 restrictions, 13 interviews and 5 FGDs were conducted online in Tblisi and each of the three project target regions. The sampling framework was developed to obtain a cross-section of data within the very limited timeframe for data collection. At the grassroots level, three municipalities were selected and 5 FGDs, involving 31 women, were conducted within these three centres.
FGD	Telavi	<i>Telavi</i> is the regional center of Kakheti, which is one of the most developed regions in Georgia outside the capital city. The project data shows that most of the women trained, employed and self-employed are from this region. The women are from different backgrounds (urban and rural, covering all six vulnerability criteria) and the FGDs revealed important lessons related to barriers and challenges encountered by women who were trained but unsuccessful in obtaining self-employment and jobs.
FGD	Marneuli	<i>Marneuli</i> is the regional center of Kvemo Kartli that is mostly populated with ethnic minority women and the FGDs helped to illustrate specific challenges and achievements faced by ethnic minority women in relation to self-employment and jobs.
FGD	Aspindza	<i>Aspindza</i> is a regional periphery that has the lowest score on the Local Self-Government Index (the worst record at the municipality level) and faces the greatest socio-economic challenges according to the national assessment. Despite the difficult situational context, this FGD highlighted some of the achievements and progress made by women related to related self-employment and jobs.
FGD	Municipal Representatives	One FGD was also conducted with the <i>representatives of the financial offices of municipal governments</i> (Marneuli, Telavi and Lagodekhi) that have been successfully introduced to GRB methodology. The FGD revealed important findings about the effectiveness and sustainability of GRB component.

Country	Sampling Framework	Description
Armenia	Overview	In Armenia, although there were only limited COVID-19 restrictions, local travel was hindered by multiple factors during the data collection phase and thus, similar to the other countries, the 16 interviews and 5 FGDs, involving 31 women were conducted online.
FGD	Amasia	<i>Amasia, Shirak Region</i> , is a rural area, where there are low participation rates of women in economic activities. However, in recent years the wool production in Amasia has improved the situation and the economic activity of women has increased significantly. The FGD in this area explored how to ensure employment in rural areas.
FGD	Chambarak	<i>Chambarak in Gegharkunik Region</i> , has an urban population and thus the FGD revealed how the actual engagement of women in wage-employment is determined by the community-based programs and their synergic cooperation within the frameworks of different initiatives.
FGD	Shirak	<i>Shirak</i> is a Region with significant poverty in comparison to other regions of Armenia. The FGDs included all communities that have mostly rural populations in order to determine how the intervention impacted on women's economic inactivity and fostered self-employment. In this regard, the FGDs revealed how the intervention related to the peculiarities of the private sector, the operation of small and medium-size enterprises, business fundamentals and the possibilities for self-employment.
FGD	Gegharkunik	<i>Gegharkunik</i> is a Region that is mostly urban. In comparison to other regions, Gegharkunik Region is very traditional. The customs, traditions and gender stereotypes influence WEE greatly. In this regard, FGDs of Gegharkunik Region revealed how traditional and cultural factors determine women's economic inactivity and decrease the involvement of women in labour market.

Country	Sampling Framework	Description
Azerbaijan	Overview	<p>In Azerbaijan, due to the restricted lockdown measures, 14 interviews and 6 FGDs in Baku and the regions were conducted online in Azerbaijan. As Outcome 1 has been prioritized for Azerbaijan and all the implemented activities were undertaken within the grassroots level component, six FGDs (two for each region) were organized, involving 30 women in these 3 centres. For Khazar, 2 FGDs were conducted with self-employed and trained, but economically inactive, women. For Sabirabad, 2 FGDs focused on self-employed and wage-employed women, and for Gusar Region, the major focus was 2 FGDs with trained, but economically inactive women and wage-employed women.</p> <p>The participants were selected through the assistance of WRC coordinators by a quota sampling method taking into account variables such as age, work experience, marital status, ethnicity, educational background and current residence (urban vs. rural).</p>
FGD	Khazar	<i>Khazar</i> is a suburban region within commuting distance from Baku. It is one of the regions of Baku known for informal employment for women. Traditional economic engagement for women is the sale of goods and services in the local market. According to the project data, women from this region in Azerbaijan

		managed to secure most of the project's business grants to establish their small businesses. The FGDs in this region explored both the existing challenges for women who could not secure employment and the achievements of self-employed women who started new businesses.
FGD	Gusar	<i>Gusar</i> is a region populated mostly by the ethnic minorities (a majority being Lezgis). The project progress reports indicate that the trained beneficiaries from this region have the lowest rate of self-employment, but a high rate of wage-employment. The FGDs in this region explored the barriers and root causes of the low self-employment level.
FGD	Sabirabad	<i>Sabirabad</i> is a region that has an existing WRC well known for its experience with women's entrepreneurship. It is also populated by many internally displaced people (IDP) in which women beneficiaries have been targeted by the project. Progress reports indicate a high success rate for self-employed and wage-employed women. The FGDs helped to identify effective mechanisms for supporting the training-tojob transition and also explored the reasons behind the low diversity and traditional nature of employment sectors for wage-employed women.

Source: Sampling Frameworks for each country prepared by the Evaluation Team.

Data Analysis

A theory-based approach as used to assess whether the program's activities led to the expected results outlined in the ToC and to analyze causality amongst the outputs, outcomes and intended impact. Quantitative data from the Project were reviewed and qualitative data was collected using FGDs and KIIs to (a) understand the process of causality, in addition to how and why changes happened, (b) test the assumptions, and (c) validate results reported by the Project.

The totality of evaluation data collected from the literature reviews, project document reviews, FGDs, KIIs and survey, has been analysed primarily at country levels, but also on a Project-wide regional basis, with Preliminary Evaluation Findings at a Country Level included as Annexes N, O and P. Data analysis of qualitative findings related to evaluation questions pertinent to the FGDs, as identified in the EM, was undertaken using a standardized template for each country across three different categories of grassroots women beneficiaries (i.e. women trained and self-employed, women trained and secured a job, women trained but economically inactive). Content analysis from the FGDs was done using Excel and comparisons were made across different groups. Further qualitative data from the KIIs that were conducted in each country was similarly analysed using a standardized template across different categories of stakeholders (implementing partners, national/local government institutions and the private sector). While a standardized template was utilized, the interviews made references to the activities relevant to each stakeholder.

Quantitative data on key metrics such as the number and type of training attended, income and other demographics on the FGD participants, were collected from UN Women to validate findings. In addition, key quantitative metrics related to Outcome 1 were collected to measure the effectiveness of the training program(s) and grants. These were further triangulated with the FGDs, KIIs and a semi-structured survey administered to staff of UN Women, UNDP and principal implementation partners.

Content analysis was used to highlight the differing contexts within which the project was implemented and, where relevant, to flag divergent views. Contribution analysis was used to identify assumptions within the current ToC, which also led to the development of a proposed revised ToC for Phase Two, recommended by the Evaluation Team (see Section 6 Recommendations).

Country-level data analyses and findings were captured and presented in two complementary formats. These were preliminary presentations of findings for each country, and three learning briefs focusing on priority topics to draw out lessons learned, both on a project wide-basis and features unique to the WEESC project customization at a national level.

3.4 Stakeholder Consultations

As indicated previously, the evaluation is based on a consultative, inclusive and participatory process and has incorporated strong participation from project beneficiaries, particularly women at the grassroots level in all three countries.

Although consultations with the wider stakeholder audience were limited to a certain extent by the COVID-19 context, the Project's stakeholder groups in each country were represented in the evaluation through their designation as the Evaluation Reference Group (ERG). The ERG facilitates the participation of key stakeholders in the evaluation process and helps to ensure that the evaluation approach is robust and relevant to staff and stakeholders.

Given the current post-conflict geo-political context, the Evaluation Team adapted the presentation of preliminary findings to encompass individual presentations for each of the three countries in February 2021. The team also participated in the subsequent annual stakeholder meeting and discussions in February 2021. Based on this activity, the Evaluation Team also decided to extend the scope of the evaluation to encompass analyses of project activities and progress from June 2020 to the end of December 2020 based on updated information presented at the February 2021 stakeholder meetings.

These workshops offered a timely opportunity for both the EMG and stakeholders to provide input into the preliminary findings to ensure accuracy and support validation of the findings. This preliminary feedback has been considered and incorporated into the draft report and comments from the EMG on the draft report have been addressed and incorporated into this final report.

3.5 Challenges and Limitations

The evaluation inception phase identified a number of limitations and risks. Approaches to mitigating these were integrated into the evaluation design. The utilization-focused design deployed has many comparative advantages with the purpose, objectives and scope of the evaluation. It also faces inherent limitations, some of which cannot or can only be partially overcome. The main limitations of the evaluation design and corresponding mitigation strategies are described in Table 6.

Table 6 - Evaluation Limitations and Mitigation Strategies

Limitations	Context and Mitigation Strategies
Compressed timelines to conduct the formative evaluation in order to inform the design of Phase Two of the project	The formal start of the evaluation was in late November 2020, with preliminary findings required by early February 2021. The data collection phase was compressed to 4 weeks and occurred during the Christmas holiday season. Given the decision to separate the preliminary findings into 3 separate presentations, rather than 1 as per the ToRs, an additional 2 weeks were allocated for data analysis.
Lack of complete data that aligns with the duration of the project	Although categorized as a final evaluation, the data set provided during the inception phase and referenced in the evaluation TORs covers only the first two years of the project (August 2018-June 2020). The sampling strategy developed in the inception phase took this into

	account and in December 2020 and February 2021, additional data (particularly for Outcome 1) was provided by UN Women that extended the data coverage to December 2020.
COVID-19 related restrictions required the entire evaluation to be conducted virtually	Data collection in each country followed each country's respective COVID-19 guidelines and also the COVID-19 Global Evaluation Coalition. In all three countries, interviews and FGDs were conducted virtually using digital technology. The Evaluation Team collaborated closely with UN Women, UNDP and the local implementing partners to organize the interviews and FGDs.
Absence of qualitative and capacity indicators in the WEESC results framework (particularly for Outcome 1)	The RRF only includes quantitative indicators. This meant that the evaluation needed to use qualitative data collection methods to compensate.
Limited involvement of large numbers of marginalized women in the evaluation	Given time and resource constraints, only a limited number of direct women beneficiaries were engaged in the data collection phase. The sampling strategy developed in the inception phase was carefully formulated and tailored for each country and included 16 FGDs to address this challenge.

Source: Prepared by the Evaluation Team

3.6 Ethical Considerations

The evaluation was guided by the UNEG Ethical Guidelines and the UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System.



Azerbaijan - no further info re photo setting or credit

4. Findings

This section presents the main findings of the evaluation. It addresses the questions set out in the evaluation matrix; however, some of these have been grouped together and the analysis prioritizes the most relevant and useful findings for future programming and the design of Phase Two. This synthesis combines the findings from the three countries covered by the WEESC project, as well as the South Caucasus regional level. Given the significant implications of the current COVID-19 pandemic on current project implementation which are envisaged to continue for the foreseeable future, findings related to COVID-19 in each of the three countries are also included. A more detailed analysis of the achievements and challenges in Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan are contained in each country's presentation of findings found in Annexes N, O and P.

4.1 Relevance

Summary of Relevance Findings: Is the Intervention Doing the Right Things?

The three-pronged approach to addressing women's economic empowerment is viewed as highly relevant within the participating countries. The programming was considered important by stakeholders for improving the enabling environment for women's participation in the economic activities and aligned well with the international and national priorities in relation to WEE.

The project design is highly relevant in terms of targeting women with multiple vulnerabilities. Under Outcome 1, women beneficiaries shared positive feedback related to grants for start-up businesses and gender responsive budgeting; however, they indicated the need to improve the training component to better align with existing economic activities and growth opportunities in their regions. While the policy level work under Outcomes 2 and 3 is viewed as highly relevant, stakeholders including women beneficiaries, have expressed the need to better include issues around 'unpaid care', 'gendered norms', in addition to 'policies and services targeting entrepreneurship'.

There is also a need to better connect Outcome 1 with Outcomes 2 and 3 and adopt a more strategic approach to targeting priority economic sectors for women's economic activity and similarly, for engagement with the private sector.

1. ALIGNMENT WITH COUNTRY, REGIONAL, INTERNATIONAL AND UN AGENCY PRIORITIES

The WEESC project design is strongly aligned with the gender equality and sustainable development priorities of the three countries and directly addresses relevant international agreements and donor mandates. The project also supports the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCFs) that were agreed upon with all three national governments in 2016 and which laid the foundation for project implementation.

Alignment with International, Regional and National Agreements

All three countries in the South Caucasus region have committed to advancing WEE through a number of international and regional human rights and development frameworks, such as *inter alia*, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA), CEDAW, ILO conventions on gender equality and, most recently, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs. In addition, governments are guided by intergovernmental processes such as the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), which focuses on WEE in the changing world of work, hence both challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls respectively.

The project builds on the interconnectedness between GE and sustainable development (including economic, social and environmental sustainability which is also in alignment with the host country governments' international commitments under BPfA, Rio Conventions, SDGs, CEDAW and the Paris Agreement, etc. The assessment of environmental sustainability was not included in the evaluation TORs or evaluation matrix, however it undoubtedly an important dimension of rural development. Going forward, the WEESC project should accord great emphasis to the Green Economy and Renewable Energy and this sector should be included in the landscape analysis of strategic high-growth priority sectors for the WEESC project.

Strategic Alignment with Donor Priorities

Both the KIs and the ProDoc indicate strong alignment of the project design with SDC's interests and priorities as outlined in the 2017-2021 strategy. The strategy includes two main portfolios: (1) inclusive sustainable economic growth, and (2) effective democratic institutions, human safety and security, which are critical components of the project design. Going forward, SDC will release a new strategy for 2022-2025 under which women's empowerment will continue to remain a priority and there is a potential interest in extending the project's mandate to also address women's civic and social empowerment. A preliminary analysis of this potential is addressed in Section 6.3 Lessons Learned.

The project is also aligned with the priorities of ADA as outlined in the Austrian Development Policy (2016-2018). Key priorities under this policy include poverty reduction, the promotion of human rights, the rule of law and democracy, securing peace, environmental protection and GE, plus the provision of effective support for education, in addition to advancing inclusive and sustainable economic development. Going forward, ADA will release a new Strategy Framework for Eastern Partnership Countries that is expected to be published in the Springtime of 2021.

Relevance to Partner Country Needs, Strategies and UNSDCFs

Both Azerbaijan (2014) and Georgia (2016) have drawn the attention of the UN Human Rights Council's Special Rapporteurs on Violence against Women.²² Female IDPs and refugees report a higher rate of intimate partner violence than others in Azerbaijan; therefore, there are a number of recommendations aimed at securing sustainable support for vulnerable women's income-generating activities and establishing quotas for their enhanced participation in decision-making positions in their communities and beyond. And in Georgia, the focus was more on legislative and policy frameworks within government to address issues such as sexual harassment, mandatory quotas for female Parliamentarians, the need for increased cooperation with NGOs working in communities on the violence against women (VAW) issue, and combating discriminatory practices such as gender stereotyping in the media.

Triangulated evidence from the document review, KIs and survey indicate that project is well aligned with national gender equality-related policies, strategies and UNSDCFs of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. In all three countries, WEESC is aligned with a number of SDGs including SDG 5 (gender equality), SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth), SDG 10 (reduced inequalities), and SDG 1 (poverty alleviation).

Georgia

WEESC is one of the main goals to achieve GE and Georgia has politically and legally committed to GE in economic participation. The 2014 Association Agreement between Georgia and the EU also requires Georgia to bring national legislation into conformance with international standards. This includes an

²² A/HRC/26/38/Add.3 (18 June 2014) and A/HRC/32/42/Add.3 (22 July 2016), respectively.

obligation to support women's equal participation and enact all necessary measures at the national level, aimed at achieving greater equality between women and men.

The WEESC project addresses Georgia's international commitments under CEDAW, CERD, ICESCR, and ICCPR human rights treaties and recommendations from the Committees with oversight responsibilities.

The project objectives support the implementation of the *United Nations Partnership for Sustainable Development (Framework Document), Georgia, 2016-2020*, especially Focus Area 2: Jobs, Livelihood and Social Protection. Output 3 states: *By 2020 poor and excluded population groups have better employment and livelihood opportunities as a result of inclusive and sustainable growth and development policies*; while Output 4 states: *By 2020 vulnerable groups have access to proactive and inclusive gender and child sensitive social protection system that address major vulnerabilities*.

The *SDG Financing Report, December 2020* outlines the alignment of Georgian national strategies with its SDG targets of which SDGs 1, 5 and 8 are listed and tracked.²³ Linkages with SDG Indicators in the Government's 2019 budget also indicate that Georgia has a long way to go towards GRB as SDG 5 was still significantly underfunded.

Armenia

In Armenia, the WEESC project design is well aligned with a number of country strategies, including the Gender Equality Strategy 2019–2023; Law on Ensuring Equal Opportunities & Equal Rights for Women and Men; Human Rights Strategy (2019) and The Strategic Programme 2019-2023 on the "Implementation of Policy Ensuring Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Women and Men" in Armenia.

The WEESC project address Armenia's international commitments under CEDAW, CERD, ICESCR, ICCPR, and CRPD human rights treaties and recommendations from the Committees that monitor compliance.

WEESC objectives also directly support the *Armenia-United Nations Development Assistance Framework, 2016-2020* and Armenia's SDG plans and priorities. Pillar 1 is Equitable, Sustainable Economic Development and Poverty Reduction and *Outcome 1: By 2020, Armenia's competitiveness is improved and people, especially vulnerable groups, have greater access to sustainable economic opportunities*.

Azerbaijan

In Azerbaijan, 85% of key informants considered the goal and design of the WEESC project to be well aligned with GE principles and human rights norms.

The WEESC project addresses Azerbaijan's international commitments under CEDAW, CERD, ICESCR, ICCPR, CRPD and CMW human rights treaties. According to the CEDAW Committee's report in 2015, Azerbaijan is progressively passing, amending, and updating legislation in line with its commitments under international conventions on GE. The Committee made specific recommendations for improvement in women's employment, economic empowerment and entrepreneurship, as well as measures targeting disadvantaged and marginalized groups of women (i.e. rural, disabled, IDPs, refugees, and older women).

²³ See sdg.gov.ge

The project objectives support the implementation of the *United Nations-Azerbaijan Partnership Framework, 2016-2020*. Strategic Priority Area 1 deals with *Promoting Sustainable and Inclusive Economic Development Underpinned by Increased Diversification and Decent Work*. Cross-cutting themes include a human rights-based approach, GE, youth, specific capacity development for M&E (institutional, technical, managerial), and improving the overall evidence base. Two expectations from such alignment are an increased commitment by the national government to social inclusion, particularly for women, youth, children and vulnerable groups such as IDPs, refugees and persons with disabilities, as well as a better balance between urban and rural areas. Accordingly, the government's Vision 2020 goals include: 1) working towards a highly competitive economy balanced between regions, 2) developing human capital, and 3) ensuring transition to an information society. Outcome 1.1 states: *By 2020, the Azerbaijan economy is more diversified and generates enhanced sustainable growth and decent work, particularly for youth, women, people with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups.*

WEESC project implementation also directly supports the National Plan on Local Development of the Regions (2015-2018; 2020-2024) which emphasizes creating opportunities for self-employment of women and empowerment of women to actively engage in rural and urban life in the regions.

2. RELEVANCE OF PROJECT DESIGN IN ADDRESSING NEEDS OF VULNERABLE WOMEN

The project design is highly relevant in terms of targeting women with multiple vulnerabilities and identifying their needs to increase economic opportunities. In particular, the work on GRB is critical to addressing women's needs in local level decision making settings. The training design addresses a range of different skills and economic activities. However, women, particularly in Azerbaijan and Armenia, expressed a need to better tailor training programs to meet their levels of experience and to align with sectors that have strong economic potential in their communities. Initial progress was made in engaging the private sector to connect women to economic opportunities; however further work is needed to create a demonstration effect within the private sector.

The WEESC project consulted a range of different stakeholders at the grassroots, local and national government and private sector levels to inform the project design.

Grassroots Level

The project design is very relevant to the economic needs of women; however, the success of implementation has varied across different countries. In Armenia, for example, the project's activities were very well structured and focused on agricultural production and food processing, amongst other sectors, yet there is a need to revisit the targeting of women participants and to continue to expand the scope of training to encompass other sectors with potential for high-growth. The project design related to GRB is also very relevant in terms of raising awareness of women's needs and providing opportunities for women's voices to be heard, and thereby promoting their engagement in the resolution of gender inequalities in service provision at the local level. However, there have been issues related to women's participation in certain locations. While women's needs in general have been taken into account, the "one-size fits all" training model should be adjusted and further customized in order to better address specific local and regional contexts, varied vulnerabilities, and the needs of certain groups.

In addition to the activities, the choice of locations for WEESC project activities in each country is also very relevant in terms of targeting the most vulnerable communities. In Georgia, two-thirds of project beneficiaries interviewed confirmed that the interventions enhanced and supported their livelihoods, even during the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, all of the women confirmed increased capacities or

attested to the resilience of their communities. This included, but was not limited to an enhanced understanding of women's rights and economic empowerment possibilities. In addition to WEE, the project recognised the psycho-social element affecting women due to their higher degree of vulnerability (e.g. issues related to gender-based violence) during the pandemic. However, there is a need to further respond to these challenges in a more strategic manner. This was particularly true in Azerbaijan where activities focused exclusively at the grassroots level.

National and Local Government Levels

The WEESC project builds on UN Women's strength of working with the government at different levels and the design took into account the local and national level structures within each country. The project was also highly sensitive and respectful of the geopolitical issues in the South Caucasus Region, and adapted as required, to meet both the needs of the project and respond to immediate challenges. The work around gender pay gaps, labour codes and gender audits was viewed as highly relevant to the needs across the three countries given the large wage variation and poor participation of women in the labour force. While many of the activities related to Outcomes 2 and 3 are aligned with national priorities, high staff turnover affected institutional memory of the organisations, thereby affecting the effectiveness of the program. The section on effectiveness further discusses the strengths and weaknesses of the project activities in relation to Outcomes 2 and 3.

Private Sector Level

Engagement with the private sector is relevant to the project's aim to connect women to economic growth opportunities. During project implementation, efforts were made to engage private sector enterprises as champions and vehicles of change to increase absorption and retention of women in the labour force. The WEESC project worked with a number of other donor projects and sister programs at this level. The expectation was that the engagement with the private sector would create a demonstration effect for other companies to improve their workplace policies and practices. To facilitate demonstration, the project promoted exchanges and interactions between companies across the countries, although this was hindered by the geopolitical conflict and the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many of the project activities in this regard were aimed at developing private sector organisational policies that were more inclusive (focused on the benefit of women), but the analysis did not take into account the benefits and incentives (economic and social) for the private sector to make the needed changes.

3. BALANCING THE SUPPLY-DEMAND EQUATION IN PROJECT DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

The project design is based on needs assessments and analyses at the grassroots and national policy levels, combined with lessons learned from UN organisations within the target countries. There is little clear evidence, however, of how the project progressed against some key variables identified during its inception phase to inform project management and decision making. The project design also lacked a systematic landscape analysis to identify priority growth sectors to accelerate or anchor new economic opportunities for women. Similarly, a demand-side analysis of the motivations and/or challenges confronting the private sector in terms of uptake of inclusive business models would have been helpful.

Overall Project

During the design phase, the WEESC project conducted a number of assessments including the "Gender Analysis of Labour Market Regulations" and the "Women's Economic Inactivity and Engagement Study" across all three countries. The findings of the studies were used to inform the project design and a

number of additional assessments were conducted as part of the program activities under Outcomes 2 and 3 to inform policies and project activities. UN Women also built on lessons learned from its work and those of sister UN agencies in the target countries. For example, UN Women Georgia's approach to WEE builds on lessons learned from its work since 2010 to reach out to poor and socially excluded populations in Georgia – including ethnic minority and internally displaced women and girls affected by conflict. This included an assessment of their needs and priorities, proposed actions to increase their participation and influence in both local and national decision-making spaces, as well as enhance their livelihoods and capacities to contribute meaningfully to the overall resilience of their communities. A similar approach was taken in Azerbaijan where the project built on UNDP experience with the WRC in Sabirabad.

However, it is important to note that while these studies were used to inform project design, there is little clear evidence to indicate women beneficiaries were actively involved in the (co)-design of the WEESC Project and how the Project progressed against study findings to inform project management and decision making. For example, 'unpaid care' and 'gendered perceptions' were identified as key variables influencing women's economic inactivity. However, to date, project activities have been very limited in responding to these issues. As indicated later in the Report, these challenges provide a basis and rationale for considering expanding the ambit of the project to include complementary social and civic empowerment activities.

It is also to be noted that, aside from the Gender Assessment of Agriculture and Local Development Systems study, no multi-sectoral assessment was conducted to analyze which sectors or value chains or economic activities should be prioritised for self-employment and job creation. This point was highlighted the KIs in terms of the importance of prioritizing activities and resources towards economic activities that have both growth potential and represent diversification from traditional sectors associated with women's economic activity, at both a country, and to the extent possible, sub-regional level.

The GBA+ analysis also needed to take into account the motivations and challenges of the private sector to engage women as employees or as suppliers within their supply chain. The project assumed that policy level change would be adequate for the private sector to engage in better gender inclusive practices. However, actual implementation has been very limited, due in part to COVID-19. Going forward, it will also be important to focus on a demand-side analysis and to identify which incentives will help accelerate private sector actions, particularly with locally owned and managed companies.

4.2 Coherence

Summary of Coherence Findings: How Well Does the Project Fit?

There is ample evidence that the WEESC Project is very compatible with other GEWE interventions in the South Caucasus Region. The WEESC Project threefold mandate is clearly aligned with UN Women's Strategic Plan and with UNDP priorities in the South Caucasus Region. The Project has developed many synergies within the UN system, UNCTs, other projects of UN Women and UNDP, in addition to coordinating with government entities in each country in order to avoid duplication of efforts. UN Women and UNDP are seen as having a distinct comparative advantage in the region around WEE given their combined expertise in GE and sustainable development.

The UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks that were agreed upon with all three national governments in 2016 laid the foundation for project implementation, according to their respective priorities for achieving SDGs, thereby improving each country's international human rights commitments under CEDAW and other legal instruments, particularly related to equitable economic development.

4. ALIGNMENT WITH UN STRATEGIES AND SYNERGIES WITHIN COUNTRIES AND UN SYSTEM

WEESC project objectives are aligned with UN Women's and UNDP's policies and strategies within the three countries. The Project has developed many synergies within the UN system, UNCTs, other projects of UN Women and UNDP, in addition to coordinating with government entities in each country in order to avoid duplication of efforts and conversely, fill perceived gaps. There is considerable evidence that WEESC supports broader UN coordination efforts, as well as evidence of coordination across UN agencies in the entire South Caucasus Region.

Regional

At the South Caucasus regional level, a vast majority of survey respondents indicated that it was either *moderately likely* or *highly likely* that the WEESC project will realize synergies and coordination within the broader UN mission to achieve GEWE in the three countries, the work of the UN Country Teams, the interventions of UN Women/UNDP and other actors' interventions in the same context.

Georgia

UN Women Georgia has identified WEE as one of its strategic priorities for achieving gender equality and women's empowerment, noting that the WEESC project contributes to that goal through its threefold mandate across the South Caucasus region. Specifically, the UN Women Strategic Plan (2018-2021) aspires for women to gain income security, decent work and economic autonomy, while outputs 8, 9 and 10 address different critical aspects that are instrumental for the achievement of the above outcome.

In Georgia, UN Women has developed a long-term partnership with civil society organizations (CSOs) such as the TASO Foundation and the application of its already successful social mobilization methodology has enabled the project to reach the most vulnerable communities and address their needs. The project also benefited from the experience of UN Women Georgia's JAWE project supported by the Government of Norway and working with private enterprises on WEPs. From a regional perspective, the Project offered opportunities for exchanging experiences and best practices among private sector partners that have adopted WEPs in the target countries. A KII respondent from the private sector in Georgia indicated that the partnership building process between UN Women and the

WEE project has been successful and led to unexpected positive results and numbers. Therefore, future work on the WEPs component needs to be intensified in both Azerbaijan and Armenia. If the Norway financed project is extended, it will be important to ensure strong coordination and synergy with WEESC to avoid the potential for confusion amongst women beneficiaries in Georgia.

UN Women Georgia has also supported the Government and different line ministries, upon request, to mainstream gender in their policies, programs and national action plans and has also supported local governments with GRB. The well-established partnership that exists with the Inter-Agency Commission on Gender Equality, Ending Violence against Women and Domestic Violence and UN Women Georgia (that coordinates government's actions on GE at the decision-making level) and the Task Force on Women's Economic Empowerment has enabled the project to ensure synergies and avoid duplications.

Armenia

In Armenia, the project design is coherent and comprehensive in terms of reaching the UN's wider goals of equality for all people and GEWE goals of the Armenian UNCT members, for example UNDP Armenia. The threefold nature of the project (bottom-up, middle-ground and top-down) contributed to its effectiveness and capacity to address the needs of women at all intervention levels (grassroots, law and policy, as well as institutional). It was also found that the networking processes were effective especially at the grassroots level, as women in each targeted region forged very strong bonds with each other and could easily cooperate together.

In terms of synergies with other initiatives, KII respondents reported beneficial cooperation with many NGOs international organizations working in the country. They even exchanged beneficiaries with other WEE programs. These included the World Bank, USAID and the Austrian Development Bank who organized many meetings. Positive synergies were adopted for the Statistical Committee of Armenia (ARMSTAT) to conduct its "Gender Pay Gap" analysis. The cooperation was very meaningful as it helped them to synchronize the data collection and processing procedures to address WEESC Project objectives in both Georgia and Armenia. At an institutional level, the project was deemed compatible as well. For example, The Caucasus Resource Research Centre (CRRC) Georgia conducted research around women's economic inactivity in close cooperation with CRRC Armenia.

Azerbaijan

In Azerbaijan, 85% of KIIs consider the design and the goal of the project to be coherent with their principles and programs in the country on GE and human rights. At the regional level, approximately 77% of survey respondents across the three countries indicate that the WEESC project fits well within UN Women's Strategic Plan, the interrelated threefold mandate and UNDP priorities in the targeted countries.

The WEESC project has created a new kind of synergy among the stakeholders and beneficiaries, involving the large corporations, local municipalities, national government, public organizations and NGOs. In terms of harmonization within the region, one KII respondent reported that the major synergy and learning output for its WRC was an international exchange of the experience with the other two countries' representatives over an online meeting. They also appreciated access to tools for holding online events, as well as building connections and implementing the project in coordination with the State Committee on Women Affairs. Overall, the interests of local and national governments, working at a grassroots level with families and women in order to economically and socially empower them, were well integrated into the components of the project.

5. COMPARATIVE ADVANTAGE IN WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

UN Women and UNDP are viewed as having a distinct comparative advantage related to WEE in the South Caucasus Region given their combined expertise in GE and sustainable development. Additionally, beyond the funding of projects, implementing partners and stakeholders recognize the technical expertise and support provided by UN Women and both agencies' flexibility in responding to unforeseen circumstances during project implementation (e.g. geo-political and COVID).

Regional

From a regional perspective, implementing partners and stakeholders recognize the comparative advantage of UNDP working in concert with UN Women Georgia, in both Azerbaijan and Armenia.

Georgia

In Georgia, implementing partners and other stakeholders recognize many comparative advantages of UN Women, including competencies and expertise in WEE and technical support beyond the funding of projects. For example, technical expertise and support and capacity building related to project preparation, management and implementation skills of organizations were highlighted as particularly beneficial for grassroots organizations. Also, highly valued was UN Women's flexibility during implementation to respond to unexpected circumstances (particularly to the changes in the political context) and willingness to work with implementing partners and stakeholders to adjust activities in order to deliver more effective results.

Reportedly, UN Women Georgia selected highly qualified professionals to advise the WEESC project on ways forward. They were up-to-date on global trends and responsive to the changing environment in which the project was being implemented. Government and ILO partners clearly expressed satisfaction with the interventions they were involved in. UN Women has over a decade of experience in reaching out to poor and socially excluded populations in Georgia which has positioned the organization very well for assessing the needs and priorities of ethnic minority women and victims of gender-based violence. They are also knowledgeable about potential opportunities available to marginalized women for participation in local decision-making venues.

Armenia

In Armenia, implementing partners and stakeholders recognize the comparative advantage of UNDP, especially their experience in implementing projects on GE. The collaboration between UN women and UNDP in Georgia was also recognized, particularly given the external challenges encountered during project implementation, although opportunities for enhanced coordination should be explored. Additionally, they valued the flexibility and responsiveness that UNDP-Armenia has demonstrated during the implementation of this project.

Azerbaijan

In Azerbaijan, implementing partners and stakeholders recognize the comparative advantage of UNDP, especially their experience in implementing projects on GE. The leveraging of the unique WRC model to support implementation of Outcome 1 was appreciated and acknowledged as a powerful and effective tool for promoting women's entrepreneurship and undertaking capacity building activities for women in the regions, although challenges related to longer-term sustainability of the WRCs remain. Additionally, they valued the flexibility and responsiveness that UNDP-Azerbaijan has demonstrated during the implementation of this project.

4.3 Effectiveness

Summary of Effectiveness Findings: Is the Intervention Achieving Its Objectives?

There have been variable results across the three Outcome areas in the countries of implementation. Under Outcome 1, the Project has achieved 87% of its target as of December 2020 in across the three countries in terms of the 'number of self-(employed) women for at least 6 months, with six months remaining in project implementation. The majority of benefits to women achieved under Outcome 1 relate to self-employment which also includes grants provided by the project to support the establishment of women's businesses. However, there is a need to further enhance targeting criteria and the training being provided to women, by incorporating learner-centered models that facilitate the development of different learning pathways and related support services (i.e. self-employment), thereby enabling customization at country and local levels to ensure the content is relevant to local needs.

Securing employment was viewed as one of the greatest challenges under Outcome 1 as women continued to face difficulty in securing jobs, a pattern further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The training and economic opportunities provided by the project resulted in increased self-confidence of women beneficiaries. However, there has been little to no change observed in decision-making, control/power relations and gendered perceptions of women's roles.

Fifteen companies have endorsed the WEPs (11 in Armenia and 4 in Azerbaijan) and their engagement in the project has helped to increase networking among like-minded companies. However, project activities with the private sector have been experimental and there is no clear evidence yet on the application of the changes emanating from adoption of the WEPs. Going forward, accompanying incentives for the private sector to implement these changes will need to be explored and additional demonstration activities tested together with the private sector in these countries.

In Georgia and Armenia, under Outcomes 2 and 3, significant work has been undertaken at the local governance and policy level, with a particular focus on formal employment and GRB. However, stakeholders expressed the need to continue work on the institutionalisation of the policies and to also focus on policies geared towards self-employment, in addition to wage employment, to ensure better integration across the Outcome areas.

6. PROJECT GOAL AND ASSUMPTIONS

There are early indications of contribution towards women's economic gains and abilities to participate in decision making processes in both private and public realms. However, it was difficult to assess progress against the project goal or impact as the WEESC project has only been implemented for just over two years and the logical framework metrics are specific to each country. This will require additional assessment which is beyond the scope of the present evaluation. However, triangulated evidence does show some early signs of progress and similarly, the majority of the assumptions that underpin the ToC were either weak or moderately proven, and therefore requires more time for actualization.

High Level Goal

Indicators of change related to the higher-level goal of “Women, particularly poor and socially excluded, in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia are economically empowered and participate in relevant decision-making” are related to country level metrics. Hence, it will not be appropriate to make any conclusive statements on the progress against these indicators. It is recommended that the WEESC project conduct a separate contribution analysis to check progress against these targets. However, the following table gives a brief indication based on qualitative findings.

Table 7 – Assessment of Impact Targets and Achievements²⁴

Indicators	Signs of progress
% of the female labor force participation in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia	Engagement of 473 women securing economic activities as a result of project activities indicates contribution to female labour force participation.
% of the gender wage gap in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia	The WEESC project has supported a number of policy reforms to close the gender wage gap but application and implementation of these policies are yet to be seen.
% of women's employment categorized as vulnerable	A majority of the women are engaged in self-employment but there is no conclusive evidence of how many of them are registered as formal businesses. Similarly, there is variability in data on employment that indicates a number of women are securing employment contracts that are service contracts. This continues to make them vulnerable. In the absence of concrete data, the evaluation team cannot make any strong statements on the signs of progress in reducing vulnerability in employment.
Number of beneficiary women with increased income in wage employment or entrepreneurship	Women who have secured wage employment or self-employment have reported income increases. However, there is indication that some of the economic activities have been affected by COVID-19 since early 2020.

Source: Prepared by the Evaluation Team based on evidence generated in the evaluation.

TOC Causality and Assumptions

The existing ToC does not clearly capture behaviour change of certain key actors (particularly the private sector) and how this intended behavioural change (application of WEP and practices) contributes to the resulting outcomes. A revised ToC for Phase Two has been put forward in the Recommendation section for consideration.

There is also variability in the number of assumptions being proven true. The following table summarises the key assumptions and the findings from the evaluation. More is described in subsequent sections.

²⁴ Impact for easy reference: Women, particularly poor and socially excluded, in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia are economically empowered and participate in relevant decision-making

Table 8 - Assessment of Validity of Existing Project Assumptions

Level	Existing Key Assumptions (as per WEESC Prodoc)	Findings
Outcome 1	Women can be inspired to participate in project activities and in becoming more active economically and socially	Strong: Women are inspired to engage in economic activities; however, perception around gendered norms continue to exist in local communities.
	Understanding of the concept of decent work for women among all stakeholders	Moderate: Project stakeholders have expressed an understanding of decent work, but FGDs indicate that there continues to be traditional perceptions around gendered norms at the community level.
	There is decent work opportunities for women, especially the poor and socially excluded	Weak: A majority of women expressed difficulty in finding decent employment opportunities. Most women preferred to engage in self-employment which is more precarious
Outcome 2	There is political will to undertake policy & legislative reforms aimed at WEE	Strong: Strong political will and motivation has been expressed by relevant stakeholders to undertake policy and legislative reforms.
	Reforms are not slow and addresses all dimensions relevant for WEE.	Weak: The extent of reform implementation has been variable across countries, but in most cases has taken time. In addition, high turnover at local and national levels risks continuity and hence requires continuous reinforcement.
Outcome 3	Government institutions engage women in local planning and budgeting	Moderate: Women have been involved in local planning and budgeting. How much of that has resulted in meeting needs of women is yet to be seen.
	Organisations can be convinced of the need to integrate women	Weak: Organisations have their own understanding and need for being gender inclusive; however, application of practices or behavioural change to be more inclusive is yet to be seen.

Source: Prepared by the Evaluation Team based on evidence generated in the evaluation.

7. OUTCOME 1: GRASSROOTS LEVEL²⁵

As of December 2020, the WEESC project achieved 87% of the project-wide target of ‘the *number of women (self-employed) for at least 6 months due to improved skills and capacities*’ regionally, and was also to reach vulnerable communities across the three countries. At the country level, there was considerable variability in terms of achieving the planned targets. Key factors affecting variability include: prior exposure to training, skills and experience of women in economic activity; alignment of training content to the needs of women and growth opportunities in priority economic sector; existing perceptions around gender norms and unpaid care responsibilities; access to finance; level of coordination with local stakeholders; the social mobilisation approach; and the effects of COVID-19 combined with the regional conflict.

Strategic Intent

Activities related to the first outcome were intended to be carried out across Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia with a specific focus on the provision of women, particularly poor and socially excluded groups, with information, skills development and economic opportunities to be self-employed and/or to join the formal labour sector in the three countries and strengthen their capacities to organise and participate in decision-making at the national and local levels (WEESC Pro Doc).

- For self-employment: the priority was to ensure support to women for self-employment opportunities with decent work elements in the project target rural communities where formal labour sector jobs are scarce or unavailable and reduce vulnerability of their economic activities.
- For employment: the priority was to ensure provision of support to women with decent work opportunities that are linked with employment in the formal sector.

However, due to the onset of COVID-19, and the resulting digital implications that the project had not foreseen, as well as an increase in unpaid obligations of women, and negative economic downturn, opportunities in the formal employment pathway proved to be more challenging than originally envisaged.

Delivery Model

The activities at the grassroots level were facilitated in different ways in different countries in relation to the local context.

- In Armenia, the grassroots component of the WEESC project has been implemented in consortium with Green Lane NGO and 3R Strategy Co. Ltd. A social mobilization approach has been applied to reach out to women in 11 municipalities in the targeted Gegharkunik and Shirak regions.
- In Azerbaijan, women at the grassroots level were engaged through the expansion and establishment of WRCs in 3 regions (Gusar, Sabirabad, Khazar).
- In Georgia, UN Women applied a social mobilization approach to reach out to women, particularly the poor and most excluded, in 9 municipalities from the three target regions of Kakheti, Kvemo Kartli and Samtskhe-Javakheti. Self-help groups have been created as a mechanism to effectively share information and knowledge with the project beneficiary women on public services and vocational and income-generating opportunities offered by state, private and development partners. The project also worked through the Women’s Rooms to facilitate

²⁵Outcome 1 for easy reference: Women, particularly the poor and socially excluded, use skills, economic opportunities and relevant information to be self-employed and join the formal labour sector in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia.

dialogue and exchanges between mobilized women and local authorities around the issues relevant to WEE.

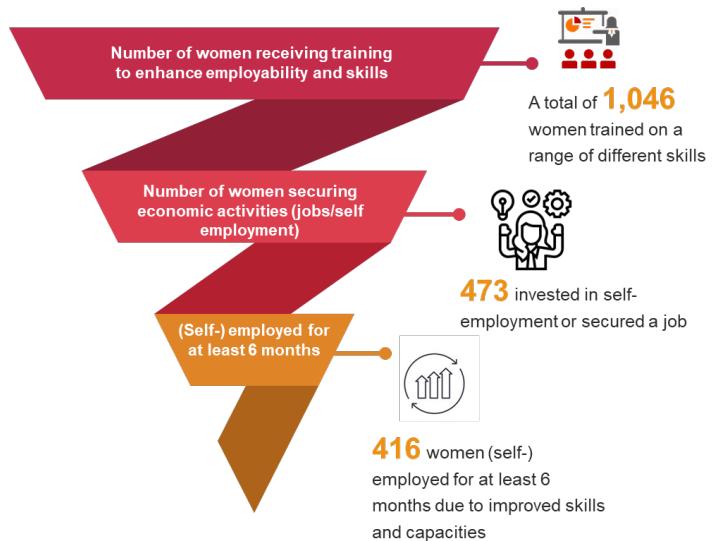
Vulnerability

It is to be noted that all the locations selected included vulnerable populations; however, within those regions the selection of vulnerable target groups has been variable across the three countries. Women in Armenia expressed the highest concerns around targeting as many of the women benefitting from the project had received some form of support previously. In Georgia and Azerbaijan, women expressed relatively higher satisfaction with targeting. However, it was interesting to find that the number of vulnerability criteria show some correlation with women's abilities to secure or generate economic activities. In accordance with the main project target group, vulnerable women who were not able to secure any economic activity after training tended to be those who had multiple vulnerabilities such as mobility restrictions, unpaid care responsibilities, were from highly vulnerable ethnicities, were subject to gender based violence and had poor access to markets.

Overall Progress in Outcome 1: Grassroots Level

The figures and narrative below illustrate the progress made across the 3 countries under Outcome 1. They have been prepared by the Evaluation Team based on data provided by UN Women to the end of December 2020.

Figure 6 Women's Access to Training and Financial Resources



Progress in Relation to Women's Access to Training, Information and Financial Resources



Women obtaining skills and opportunities: A total of 1,046 women (171 in Armenia, 422 in Azerbaijan and 453 in Georgia), especially those facing poverty and social exclusion, have received a range of different training to enhance their employability and/or business skills.



Women trained in GRB and local budgeting process: Approximately 293 women (140 in Armenia and 150 in Georgia) have been trained in GBB and have stated increased knowledge regarding women's rights and policies through advocacy initiatives.



Women receiving grants: a total of 324 women received grants for small business establishment and expansion. In Georgia, women also received grants for vocational education.



Progress in Relation to Women's Use and Application of Skills, Information and Grants

Women securing economic activities: Of the total number of women trained, 473 women secured economic activities (either jobs or self-employment). Of the 473 women, 416 reported to have continued for at least 6 months.

Across the three countries, Georgia had the highest proportion of women (self-) employed due to improved skills and capacities (44% of 416) followed by Armenia (34%) and Azerbaijan (23%) respectively.

At an aggregate level, the project met 87% of the target (which was 120 women in Armenia and 180 in both Azerbaijan and Georgia) in terms of the 'number of women (self-employed) for at least 6 months due to improved skills and capacities'. The table below shows the project's status of ultimate targets met under Outcome 1.

Figure 7 - Proportion of Women Securing Economic Activities

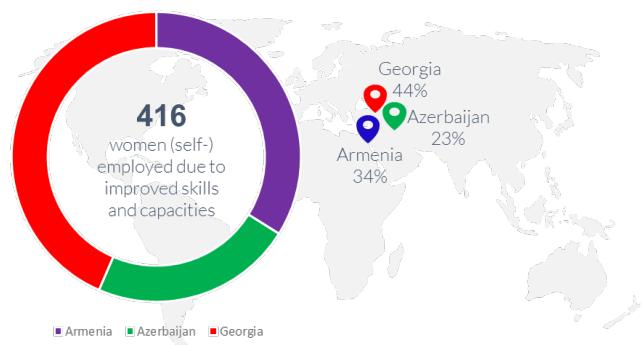


Table 9 - Outcome 1 Targets and Achievements for (Self-) Employment of Women

Targets achieved in relation to 'number of self-(employed)' for at least 6 months due to improved skills and capacities			
	Armenia	Azerbaijan	Georgia
TARGET:	120	180	180
Achieved	141	94	181
% of target achieved	118%	52%	101%
# of women receiving training to enhance employability and skills	171	422	453
Uptake: number of women self-employed as a percentage of those trained	82%	22.3%	40%

Source: Prepared by the Evaluation team based on quantitative data provided by UN Women

While Georgia and Armenia were able to exceed their targets (by 1% in Georgia and 18% in Armenia), Azerbaijan was able to reach only 52% of their target. There are several factors that affected this variation in progress towards achieving training targets and these are analyzed below. Although it is unrealistic to expect that all women trained will secure economic activity, it is important for the project to review and analyze the uptake rates in order to validate the effectiveness of the activities.

Although both Georgia and Armenia exceeded their targets, the proportion of trainees who were actually able to use the skills to secure (self-) employment is variable. Armenia had the highest uptake rate²⁶ with 82%, followed by Georgia at 40% and then Azerbaijan at 22%, respectively.

Below are some of the key reasons that may have contributed to the variation in target achievement and uptake rates across the South Caucasus Region. Some of these factors are common across all three countries while others are more country specific.

Variability in Progress Toward Training Targets: Regionally

Varied perceptions around gender norms had a varying impact on women's ability to be economically active. For example, a majority of the project beneficiaries in Armenia were from the region with a relatively low gender stereotype. This was generally considered high across Azerbaijan. Similarly, unpaid care responsibilities were cited as an important reason for women in Georgia to refrain from engaging in economic activities despite training.

Differing baselines of women in terms of their skill sets and existing involvement in economic activities were identified. This is further expanded below.

Variability in Progress Toward Training Targets: Georgia

Unpaid care responsibilities and the lack of affordable childcare have been a critical factor in limiting women's ability to engage economically despite obtaining skills through the training programs.

Lack of access to capital due to collateral issues: women struggle to obtain capital from financial institutions because of their inability to meet collateral requirements.

Limited or no transportation along with the high costs of travel serve to holdback women from securing job opportunities.

The approach to social mobilisation using self-help groups in Georgia was highly effective in increasing women's participation in economic activities. For example, the social mobilization method implemented by TASO and KRDF was seen as highly effective as women were able to engage in self-employment in an area where they already had experience (of unpaid childcare and elderly care work). Building on existing experience meant they were able to quickly pick up and apply their learning to participate in paid labour. This also increases their confidence and self-esteem.

Variability in Progress Toward Training Targets: Armenia

Women with existing businesses and skills: Most of the women engaging with the WEESC project in Armenia had a stronger economic orientation. They either had existing businesses or had been trained or received grants previously by other programs. The training was attended primarily to meet the compliance requirement for obtaining grants. This led to a higher uptake rate between those trained and those securing economic activity. Therefore, this does not necessarily indicate effectiveness of the training, but is indicative of a higher baseline of competency for the clients in Armenia. In addition, the total number of women targeted for training was also lower compared to Azerbaijan and Georgia.

Strong coordination between WEESC project implementing partners and project participants: The project (implementing partners and project leads) reached agreements with potential project

²⁶ Defined as the proportion of women able to secure and continue (self-employed) activities for at least 6 months, to total number of unique women trained.

participants and relevant local authorities on the type of WEE project needed, in addition to the best ways to plan and implement it. This needs-based approach improved the effectiveness of the project activities.

Variability in Progress Toward Training Targets: Azerbaijan

Lack of previous experience and discrepancy between economic opportunities available for women and the type of training offered: In Azerbaijan, external factors were more critical to contribute to women's inactivity despite training. Lack of previous work experience, absence of relevant certificates (similarly to Georgia) or documents to endorse and/or validate their skills on completion of certain training, and a scarcity of relevant job opportunities in the field they are seeking have cumulatively led to a poor uptake rate. Also, the lack of baseline data or situational analyses to assess the local market situation (formal and informal labour market opportunities, skills required, market trends and growth opportunities) led to a discrepancy between the specific needs of women and the economic realities or opportunities in their communities. In addition, remoteness of location from areas where job opportunities are available (particularly in Sabirabad and Gusar) was also seen as a contributing factor to economic inactivity. In general, women perceive public sector employment as stable and well-regulated compared to self-employment. However, these factors limit their ability to engage economically.

Poor business environment: The general business environment is perceived to be challenging for women to enter the job market or take up economic activities. This is also supported by secondary information which indicates lower SME skill scores compared to other countries in the South Caucasus Region.

Lack of access to capital and perceived fear related to business set-up and operations: Although there are provisions for lower interest rates for women to take out loans for business development, the collateral requirements limit women's ability to obtain finance for economic activities. In addition, the fear related to taxation and complexities of bookkeeping discourage women from setting up their businesses.

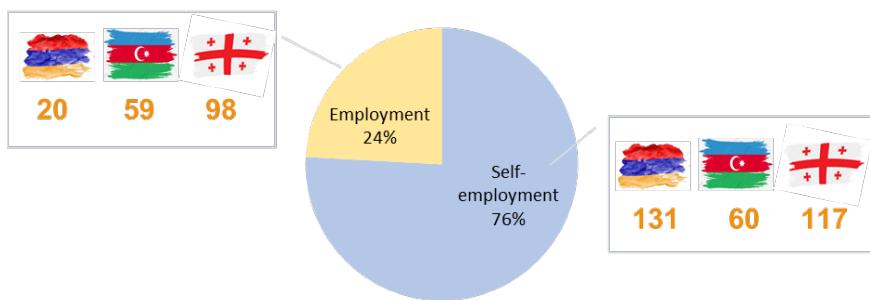
Disproportionate impact of COVID-19 and the recent Nagorno-Karabakh conflict affected the target population in Azerbaijan more seriously relative to other countries. In Azerbaijan, COVID-19 limited the purchasing capacity and business opportunities, but also affected women's incentive to engage in economic activities.

8. OUTCOME 1 GRASSROOTS LEVEL (TRAINING PROGRAM)

The majority of women who engaged in economic activities secured self-employment instead of wage-employment (i.e. jobs). The project facilitated an increased ability of women to network, gain a range of work-related skills, express their needs in public forums, and engage in local level budgeting discussions. This enabled them to gain access to economic opportunities and support networks, as well as helped to increase their confidence and boost self-esteem. However, participants also expressed the need to better align the design of the training with their specific contexts and requirements, in particular, with economic activities that have strong growth potential in their community, region and country.

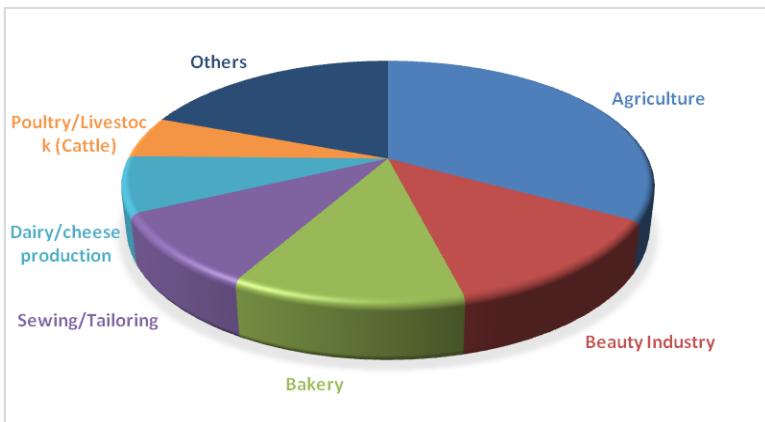
In terms of economic activities, approximately 76% of the target group secured self-employment (either through establishment of new or expansion of existing businesses) and this rate is partially influenced by the grant activities of the program geared towards self-employment activities. The figures below were prepared by the Evaluation Team based on data provided by UN Women.

Figure 8: Proportion of Women Securing Self-Employment and Employment



While the composition varied within countries, on average, self-employment activities were highest in agriculture (33%), followed by the beauty industry. The top six sectors where women engaged in self-employment activities are shown below.

Figure 9: Top Six Sectors for Women's Self-Employment



Distribution of Self Employment across different counties	
Agriculture	33%
Beauty Industry	13%
Bakery	12%
Sewing/Tailoring	10%
Dairy/cheese production	7%
Poultry/Livestock (Cattle)	6%
Others (multiple sectors)	19%

Women applying GRB Information

According to WEESC project reports, women trained on local planning and budgeting are now able to follow up on commitments made by local authorities, particularly in Armenia and Georgia through roundtable meetings and via women from self-help groups. In total, as of December 2020 the project has been able to facilitate a total of 64 advocacy initiatives (20 in Armenia, 12 in Azerbaijan and 32 in Georgia) and a total of 159 women beneficiaries reported as having contributed to local planning and budgeting / GRB discussions aimed at addressing their socio-economic concerns.



In Armenia, 140 women reported increased knowledge regarding women's rights and policies through advocacy initiatives. 79 active women in 7 communities engaged in virtual discussions to identify gender-responsive community development priorities to be included in their 2021 annual work plan.



In Georgia, 9 municipalities incorporated GRB in their budgeting processes and included many of women's needs in their budgets (access to clean drinking water, rehabilitation of roads and public buildings and maintenance of waste management systems, building on playgrounds for children).

Benefits and Progress Highlighted by Women Beneficiaries

FGDs conducted across the three countries indicate positive responses from women beneficiaries in the following areas:

Access to new tools, techniques, skills and markets: Business grants, networking opportunities, new skills on business management, marketing and job search were some of the key motivations and areas of learning for women. In Armenia, women mentioned that they had the opportunity to be introduced to new crops, improved production techniques, financial management and social media tools (such as Facebook) for marketing their products. In Azerbaijan, self-employed women highlighted the importance of learning to apply skills related to business planning, English-language skills, computer skills, accounting and financial management, packaging and marketing, whereas, wage-employed women mentioned the importance of being able to acquire computer skills, language and job application skills. In Georgia, women obtained skills connected to programme budgeting and project writing that enabled them to

develop and submit project proposals to different donor organizations, beyond WEESC, based on their community's or household's needs and capacities.

Access to working capital to expand or invest in business: Access to grants was a key motivation for women to join the training programs in each of the countries. Women in a number of FGDs across the three countries, particularly in Georgia and Azerbaijan, mentioned the absence or lack of capital to start a business, with the grants providing them an opportunity to test out their business ideas and skills.

Access to social networking skills and social capital: Access to safe spaces and networking opportunities for women were identified as key benefits of the WEESC project. In Armenia, women used social media platforms to exchange information and communicate on important issues such as COVID, transportation, roads, etc. In Azerbaijan, women highlighted the importance of the WRCs in developing networks that have helped them graduate to secure jobs, expand their social networks or create business partnerships. The WRCs also exposed them to networking and marketing opportunities such as trade exhibitions for profiling their businesses with direct clients and other buyers. In Georgia, the FGDs revealed that the trainings and information sessions supported the establishment of both internal networks (among the socially mobilized women) and external networks (with the CSOs working with women in the region and local government entities). In turn, these helped women to increase their access to information and services, funding grants, capacity building opportunities and served to enhance their overall self-confidence.

Improved understanding of women's rights: Women beneficiaries also highlighted their improved understanding of GRB and issues surrounding violence against women (VAW), as well as support services and mechanisms available for them.

Signs of increased agency: While no clear change has been seen in terms of women's decision-making, control/power relations and division of labour at the household level, women have mentioned positive outcomes in terms of improved self-confidence and self-esteem through their ability to network and contribute to household income. For example, in Armenia women indicated a reduced dependency on their husbands as a result of being able to secure self-employment. Women also highlighted their increased ability to express their needs and contribute to budget discussions at the community level.

Challenges/Barriers Faced by Women at the Grassroots Level

Some of the challenges/barrier mentioned by women during the FGDs include:

Difficulties with the transition to online training: The shift to online platforms limited women from attending the sessions, particularly for those who did not have internet access. Women also highlighted the value and importance of face-to-face interactions.

Criteria for beneficiary selection: According to women, the main target group could have been more clearly defined in accordance with their economic inactivity and vulnerability status. For example, most of the beneficiaries in Armenia, particularly those receiving grants, were previously involved in similar programs. On the other hand, in Georgia, women with multiple vulnerability criteria (e.g. mobility restrictions, unpaid care responsibilities, member of deprived groups, etc.) faced relatively greater challenges to secure economic activities compared to those with fewer vulnerability variables.

Concerns with the training programs:

- **Structure of the training:** According to women, the training courses were attended on a voluntary basis and there was no specific modular approach. As soon as women secured an economic activity, they could choose to discontinue attending training. It was also quite theoretical and women also expressed the need for the training content to include practical/field examples.
- **Disconnect between trainees' experiences and the training courses:** There was mention of mismatch between the trainees' backgrounds or existing economic activities and the courses they attended. They expressed their need for greater alignment between the job or economic prospects and the trainings offered. In Armenia for example, the training courses were geared towards agriculture so the women who were involved in non-agricultural activities, yet who did meet the vulnerability criteria, could not make much use of the training. In Georgia, in many cases women did not consciously choose which type of training to attend; their participation was more a factor of which training was available and their own availabilities, which resulted in less than optimal application of the learning.
- **Absence of certification:** Lack of a formal certification or recognition of credential precluded women in Azerbaijan from making use of the training courses for employment. However, it is important to note there are several benefits to experiential adult learner-centric training which is customized to the target audience and typically involves the awarding of certificates for course completion and these type of certificates should be integrated into the WEESC project. In Georgia, grants were also provided to women to enrol in vocational education in which formal certification is provided and this option could also be considered for Azerbaijan and Armenia.

Poor uptake of economic activity despite training: Despite the training received and skills gained, access to formal employment remains a challenge across the three countries. These challenges are related to mobility restrictions, availability of few employment opportunities, infrastructure difficulties associated with rural regions, low wages and the economic downturn caused by COVID-19 and the geo-political context. In Azerbaijan, for example, although women gained a range of different skills from the trainings, they struggled to find jobs as there are very few options for formal employment contracts. Most women were able to secure employment under service contracts; however, these pose risks related to vulnerability of income. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the women employed by beauty salons did not receive any income/compensation due to the nature of their service contracts.

Limited or no change in women's agency: Although women gained more information about their rights and their self-confidence increased, there was no clear evidence of changes in the traditional gendered roles and decision-making nor control exercised by women at the household level.

Continued gender stereotypes and constraints to women's ability to engage: This was applicable both in terms of training attendance and in acquiring employment opportunities. Women continued to engage in self-employment in order to balance their unpaid care work with economic activities and there is no clear evidence of a shift in their existing roles at the household level. This meant that they had to continue making sure they satisfied their household responsibilities in addition to their individual economic activities. In some cases, the participation of women in training programs was hindered by negative perceptions of these events by other household members (e.g. mother-in-law and husband). For example, in some cases in Georgia, women were not allowed or discouraged to participate, whereas

in other cases, household members accompanied women to the training program and only endorsed it if they felt comfortable with the content.

External factors such as COVID and the conflict affected women's mental health and their ability to engage or continue their economic activities.

9. OUTCOME 1 GRASSROOTS LEVEL (PRIVATE SECTOR ENGAGEMENT)

Private sector companies who engaged with the project have acknowledged an increased understanding and intent to integrate gender inclusive practices in their organisations. However, to date, there is scant evidence of or signs of application of practices as a result of their participation with the WEESC project. COVID-19 also posed a serious challenge to the achievement of this output as priorities shifted and a number of companies faced financial constraints.

Progress with the Private Sector

A total of 15 companies have signed the WEPs with the project (11 in Armenia and 4 in Azerbaijan). WEPs were not signed directly with companies in Georgia, yet through their sister programs, 160 women were trained by private sector (*pro-bono*). KIIs suggested that this was the first occasion in which companies in the three countries engaged with UN organisations and this experience was viewed as a pilot. The companies found the networking and exchanges organized by UN Women and UNDP very useful, as well as the mentoring manual created by UN Women Georgia, which has been shared by the UN Women Head Office as a global resource.

Challenges/Barriers in Relation to the Private Sector

The activities under this output were aimed at implementing gender-responsive corporate policies and practices to increase women's access to decent work and increasing inclusion of more women-owned and collective enterprises in their supply chains. While private sector companies have expressed their intent to work towards WEE through the signing of the WEPs and participating in exchanges, in Armenia the large companies already have established gender-sensitive practices, so there is no clear evidence of the application of changes to practices as a result of WEPs signed. It is also not clear what specific benefits or indications of benefits which might have accrued to the companies involved, which is often a core part of analysis for WEE programs engaging the private sector. It is to be noted that COVID-19 also posed a serious challenge to the achievement of this output as priorities shifted and as mentioned prior, a number of companies faced financial constraints.

10. OUTCOMES 2 AND 3: POLICY, LEGISLATIVE AND INSTITUTIONAL LEVELS

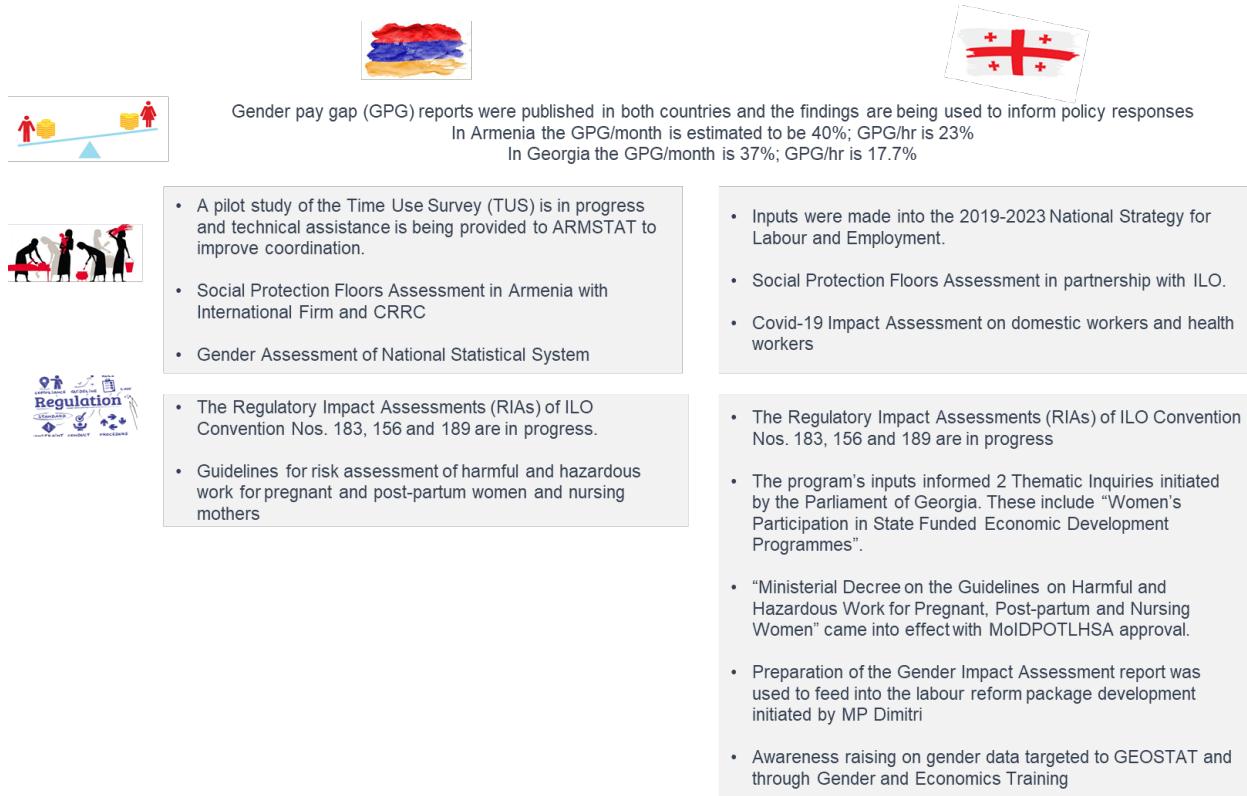
The WEESC project was effective in facilitating evidence-based policies that targeted reforms in labour laws and in reduction of the gender pay gap. Moreover, the project was able to work with local authorities to improve the gender responsiveness of local budgeting and resource allocation. However, actual implementation of these policies and practices is at a very early stage and will require reinforcement. Much of the policy-level work under Outcome 2 was targeted to formal employment and there is a need to expand such activities to also respond to the needs of women engaged in self-employment as they constituted the majority of project participants within the three countries.

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

Two key areas of project work include, 'research and data' and 'improved policy and legislative frameworks aligned with international labour standards'. The following figures illustrate the major activities conducted across Armenia and Georgia under Outcome 2 and have been prepared by the Evaluation Team based on data provided by UN Women.

Progress in Outcome 2

Figure 10: Progress in Achieving Outcome 2 - Policy and Legislation Level

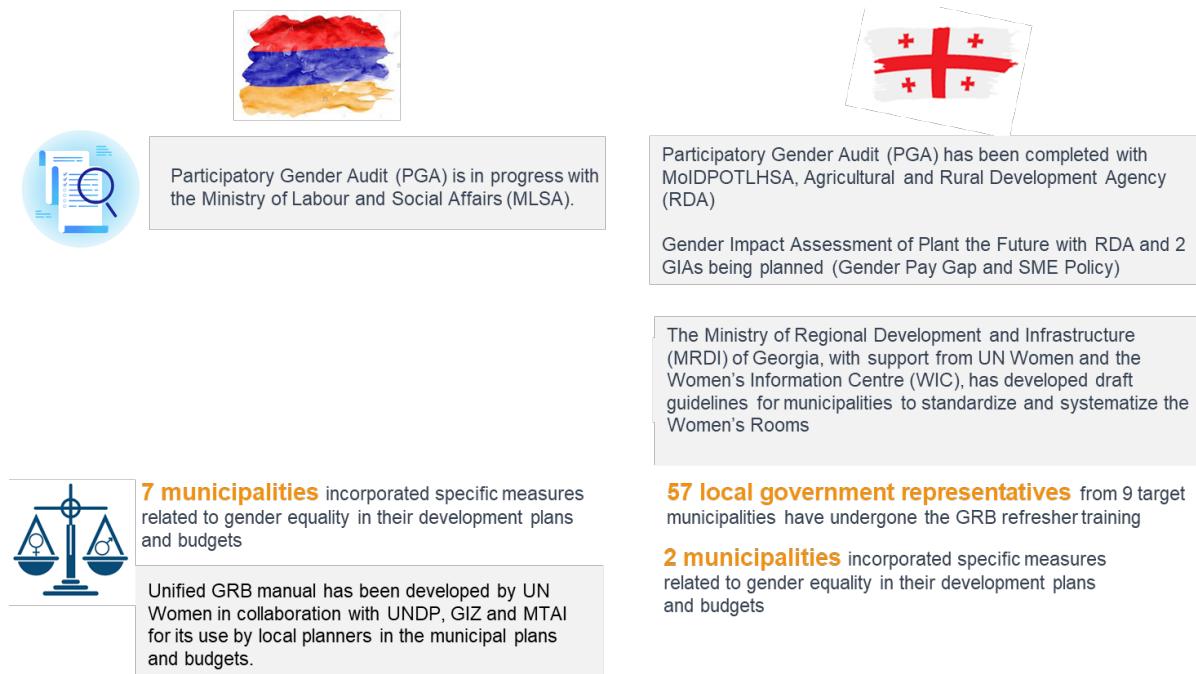


Outcome 3 Government and public institutions develop and deliver gender-responsive programmes, public services, strategies and plans for WEE in Armenia and Georgia.

Two key areas of WEESC project work include: 'strengthening institutional capacities: government internal systems for GE mainstreaming' and 'strengthening individual capacities on GE: technical staff at the government institutions'.

Progress in Outcome 3

Figure 10: Progress in Achieving Outcome 3 – Institutional Level



Signs of Progress/Success at the Institutional and Local Government Level

Key informant interviews indicated the following signs of success:

Targeting women with different vulnerabilities: An increasing number of women, including women from remote areas and vulnerable groups, are now actively involved in GRB meetings. However, women also mentioned that due to COVID, the needs and vulnerability assessments were moved to online platforms which may have affected the targeting of disadvantaged women participants.

Engagement of local government ensured greater inclusion: Engagement of the local government in project implementation at the grassroots level helped the community organizations to select vulnerable groups and project beneficiaries who, then in turn, established their own businesses as a result of the project. This along with training of women on GRB resulted in a two-way facilitation of grassroots women and local governments' understanding of women's engagement in the budgetary process.

Emergence of other services triggered by increased women's economic activities: At a national level, the launch of different approaches and new programs to promote the development of small and medium enterprises, social entrepreneurship, and agro-tourism have positively influenced WEE. This has also influenced the establishment of other services, such as in Armenia, where the loan policy was recently changed to ease the tax burden for small and family-based enterprises.

Evidence-based policy discussion: The research and assessment output were viewed as important steps in ensuring evidence-based policy advocacy targeting women. This includes the gender wage gap study, access to economic resources in line with international best practices, and the Ministerial decree on "Harmful and Hazardous Work for Pregnant, Postpartum and Nursing Women" in Georgia and Armenia. Policy dialogues also laid the groundwork for landmark policy implementation such as the official declaration of the Government of Georgia to join Equal Pay International Coalition (EPIC).

Greater accountability through assessments and audits: Participatory gender audits (PGAs) are considered important mechanisms to support gender mainstreaming at the institutional level, which in turn can lead to concrete recommendations and gender action plans.

Challenges/Barriers at the Local Governance and Institutional Level

Insufficient resources and coordination challenges: The project underestimated the extent of UN Women staff resources required for partnering with government agencies that do not have existing institutional mechanisms and knowledge of GE, nor how to prioritise gender issues and focus on policy-making. In addition, KIIs indicated coordination challenges with other programs and institutions.

Targeting of institutions: KIIs revealed the need to target the most appropriate institution(s) for integrating gender relevant activities and decision-making. For example, the GRB component in Georgia has been introduced with the financial offices of the municipalities that do not have the decision-making capacity nor adequate data and support from the rest of the municipal apparatus, including political support from the ultimate decision makers.

Disconnect between Outcome 1 and Outcomes 2 and 3: FGDs and KIIs at all three levels revealed that the Outcome 1 functioned as a stand-alone program, while it should have also been a foundation to enable other outcomes, especially at the policy-making level. The Outcome 1 results achieved could have been a foundation to inform WEE strategies under Outcomes 2 and 3.

Difficulties with online modalities: Similar to the FGDs, KIIs also indicated the difficulties in women's participation due to the shift to online platforms.

Gender stereotypes, unpaid care responsibilities and gender of local council members: Gender stereotypes related to women's economic engagement at the local community level, along with the unpaid care responsibilities, were seen as key deterrents for women to participate in budgeting discussions. Additionally, in locations where the proportion of men on local councils is greater, women feel hesitant to participate.

4.4 Efficiency

Summary of Efficiency Findings: How well are project resources being used?

The WEESC project delivers results in a reasonably economical and timely fashion overall given the constraints caused by the COVID pandemic, conflicts, and changes in governments. The strategic allocation of project resources to the implementing agencies has been equitably spread between the three countries, with almost half of the net budget addressing the needs of poor and socially marginalized women in the rural regions who are the primary direct beneficiaries. The timeliness of outputs and activities implementation has been reasonable given the negative impacts of both the COVID-19 pandemic and the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Project planning and implementation with stakeholders and other actors have proven to be significantly effective, yet there are a number of areas which call for strengthening. Project leadership and management also received a high approval rate from key implementing staff; however, a clearer definition of roles and responsibilities and management structure was identified as requiring some adjustment to enhance overall efficiencies.

The assessment of cost-efficiency proved difficult due to a lack of financial data based on a breakdown by budget line item due to UN Women centralized financial reporting processes, however the analysis that was undertaken did not surface any key issues.

Project M&E mechanisms put in place are standard practice, however there is a need for a consistent tracking tool to improve the efficiency of results reporting and assessment and a need for designated M&E personnel in each country. The utilization of M&E data has been limited in that the performance measurement indicators established at the Project's outset were all quantitative in nature and do not capture the gender-sensitive qualitative measurement of GE and WEE results.

11. ALLOCATION OF PROJECT RESOURCES AND COST-EFFICIENCY

The strategic allocation of project resources to the implementing agencies has been equitably spread between the three countries, with almost half of the net budget addressing the needs of poor and socially marginalized women in the rural regions who are the primary direct beneficiaries. However, the assessment of cost-efficiency proved difficult due to a lack of financial data based on a breakdown by budget line item. However, the analysis that was undertaken of the WEESC project budget across the outcomes, central and regional levels and UN agencies did not surface any key issues.

Overall Project

Overall, project resources (financial, human and material) have been allocated appropriately towards the expected results at the output and outcome levels. At a regional level, 63% of survey respondents believed the resources allocated and utilized towards the project outputs and outcomes have been used with *significant* efficiency. Furthermore, the project has been successful in identifying the regions and groups that are the most vulnerable and has met most of the vulnerability criteria established during project conceptualization. The vast majority of beneficiaries in all three countries are reported to satisfy at least one vulnerability criteria.

The total 3-year budget of USD 4,187,348 in 2018 was allocated in the following manner:

Table 10 - Overview of Allocation of WEESC Budget Resources

Outcome 1 (AZ & GE & AM)	1,860,033	(44.4% of Total or 48% of Net)
Outcome 2 (AM & GE only)	740,873	(17.7% of Total or 19% of Net)
Outcome 3 (AM & GE only)	740,566	(17.7% of Total or 19% of Net)
Direct project Management Costs	536,383	(12.8 % of Total or 8.6% of Net)
UN Program Support Costs		
General Administration Fee	305,895	(8% of Net)
UN Coordination Levy²⁷	3,597	(1% of Net)
GRAND TOTAL	4,187,348	(78% from SDC; 22% from ADA)

Source: Prepared by the Evaluation Team based on financial information from the UN Women Interim Financial Reports to the donors.

There is evidence that 86% of the net budget was allocated to outcomes/outputs/activities (direct program costs) and that project management costs were reasonable at 8.6%, while the program support costs were fixed according to UN standards at 8%. UNDP-Azerbaijan was allocated USD 712,000 of which USD 659,259 (or 93%) was for direct program costs. Project implementation partners considered the project resource allocation efficient. UNDP-Armenia was allocated USD 637,000 of which USD 589,815 (or 93%) was designated for direct program costs. The above analysis is based on the four semi-annual interim financial reports to donors that were provided to the Evaluation Team, as financial data showing a breakdown of actual allocations to output/activity to various implementing partners within each country was not available.

The Evaluation Team also undertook a preliminary cost-efficiency analysis of the WEESC project budget that included a review of the original 2018 budget, interim financial reports for the Steering Committee's deliberation, and triangulation with several KIIs with UN Women Georgia and government officials, stakeholders and partners.

Due to UN Women's corporate policy of centralized financial reporting to the donors, the Evaluation Team was not provided with financial data / expenditures based on budget line items which complicated the cost-efficiency analysis. However, on a regional level, 72% of survey respondents believe that the WEESC project approaches and strategies utilized have been cost-efficient, although it should be noted that the allocation of funds by regional component was not available for Outcome 2.

Annex Q attempts to provide a more in-depth analysis of financial resources according to the results framework in order to estimate whether the project is on track in this regard. From this analysis, it is apparent that all the outputs were under-expended for years 1 and 2; yet both the project management and program support costs were over-expended. This can be attributed to the fixed nature of the latter two costs and the variable costs associated with project implementation given the COVID-19 and geopolitical context in the region. One key informant indicated that some of the financial resources that had been accumulated because of the pandemic (due to travel restrictions, for example) have been redirected to beneficiaries by way of economic grants. The activities where there was evidence of

²⁷ collected by the UN entity on behalf of the UN Secretariat

substantial utilization of available funds included: Output 1.1 (66%) for all 3 countries; as well as Outputs 2.1 (79%), 2.2 (89%), and 3.1 (78%) for Armenia and Georgia combined.

Without a comparison by budget line item to actual expenditures, it is difficult to assess the true cost-efficiency of the project interventions. However, the financial reports provided allow the Evaluation Team to infer that project funds were spent in accordance with the general budget parameters set for Outcomes 1, 2 and 3, and project management costs determined at the project's inception.

Georgia (Allocation of Resources and Targeting of Vulnerable Women)

In Georgia, the WEESC project has allocated resources with a view to creating a foundation for further WEE reforms in alignment with the international standards and quality assurance tools and/or policy instruments within the country. As mentioned previously, UN Women Georgia is recognized for their technical expertise. The KIIs reveal that the expertise of technical project analysts and other personnel greatly supported the achievement of results during the project's first phase and thus, represents significant value for money.

In terms of allocation of resources to Outcome 1 and targeting of vulnerable women to address intersectionality, particularly as it relates to poor rural women suffer multiple layers of discrimination, UN Women Georgia utilized a clearly defined methodology. They also trained their CSO partners (e.g. TASO and KRDF in Georgia) in using this methodology to select different women participants from marginalized communities. The methodology involved convening village meetings whereby community members identified the most vulnerable women and those who most needed empowerment so as to engage them — known as the “snowball principle”. However, this methodology was used only in Georgia. In Armenia and Azerbaijan, grassroots work is carried out through UNDP agencies and due to the specific country contexts and modalities in which these agencies function, a different methodology was deployed.

In terms of Outcomes 2 and 3 (for Georgia and Armenia), because of the above limitations, it was difficult to assess the cost-efficiency of key project activities that were linked to creating and analyzing data, developing methodologies, RIAs and GIAs, all intended to contribute to the sustainability of WEESC initiatives.

Armenia (Allocation of Resources and Targeting of Vulnerable Women)

In Armenia, the evaluation determined that the main challenge at the grassroots and community levels is access to finance. Hence, establishing women's cooperatives was thought to enhance chances for economic success and financial stability, as well as to distribute the risk across a larger group of women and contribute to solidarity in times of adversity.

As it relates to targeting of vulnerable women In Armenia, UNDP Armenia selected beneficiaries from the lists provided by local municipalities of people who received social benefits. The WEGE Programme Manager indicated that UNDP Armenia applied a rigorous approach in beneficiary selection, alongside the implementing partner consortium, Green Lane/3R Strategy, as members of the selection committee. For the grassroots interventions, there was an open call for interested project participants, consultations were held with local governments, and the subsequent selection of women entrepreneurs was based on the feasibility of their business plans.

Most of the project activities were deemed important and effective by key informants. For example, implementing partners selected vulnerable groups of Armenian women from different backgrounds and

supported them both socially and emotionally, taking necessary steps to help them improve their economic situation. The women trained reported a change in their self-esteem and outlook. As a result of this enhanced confidence, their decision-making roles within the household increased as well.

Azerbaijan (Allocation of Resources and Targeting Vulnerable Women)

In Azerbaijan, the majority of the project resources were allocated to Output 1.1, namely to establish two new WRCs in Gusar and Baku-Khazar regions and to support the existing WRC in Sabirabad. WRCs were well equipped and coordinators had sufficient resources to successfully deliver the training sessions and events. The WRCs report to UNDP-Azerbaijan on a monthly basis as to expenses related to budget allocations. Alongside government, private sector and NGO partners, UNDP organized monthly monitoring trips to the WRCs and some of the established business sites. In future, Gusar and Khazar WRCs mentioned they would need larger spaces which could also accommodate a women's shelter for short-term stays. Independent operational capacity of WRCs remains as one of the major sustainability challenges for the project according to KII respondents.

12. TIMELINESS OF OUTPUTS AND ACTIVITIES

The timeliness of outputs and activities implementation has been reasonable given the negative impacts of both the COVID-19 pandemic and the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan. There was ample evidence of regular reporting of performance against identified outputs, including consideration of COVID-19 implications, changes in governments and personnel, as well as the serious effect of regional conflict on timeliness matters.

Overall Project

At a regional level, 72% of survey respondents believe WEESC project results have been delivered in a *timely* manner. In Azerbaijan, the reporting of performance against identified outputs, including consideration of COVID-19 implications on the timeliness of implementation, was assessed as sufficient. Some project stakeholders indicated that milestones and timelines for project implementation could be more efficient by decreasing some perceived bureaucratic obstacles. For example, gaps in-between meetings with UNDP and designing and delivering the training sessions at WRCs were sometimes inefficient and not well coordinated among the three implementation partners.

According to triangulated data from KII and FGD respondents in Armenia, the Evaluation Team found a perceived lack of awareness-raising campaigns or events directed towards the WEESC project, not only at the beginning of the project, but also during the implementation stage. UNDP explained that *"At the initial phase of the project UNDP Armenia team proposed to UN Women Georgia to have a communication strategy for the project (even a respective ToR was shared). However, the UN Women response was that there would be a unified communication approach within all countries, but no further action followed."*

Within the South Caucasus region, UN Women Georgia reported that during the first phase, the project team invested a great deal of time in creating and analyzing the data (e.g. gender pay gap), developing methodologies, and creating RIA and GIA tools with the involvement of international and local experts to build the capacity in this field.

In Georgia, concurrent grassroots and policy level activities being implemented at the same time as GIA monitoring enabled the WEESC project to focus on how granting agencies addressed existing inequalities. Minor delays occurred due to COVID-19 which negatively influenced the delivery of some

project outputs in a timely manner. As a result, the project was extended until March, 2021 for the Association of Finance Officers of Georgian Local Self-Governing Units (GFA) and CARE International. According to key informants from implementing partners, the project managed to redirect COVID-related savings (e.g. travel funds and DSA) to cover some basic needs of vulnerable women in rural communities (e.g. face masks and hand sanitizers), with the assistance of self-help groups established during the first stage of the project. Related to that finding, another key informant indicated online communication is considered a resource in and of itself being very time efficient – perhaps even more so when working in several regions at once.

13. PROJECT PLANNING, IMPLEMENTATION AND MANAGEMENT

Project leadership and management enjoyed a high approval rate from key implementing staff, however there is a need to more clearly define roles and responsibilities and management structure, particularly as it relates to UNDP in Azerbaijan and Armenia, to enhance overall efficiency. There is evidence of a solid commitment by UN Women and UNDP to work together in the WEESC project both at the country level as well as at the regional level. Project planning and implementation with stakeholders and other actors has proven to be significantly effective and there is evidence of stakeholder participation in decision-making. However, there are a number of areas which could be strengthened, including greater participation of grassroots women in project planning and more frequent country-level stakeholder meetings given the complexity and scale of the WEESC project.

Overall Project

In Georgia, the leadership and management of the WEESC project has been effective to maximize results. Results-based management (RBM) and reporting enhanced the overall results and contributed to communication around project achievements. The project overcame quite a number of substantial challenges related to regional conflicts and the COVID-19 pandemic as previously indicated. Benchmarking tools such as the project document, ToC, logical framework, and M&E plans to measure project progress, efficiency, and accountability, were successfully utilized. Organizations were found to be well profiled, as was the use of social mobilization methodologies by CSOs to empower the most vulnerable communities. However, in Armenia and Azerbaijan, there has been feedback that a clearer division of roles would have enhanced project efficiency. In Armenia, focus groups and one-on-one in-depth interviews with stakeholders show that for half of the project beneficiaries and stakeholders consulted, the roles and responsibilities of the project team were unclear.

UN Women Georgia also acknowledged that the WEESC project underestimated how much staff capacity is needed for a project that is focused on policy making (i.e. full-time professionals providing technical assistance to partners) and that a dedicated, on-the-ground presence is needed in Yerevan to fully support Outcomes 2 and 3.

Regional

At a regional level, 90% of the survey respondents believed there is *effective* leadership and management within the WEESC project. Over 60% of the respondents felt the structuring of management and administrative roles were *significantly effective* in order to maximize results and communication strategies, with the sub-sections below highlighting input specific to Armenia and Azerbaijan.

At a regional level, survey answers were diverse when it came to describing how effectively the stakeholders and other actors were involved in project planning, implementation and monitoring. For project planning, respondents felt it was *moderately* to *significantly effective*. For project

implementation, a few people felt it was *slightly to moderately effective* with the majority indicating it was *significantly effective*. For project monitoring, most people felt it was *significantly effective* with about a quarter indicating it was *moderately effective*.

Georgia

In Georgia, there is evidence that implementing partners have been included in project planning and implementation. It was reported that CSOs have been voicing women's feedback at roundtables with UN Women, enabling them to swiftly react to the changing circumstances during the global COVID-19 pandemic. Hence, the WEESC project has been responsive to the needs of women in the region, especially women from minority and marginalized groups. Furthermore, the use of an innovative three-pronged approach for the successful implementation of the WEESC involved all relevant institutions and CSOs.

However, KIIs with UN Women Georgia staff also highlighted the following implementation challenges in Georgia: 1) the low capacity of partners at the policy level and a lack of focal points; 2) partners with high demands and insufficient resources or time; and 3) an extremely deregulated economy since 2004.

Armenia

At a grassroots level in Armenia, there is evidence that implementing partners and stakeholders were engaged closely with the beneficiaries in helping to improve their economic situation and the project reportedly had a significant impact, not only on the women but also on their entire families. The implementing partner, the Green Lane-3R Strategy consortium, also responded to interest from family members to participate in the project which helped Armenia to exceed the planned grassroots level training target. On the other hand, KIIs and FGDs indicated that women beneficiaries were not involved in preparation and design of the project and WEE programming. Addressing this gap in the direct engagement of women in project design and planning going forward will help with the identification and prioritization of project activities and should also help to strengthen overall project results.

KIIs with UN Women Georgia staff also highlighted the following implementation challenges in Armenia: 1) constant changes at decision making levels and not having a focal point at the ministry level; 2) political instability that made it difficult to lead policy level discussions; and 3) the fact that UN Women was not represented in the country. This was further exacerbated by COVID-19 and the inability to travel frequently.

From a project management perspective, UNDP was viewed as managing Outcomes 1 and 3 well given the multiple challenges encountered during project implementation. However, both FGDs and KIIs indicated that for many of the women beneficiaries and stakeholders, the division of roles and responsibilities between UNDP Armenia and the implementing partner consortium was unclear. There was also some confusion related to the roles of the two implementing partners in the consortium.

Azerbaijan

As it relates to project management, similar to Armenia, UNDP-Azerbaijan was viewed as managing the WEESC project well given the multiple challenges encountered during project implementation. However, KIIs indicated that there was a lack of clarity on the division of roles and responsibilities of UNDP and the implementing partners. In the case of Azerbaijan, it was also suggested that increased outsourcing of capacity building activities to implementation partners would increase project efficiency by continuously determining the learning needs of beneficiaries, designing interventions according to

those needs, providing in-field experience such as trips to established businesses, and supporting learners through an ongoing process of knowledge application.

14. PROJECT M&E FRAMEWORK AND SYSTEMS

The project M&E mechanisms put in place are standard practice; however, there is need for a consistent tracking tool to improve efficiency of results reporting and assessment. The current level of coordination between country and regional level M&E systems requires improvement and there is a need for designated M&E personnel in each country. The utilization of M&E data has been limited in that the performance measurement indicators established at the project's outset were all quantitative in nature and do not capture the gender-sensitive qualitative measurement of GE and WEE results. In order to become more robust, the performance measurement system needs to incorporate both qualitative and quantitative gender-sensitive (plus diversity-related) performance indicators to capture disaggregated data on outputs, outcomes and eventually, impact.

Overall Project

The Evaluation Team assessed the level of coordination between country and regional level M&E systems, as well as the robustness of the performance measurement system in capturing results (both quantitative and qualitative changes). It triangulated data from WEESC project plans, semi-annual reports, documents, aggregated survey results and KIIs with various members of the Steering Committee, stakeholder groups and key staff of UN Women Georgia and UNDP in Armenia and Azerbaijan. Regionally, a large majority of survey respondents believed the WEESC project has effective monitoring mechanisms in place for measuring and informing management of project performance of individual and joint entities and their progress towards meeting targets.

The Evaluation Team also assessed the extent to which results performance and lessons learned were integrated into internal decision-making. This was through document reviews (including strategic plans and periodic reports), KIIs with UN Women, UNDP and government officials, and with WEESC project stakeholders. In addition, a survey was undertaken to capture additional information and included people who were unavailable for interviews. The team also determined that a more robust M&E framework needs to be put in place in order to monitor and identify desired results in specific areas and their likely contribution towards meeting project objectives. Key informants revealed that the information gathered in the field was not fully utilized in order to influence project design, which resulted in a perceived weaker connection between Outcome 1 and Outcomes 2 and 3 of the project.

Regional

Within the South Caucasus Region, UN Women Georgia reported that the project does not have a dedicated M&E team nor M&E focal points for each country and believes the WEESC project would benefit from such dedicated resources. The project Manager is responsible for M&E activities, however the rest of the management team is responsible for strategic support which includes a National project Analyst who joined the team in June 2020 and one other staff member. Some of the M&E tools currently in use include a tracking tool updated every quarter by the country team/implementation partners who then manually insert the data for collection and aggregation by the UN Women Georgia *ad hoc* M&E team. In Azerbaijan and Armenia, the UNDP teams alongside the implementation partners, provide the information. Their M&E team works with the implementing partners to capture success stories and case studies for reporting and public relations purposes. Quarterly reports of UN Women Georgia to the UN also capture these narratives while quantitative data is collected by the tracking tool. However, the data appears to be only disaggregated by sex (but only partially as it was not clear how many males

participated in project activities) and not the additional categories called for by the various international human rights treaty committees, which include race and ethnicity, age group, disability, religion, income level, and so on. This is an important area for improvement.

The process of aggregating data across the country and project level was reported as being threefold. The WEESC project has a Results Monitoring Framework (RMF) and every 6 months the team updates the indicators in the RMF table to check on progress. The results measured across the log frame helps UN Women Georgia to assess how the project is progressing. They have both a project level ToC and a country level ToC, all of which are aligned to the UN Women Global Strategic Plan. The latter contains all the global performance indicators and the country offices feed into the indicators. As mentioned prior, the Evaluation Team found the quantitative indicators as being insufficient to capture the perspectives of project beneficiaries, mainly females but also males, within the rural communities targeted.

Survey respondents were divided when it came to the extent to which the monitoring data was objectively used for management action and decision making. While 45% felt it was *significantly effective*, 36% felt it was *moderately effective*, 9% felt it was *slightly effective* and another 9% *didn't know*.

UN Women Georgia has also acknowledged the need for a standard results-tracking tool that is based on a cloud-based system as current data entry is done manually via Excel files and is prone to error. A streamlined, cloud-based system that can be easily accessed and used by both UN agencies and implementing partners would improve data aggregation and analysis.

M&E Financial Resources and Capacity Building

In terms of the adequacy of allocation of resources for M&E, the UN Women Georgia Country Office intended to spend 3% of its total budget in 2016-2020 on evaluation activities, in compliance with the UN Women Georgia Strategic Note and based on their work plans and best estimates. According to the UN Women Strategic Plan and given the partnership context, the preferred modality for the UN Women Georgia Country Office was to have at least two-thirds of its 2016-2020 portfolio evaluated.

As it relates to training or capacity building exercises conducted for staff on M&E for implementation, UN Women Georgia reported that the WEESC project does not have a specific budget line item for M&E, and only has an allocation for evaluation as per the UN guideline which is 3%. Reportedly, none of the projects have a specific budget line item as M&E is typically carried out as part of project management by way of staff time, logistics, audit costs, and field visits which are incorporated into the M&E activities.

Georgia

The WEESC ProDoc states there was to be a regular monitoring mechanism in place conducted by the project Management Unit, with field visits to all three countries and participation in project events among other modalities. COVID-19 related travel restrictions limited the capacity of the UN Women team to gather the information and feedback via field visits, which also influenced the monitoring quality.

In Georgia, ensuring the project-supported reforms were linked to creating and analyzing the data, developing methodologies, RIAs as well as GIAs, would collectively better ensure sustainability of WEESC initiatives.

At the most recent annual Stakeholder Meeting conducted in February 2021 in which there were 29 participants online (including the Evaluation Team), UN Women Georgia's project Manager and Analyst co-presented on highlights of the WEESC project's achievements and priorities for the remainder of the project.

Armenia

In Armenia, project management has delivered the planned outputs that they oversee. In this regard, the implementing partners also contributed to the project's efficiency by utilizing monitoring mechanisms such as follow-up calls, field visits, feedback discussions regarding any perceived project shortcomings, outcomes, as well as short-term and mid-term evaluation leaflets/questionnaires for completion. However, some respondents reported insufficient M&E procedures, not only for the WEESC project, but for GRB in each region in Armenia.

At the most recent annual Stakeholder Meeting conducted on February 15, 2021 in which there were 22 participants online (including the Evaluation Team), UNDP Armenia presented on highlights of the project's achievements and priorities for the remainder of the project.

Azerbaijan

WRC coordinators have been delivering monthly reports to UNDP-Azerbaijan management on expenses, visits, and statistics on events held. The UNDP project team has been conducting monthly site visits to the WRCs with different stakeholders, and also checking on established businesses. Again, the COVID-19 and lockdown have hindered the quality and intensity of monitoring visits to the regions. One of the challenges was reported as being the lack of a singular M&E framework that could be communicated and updated accordingly by all implementing partners.

At the most recent annual Stakeholder Meeting conducted on February 18, 2021, in which there were 23 participants online (including the evaluation team), UNDP Azerbaijan presented on project results and priorities for the remainder of the project.

4.5 Sustainability

Sustainability: Will the Benefits Last?

There is evidence of commitment to sustainability in the form of institutionalisation across all levels, however, progress has been variable. As it relates to sustainability at the grassroots level with women beneficiaries, their ability to network through the women's group has the strongest potential to continue. Evidence also suggests an increase in income of women who have been able to secure self or wage employment; yet, for self-employed women, continuity of economic activity remains subject to vulnerability due to inconsistent markets in the current context and their limited ability to expand into new alternative markets. Wage-employed women, on the other hand, are concerned about the nature of their contract as many of them have service contracts which tend to be precarious and lack benefits.

In terms of private sector interventions, there is acknowledgement by the private sector of the importance of gender inclusive practices, however at this point, the private sector is still in the process of adopting such practices and further work to demonstrate how the WEPs and inclusive business models can be applied and operationalized in each country is needed.

Regarding local and national government interventions, there is acknowledgement and commitment from local and governments to be more gender responsive. Certain progressive practices such as GIAs and GRB are in the process of being institutionalised. However, there is a risk of discontinuity given the relatively high turn-over of government officials and further work is needed to reinforce GE and WEE mechanisms.

Project Definition of Sustainability

As per the ProDoc, 'sustainability' of results was planned to be achieved at all three levels, corresponding with the WEESC project outcomes and outputs, as follows:

- *At the grassroots level*, sustainable results will be represented by women who successfully transitioned from informal to formal decent jobs and/or whose incomes increased as a result of the project's support, as well as by women's networks (country and regional) that have been created and/or strengthened as a result of the project.
- *At the legal and policymaking level*, sustainable results will include adopted laws and policies that remove discriminatory barriers for women to participate in and benefit from economic opportunities (Armenia and Georgia; national and local government levels)
- *At the institutional level*, sustainable results will be represented by institutionalized capacities and mechanisms delivering gender-responsive programmes and services (Armenia and Georgia; national and local government levels).

15. SUSTAINABILITY AT THE GRASSROOTS LEVEL WITH WOMEN BENEFICIARIES

Women's ability to network through the women's groups has the strongest potential to continue. It is also a key source of information for women on economic activities and opportunities. While all women securing economic activity have seen positive changes in income, there is uncertainty around continuity of the economic activity as they are being affected in the context of COVID-19. In addition, there is little concrete evidence of jobs (with benefits) being created in the formal sector which continues to make them vulnerable. There is high appreciation of training courses; however, women have expressed the desire to have more targeted and needs-specific training courses.

Increase in Income

The WEESC monitoring reports indicate an additional increase in income (as measured from baseline data) for the women who received grants to set up and expand businesses and who were able to secure jobs. This was further confirmed during the FGDs. However, continuity of business and jobs was affected by COVID as women found it difficult to continue making sales. It was clear from the FGDs that women had limited or no alternative sources of finance. Women either have to rely on their own savings or apply for loans that require collateral which women cannot meet. This means in the absence of grants, these women would have struggled and there continues to be a strong desire to seek further financial assistance.

Limited Transition to Formal Jobs and Vulnerability of Income

The majority of beneficiaries were self-employed in a variety of small businesses. There was no clear indication of the formalization of those businesses nor growth prospects of the economic activities women have been investing in. In some cases, women viewed the grants as a one-time cash injection without a clear vision of business expansion. This puts the sustainability of the business' continuity as risk in the longer term. Most often women chose to invest or expand their businesses as opposed to take up jobs due to (a) a perceived need to remain in close proximity to home, (b) flexibility of work hours to manage unpaid responsibilities, and (c) absence of the ability to secure formal employment. Vulnerability of income remained an issue as many women's businesses were affected by COVID and the absence of consistent buyers or markets for their goods and services. In addition, the majority of women securing employment had a service contract (particularly as seen in Azerbaijan), which increases the precariousness of income source as the nature of service contracts means little or no employee protection or compensation in situations like COVID.

Strong Women's Networks

The WEESC project has been able to foster networking amongst women through the self-help groups, Women's Rooms and Women's Resource Centers. Use of the networks and the facilities at these centers were expressed as important changes appreciated by women. These networks have also become sources of information on economic opportunities, social capital and awareness of women's rights. Women have also been seen to use these networks to voice their opinions and communicate their needs and rights with different stakeholders. The women's networks are also seen as a key source of reference for other women. For example, 85% of FGD participants in Azerbaijan mentioned that they have referred at least 2 other women to the center.

Concerns Around Technological Challenges

Lower general digital skills, and especially digital sales skills for self-employed women, was one of the most frequently mentioned concerns by KII respondents for sustainability, especially during the ongoing pandemic where the digital skills were as equally important as general knowledge on business management and operations. This indicates the limitations around adapting new methods and training platforms or modules based on current contexts.

Variable Application of Uptake of Training

While women gained some important skills in accounting and finance, marketing, use of social media, writing abilities, etc., women also expressed their concerns on the generic nature of the training rather than aligning the training to their level of understanding or experiences. For women seeking formal employment, the absence of certification or any form of document endorsing their acquired skills, limited their ability to illustrate the importance of the training. For women engaged in self-employment, women either expressed concerns on the generic nature of trainings, or a mismatch between economic opportunities and the training subject matter. In some places, timing and location of the training was also seen as a limitation for participation. Training on mentoring and market linkages was also expressed as a critical need to continue increasing sales.

16. SUSTAINABILITY RE TRAINING PROGRAMS AND WOMEN'S NETWORKS

In the South Caucasus Region, the WRCs and Women's Rooms rely heavily on external organizations to design and deliver WEE training. There is scant clear evidence of capacity for these women's groups to continue operating independently and to offer training and information services without external support, in the absence of the WEESC project. This means that alternative models for self-reliance and financial independence need to be investigated to enhance sustainable project results.

Reliance On WEESC Project Training Content and Delivery

The delivery of training and capacity of women's groups have been facilitated and led either by UNDP or the implementing partner NGOs. In a number of interviews, it was suggested that the initial content has been developed by UN organizations and the women's groups can continue to use them. Yet there was no mention of how any upgrades or changes to the content of the training materials will be carried out in the absence of the project.

Limited Capacity of the Women's Groups to Continue Without Support

A number of activities have been carried out to improve the capacity of the women's groups; however, there has been no clear evidence of the pathway towards their independent ability to run these women's groups or centers. Some great initiatives include PwC's training of WRC coordinators in

Azerbaijan, but KII^s indicate that the WRCs need more organizational and financial support (at least for a couple of years), in order to help the beneficiaries to sustain themselves.

Alternative Models for Sustainability Need to Be Considered

Ensuring the independence and formulation of WRCs as independent NGOs is one of the major sustainability concerns of stakeholders. KII^s indicate that becoming an NGO could be an alternative solution for the women's centers to operate on their own; however, NGOs could potentially continue to mean dependency on donor funds unless they become social enterprises. At the project design phase, there was mention of testing out models such as "common pots" and "contribution of a portion SME profit into the centres" similar to World Bank projects in the southern part of Azerbaijan (where it has been seen that women who contributed in the cooperative approach were getting back twice the amount of investment). However, these approaches have not been tested yet by the WEESC project.

17. SUSTAINABILITY OF LOCAL AND NATIONAL GOVERNMENT INVERVENTIONS

There is an acknowledgement and commitment from local and national governments to be more gender responsive. Certain progressive practices such as GIAs and GRB are in the process of being institutionalised. However, there is a risk of discontinuity given the relatively high turnover of government officials and further work is needed to put GE and WEE mechanisms in place to ensure continuous reinforcement.

Commitment to Integrate Gender Equity Issues with National Priorities

Local government and other State officers acknowledge the poor understanding of GE issues but are committed to further align their operations with national priorities. However, practical application has been low. Most of the policies are top-down in nature with little bottom-up involvement. The KII^s with partner Government agencies also revealed the need for continued support from the project to address all the participatory gender audits' recommendations, particularly to strengthen the capacity component of the national and local government offices.

Integration of GRB Issues at The Local Planning Level

Across Armenia and Georgia, the inclusion of gender relevant changes in the local budgetary process is a sign of progress towards institutionalization. Continued integration and roll-out of the GRB initiative in local government budgeting processes to meet women's ongoing needs is in process, recognizing that in Phase One, GRB was initially conceived as an auxiliary strategy to social mobilization activities

Increased Regional Collaboration

The WEESC project has not been able to take advantage of the South Caucasus regional aspirations of the project as much as it had initially planned. There have been some regional exchanges and interactions, but more could be done according to some stakeholders.

Further Institutionalization of GRB

Notwithstanding the initial intention for inclusion of GRB in the WEESC project, Phase One has created expectations among rural and vulnerable women, who are now empowered and equipped to voice their needs, actual changes to the local governments' budgets in response to those needs. The FGDs with municipal representatives and CSOs reveal that for more sustainable results on the GRB component, the project needs to continue working with the decision makers at the municipality level to raise their awareness on the benefits of GRB and influence the institutionalization of GRB related work.

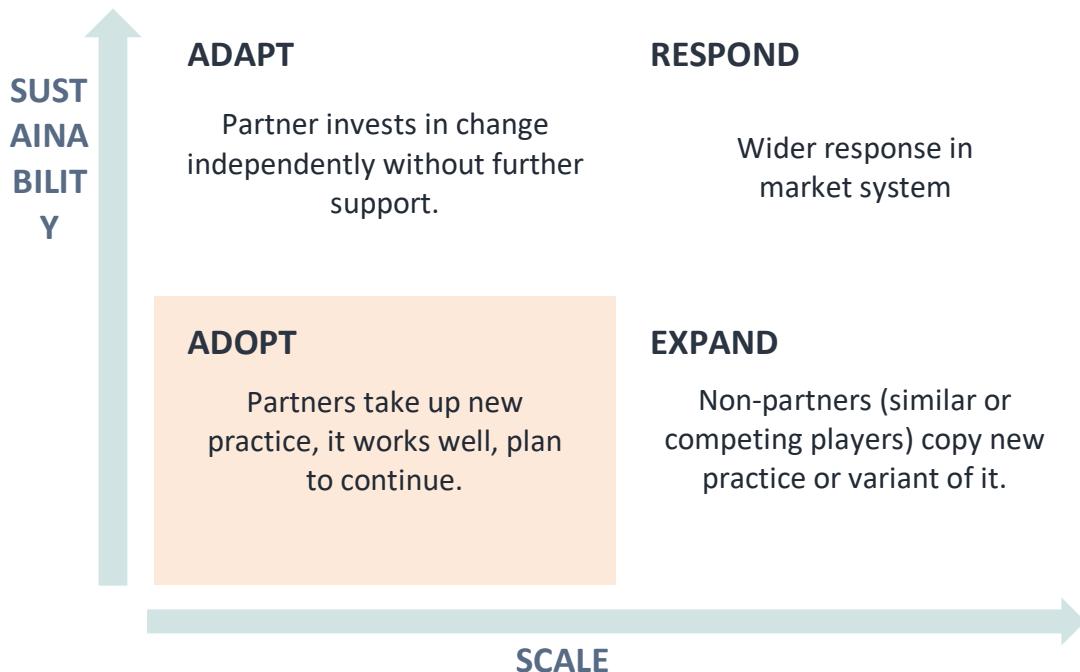
18. SUSTAINABILITY OF PRIVATE SECTOR INTERVENTIONS

There is acknowledgement by the private sector of the importance of gender inclusive practices, however at this point, the private sector is still in the process of adopting such practices and further work to demonstrate how the WEPs and inclusive business models can be applied and operationalized in each country is needed. Such demonstration initiatives also need to be more demand-driven and designed and tested together with private sector partners in the three countries, with further scope for accelerated knowledge sharing and exchange of best practice on a regional level.

Engagement with the private sector was aimed at creating a demonstration effect to improve workplace practices. KII's with the private sector representatives in Armenia and Azerbaijan did not indicate any clear application of change in practices as a result of project support. Many of the changes made by large Armenian companies were already in place given their concern for reputations around corporate social responsibility (CSR). No new changes have been discerned as a result of WEESC project activities. In Georgia however, the work with business associations like the Georgian Farmers' Association and organizations such as 'Women for Tomorrow' strengthened the sustainability component. The Georgian Chamber of Commerce incorporated WEPs into their internal regulations and companies have indicated a desire to undertake fundraising to support GE and further respond to the gaps and needs identified.

If we consider an analytical framework for systemic change across four key quadrants presented in Figure 11 below²⁸, it can be seen that much of the WEESC sustainability progress is still at the 'Adopt' stage where partners have adopted new practices in cooperation and with support from the project, but have not yet advanced to implementing independent changes at a wider systemic level.

Figure 11: The Systemic Change Framework



²⁸ Source: The Systemic Change Framework by the Springfield Center

4.6 COVID-19 Situation and Impact

Summary: COVID-19 Situation for Women in the South Caucasus Region and WEESC Implementation:

Overall, the project has successfully adapted to the new reality, launching timely and innovative initiatives to assist women beneficiaries and their families cope with the pandemic, while also adjusting project implementation modalities and re-profiling budget resources to facilitate maximum support. For example, most of the planned activities since March 2020 have been conducted virtually and the savings derived from under-utilized travel budgets and face-to-face events were re-allocated to supporting WEE during the crisis.

However, there are also ongoing challenges and obstacles posed by the pandemic, particularly for self-employed women whose ability to put into practice benefits derived from the Project are currently undermined as many of their activities have been suspended due to shutdowns. Although the project adapted to a virtual modality and achieved some important successes, women were not able to fully attend the training sessions due to financial, technical and family constraints, although the Project has attempted to address these issues and will need to do so in the foreseeable future. Finally, the COVID-19 lockdown and travel restrictions have had a negative influence on the regional dimension of the project, although this can be counter-balanced by replicating some of the key innovations and best practices at county level in the design of Phase Two of the project.

19. COVID-19 IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR WEESC IMPLEMENTATION

Overall, the project has successfully adapted to the new reality, launching timely and innovative initiatives to assist women beneficiaries and their families cope with the pandemic, while also adjusting project implementation modalities and re-profiling budget resources to facilitate maximum support. However, there are also ongoing challenges and obstacles posed by the pandemic, including issues related to online accessibility and affordability for key project activities, negative economic impacts, particularly for self-employed women and the private sector, and limitations related to regional exchange and knowledge sharing.

COVID-19 Situation and Impact on Women in the South Caucasus Region

Women have been disproportionately affected by the impact of the COVID-19 crisis. Since the beginning of the pandemic, violence against women and girls has intensified all over the world, and the ECA region is no exception. Data from multiple sources show an increase in cases of gender-based violence, and particularly domestic violence. The pandemic has also deepened pre-existing gender inequalities, especially in women's access to social protection services and their disproportionate share of unpaid care work. Women also face heightened risks of seeing their income and livelihoods decrease.

Economic impacts are experienced disproportionately by women and girls who generally earn less, save less, hold insecure jobs and/or live close to the poverty line. In the South Caucasus Region, women constitute the majority of those employed in the sectors worst hit by business closures, including the service sector and tourism. This situation is further exacerbated by the fact that the vast majority of women's employment – 70 per cent – is in the informal economy with few provisions against dismissal or for paid sick leave and with limited access to social protection measures.²⁹

²⁹ Ibid.

In each of the three countries covered by this project, the COVID-19 crisis has evolved differently. While all three countries have taken measures to control the spread of the pandemic, the table below presents a summary of their cases as of March 9, 2021.

Table 11 - COVID-19 Situation in the South Caucasus Region

Country	Total cases	New cases	Total deaths	New deaths	Recovered	New Recoveries
Georgia	273,000	147	3,591	15	267,000	193
Azerbaijan	237,000	337	3,247	4	230,000	170
Armenia	175,000	337	3,225	170	165,000	4

Source: [COVID-19 Daily Statistics](#) as of March 9 2021

Georgia

In Georgia, the national government developed the Anti-Crisis Economic Recovery Plan,³⁰ which contains measures aimed at supporting micro- and small business, strengthening social protection of furloughed workers and vulnerable citizens, and supporting people residing in villages, among other measures. The plan, however, includes no explicit measures for WEE, and the government failed to identify adequate mechanisms to reach informal workers, particularly domestic workers who have been largely affected by the mobility restrictions and social distancing measures. According to the COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker developed by UN Women and UNDP, the proportion of gender sensitive measures out of the total COVID-19 related policy measures is 24% in Georgia.

WEESC Project Success in Responding to the COVID-19 Pandemic and Adapting to Challenges

- Overall, the project has successfully adapted to the new reality, launching timely and innovative initiatives to assist women beneficiaries and their families cope with the pandemic, while also adjusting project implementation modalities and re-profiling budget resources to facilitate maximum support. For example, most of the planned activities since March 2020 have been conducted virtually and the savings derived from travel budgets and face-to-face events were re-allocated to supporting WEE during the crisis.
- UN Women Georgia leveraged the country-level stakeholder group as a key mechanism to disseminate information in the early days of the pandemic; approximately 400 households were reached via phone with infection prevention information. In addition, WHO information in ethnic minority languages (Armenian and Azerbaijani) was shared through social media, reaching approximately 9,600 people; and 150 posters in ethnic minority languages were placed in municipal centres and villages.
- Due to the sudden and strict lockdown that was enforced in the target municipalities of this project, the WEESC project provided food and hygiene packages as a one-time assistance to the most vulnerable households. A total of 450 food and hygiene kits were distributed in the nine target municipalities. The packages included basic food (e.g. rice, flour, sugar, oil) and hygiene products. The value per package is approximately GEL 100.
- Women in stakeholder groups also supported one another by managing members' crops, particularly for those who were in quarantine due to COVID-19, or by helping to facilitate access to online training for those who did not have Internet access.
- Women indicated that engagement in the project during the pandemic, particularly during lockdown periods, although virtual, had a positive influence on their psychological well-being.

³⁰ Available at <https://stopcov.ge/en/Gegma> (accessed on 23 July 2020).

Women involved in the project also received varied assistance from the implementing partners: including the provision of basic hygiene products, training on stress-management and support to women-owned businesses to connect to online markets to sell their products.

- However, most had ambivalent views about the dynamics of online and face-to-face training. While most of the women in FGDs mentioned that online training and information sessions enabled them to deal with the increased burden of unpaid care work at home while attending the training, they also emphasized the benefits of face-to-face training, particularly the value of personal contact, networking and experience sharing.

WEESC Project Ongoing Challenges and Obstacles

- Knowledge sharing among the implementing partners provided an opportunity for networking and improving project outcomes in all three countries. However, the COVID-19 pandemic and related restrictions had a negative influence on the regional dimension of the project.
- Most of the self-employed women could not apply the knowledge gained in practice as many of their activities were suspended because of the pandemic.
- Due to limited access to the internet, women could not fully attend the trainings nor access information as a result of financial or for technical reasons. They either could not afford to buy internet packages, or don't have access to computers and smartphones, nor do they have access to private space at home to participate in the training as spaces are shared with other family members.
- Interestingly, women in rural settings mentioned that COVID 19 had not affected their workload, as they were already overburdened with unpaid care work, household related labour, animal husbandry and paid work.

Armenia

In Armenia, the Government developed a national strategy of socioeconomic recovery³¹ that includes some aspects of WEE such as cash transfers for married or single pregnant women who were not employed or who (or whose husbands) lost their jobs due to the crisis; and partial income replacement programmes for specific sectors including those dominated by women, such as tourism, hospitality, beauty and education. According to the COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker developed by UN Women and UNDP, the proportion of gender sensitive measures out of the total COVID-19 related policy measures is 26% in Azerbaijan.

WEESC Project Success in Responding to the COVID-19 Pandemic and Adapting to Challenges

- Overall, the WEESC project has successfully adapted to the new reality, launching timely and innovative initiatives to assist women beneficiaries and their families cope with the pandemic, while also adjusting project implementation modalities. For example, most of the planned activities since March 2020 have been conducted virtually and project implementation partners developed innovative solutions to support women, particularly in the agricultural sector, during the pandemic.
- For example, due to the COVID-19 restrictions on public events and visitations to established businesses, women beneficiaries needed consultations and technical assistance in certain areas of agriculture to increase their effectiveness. In response, implementing partners created online toolkits to address this issue, and moreover, self-employed women found new ways and technologies for selling their products.

³¹ Available at <https://www.gov.am/en/covid-19-cragrer/> (accessed on 20 July 2020).

- For women engaged in the agricultural sector, “Green Lane” implementation partner also helped women to develop social media marketing (SMM) skills to overcome the barriers of face-to-face communication and travel caused by the pandemic. An additional benefit was that women developed a special delivery system that helped to increase their income.

WEESC Project Ongoing Challenges and Obstacles

- Due to the COVID-19 restrictions, other stakeholders organized interventions to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on households that have seasonal workers. However, home-based child education was among the many problems created by the pandemic for the women as duties of mothers multiplied.
- Similar to the other two countries, all training courses were conducted virtually and this created many difficulties. Participants had trouble understanding the content, organizers felt a lot of pressure to transfer the content in an efficient way and “field visitations” were done online.
- In general, women in the Gegharkunik Region experienced the most difficulties as this area is situated on the borders with Azerbaijan. The municipalities were not accessible to external parties during the pandemic due to the double crisis (COVID and regional conflict) within their communities.

Azerbaijan

In Azerbaijan, the Government introduced programmes³² to support the economy, including, for example, income support to those who were unemployed or lost income due to the pandemic, as well as State support for entrepreneurship loan repayments. The Azerbaijani economy has not only been severely affected by the spread of COVID-19, but also by the decline in global oil prices, as oil is a key revenue source for the country. Earlier in 2020, a new Chair was appointed for the State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs who is supportive of the WEESC project objectives and activities. According to the COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker developed by UN Women and UNDP, the proportion of gender sensitive measures out of the total COVID-19 related policy measures is 29% in Azerbaijan.

WEESC Project Success in Responding to the COVID-19 Pandemic and Adapting to Challenges

- Overall, the project has successfully adapted to the new reality, adjusting project implementation modalities to online training and support sessions and through provision of various forms of direct assistance from UNDP to women and vulnerable families in the target regions.
- UNDP Azerbaijan has provided internet packages to the women in need, particularly in the regions of Gusar and Sabirabad, based on the income of women and their families.
- UNDP Azerbaijan has also delivered sessions on psychological assistance and domestic violence during the pandemic, which women appreciated highly and which helped to decrease their feeling of isolation.
- According to FGDs, women felt connected to the project and the WRCs during the pandemic due to regular check-in calls from WRC Coordinators to catch up on their learning, employment progress and self-employment challenges. They also created internal social media groups (WhatsApp groups) where they have shared news and various opportunities.

³² Available at <https://koronavirusinfo.az/az> (accessed on 21 July 2020).

WEESC Project Ongoing Challenges and Obstacles

- The rapid gender assessment conducted by UNFPA in Azerbaijan in 2020 indicates that women were more likely negatively impacted by the consequences of COVID-19 and lockdowns than men, in addition to highlighting the increase in disproportionate burden of unpaid care during the COVID-19 outbreak.
- In particular, self-employed women have experienced a major decrease in their sales and business opportunities, with only a few of them managing to digitalize their services and goods and sustain their sales over the COVID-19 period.
- A significant majority of FGD respondents (80%) expressed either negative or mixed views related to online/digital trainings. They attribute this to the poor quality of internet connection, lack of appropriate devices to access the online trainings as well as learning difficulties using digital tools.
- Challenges caused by the pandemic and a nation-wide lockdown were further exacerbated by martial law imposed as a result of the Azerbaijan-Armenia conflict. This has increased the socio-economic challenges and decreased overall economic empowerment opportunities in the target regions.



Mariam Lomtadze, Founder of Hero and Farm App Tech Start-Ups, Georgia. Photo: UN Women/Leli Blagonravova

5 Conclusions

5.1 Overall Project

1. RELEVANCE: The WEESC Project is well aligned with national, international and UN Agency priorities in relation to gendered outcomes and women's economic empowerment in the South Caucasus region. (Based on Findings 1, 2 and 3)

The project's design aimed at bringing transformative changes across three levels – grassroots, policies and legislation, and institutions – is a highly relevant and holistic approach to WEE as it considers both the demand and supply side of women's needs, access to opportunities/skills and an enabling environment to address women's constraints to benefit from growth opportunities.

This approach was greatly appreciated across Georgia and Armenia; Azerbaijan has acknowledged the importance of this approach and mentioned the need to gradually pilot activities targeting local institutions. The choice of locations within each country was seen as highly relevant to meet the project outcomes. There is strong acknowledgement that the project design and the key issues it is trying to address are even more relevant in the current fragile context. There is need for greater cohesion amongst Outcomes 1 to 2 and 3 and paying equal attention to self-employment and wage employment in terms of policies and economic opportunities at the grassroots level.

2. COHERENCE: There is a high level of compatibility of the WEESC Project with other GEWE interventions in the South Caucasus region, as well as within the three countries. (Based on Findings 4 and 5)

The strengths of the WEESC project include the perceived expertise of both UN Women and UNDP in gender-responsive planning and programming, as well as the synergies they cultivate with government entities, CSOs, UNCTs, international donors, private sector companies and most importantly, the beneficiaries themselves. As such, UN agencies are well-positioned to play a unique coordination role with the myriad of WEE implementing partners in the region, and to identify any potential overlaps or gaps in WEE programming that need to be addressed.

This is the project's strength, yet conversely, it also represents a significant challenge in terms of coordinating WEE interventions in disadvantaged regions spread over 3 countries and programming for 3 medium-term outcomes at quite different levels, with a combined total of 7 short-term outputs.

3. EFFECTIVENESS: Effectiveness has varied across different outcome levels and across the three countries, with anticipated project results negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and the South Caucasus geopolitical crisis. However, there are good signs of progress across the different outcomes, although there is a clear need to increase cohesion amongst the different outcome levels. (Based on Findings 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10)

Under Outcome 1, much of the impact has been achieved at the more precarious self-employment level compared to wage employment. However, women's ability to apply the skills in practice was affected by a range of different challenges including the limited availability of economic opportunities available given the current COVID-19 and geopolitical context. While the generic training was regarded as useful, women expressed the need to have more specific modules or sessions aligned with the training needs or level of understanding and experience of the participants.

Under Outcomes 2 and 3, the project's work related to local institutions was highly regarded by stakeholders, and there has been progress related to women's engagement in local budgetary discussions, articulation of their needs, followed by initial commitments of resources to address some of these needs. At the national level, significant progress has been achieved in completing gender audits in selected government departments, with research and assessment findings being used to inform selected policy decisions, although many of the policies are geared towards formal employment, whereas the majority of the change at the grassroots level has occurred in the self-employment track.

4. EFFICIENCY: The WEESC project delivered results in an economical way and timely manner during the first 1.5 years of Phase One and prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020. However, there is a need to improve the project M&E framework and related monitoring system. (Based on Findings 11, 12, 13 and 14)

To a large extent, the financial, human and material resources are being utilized appropriately, however, without a rigorous tracking mechanism that is used jointly by all responsible parties and implementing partners, it is difficult to assess overall project efficiency. There are concerns with the perceived cumbersome and bureaucratic processes of UN agencies, particularly as it relates to the WEESC governance and project management model in which a high degree of coordination is needed amongst UN Women, UNDP and local implementation partners.

A streamlined project management and reporting system across the three outcome levels that engages all implementing partners will help to simplify the M&E tasks, as well as enhance transparency and inter-organizational accountability for project results. It would also make it easier to share lessons learned, good practices and innovative approaches between countries and organizations. Developing an appropriate IT based data collection and storage platform that is secure and easily accessible by all partners has been a challenge to date, which also necessitates translation of key documents into Azerbaijani, Armenian and Georgian languages from English.

5. SUSTAINABILITY: A holistic perspective of sustainability acknowledges its multidimensional aspects and explores whether the benefits will continue after the WEESC project has come to an end. While external funding can be a catalyst for the initial phase, the project life cycle must also address both long-term financial and environmental sustainability of the WEE programming. For sustainability to be achieved, there needs to be collective "buy-in" from the targeted grassroots communities (beneficiaries, municipal governments and the local private sector), legislative and policy-making branches of governments (local, regional and national), and institutions (public, private and CSOs) which ultimately impact the target beneficiaries. The WEESC project has made considerable gains in this regard; however, with two additional phases of the project planned, there is still much work to be done. (Based on Findings 15, 16, 17 and 18)

The women's groups that have been established as part of the grassroots level work are viewed as a powerful network and source for women to gain social capital and information on economic opportunities, and female beneficiaries have expressed their motivation to continue engaging. However, these networks require further investment in capacity building and additional funding in order to ensure their medium-long term viability. Limited behaviour change has been observed at the private sector level, both in terms of internal practices and uptake of policies initiated by local and national

governments, however, this is not surprising given the 2-year timeline evaluated to date and the negative impact on the private sector caused by COVID-19.

WEE institutionalisation is still in progress at the local government level, although it looks promising in light of the recent commitments to gendered resources at selective municipalities across the three countries. Similarly, some progress has been made to institutionalize gendered outcomes and good practices at the national government and policy level, but continued reinforcement and strategic prioritization is needed to ensure that these ideas and concepts are well integrated and implemented in the future.

6.COVID-19 SITUATION AND IMPACT: The COVID-19 crisis has been particularly hard on women in the South Caucasus Region, similar to the rest of the world. Unsurprisingly, the onset of the pandemic in March 2020, at the mid-point of the WEESC Phase One project cycle, has affected negatively project implementation and achievement of some of the intended results. However, the evaluation has identified multiple lines and levels of evidence to support the conclusion that the WEESC project has also achieved some key successes in adapting to the new reality.

(Based on Finding 19)

A year into the pandemic, women continue to face multiple challenges: rising gender-based violence and acceleration of pre-existing gender inequalities related to disproportionate share of unpaid care work and access to social protection services. The impact of COVID on women's work has also been unequal, with women facing disproportionate risks of reduced incomes and disruptions to their livelihoods due to their concentration in sectors hardest hit by the economic shutdown.

Strong and timely collaboration amongst the UN agencies and implementing partners, and leverage of the project's strong grassroots networks across all three countries, enabled the project to directly assist women and their families with provision of critical information, supplies and financial and psychological support at the outset of the crisis. Innovations in project implementation modalities were also introduced, particularly the accelerated use of digital technologies and online marketing and services for self-employed women.

5.2 Georgia

7.GEORGIA: The WEESC project responded to the existing context and challenges with a holistic approach, enabling inter-linked interventions at the three levels. As Outcomes 2 and 3 were managed by UN Women Georgia, and in light of the support of the Tblisi-based Gender Theme Group and its Task Force on WEE, implementing partners in Georgia benefited from their proximity to these GE and WEE knowledge brokers.

(Based on Country Presentations, Learning Briefs and integrated Findings)

The three-pronged approach has been implemented through the participation of women from different backgrounds so that the policies, legislation and services respond to the needs of those most vulnerable and can empower them economically. The project also supported the development of gender machinery, including capacity development, legislation and policies to support gender mainstreaming and WEE in both Outcomes 2 and 3 which also helped to serve as a foundation for similar work in Armenia.

Several key results were achieved, including the development of assessment methodology of the gender wage gap, a Ministerial decree related to working conditions for pregnant and nursing women in Georgia, and the Georgian government's intent to join the Equal Pay International Coalition. It also identifies challenges, in particular with the GRB component under Outcome 2 related to the project's engagement with financial offices of the municipalities involved who most often lack the political support from decision-makers. More broadly, the project underestimated the level of resources and staff capacity needed for partnering with local government agencies that do not have either institutional mechanisms or GE focal points.

5.3 Armenia

8.ARmenia: There were several inter-linkages between the three Outcomes, many benefits and a few challenges related to the geopolitical context, COVID-19 and coordination between UN Women and UNDP. The latter was further hindered by UN Women staff not being able to travel to Armenia due to COVID-19 and the absence of a dedicated representative on the ground to manage Outcome 2 at the legislative and policy-making level.

(Based on Country Presentations, Learning Briefs and integrated Findings)

At the grassroots level, poor and socially excluded Armenian women obtained some skills and opportunities to be self-employed and to a lesser extent, wage employed. They were empowered to participate in GRB discussions for local planning and budgeting purposes and a few private enterprises did adopt WEPs, although implementation of the principles needs further attention. At the legislation and policy level, the positive work on RIAs and GIAs was focused on the national level and in some cases, did not trickle down to the local level, in part due to the geopolitical and COVID-19 context. The same can be said for the institutional level which targeted the public sector as regards gender mainstreaming and developing gender-responsive plans, programs, services and strategies. All these levels need to be implemented at the local grassroots level in order to reach the poorest women from marginalized communities and their families.

5.4 Azerbaijan

9.AZERBAIJAN: The WRCs have been a powerful and effective tool for promoting women's entrepreneurship and undertaking capacity building activities for women in the regions, in spite of challenges around women's unpaid care responsibilities, perceived gender norms and inability to influence decisions at the household level. However, there needs to be more sharing of learning, mentoring and cross-fertilisation amongst the different WRCs, especially between the more mature WRCs such as in Sabirabad, coupled with further capacity-building of WRC Coordinators related to governance and diversification of sources of funding to enhance financial sustainability.

(Based on Country Presentation, Learning Briefs and integrated Findings)

While the choice of the project locations has been appropriate in terms of covering the most vulnerable segments of the population, the project has been able to meet only 52% of its target of 'number of self-employed) for at least 6 months due to improved skills and capacities'. Benefits have accrued mostly to self-employed women, while the total number of women in wage employment compared to self-employment was low. There is a need for more specialized training suited to the level of understanding

and experience of the women entrepreneurs, as well as certification for increasing their competitiveness in the job market for women seeking wage employment. Further work is needed to realize concrete results in regards to women voicing their needs in local budgeting decisions after having gained more confidence as a result of the exposure to training and economic activities. There is a need to engage the local governments and the local communities to facilitate some institutional changes in terms of making services available to women, and by women where feasible.



Armenia (No specifics – photo from Progress Report 1, Annex C Project Brief)

6 Lessons Learned

This section presents a set of lessons learned drawn from the evaluation's findings and conclusions. that includes overall lessons from the WEESC project, as well as lessons specific to WEESC design and implementation in each of the three countries. The latter are based on the three Learning Briefs found in Annexes A, B and C.

6.1Overall Project

1. COMMUNICATIONS AND AWARENESS-RAISING: Developing and launching a Communications and Awareness Raising Strategy at the outset of the project (phases) is an important foundation for engaging both project stakeholders and direct beneficiaries.

Given the threefold mandate of the WEESC project, its regional scope and accompanying complexity, the project encountered some challenges related to awareness of project, particularly in Armenia. As indicated previously, there was also lack of clarity related to roles and responsibilities, particularly of UNDP and the implementing partners, and this could be alleviated by conducting kick-off workshops at the outset of the project and maintaining more regular communications with implementing partners and stakeholders.

2. ENGAGEMENT OF BENEFICIARIES AND NETWORKING: Networking has featured prominently as an important benefit of WEESC Phase One. This can be further deepened and scaled in future phases, in terms of increased participation of women beneficiaries in project design/implementation, and more systematic exchanges amongst women's networks (e.g. WRCs/Women's Rooms) and between women's networks and government leaders, particularly at the local level.

Phase One of the WEESC project focused on awareness-raising/social mobilization, information-gathering/research, skills acquisition etc. for the grassroots women beneficiaries. Phase Two can build on this foundation and emphasize greater involvement of women in decisions related to the design and implementation of the project, while also deepening networking activities to facilitate "bottom-up" approach that prioritizes challenges, innovations and, successes. Lessons learned from these exchanges can feed into the national arena, yet also serve as a foundation for transformative change in poor and marginalized regions.

3. SOCIAL AND CIVIC EMPOWERMENT TO COMPLEMENT WEE: Unpaid care, gender-based violence and perceptions of gendered norms continue to pose significant challenges for women's economic empowerment in all three countries. These challenges and their inter-connection with efforts to promote WEE provide a rationale for considering the expansion of the WEESC project scope to encompass relevant activities to address such issues.

Although the issue of potentially extending the scope of the WEESC project during Phase Two to encompass activities related to the civic and social empowerment of women was not formally identified in the Evaluation Matrix (sub)-questions, there is a significant amount of qualitative evidence from FGDs, that lend support for this expansion of project scope.

For example, GRB could potentially serve as a foundation for the social and economic empowerment of women during Phase Two. Similarly, greater emphasis on WRCs and Women's Rooms as networks for

social change could also be considered, in addition to increasing the integration of families, men and selected social agents from communities.

6.2 Regional Dimension of Project

4. CUSTOMIZATION AT COUNTRY LEVEL BALANCED WITH REGIONAL APPROACH: Given the differing contexts and geopolitical situation of the three WEESC countries, evidence from Phase One has shown that customization of project design and implementation at a country-level is an important factor in ensuring that project is relevant and achieves its intended results in each country. However, there is scope to also deepen the regional dimension of the project in Phase Two.

As indicated previously, the customization of the WEESC project design at a country level has been viewed as a key strength of the project, together with ongoing flexibility of project management to adapt project activities to respond to external factors affecting project implementation.

This continued emphasis on customization should be continued in Phase Two. However, there are opportunities to deepen the regional dimension of the project, both in terms of overall WEE knowledge sharing as well as the accelerated exchange of cross-country experience, particularly in the areas of GIA, GRB, WEP engagement with the private sector and possible inclusion of TVET training for women beneficiaries across the three countries.

6.3 Georgia

5. GEORGIA: To reduce discrimination against women during employment and encourage a fairer gender division of labour to enable women's participation in formal employment in the long run, it will be important to accelerate cooperation with the Government (both executive and legislative branches and at national and local levels) and organizations like ILO and ISET.

The provision of increased technical assistance support to the line Ministries is important in order to enhance their capacities on gender equality, and WEE in particular, and to help them 'translate' the strategies and action plans into policy documents and standard operating procedures. As noted previously, the role and technical expertise of UN Women is critical in this respect.

6.4 Armenia

6. ARMENIA: The most successful aspect of the project was networking among different government entities, CSOs, private sector, implementing partners etc., in addition to the sharing of gender-based data with local and national government entities. However, going forward, the existing level of community/regional infrastructure should be assessed during project design/inception phases as it can significantly impact overall implementation of project activities and achievement of results.

At the grassroots (Outcome 1) and legislative/policy (Outcome 2) levels, there are many ideas and insights which cannot be applied because of the lack of adequate infrastructure. The level of development of community infrastructure (transportation, marketplace, employment, etc.) can significantly enhance or

decrease the effectiveness of any intervention. Therefore, all interventions at the grassroots level should take these conditions into account, but also at the legislative and policy levels.

6.5 Azerbaijan

7. AZERBAIJAN: WRCs provide women safe spaces to meet, network, exchange ideas, pursue partnerships, attract capital, gain confidence and grow professionally, which has led to a transformative impact in the country. In rural and remote areas especially, such spaces are instrumental in helping women learn more about their rights, discover untapped potential, and overcome obstacles.

To succeed and advance economically, women need the skills and resources to compete in markets, as well as fair and equal access to economic institutions. To have the power and agency to benefit from economic activities, women need to have the ability to make and act on decisions and control resources and profits. Economic advancement via ensuring and creating decent work and incomes, in addition to accessing knowledge and resources is fundamental. However, women's agency to make and act on economic decisions, and equitable systems (legal and policy frameworks, social and gender norms) are also crucial.



Georgia – no specifics. Photo from Progress Report 1, Annex C Project Brief

7. Recommendations

Based on the evaluation team's findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are supported by evidence-based data and were formulated with the direct involvement of key stakeholders who will ultimately become the users of this formative evaluation. The process involved extensive document reviews, KIIs, FGDs and a survey, as well as several online meetings with members of the EMG and ERGs and the target audience is primarily UN Women, UNDP in Armenia and Azerbaijan and the project Steering Committee. The resultant recommendations and related actions to consider have been prioritized, particularly in light of the formative nature of the evaluation and the Phase Two design process.

The recommendations are presented in four tables. The first table of 19 recommendations relate to the WEESC project as a whole, including both regional and country levels. The following three tables identify country-specific recommendations for Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. Each of the tables include references to relevant parts of the Section 4 Findings section that back up and validate each recommendation, with detailed evidence found in multiple Annexes accompanying this report. The recommendations were validated by EMG and ERG.

7.1 Overall Project

Table 12 - Overall Project Recommendations

OVERALL PROJECT RECOMMENDATIONS	ACTIONS TO CONSIDER	TIMEFRAME & RANKING (L = low, M = medium, H = high priority)
<p>1. Strategic: Ensure that implementing partners, key stakeholders and a representative sample of women beneficiaries are proactively engaged in the design of Phase Two through participatory processes.</p>	<p>Hold virtual brainstorming sessions on Zoom with women from each WRC or Women's Room, including the Coordinators during the project design and review process.</p> <p>Conduct participatory mapping exercises in the inception phase to ensure more social inclusion as well as participatory action research to promote local ownership of research results (designing research questions, identifying risks and mitigation strategies, validating assumptions and findings, etc.).</p>	<p>Immediate: H</p> <p>Short Term: M</p>

<p>2. Strategic: Refresh the inception analysis to look more closely at the factors that facilitate and limit women's ability to secure (a) wage employment, and (b) self-employment across the three countries and the policies and the service provisions that are necessary to facilitate both types of economic activities.</p>	<p>Conduct new baseline studies and/or needs assessments that take into account the gendered relations and family dynamics by consulting both females and males from different age, ethnic, and religious groups. Ensure disabled, migrant and other disadvantaged people are included.</p>	<p>Immediate: H: As part of the transition to Phase 2 <i>before deciding</i> project activities</p>
<p>3. Strategic: Obtain a clear understanding of market potential or growth prospects for a wide range of economic activities before offering grants to women for self-employment, vocational training, or wage employment.</p>	<p>Conduct an economic analysis in each country to identify the sectors or economic activities that have growth opportunities both for formal employment and self-employment for women in the target rural regions and also those economic activities where women are currently active in. Use the analysis to decide which sectors or activities should be prioritized for project activities.</p>	<p>Immediate: H: As part of the transition to Phase 2 <i>before deciding</i> project activities</p>
<p>4. Strategic: Align Phase Two with new 4-year UNSDCFs for three countries (2021-2025) along with their commitments under international human rights treaties, conventions, and relevant national legislation.</p>	<p>Incorporate/address recommendations from UN human rights committees under CEDAW, CERD, ICSECR, ICCPR, CMW, CRPD, and Special Rapporteur reports on Violence against Women as they relate to GE and WEE particularly.</p> <p>Work more closely with UNCT members such as OHCHR and UNHCR within each country, as well as national government authorities.</p>	<p>Immediate: H</p> <p>Ongoing: H</p>
<p>5. Strategic: Strengthen the regional dimension of WEESC based on the comparative advantage of UN Women and UNDP in the region in knowledge management by formalizing a WEE sub-regional knowledge hub within UN Women Georgia.</p>	<p>Allocate specific resources to support a hub and an associated online platform to facilitate knowledge management and sharing.</p> <p>Create a regional level and country level knowledge sharing mechanism for stakeholder coordination whereby implementation partners and key stakeholders (including other relevant donor projects) can discuss the progress and coordinate activities to prevent duplication, share tools and amplify impact.</p>	<p>Short Term: H</p> <p>Medium Term: M</p>

<p>6. Operational: Enhance the involvement of local partners with expertise in GEWE or WEE and ensure they are allocated resources sufficient to enable their participation in the project.</p>	<p>Expand partnership networks especially in the targeted rural communities, to ensure WRCs and Women's Rooms have more frequent contact with knowledgeable resource people. As it relates to the WRCs in Azerbaijan, more detailed recommendations are provided in Section 5.2</p>	<p>Short Term: M</p>
<p>7. Operational: Enhance the involvement of local governments and private enterprises at the grassroots level, with the objective of creating jobs for women.</p>	<p>Assess opportunities for job shadowing and volunteering for young women (and men) as part of a career development strategy for the next generation of gender-sensitive workers.</p> <p>Work with the local school authorities and chambers of commerce to create pilot GEWE projects in commercial sectors that enhance the resilience of the rural communities (i.e. that meet basic needs such as food, water, medicine, shelter, clothing, safety, and access to health facilities).</p> <p>Identify “champions” within these organisations to spearhead the programs and serve as role models in promoting gender inclusive and sexual harassment free workplaces. Mentorship could also be tested with more mature entrepreneurs to provide motivation and advisory support to other women.</p> <p>Where in-kind resources are provided by any partners, they should be both recognized and reflected in cost-efficiency analyses.</p>	<p>Short-Medium Term: M</p>
<p>8. Strategic: Develop further partnerships to facilitate awareness on gendered norms, and collaboration with market actors or other organisations who can offer services to support poor rural women in reducing their load of unpaid care</p>	<p>A range of models could be tested:</p> <p>(a) Models with the private sector, particularly with those companies that have endorsed the WEPs to promote flexible work hours so that women are encouraged to engage in formal employment.</p>	<p>Short-Medium Term: H</p>

	<p>(b) Support services to meet unpaid care responsibility for women. For e.g. this could be part of the Women's Rooms or WRC's business model and be linked to the "care economy".</p> <p>(c) Establishment of daycare support in the community as a social enterprise so that women can help themselves).</p> <p>(d) Consider engaging men and other household/community members to promote positive gendered norms and reduce traditional perceptions of women's roles.</p> <p>This can also be linked to potential expansion of project scope to include social and civic empowerment.</p>	
<p>9. Strategic: Demonstrate some form of "graduation" to break the cycle of grant dependence in order to continue to further support and sustain self-employed women, especially those who are currently establishing their businesses and obtaining small grants from the WEESC project.</p>	<p>Identify strategic partners who can be long term sources of working capital for women. Engage with service providers or market actors (e.g. raw material suppliers, agro-dealers/retailers, financial institutes, etc.) to pilot models for products or services that enable women to access finance or credit using buyer contracts as a guarantee, or value chain financing.</p>	<p>Medium Term-Long Term: H</p>
<p>10. Operational: Adjust the training program to be more learner-centric and better aligned with the needs, current level of understanding and experiences of the target groups in each country, and include the use of accelerated digital technology, including online courses and creation of videos for core modules.</p>	<p>Conduct a training needs assessment across two groups (self-employment and wage employment) in different areas and also identify the level of willingness and skill to engage with different medium, particularly, digital platforms.</p> <p>Leverage WRCs and Women's Rooms to bring small groups together for digital training of those impoverished women who lack the facilities for online learning at home and provide related budget support for connectivity, and where required, devices.</p>	<p>Short Term: H</p>

	<p>Identify strategic partners (e.g. vocational training services providers, knowledge providers and or other businesses who could outsource supply and also train women) who have the incentive to provide training or advisory/mentorship support. Collaboration with local or international service/knowledge providers might solve the certification or validation challenge and ease the way of women to wage-employment.</p> <p>Develop more modular training that includes core foundational or generic modules such as digital skills, book-keeping, management/business planning and advisory. This should be separated from advanced trainings (e.g marketing and those specific to sectors or technical skills such as production or quality control, with more practical examples); mentorship or linkages with experienced businesses/entrepreneurs. WEESC could also consider modules specific to the two WEE pathways (self-employment and employment).</p>	
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<p>11. Operational: Develop systems to ensure closer monitoring of training to assess relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the learning</p>	<p>Consider contracting of specialized instruction design expertise, a blended approach to learning once COVID restrictions are eased and a higher level of resource allocation for training than has been currently allocated in Phase One.</p> <p>Conduct short tracer studies at least 6 months to 1 year after the training is complete with different cohorts to see what skills women have been able to apply in practice (why or why not) and track their progress with (self-) employment pathways in an effort to accelerate the uptake of skills and percentage of women who secure (self-) employment.</p>	<p>Immediate & Ongoing: M</p>
<p>12. Strengthen the M&E framework for Phase Two by harmonizing the tracking system of enhanced performance indicators as well as ensuring there are gender-sensitive qualitative indicators also built into WEESC LogFrame.</p>	<p>Designate specific M&E teams or personnel within each country and develop country-specific outputs mapped to the overall Theory of Change.</p> <p>Review the assumptions and indicators and strengthen the measurement around behaviour change and sustainability.</p> <p>Engage the regional UN Women Evaluation Unit in Istanbul to deliver capacity-building exercises for local personnel to further develop M&E competencies in the field and with implementation partners.</p> <p>Explore the use of cloud-based platform(s) for housing data and also presenting results in a user-friendly across multiple countries and partners.</p>	<p>Short Term: H</p> <p>Ongoing: M</p>
<p>13. Strengthen the program TOC and interventions to reflect linkage between Outcome 1 and Outcomes 2 and 3. This inter-linkage amongst the outcomes is a core element of the WEESC project design.</p>	<p>Currently, the majority of institutional interventions are geared towards employment, whereas, to date, there has been a greater uptake of women in self-employment, for multiple reasons. These include, but are not limited to,</p>	<p>Immediate: H</p>

	<p>issues related to unpaid care, continued perception of gendered norms which limit women from taking up formal employment and the current COVID-19 context.</p> <p>The project needs to take these into account and develop potential activities to help mitigate these challenges. Alongside policies for employment, the project should also consider what needs to be done to reduce entry and expansion barriers in self-employment. For example, if finance is a key problem, then partnerships could be developed with banks, MFIs, savings and loan groups to introduce alternative financing models into the project. If working capital to buy raw materials is an option, the project could test out value chain financing models.</p> <p>For the employment pathway, in addition to supporting an enabling policy environment, the project should also explore which sectors offer high potential for jobs and based on this landscape assessment, work together with partners (both private and public sector) to enable increased jobs for women in these sectors. These could include such sectors as the green economy (agri-business, waste recycling, renewable energy), the care economy (daycares, elder care centres, women's shelters), the health and safety sector (health care workers, personal support workers and emergency response workers).</p> <p>Increase engagement of implementing partners to facilitate linkages, particularly between Outcomes 1 and 2.</p>	
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<p>14. Operational: Improve the use of the M&E data for decision making purposes, not only for reporting purposes. The project should also revisit how it measures sustainability across different levels and focus more on adoption and behavior change.</p>	<p>Assess effectiveness and analyze (a) the variability of results from target and (b) the attrition rate from access to usage to benefit and the uptake/application (e.g. women applying the skills) and benefit (e.g. women securing jobs or self-employment). There should be a focus on assessing behaviour change and indicator(s) related to sustainability need to be revisited.</p> <p>Develop a clear sustainability and exit strategy, that is, how will these services and functions carry on in the long term without the support of external funding.</p> <p>Review and analyse findings against such indicators. See Figure 12 which illustrates recommendations for a revised TOC for Phase Two.</p>	<p>Immediate & Short Term: M</p>
<p>15. Operational: Enhance transparency and accountability for the use of resources (financial, human and material).</p>	<p>Report on resources utilized by all implementing partners broken down by specific budget-line items to more effectively determine more the cost-efficiency of each output/activity in Phase 2.</p>	<p>Ongoing: M</p>
<p>16. Operational: Position UN Women & UNDP should act as a role model for other project stakeholders as it relates to disaggregating data by sex and vulnerability.</p>	<p>UN Project Managers ensure disaggregated data by sex, age, minority status, disability, and income via agreements with implementing partners and any consultants hired.</p> <p>Share UN Women's & UNDP's corporate gender policies with all stakeholders, including gender-sensitive procurement policies, in order to contribute to the promotion of women-owned businesses and their legitimate place in the value chain.</p> <p>Encourage project stakeholders to model and promote their own gender-sensitive procurement</p>	<p>Short to Medium Term: M</p>

	<p>policies to enhance their credibility with local governments, civil society and private sector companies working within the rural communities.</p>	
17. Operational: Enhance the demand-driven aspect of the training provided to women to improve their business and their readiness for economic activities.	<p>Analyze the demand or market for high-priority those sectors/services/products and the demand-driven opportunities for women in the employment sector.</p> <p>Facilitate linkages so that buyers are connected to these suppliers and employers see the benefit of hiring women. Explore promoting women's involvement in investing in alternative initiatives such as small-scale renewable energy (solar, biogas, wind turbines), waste recycling operations (paper, plastics, glass, metals, and organic materials for composting, etc.).</p>	Short Term: H
18. Operational: Develop pilot activities to demonstrate a shared incentive for the private sector to adopt policies and practices to improve absorption and retention of women at the workplace.	<p>Conduct pilot initiatives with select private sector partners in relevant countries to capture and "demonstrate" the financial and social benefits of adopting the WEPs and resultant changes to corporate policies and practices.</p> <p>These initiatives could potentially include the following activities to be implemented directly with private sector partners (1) convene discussions to understand if companies are having issues with retention, absenteeism and employee turnover and also understand if there is scope for women's (increased) employment in the organisation and rationale for the companies to hire more women; (2) conduct brief exploratory research to understand if any of the above issues are specific to women; (3) interview current female staff separately to obtain their individual perspectives and identify potential female role model/champions within the company (4) develop models with interested private sector partners to</p>	Short to Medium Term: M

	<p>address above issues that may have been identified and align with international and regional best practice; and (5) share the learning with other private sector organisations and develop a community of practice of private sector partners committed to operationalizing the WEPs in the context of inclusive business models that embrace women's economic empowerment.</p> <p>Given the current COVID-19 context, partnerships with local companies active in rural areas should be prioritized in Phase 2 by conducting landscape assessments in the 3 countries. There may be an opportunity to prioritize collaboration with local companies engaged in agri-business (i.e. wage employment opportunities) in light of food security issues related to COVID, and also potentially those engaged in the medical supplies sector.</p> <p>Such interventions have been undertaken with strong success by IFC in Asia, Market Development Facility in the Pacific and the Arab Women Enterprise Fund in Jordan and Egypt.</p>	
<p>19. Strategic: Develop a specific WEESC Phase Two COVID-19 Action Plan, including priority activities and resource allocation requirements.</p>	<p>The action plan should continue to address the ongoing immediate needs of poor and excluded women and also focus on medium-term strategic policy and institutional initiatives, as well as post-COVID recovery considerations.</p> <p>Consider the creation of a COVID-19 Gender Response Tracker that defines gender-sensitive measures as those that seek to directly address the risks and challenges that women and girls face in the COVID crisis, notably violence against women, unpaid care work and economic insecurity. Measures currently included in the tracker are clustered into 4 categories: Social Protection,</p>	<p>Immediate to Short Term: H</p>

	Labour Markets, VAW, and Economic and Fiscal Policies.	
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Source: Prepared by the Evaluation Team based on evaluation findings, conclusions and lessons learned.

7.2 Georgia

Table 13 – Georgia Specific Country Recommendations

GEORGIA: COUNTRY-SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS	ACTIONS TO CONSIDER	TIMEFRAME & RANKING (L, M, H)
1. Strategic: Capitalize on the achievements and results of Phase One and deepen/expand activities in Outcomes 2/3 for improved policymaking and legislation for WEE and recommendations to ensure that the legislation harmonizes with international standards.	Continue providing much needed support to the line Ministries in order to enhance their GE and WEE capacity and help them translate their strategies and action plans into policy documents and standard operating procedures.	Short to Medium Term: M
2. Strategic: Accelerate work with municipal decision-makers to raise the awareness of the benefits of GRB and influence the institutionalization of GRB related work	GRB has been positioned as an auxiliary strategy for social mobilization activities in Phase One of the project. It has been successful in this regard, and in Phase Two, the WEESC project should address the current expectations among rural and vulnerable women that their voices will be heard by municipal government as it relates to GRB. Phase Two should expand the interaction with municipal governments to include decision-makers who can drive increased awareness and also ensure commitment to institutionalization of GRB at a municipal level.	Short to Medium Term: M

Source: Prepared by the Evaluation Team based on evaluation findings, conclusions and lessons learned.

7.3 Armenia

Table 14 - Armenia: Country-Specific Recommendations

ARMENIA: COUNTRY SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS	ACTIONS TO CONSIDER	TIMEFRAME & RANKING (L, M, H)
1. Strategic: To strengthen the linkages between the grassroots, law and policy, and institutional levels, allocate additional resources to working with local governments on reforming their bylaws and policies to encourage WEE and GE.	Identify further capacity-building (training, mentoring, coaching, etc.) and institutional-strengthening needs related to good governance, including e-governance for transparency. Work with local male leaders and administrators to change their perceptions on women in the public workforce. Identify GEWE champions to change community perceptions as to women's roles in the economy and the "power of the purse".	Short-Medium Term: M
2. Operational: Encourage local government to embrace e-governance, especially in times of COVID and beyond the pandemic, so as to enhance transparency around GE and WEE.	Consider developing a radio or TV program in Armenian which reaches the rural populations as well to promulgate developments concerning GE & WEE in times of COVID and beyond.	Short Term: M
3. Operational: Raise the awareness of local leaders, private sector companies, and the general public at public events or via online media about best practices and innovative approaches to GE and WEE.	Consider the establishment of a new Center for Creative Technology in Azerbaijan and Georgia as pilot projects like the one in Vardenis, Armenia. Assess how each Centre incorporates lessons learned from Phase One and	Medium Term: M

Source: Prepared by the Evaluation Team based on evaluation findings, conclusions and lessons learned.

7.4 Azerbaijan

Table 15 – Azerbaijan Country-Specific Recommendations

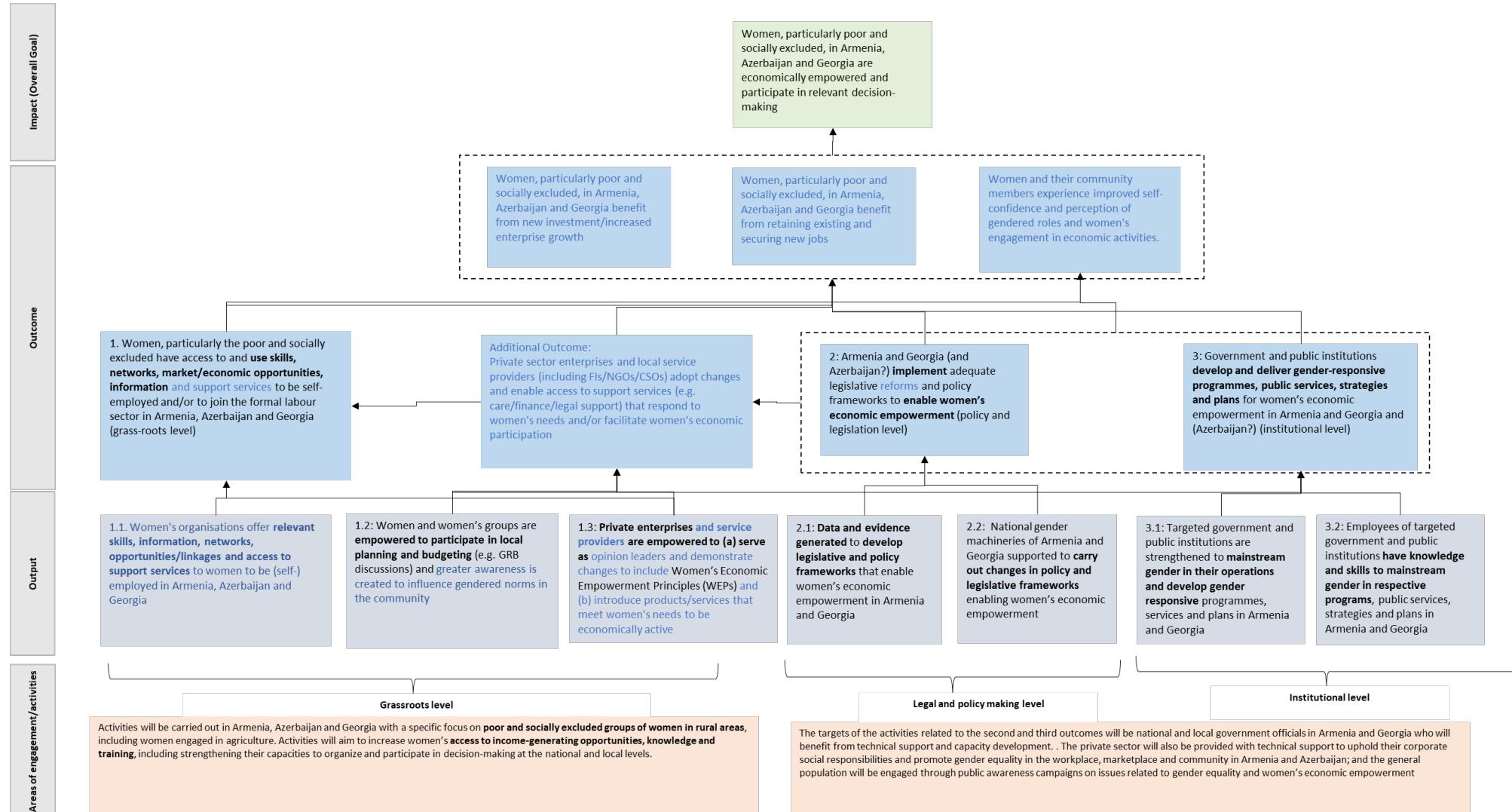
AZERBAIJAN: COUNTRY SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS	ACTIONS TO CONSIDER	TIMEFRAME & RANKING (L, M, H)
<p>1. Strategic: During Phase Two, explore the integration of Outcomes 2 and/or 3 in Azerbaijan, using a similar approach to collaboration with UNDP Armenia.</p>	<p>Recruit a designated UN Women focal point in country to manage these outcome(s), shares its expertise, and works closely with UNDP alongside a network of public sector stakeholders, and outsourced NGOs, local and/or international WEE experts.</p> <p>Develop gender-responsive entrepreneurship support mechanisms in collaboration with the Ministry of Economy and Industry and National Fund of Assistance for Entrepreneurship.</p> <p>Partner with the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Azerbaijan, to assess and facilitate gender-responsive social protection programming and early childhood care services, given the high unpaid care responsibilities of women that limit their economic engagement.</p> <p>Identify leading gender-responsive businesses in the project regions, as well as women's business associations.</p>	Immediate-Short Term: H
<p>2. Strategic: Prioritize support to the Azerbaijani WRCs to build both governance and funding diversification models and options to lay the foundation for long(er) term sustainability.</p>	<p>Formulate both a capacity building/governance and exit strategy for the existing WRCs in order to develop a financially sustainable model(s) to enable independent operation.</p> <p>Test a number of alternative models such as contribution of a portion of income generated by</p>	Short-Medium Term: H

	women to support the services provided by the WRCs, social enterprise models and cooperative models (of profit sharing), etc.	
3. Operational: Engage private sector entities in the implementation of WRC activities, as well as in the design of capacity building and sustainability processes and models.	<p>Use the WRCs to connect women to markets and, in exchange, a portion of the sales commission would support the WRC services.</p> <p>Connect the WRCs to broader women's business associations or their regional chapters to facilitate potential mentorship and angel investor opportunities.</p>	Short-Medium Term: M

Source: Prepared by the Evaluation Team based on evaluation findings, conclusions and lessons learned.

Based on multiple lines of evidence, the Evaluation Team has developed a revised the Theory of Change for consideration in Phase Two design to better reflect qualitative indicators and behaviour changes integral to the project's success. The proposed changes are illustrated in blue text below.

Figure 12 - Proposed Revised Theory of Change



List of Annexes

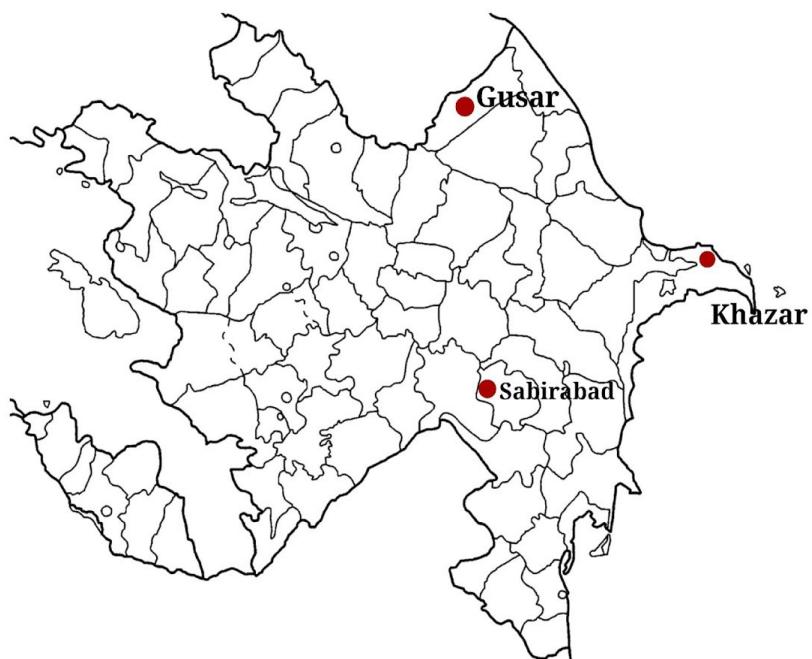
There are 18 Annexes to this report compiled in separate companion document:

- Annex A: Azerbaijan Learning Brief
- Annex B: Armenia Learning Brief
- Annex C: Georgia Learning Brief
- Annex D: WEEESC Partnership Map
- Annex E: Results Tracker
- Annex F: Evaluation Terms of Reference
- Annex G: Bios of Evaluation Team
- Annex H: Evaluation Matrix
- Annex I: Data Collection Tools: Key Information Interview Questionnaire Guide
- Annex J: Data Collection Tools: Focus Group Discussion Guide
- Annex K: Data Collection Tool: Survey
- Annex L: Documents Reviewed
- Annex M: List of People Interviewed
- Annex N: Preliminary Findings in Azerbaijan
- Annex O: Preliminary Findings in Armenia
- Annex P: Preliminary Findings in Georgia
- Annex Q: WEEESC Project Outputs, Activities and Expenditures to June 2020
- Annex R: Explanation of Proposed Revisions to Theory of Change and Indicators

Annex A: Azerbaijan Learning Brief

Women's Economic Empowerment in the South Caucasus

LEARNING BRIEF - AZERBAIJAN



LEARNING BRIEF – AZERBAIJAN

The first main phase of the project “Women’s Economic Empowerment in the South Caucasus” (WEESC) was initiated in August 2018 with the aim to ensure that women, particularly the poor and socially excluded in Azerbaijan are economically empowered and participate in relevant decision-making. In Azerbaijan, the project has been implemented by UN Women Georgia and UNDP Azerbaijan, in close partnership with CSOs and funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and the Austrian Development Agency.

This learning brief has been prepared by Ilaha Abasli, local WEE specialist for Azerbaijan and is based on a large study of the WEESC project by the evaluation team covering three countries in South Caucasus (Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia). The findings are based on a careful study of Project documents, gender-related policy documents, 13 KII interviews and 6 focus group discussions with the Project staff, implementing partners, government representatives and women beneficiaries.

INTRODUCTION AND COUNTRY BACKGROUND

Azerbaijan has been progressing steadily towards gender equality since becoming an independent state in 1991; however women in the country still face various challenges. According to the World Economic Forum’s *Global Gender Gap Index*, in Azerbaijan there is a higher gender gap in empowerment, namely women’s participation in decision-making and access to economic opportunities, compared to the areas of education and health.

The legal foundation of gender equality was enhanced in 2006 by the adoption of the *Law on State Guarantees of Equal Rights for Women and Men*. This law aims to guarantee the equal rights status for women and men in the political, economic, social, cultural and other spheres. It also defines women’s equal rights in terms of property, education, state services, the labor market, and their equal rights as entrepreneurs and consumers.

The principle of equality and non-discrimination is reflected in other legislative documents, including the *Criminal Code* and the *Labor Code*. In 1995, Azerbaijan became a party to the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* (CEDAW) and signed the *Optional Protocol* in 2000. Azerbaijan has signed the International Labour Organization *Convention concerning Equal Opportunities and Equal Treatment for Men and Women Workers* and the revised *Maternity Protection Convention*. In December 2016, a package of strategic road maps was adopted in 11 areas by the Government of Azerbaijan, which was in line with the *Sustainable Development Goals* (SDGs). However, only 2 of the 11 road maps, namely the *Strategic Roadmap for Manufacturing and Processing of Agricultural Products in the Republic of Azerbaijan*, and the *Strategic Roadmap for the Production of Consumer Goods at the Level of Small and Medium Entrepreneurship* contained clauses about women and girls.

AZERBAIJANI WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT FACTSⁱ

- Female labor force participation rate is 68.6% compared to 73.9% for men.
- Unequal domestic labor: In total, 42.7% of women who are not active in employment state these domestic tasks as their reason for being non-active. On average, women in Azerbaijan spend three times the amount of time as men doing unpaid domestic work.
- Gender pay gap: Women earn only 48% of what men earn, ranking the country at 117 out of 144. The wage gap has increased since 2012 when women earned 52% of what men earned and the country ranked 88 out of 135.
- Informal economy: Women are more likely to have informal jobs with lower job security; and no maternity, pension, and other social benefits, with 41.7% of women in the nonagricultural sector estimated to be in informal jobs, compared to just 16.6% of men.

HOW DID THE WEESC PROJECT RESPOND TO THE EXISTING BACKGROUND?

The Project tackles women's economic empowerment in Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia with a three-pronged approach to enable linked interventions at three levels: grassroots, policies and legislation, and institutions. The three outcomes that the Project aims to contribute to are:

OUTCOME 1: Women, particularly the poor and socially excluded, use skills, economic opportunities and relevant information to be self-employed and/or to join the formal labor sector in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia (**grassroots level**)

OUTCOME 2: Georgia and Armenia implement adequate legislative and policy frameworks to enable WEE (**policy and legislation level**)

OUTCOME 3: Government and public institutions develop and deliver gender-responsive programs, public services, strategies plans and for WEE in Georgia and Armenia (**institutional level**)

In Azerbaijan, the WEESC Project builds on UNDP-led studies and interventions regarding WEE in the country, and has focused on the grassroots level intervention. This learning brief will present a grassroots level case study and evaluate the use of Women's Resource Centers (WRCs) as a hub to economically empower Azerbaijani women in three rural regions, namely Khazar, Gusar and Sabirabad.

WHY WRCs AS A TOOL FOR GRASSROOTS INTERVENTION?

Designing the Project through the WRC model was a relevant decision. This model has previously worked well in 7 other regions in Azerbaijan and had a well-grounded reputation among the private and public stakeholders, government partners and the donor community. WRCs provide women spaces to meet, network, exchange ideas, pursue partnerships, attract capital, gain confidence and grow professionally, which has led to transformative impact in the country. In rural and remote areas especially, such spaces are instrumental in helping women learn more about their rights, discover untapped potential, and overcome obstacles.

WRCs have also played a great role to equip women in rural areas with tools and resources to help them launch their own businesses. The locations for existing WRCs in Azerbaijan were particularly chosen to address vulnerabilities in areas where women face challenges for a variety of reasons besides restrictive cultural norms. Early marriage, men emigrating to Russia for work, high proportion of internally displaced people, limited access to main roads and infrastructure and limited opportunities for an official employment in a formal market all contribute to the exclusion of women from economic opportunities. Since their launch in 2011, 11 WRCs have provided more than 6,200 women with free training courses on a range of hard and soft skills – women's human and economic rights, accounting and financial literacy, computer science and networking techniques.

This Project has targeted the already existing Sabirabad WRC, as well as establishing two new WRCs in Gusar and Khazar. Sabirabad WRC, being the most experienced, already had a few projects in its portfolio. The "Engaging Civil Society" and "Start and Improve Your Business" were identified as the best micro-project proposals and the winners were provided with financial awards. However, in these projects, internally Displaced women were more of a target. Khazar, on the other hand, is a suburban region within commuting distance from Baku. It is one of the regions of Baku with less formal employment for women. Traditional economic engagement for the women is sales of goods and services in the local market. Gusar is a region populated mostly by the ethnic minorities (the majority being Lezgis) in the north of Azerbaijan and is not a usual target for international donor projects on women economic empowerment.



Project beneficiary entrepreneur, Elnara Iskandarova, providing art classes to children in her art studio in Khazar, Azerbaijan. (Photo credit: Lala Jafarova, Women's Resource Centre Coordinator, Khazar)

CASE STUDY: On the use of Women's Resource Centers (WRCs) as a hub to economically empower Azerbaijani women in three rural regions, namely Khazar, Gusar and Sabirabad. The case addresses Outcome 1 and contrasts lessons learned between a mature WRC and two new WRCs.

Intervention Type: Using Women's Resource Centers to create women's economic activity in the regions

Target Group: Economically inactive and uncompetitive women in the Khazar, Gusar and Sabirabad regions.

Context and Background: Women's Resource Centers in Azerbaijan have been a powerful and effective tool for promoting women's entrepreneurship and undertaking capacity building activities for women in the Khazar, Gusar and Sabirabad regions. However, there are outstanding challenges to address going forward:

- WRCs are effective for reaching out and building trust among communities, and creating networking and learning opportunities for women, specifically with marginalized backgrounds;
- WRCs contributed to the formation of job opportunities, and empowered the image of working women in the communities;
- WRCs have the potential to assist communities to move in the direction of positive change around women's empowerment and gender equality;
- One approach does not fit all WRCs. Women's economic empowerment is a challenging and culturally sensitive issue. Local cultural norms and social contexts of the regions could have been studied and integrated better into the design of activities of WRCs. What is considered to be women's empowerment can vary considerably by region. The challenge for WRCs is to capture commonalities while remaining sensitive to differences;
- An understanding of women's paid and unpaid activity in the informal and formal labour market, in various forms, remains a major knowledge gap for WRCs;
- Financial and organizational sustainability and independence of the three WRCs stand as a major challenge and needs to be addressed.

Results Achieved:

- WRCs have had a positive impact on the lives of 425 women across 3 regions by developing technical and business skills and guiding them to launch their entrepreneurial activities;
- WRCs have gained the trust of communities, women and men through openness and results-based approach to the activities. 80% of the focus group discussion respondents highlighted high trust from their families towards the centers;
- Beneficiaries reported increased motivation towards increasing their income and empowering themselves through attending the events at WRC, it has influenced the other women in the communities. 85% of FGD participants mentioned that they have referred and attracted at least two other women to the center;
- Women's networks that have been created and/or strengthened as a result of the project: according to the FGDs and Key Information Interviews (KIIs), established businesses, wider networks (both with local women and with the other WRC members) have been reported to be the most significant changes for the women. For instance, the network between female entrepreneurs, connection with local governance entities (both local municipalities and executive committees) have been facilitated through the WRCs and are expected to continue;
- WRC's coordinators were trained and enhanced their capacities in organizational management, project management and fundraising activities by PwC and UNDP which led to the increased confidence of coordinators to hold stakeholder meetings with Executive Committees in regions, to conduct monthly reporting to UNDP and to reach to certain local businesses for collaboration;
- WRCs have been registered as NGOs in the official registry which opens up the opportunities for fundraising. WRCs have submitted project proposals to the donors as a follow-up of trainings, though not all of them were successful;
- According to the FGDs, women felt well connected to the project during the COVID-19 pandemic. WRCs have had to check-in calls with women to catch up on their learning, employment progress and self-employment challenges, and their internal WhatsApp groups where they have shared the news and opportunities.

Lessons Learned & Next Steps:

- Continued training service provision of WRCs is an important element indicating sustainability and according to them a way forward for the sustenance of WRCs could be to operate as an NGO and fundraise for their activities. For instance, WRCs in Khazar and Gusar have been established as an NGO yet continues to need support (organizational and financial) to be able to function effectively as it is new. Training of the coordinators to manage these functions are seen as key to maintaining the momentum of operating WRCs.
- While the outputs of WRC activities have been appreciated by stakeholders, there are lingering concerns around the sustainability of WRC's capacity to continue offering the services. Another expressed by the private sector is on the perceived over-involvement of UNDP in conducting the activities of WRCs, including delivery of the content. In the future, the private sector entities expressed interest to be actively engaged in the design process and the sustainability of WRCs.
- According to the implementing partners, WRCs should have more of a community center and NGO function, rather than an ad-hoc training provider. With regards to trainings, to ensure the sustainability of impact and cost-effectiveness of the allocated resource to WRCs, a holistic and learner-centered approach should be applied, which means designing and delivering a whole package of trainings, in-field experience and application of knowledge both for self-employed and wage-employed women.
- The function of UNDP Azerbaijan at a governance level overlaps with the function of management of the WRCs and LNGO. UNDP is seen to be taking over too many responsibilities and daily tasks of WRCs, which implies the slow development of the appropriate management and leadership capabilities of the WRC and LNGO coordinators during Phase One. According to the private sector KIIs, Phase Two of the project should also aim to strengthen WRCs governance systems, the leadership capacity of its management, and financial capacity and management systems. Therefore, training in the area of organizational development, financial management, fundraising and proposal writing needs to be provided for the NGO working group. According to KIIs, outsourcing the capacity development components both for WRC coordinators and beneficiaries from UNDP to the experts/partnering organizations is a key for sustainability, as it will allow an independent and more adaptive approach during the implementation.

CONTEXTUALIZATION of WRCs

The three regions that were the focus of the evaluation in Azerbaijan presented a number of interesting contrasts. Women in Khazar have had a long history of mobility in the public domain and of engagement in work outside the home. By contrast, in both Sabirabad and Gusar, women experience far more restrictions on women's public mobility and engagement in paid work outside the home, as well as having lower digital and technical skills, which hinder their overall progress after the trainings. While the state has been an important source of formal employment for women in Gusar and Sabirabad, women from Khazar were involved more in informal employment.

The cultural presence of gender discriminatory norms has mirrored the under-representation of women in the labour market in Sabirabad and Khazar. In all three locations, women in self-employment and wage-employment were generally more likely to report positive outcomes in relation to decision-making roles and attitudes than economically inactive women. The FGD findings show that women in Sabirabad and Gusar show more inclination towards wage-employment due to a lack of access to larger markets and uncertainties inherent in running businesses.

The Sabirabad WRC, being the more experienced center among the three regions, had more well-established linkages with local entities and the community, and has been more engaged in building social capital for women. The other two WRCs had to build up their reputation and earn credibility, both within the community and with local governance entities, which has been a double challenge for the newly established WRCs. Despite the differences in the level of experience and challenges, all WRCs have received the same amount of funds and organizational support. Therefore, a needs-based approach to resource allocation and capacity building measures for WRCs is more likely to increase the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the WRCs and the WEESC Project.

Pathways to Transformative Change for WRCs

Building Capacities: The involvement of UNDP as a technical implementer during the preparatory, establishment and first operational phase of the centers is important. UNDP might provide operational backstopping and credibility for WRCs; however, UNDP's involvement in the institution building process should be seen as temporary. The main objective for WRCs is establishment of a strong local institution and its gradual independence. Building the governance and organizational capacity of WRCs through training in the area of organizational development, financial management, fundraising and proposal writing need to be provided for the WRCs.

Timing and Leadership: The provision of highly qualified experts combining technical advice and development skills with management experience to the centers is crucial. Solid relations and contacts with international organizations (e.g. UNDP, USAID, GIZ, EU) and local donors are of high importance for raising funds and building the credibility of WRCs. The first development phase should focus on operational management such as procurement, financial management, project cycle management, staff management, until the processes are consolidated. The priority should be establishment of an effectively operating office with internal rules, documentation templates and processes. Also, WRC management should take ownership in developing strategic direction and work plans.

Financial Sustainability: The financial sustainability of WRCs should not be limited to the actual funding received from UNDP and project funding commitments. Fund mobilization should be one of the core activities of the WRCs and coordinators. Portfolio expansion should be one of the requirements for the operation of WRCs. The mixture of co-funding from UNDP, fundraising from international donor organizations, private sector CSR activities and local public entities is the basis for financial sustainability in the short-term. The funding gap is a major challenge that should be addressed in the 2nd phase of the project. Developing an operational NGO model focusing on raising funds or a social enterprise model focusing on self- funding the activities on a long-term basis might be the possible options.

Partnerships and Collaboration: Collaboration with local vocational education entities (in design, food production, and craftwork areas) add value to interventions as a sustainable local partner and for access to additional funding and resources and establishment of the formal network of WRCs is crucial for the functioning of the centers. The network will allow access to support services (e.g. workshops, project monitoring, awareness creation and data collection) and strengthen the capacities of WRCs.

Communication and Visibility: Building communication and visibility strategies for WRCs by creating informative websites and a contact database, informing regularly on updates making use of social media.

Flexibility and Adaptation: Integrating additional rights issues during and post - COVID-19 period into the work with women to reflect a need, including an additional key community institution in recognition of its influence for advocating for wider change.

Contextual Customization: The comparative advantages of WRCs due to knowledge of the local context and communities should be sought and a thorough contextual assessment should be conducted for this purpose. WEE solutions might vary considerably by regional context. The challenge for WRCs is to capture commonalities while remaining sensitive to the differences within the 3 rural regions. Women's public mobility, engagement in unpaid care, and the informal labour market all influence WEE. While there might be some general challenges and areas to tackle such as an unpaid care burden or access to resources, there are also significant differences in local norms and attitudes. For instance, women's purchase or ownership of land and renting out infrastructure for the business activities is more commonly accepted in Khazar region, while in Sabirabad and Gusar it should overcome cultural norms.

Annex B: Armenia Learning Brief

Women's Economic Empowerment in the South Caucasus

LEARNING BRIEF - ARMENIA

Anahit Gharibyan, WEE Expert in Armenia

April 2021

The first main phase of the “Women’s Economic Empowerment in the South Caucasus” (WEESC) Project was initiated in August 2018 with the aim to ensure that women, particularly the poor and socially excluded in the South Caucasus Region are economically empowered and participate in relevant decision-making settings. In Armenia, the Project has been implemented by UN Women Georgia and UNDP Armenia, in close partnership with civil society organizations and funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and the Austrian Development Agency.

This learning brief has been prepared by evaluation team member Anahit Gharibyan, a local WEE specialist for Armenia, and is based on a 5-month study of the WEESC Project by the evaluation team covering three countries (Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan). The findings are based on close analysis of data collected via Project documents, 18 key interviews and 5 focus group discussions with the Project staff, a donor, implementing partners, government representatives and women beneficiaries, as well as desk-based research.

Introduction & Country Context

Women in Armenia face many challenges and stereotypes that affect them deeply, one of them being the issue of gender inequality. The main reason lies within the mindset and the many stereotypes of the rural population. Traditionally, the women’s tasks in Armenia are confined solely to the house and taking care of the children. Some do not even take part in the decision making process of the family. Women, whose husbands are migrant workers that are obliged to leave the family for a whole year, are affected not only economically, but also psychologically. In recent years, a new trend has been established where both the man and woman of the house work seasonally to gain more income; in this case the woman (the grandmother) is once again the caregiver.

Recent studies show that Armenian entrepreneurship is largely concentrated into two activities: agriculture and trade. Due to agriculture, the entrepreneurship rate in rural areas is higher than in Yerevan that is a result of lack of other income opportunities in that areas¹. In this regard, both the Geghargunik and Shirak Regions/Marzes were selected in the frameworks of this project as the lowest in terms of income, unemployment and sharp poverty. Thus, this particular learning brief serves to highlight some of the lessons learned from the implementation of the UN Women’s Economic Empowerment in the South Caucasus (WEESC) Project in Armenia. It focuses on the Project’s integrated approach in improving women’s skills and capabilities for establishing businesses, securing employment and women’s participation in decision making settings. Additionally, interventions made at legislative and institutional levels that have positively affected women’s economic activity will be discussed. The case study concerns interventions undertaken in the Amasia consolidated community in the Shirak Region, and explores the interconnection between the three project outcomes.

Life in the Amasia community is considered to be active. Women play a crucial part in the decision-making process regarding their children and homes. They also participate in community-based discussions and are willing to be more active in the future. The WEESC Project has given women the confidence to address social norms that negatively affect

¹ Global Entrepreneurship Monitor: Armenia National Report 2019/2020, Armenia CJSC, 2020

their economic activity; however they still face problems when it comes to participating in political elections for both the president of the community and the council of the elders.



Photo 1. Amasia, Shirak Region.

In terms of psychology and perceptions, women in Amasia discovered that any kind of income or earning in a women's life positively affects their self-confidence and worth. This Project has given them the strength to make something of themselves. In this regard, women's activism in Amasia has led them to become more involved in community affairs on issues that concern them directly such as children's education, the condition of roads adjacent to the school and kindergarten, healthcare, organizing various caregiving activities, and so on. In Amasia, women's independence primarily depends on how financially independent they are from their family members. The role women have within their families is key: if they are eager to change something in their lives, they can in most cases.

In the Shirak Region, with respect to Amasia, the role of women in any household is significant; some even acting as the family lead. Men mostly "show" that they make decisions, but in reality women have a great impact on them. At the same time, there are still many families where women have no voice in the decision-making process.

In terms of feedback, women felt that the Project could focus more on vulnerable groups and suggested selecting participants through field visitations instead of making calls or through online channels.

One of the Project participants was a beneficiary who was divorced and who had lost her son in the war. Incidentally, this exemplified that such projects could be more beneficial to women like her, which would have been possible through visitations. In this regard, the support was given to those who had already established a business and were intending to open another one. Many vulnerable groups were possibly excluded from the Project. Beneficiaries were primarily selected based on their social bonds and acquaintances.

Outcome 1: Women, particularly the poor and socially excluded, use skills, economic opportunities and relevant information to be self-employed and/or join the formal labor sector at the grassroots level

Target Group 1: Economically inactive and uncompetitive women in the labor market from the Amasia consolidated community in the Shirak Region.

Background & Context: Women living in Amasia were informed about the Project by the municipality and local government entities. On the one hand, they were engaged in trainings and capacity-building courses, and on the other, they participated in various community-based projects. Women in Amasia revealed that before the Project, their work and activities in the agricultural sector were very ineffective in terms of earning an income. Previously, they were unable to calculate their expenses and evaluate whether or not their businesses were cost efficient. In this regard, there are many ongoing specific problems and issues in terms of women's economic empowerment (WEE) in the local context and community level. Overall, most of the issues were addressed rigorously during the Project's intervention. With the aid of the Project, implementing partners planned interventions for communities, wrote proposals, and gained grants to buy equipment for women to use in their businesses.

Results Achieved: Through WEESC, 20 women were trained from which 3 became self-employed, 4 secured a job and 3 gained business grants. Additionally, online tools prepared by the UNDP technical leader made it possible for women to calculate their business profits.

Lessons Learned: Both success factors and adverse factors affecting women's economic and/or political inactivity are many and complex.

- One key success factor of the Project in the field of agriculture was the scope reached by implementing partners who played a major role in achieving good results. In Byurakn (Amasia), the Project launched the cultivation of berries, where a group of women are employed. Green Lane-3R Strategy Consortium has provided them with the seedlings and technical advice on how to grow the seedlings in their household yards. In this regard, women were given the opportunity to develop their businesses slowly, and develop steadily their skills in agriculture on an incremental basis.
- Inadequate social conditions existing in the community prevent some of the women from establishing businesses and participating in the labor market. Harmful social norms lead to economic inactivity of women in Amasia. Thus, WEE requires a range of prevention strategies in households and/or communities to further improve optimal practices.
- Lack of infrastructure in the community negatively affects the efficiency of Project interventions. For example, it is assumed that women who are trained in particular areas have a high demand in the labor market, which in fact is not a sufficient analysis of the situation. In Amasia, some women who were trained to get a career did not work as travel expenses were too high. Due to such expenses, the value of income turns out to be far less than the income a woman can earn if she farms at home and sells products locally. In that case, it would be more accurate to emphasize the access to public transportation and more developed infrastructure in relations with the existing demand for labor.
- At the grassroots level, there is a huge need for any kind of intervention towards economic activities and even though some projects could be duplicated, the demand of such projects remains very high.
- The Project has not yet been able to secure a diversity of economic activities. The proposed areas of activities (value-chains) were mainly related to green agriculture, which is why some of the beneficiaries who were trained during the project did not establish businesses or become self-employed. The WEESC implementing partners undertook the required assessments, however did not provide sufficient interest in the area of work sought by some of the beneficiaries.
- In the social context in Amasia, housework is not considered as "work". A woman who stays at home is considered to be an idle person. On the other hand, women working in agricultural businesses do not earn sufficient money; their work is considered to be a "contribution". In this regard, one of the primary goals of the Project was to train women to acquire skills and change perceptions that they will be able to use for their future businesses and work in agriculture.
- Women do not consider their work in agriculture as an economic activity since they share their harvest among their relatives. Rather, they consider it as some kind of charity they do for others. Normally, they do not sell the products, they share them. However, the perceptions of women in Amasia are changing with the realization that earning money and making a profit in the world of business is a positive development.

Outcome 2: Implementation of adequate legislative and policy frameworks to enable WEE at the policy and legislative level

Target Group 2: Enlarged community of Amasia, Shirak Region (marz).

Background & Context: In 2015, Armenia switched to project budgeting, which means that gender audit can be more easily done as community budgets become transparent and accessible to all. In Amasia, no circumstances can occur in the local government entities caused by the legislation in which gender-sensitive aspects are considered and represented equally thus, affecting the solutions/decision making to be more gender-based (problems occur especially at an institutional level). Women recently engaged in gender responsive budgeting (GRB) that was organized in cooperation with GIZ. In this regard, 3 outcomes and results of the project are interconnected and key success factors are included in Outcome 1 and 2, however there is less successful results at the institutional level. The project therefore, put lots of effort in Outcome 3. In this regard, UN Women acted progressively on the legislative level and their proposed model is well-prepared.

Results Achieved: In January 2021, a discussion around the 2021 budget took place where many women were engaged in the process. Due to their suggestions being voiced, the local government authority (LGA) included women's issues in the budget. Almost all of the trained women participated in GRB discussions and made suggestions to LGAs.

Lessons Learned:

- A key success factor is that the head of the enlarged community of Amasia is a woman with great experience. She is aware of the need in each community and can easily coordinate and make the budget allocation procedure more effective, beneficial and gender-sensitive.
- Any institutional and budgetary issue must be evaluated in terms of gender-sensitive solutions. When making budget allocations, LGAs must ensure that both men and women gain the same outcome. It is important in terms of gender impact assessment toolkits, for example participatory gender audit (PGA) tool, becomes more effective when each organization treats women and men equally within their inner policy structures.



Public budget hearing held in Amasia consolidated community under the WEESC Project (Photo credit: UNDP Armenia – Facebook?).

Outcome 3: Government and public institutions develop and deliver gender-responsive projects, public services, strategies and plans for WEE at the institutional level

Target Group 3: Amasia consolidated community, Shirak Region.

Background & Context: The UNDP projects helped with providing new amenities for kindergartens in Amasia. Under the framework of the project, new preschools were opened as well.

Results Achieved: With the aid of UNDP Armenia in the Gtashen community near Amasia, two rooms were opened in the school as a kindergarten. It has all the amenities needed for children; it also has a solar energy battery on the roof, and a beautiful playground, and so on. The kindergarten enables the beneficiaries of the project to be engaged in the labor market and establish businesses more easily. Moreover, in Amasia, speech therapy services were established, which is very practical and cost efficient for parents who previously had to take their children to the city with private taxis and/or local transport, thus wasting money and leaving their regular duties.

Lessons Learned: At grassroots (Outcome 1) and legislative/policy (Outcome 2) levels there are many ideas and insights which cannot be applied because of the lack of adequate infrastructures.

- The project could have been more efficient if peculiarities of each community in terms of existing social, cultural, economic and asserted relations were considered within other development projects. For example, in Amasia, there is a closed textile factory that could be reopened through some kind of financial support, thus giving women an opportunity for employment.
- Most of the beneficiaries cannot see the sustainability of the results they have now.
- The most successful part of the project was networking among different government entities, CSOs, private sector, consultants, and so on.
- The level of development of community infrastructures (transportation, marketplace, employment, etc.) can significantly enhance the effectiveness of any intervention. All interventions should take these conditions into account. Established cooperatives can enhance employment opportunities and financial stability of women.

Inter-linkages Between the Three Outcomes and Key Takeaways

Specific practices prioritized by the WEESC project to increase the economic activity of women are integrated across the private sector, local government, the public sector, and legislative sectors. In this regard, there is an excellent practice of using synergistic connections in Amasia within government entities, local municipalities, state services, international projects, UN agencies, EU projects and other partners.

Due to the skills acquired by the WEESC project, women became members of other projects financed by the EU. As of today, the EU-funded wool factory has 16 workers, 14 of which are women. This was a great success for the community, women's empowerment and increasing the economic activity of women. In addition to this project, there were many other projects encouraging the engagement of women in the labor market and providing them with the opportunity of employment.

As another example of support, during the pandemic some households in Amasia received livestock such as cows and sheep from the Austrian Development Agency. Some of the WEESC project participants' families also gained support from ADA and used their skills obtained from WEESC trainings to start producing milk, cheese, and other homemade products. A lot of support was provided this year by ADA as finances of approximately 60 million AMD (120.000\$) were devoted to sheep breeding. The sheep were mainly given to men who were seasonal workers to ease their economic situation during the pandemic. In addition the pandemic had both disadvantages and advantages for all. As an advantage, the implementing partners were able to organize training courses such as SMM, marketing and digital tools, and because of it women were able to acquire new skills that would be beneficial for them in the future. As a disadvantage, all the courses were done virtually on ZOOM which created many difficulties. Participants had trouble understanding the content, organizers felt a lot of pressure to transfer the content in an efficient way, field visitations were done online, and the project as a whole was postponed and was left uncertain.

In terms of soft skills, women involved in employment, businesses and GRB discussions became more disciplined, responsible, decisive, and were able to affirm their self-worth. Women, however are still lacking in amenities and infrastructure in the community for both self-employment and wage-employment. For example, the irrigation water supply is not sufficient for agricultural activities, therefore most of the families in the community are engaged in animal husbandry. If the community establishes other factories like the wool factory, no one in Amasia would consider seeking seasonal work. Presently, the Government approves an action plan for developing the irrigation system and infrastructure in Amasia raised by LGAs and other key actors. This was also connected to the legislative changes, as project budgeting now gives an opportunity to see State allocations and forces authorities to change them. In this regard, through the WEESC Project interventions, there are now plans to build 8 stations in the respective communities as a start.

The compliance of the project is ensured by all of the procedures currently executed successfully not only at grassroots but also at institutional, policy and legislation levels. The main outcome is the participation of government officials and representatives at project meetings and field-visitations, which becomes evidence of the project's strategic compliance. Moreover, in order to achieve sustainable results, not a one-time experience, it is essential to synchronize interventions at the grassroots with the institutional and policy levels.

In other words, there should be mechanisms in local municipalities that will allow women to participate in the decision-making process sustainably. For example, when an annual development plan is developed, or a budget is drawn up, or a budget hearing is held, there should be such established practices which will not allow the local government representatives to ban women from raising questions and participating in discussions. In other words, women should not only be prepared to be involved in the process, but the other side should also be willing to involve them in the process as in the case of Amasia. Overall, if this threefold cooperation fails, the process will not move forward and will create barriers.

The Way Forward:

- To design new training projects for agricultural businesses, financial literacy, cost-efficiency and so on.
- To take into account the specifications and the conditions of communities.
- To create community-based markets and to solve the problems of realization. For example, making policy changes in costs of food production, especially milk production.
- In the framework of the project, implementing partners should hold more visitations with beneficiaries. At the same time, they should engage new groups and beneficiaries to enhance the mobilization of the project.

- Partners should raise awareness about the project on an ongoing basis.
- The main need is to work with community members in person, since not all of them have access to online modalities. This in turn will help the project to be more productive and effective.

Annex C: Georgia Learning Brief

Women's Economic Empowerment in the South Caucasus

LEARNING BRIEF - GEORGIA



LEARNING BRIEF - GEORGIA

The first main phase of the “Women’s Economic Empowerment in the South Caucasus” (WEESC) Project was initiated in August 2018 with the aim to ensure that women, particularly the poor and socially excluded in Georgia are economically empowered and participate in relevant decision-making settings. In Georgia, the Project has been implemented by UN Women Georgia, in close partnership with civil society organizations and funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and the Austrian Development Agency.

This learning brief has been prepared by evaluation team member Anna Iluridze, a local WEE specialist for Georgia, and is based on a 5 month study of the WEESC Project by the evaluation team covering three countries in South Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia). The findings are based on a close analysis of data collected via Project documents, 16 key interviews and 5 focus group discussions with the Project staff, implementing partners, government representatives and women beneficiaries.

INTRODUCTION AND COUNTRY BACKGROUND

Georgia became independent in 1991. Since independence, Post-Soviet Georgia has made efforts to improve the situation of gender equality. Women’s economic empowerment is seen as one of the main goals to access gender equality and Georgia has committed politically and legally to it. The 2014 Association Agreement between Georgia and the EU also requires Georgia to bring national legislation into conformance with international standards.

According the CEDAW Convention (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women), Georgia also has the obligation to support women’s equal participation in decision-making spaces that entails all necessary measures (including temporary special measures) at the national level, aimed at achieving the full realization of *de facto* equality between men and women.

GEORGIAN WOMEN’S EMPLOYMENT FACTS ¹

- From 2018 to 2020, the overall ranking for gender equality in Georgia has improved from 99th to 74th.
- The ranking for economic participation and economic opportunities for women has also headed up from 85th in 2018 and Georgia is now 61st among 153 countries in Eastern Europe and Central Asia.
- However, a wide gender gap remains in the average earned income with an estimated annual income of a man being twice as much as a woman’s annual income in Georgia, with men’s average annual income reaching USD 13.200 as compared to women’s average annual income of USD 6.500.
- According to the same source, wage equality for similar work deteriorated and the country moved down from 69th (in 2018) to 73rd place in this category.

¹ Global Gender Gap Report 2020, World Economic Forum. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3qQ1hdo>

From 2003 onwards, after the so-called ‘Rose Revolution’, the constitutional reforms of the new, neoliberal government transformed Georgia into a global showcase for the benefits of economic deregulation. Policies like minimum wage and unemployment benefits, and infrastructure like labour inspection, were regarded as former Soviet legacies, thus, fully abolished.

The deregulation of the economy did not result in economic growth. Therefore since 2013, under the framework of the new social-economic development strategy of Georgia², the country took several steps for the improvement and harmonization of labour and employment legislation with European standards³. As a result of this strategy, the unemployment rate dropped from 23.6% in 2013 to 17% in 2020. However, challenges persist in the area of women’s economic participation. The economic development in the country remains uneven and is mainly centered in urban areas, particularly in the capital – Tbilisi. Some facts are in order:

- Georgian women experience a 10.4 % employment gap, and 17.7 % raw pay gap
- Women are more predominant in agriculture, which corroborates their larger share as unpaid family workers.⁴
- Participation of women ages 15 and over in the formal labour market is lower than that of men and occupations are strongly segregated by gender (with the majority of Georgian women employed in care or service sectors).⁵
- Ownership of core assets is higher for men than women with the widest gender gap in ownership of agricultural land.⁶
- Georgian women carry out at least 2.5 times more unpaid labour than men.⁷

IMPACT OF COVID-19

The COVID 19 pandemic further exacerbated existing inequalities. The economic consequences of COVID 19 will most probably result in further recessions related to the economic strength of women. According to the study *Rapid Gender Assessment of the COVID-19 Situation in Georgia* (2020)⁸, women and girls, particularly those who live with disabilities, are unequally affected by the consequences of the lockdown measures and their voices

² The Government of Georgia: *The Social-Economic development Strategy of Georgia, “Georgia 2020”*; available online at: <https://bit.ly/2MY2Ho5>

³ UN Women, *A Gender Analysis of the Labour Market Regulations in Armenia and Georgia*, 2018; available online at: <https://bit.ly/2YMj8X7>

⁴ UN Women, *Analysis of the Gender Pay Gap and Gender Inequality in the Labour Market in Georgia*, 2020; available online at: <https://bit.ly/39QEg4V>

⁵ National Statistics Office of Georgia, *Men and Women in Georgia: Statistical Publication*, 2020

⁶ GEOSTAT and ADB, *Pilot Survey on Measuring Asset Ownership and Entrepreneurship from a Gender Perspective*, 2018

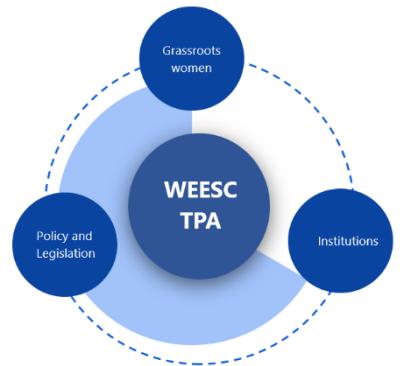
⁷ ILO, *Women at Work: Trends*, 2016

⁸ UN Women, *Rapid Gender Assessment of the COVID-19 Situation in Georgia*, 2020; available online at: <https://bit.ly/3cJZaoc>

have not been heard in pandemic response policies.⁹ As a result, under the pandemic restrictions, the situation of informally employed women became particularly distressing.¹⁰

HOW DID THE WEESC PROJECT RESPOND TO THE EXISTING BACKGROUND?

The Project responded to the existing context and challenges with a holistic approach, enabling linked interventions at three levels: grassroots, policies and legislation, and institutions. The threefold approach (TPA) has been implemented through the participation of women from different backgrounds so that the gender-responsive policies, legislation and services respond to the needs of those most vulnerable and can empower them economically. The Project also supported the development of gender machinery (including capacity development, legislation and policies) to support gender mainstreaming and women's economic empowerment. Sexual harassment policies and complaint handling mechanisms were specific initiatives.



ANTICIPATED WEESC PROJECT RESULTS

OUTCOME 1: Women, particularly the poor and socially excluded, use skills, economic opportunities and relevant information to be self-employed and/or to join the formal labour sector (grassroots level)

OUTCOME 2: implement adequate legislative and policy frameworks to enable women's economic empowerment (policy and legislation level)

OUTCOME 3: Government and public institutions develop and deliver gender-responsive programmes, public services, strategies and plans for women's economic empowerment (institutional level)

The WEESC Project focused on establishing and developing capacities of vulnerable rural women in Georgia within 3 regions: Kakheti, Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kvemo Kartli. Project results were achieved via: (a) training and capacity development of socially mobilized women on WEE topics, yet not limited to financial literacy and business management; and (b) by creating a platform for dialogue and exchange between mobilized women and local authorities around the issues relevant for women's economic empowerment.

The learning brief focuses on Outcome 2, the policy and legislation level of WEE, and Outcome 3, the

⁹ According to the UNDP's [COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker platform](https://www.undp.org/coronavirus/covid-19-global-gender-response-tracker), out of 27 measures in response to COVID 19, only 7 have been gender sensitive, 3 of them addressed women's economic security and none of them addressed women's unpaid care.

¹⁰ G. Lanchava, T. Qeburia, G.Tsintsadze, *Labor Relations and Social Protection During the Pandemic*, EMC, 2020; available online at: <https://bit.ly/3cl8lFy>

institutional-strengthening level. In Case 1, the brief analyzes the assessment of the prospective ratification of three ILO conventions as a successful example to create policy frameworks that will enable WEE in the country. In Case 2, the learning brief will also discuss introducing gender responsive budgeting to nine municipalities, and will focus on lessons learned as a result of the implementation of these two components. The analysis addresses the following questions:

- Why was UN Women advocating these ILO conventions as a WEE tool and what were their value?
- Why was the GRB component the most ambivalent if we look at the sustainability of results?
- How sustainable are the Phase I results in continuing to build the capacity of national gender machineries and how will the Project carry the momentum forward from these nascent achievements?

CASE 1 - Assessment of the prospective ratification of three ILO conventions as a successful example to create policy frameworks that will enable WEE

Intervention Type: To conduct the Regulatory Impact Assessments (RIAs) of ILO Convention Nos. 183, 156 and 189 (in progress).

Context and Background: In order to eliminate discrimination against women and combat unequal labour policy, regulation of labour practices is crucially important. This entails both modifying the existing legal framework and creating effective anti-discrimination mechanisms.

Through the project, UN Women has participated in the stakeholders' consultation processes aimed at the reform of the labour legislation in Georgia. The *"Analysis of the Gender Pay Gap and Gender Inequality in the Labour Market in Georgia"* report was the principal source of evidence that UN Women relied on demonstrating gender disparities in labour in Georgia.

These efforts have been successful and the newly amended *Labour Code* of Georgia regulates issues like workplace discrimination, vacation regulations, payments, night shifts, working shifts and night jobs, grants men the right to paternity leave, promotes equal pay for equal work and other substantial labor-related issues. Most importantly, the changes expand the State Labor Inspection mandate, granting the authority to conduct unannounced examinations in all labour sectors.

According to the ILO, basic social security guarantees should ensure that at minimum, all individuals have access to essential health care and basic income security over the course of their life. Notwithstanding the latest changes adopted by the Georgian Parliament on September 29, 2020, the Code is not yet fully harmonized with ILO standards and requirements.

WEESC Project Results Achieved:

- Assessment of the prospective ratification of ILO Conventions No. 183 (Maternity Protection), No. 156 (Workers with family responsibilities) and No. 189 (Domestic Workers) in Georgia - the International School of Economics at Tbilisi State University (ISET) has completed the desk review of the RIA and key stakeholders' consultations are ongoing.
- Development of an assessment matrix to conduct mapping of existing social protection measures based on ILO standards. In the long run, this matrix will be used to open a policy dialogue to gradually increase minimal social protection measures on a country level.
- The Government announcing its consideration of the ratification of several Conventions, at its contribution to the ILO Centenary celebrations.

Lessons Learned and Next Steps:

By conducting RIAs on ILO conventions, UN Women managed to generate data and evidence on strategic priority issues for improved policymaking and legislation for WEE. The assessment is followed up with recommendations to ensure that the legislation of Georgia is harmonized with international standards. This will contribute to the reduction of discrimination against women during employment and encourage a fairer gender division of labour that will, in the long run, support women's participation in formal employment:

- This result will be achieved in close cooperation with the Government (both executive and legislative branches) and organizations like ILO and ISET;
- During Phase 2, the WEESC Project needs to capitalize on the achievements and results of the Phase 1 programming and provide much needed support to the line Ministries in order to enhance their capacities on gender equality, and WEE in particular, and to help them 'translate' the strategies and action plans into policy documents and standard operating procedures;
- WEESC has allocated resources to create a foundation for further WEE reforms in alignment with international standards and quality essential tools and policy instruments in the country. Ensuring that the Project supports reforms in WEE is related to creating and analyzing the data, developing methodologies, regulatory impact assessments and gender impact assessments to ensure the sustainability of WEESC initiatives.
- WEE is a political issue. Considering the current social and political climate, the WEESC Project needs to be flexible enough to translate policy work into tangible results, but also needs to continue building and advancing the WEE agenda as an implementing partner. The WEESC Project must engage stakeholders that recognize the many comparative advantages of working with UN Women and other UN agencies, demonstrate competencies and expertise in WEE and GE, and provide support beyond the mere funding of projects. This could include providing technical support and strengthening the expertise, management, project preparation and implementation skills of organizations which prove to be particularly beneficial for capacity-building of grassroots organizations.

Inter-linkages between Project Activities under Outcome 2 and Outcome 3:

The two outcomes have achieved several results including the development of assessment methodology of the gender wage gap, employment status and access to economic resources in line with international best practices, the Ministerial decree on “*Harmful and Hazardous Work for Pregnant, Postpartum and Nursing Women*” and organizing expert group meetings and policy dialogues related to the gender wage gap that resulted in Government of Georgia officially declaring its intention to join Equal Pay International Coalition. Simultaneously, advocating for changes in the Labour Code of Georgia resulted in changes being adopted by the Parliament of Georgia in 2020.

This should be seen as an integrated approach to strengthen gender equality and significantly important WEE work that resulted in better employment guarantees for women and men in the country.

CASE 2 – Implementing legislation and policy reform at the national and local government level in conjunction with institutional-strengthening at the national level to support the grassroots level beneficiaries.

Intervention Type: Introduction of gender responsive budgeting (GRB) to the 9 targeted municipalities in Georgia, namely Akhmeta, Lagodekhi and Telavi in Kakheti Region; Bolnisi, Marneuli and Tetri Tskaro in Kvemo Kartli Region; and Akhalkalak, Akhaltsikhe and Aspindza in Samtskhe-Javakheti Region.

Context and Background: Law of Georgia on Gender Equality stipulates that any form of discrimination in the development and approval of local government budget, programs, projects, and plans within the local self-government body shall be eliminated¹¹. This statement obliges self-government bodies to be gender-sensitive in their work and to consider the needs of all citizens living in the municipality. However, key concepts and tools, such as gender mainstreaming and gender-responsive budgeting are not defined in the law¹² and are not mandatory for the government bodies on central and local levels.

On the other hand, according to the report of Public Defender’s Office of Georgia, as for 2019, 57 out of 64 municipalities of Georgia have developed gender equality action plans. It is noteworthy that according to the same report, 61% of municipalities did not have a budget compliant to the action plan.¹³

UN Women has supported GRB initiatives in Georgia since 2013¹⁴. The GRB component in WEESC in some municipalities was built upon the previous achievements of UN Women work and also, was successfully interlinked with ongoing projects and initiatives of the organization (JAWE¹⁵, GG4GE¹⁶).

¹¹ Law of Georgia on Gender Equality, Article 13 (2)

¹² GEC of Georgia and UNDP. 2018. Gender Equality in Georgia: Barriers and Recommendations. Tbilisi: Parliament of Georgia.

¹³ Assessment of gender policy of local self-government bodies - with special emphasis on women’s economic empowerment, The Public Defender of Georgia, 2019. Available online at: <https://bit.ly/3e0rEui>

¹⁴ Final Evaluation of UN Women’s Work on GRB in the ECA Region, UN Women, 2017

GRB has been an auxiliary strategy to social mobilization work for the WEESC project. The project intended to introduce GRB at local level and use the whole process as a tool, giving more leverage and incentive to local social mobilization work.

Under the framework of the WEESC Project, UN Women supported capacity building on GRB at the local level through training, direct support and consultations to the finance offices of municipal governments with the help of Association of Finance Officers of Georgian Local Self-Governing Units. To ensure that the needs of women are integrated into the local budgets, socially mobilized and trained women, members of Self-Help Groups in the same 9 municipalities have been introduced to programmes and services the municipal governments offered, and they have been invited to roundtables to voice the needs of the community.

WEESC Project Results Achieved:

- Women trained on GRB and on local planning and budgeting are now able to follow up on commitments made by local authorities, through round-table meetings and women from self-help groups in Akhmeta municipality have also initiated follow up discussions on previous commitments.
- 57 representatives of 9 municipalities have undergone GRB training, 2 municipalities have incorporated specific measures related to gender equality in their development plans

Lessons Learned and Next Steps:

- GRB component has been introduced with the financial offices of the municipalities that do not have the decision-making capacity and lack the data and support from the rest of the municipal apparatus, including political support from the decision makers; During the phase 2, the Programme needs to work on decision-making level with local municipalities to respond existing expectations and achieve tangible results;
- The project underestimated how much staff capacity is needed for partnering local government agencies that does not have institutional mechanisms and knowledge of gender equality to focus on policy making. Therefore, it will be beneficial if local authorities will be strengthened with the full-time professionals working at local level to support gender mainstreaming.

Inter-linkages between Project Activities under Outcome 1 and Outcome 3:

¹⁵ UN Women project "A Joint Action for Women's Economic Empowerment in Georgia (JAWE)" generously funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway. More information available at: <https://bit.ly/3vkLYk2>

¹⁶ UN Women project "Good Governance for Gender Equality in Georgia" (GG4GEG) generously funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway. More information available at: <https://bit.ly/3eE6eUq>

Women involved in roundtable discussions have all the capacity that is needed to continue being involved in local policy-making. As a result of the focus group discussions (FGDs), it can be said that they know about existing services and local level support mechanisms. Thus, Phase 1 of the project has created expectations among rural and vulnerable women that their voices will be heard by the municipal government. These expectations need to be addressed during Phase 2.

While women at grassroots levels are empowered and well-equipped to voice their needs, the process is incomplete with regards to GRB in the selected municipalities. The FGDs with municipal representatives and CSOs reveal that for the sustainable results on the GRB component, the project needs to continue to work with the decision makers at the municipality level to raise their awareness on the benefits of GRB and influence the institutionalization of GRB related work in Georgia.

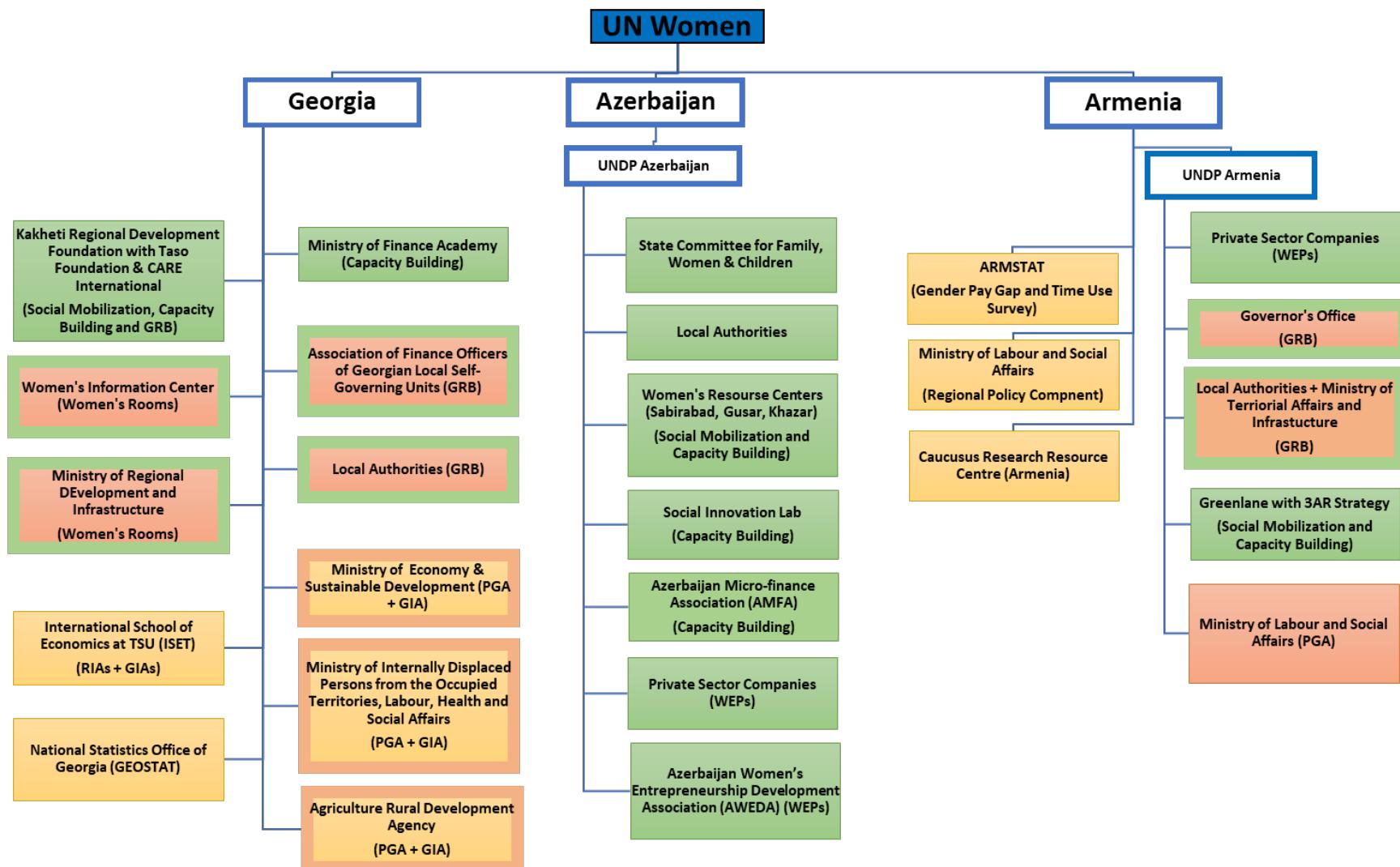


Project beneficiary entrepreneur Diana Imedashvili and her mother-in-law are welcoming guests at Café Birkiani, Diana's café in the Pankisi Gorge, Georgia. (Photo: UN Women)



Naira Paksadze, together with other women, weeding the crops to protect the income source of a family that was hospitalized due to COVID-19 in the village of Maradisi in Marneuli, Georgia. (Photo: UN Women)

Annex D: WEESC Partner Map



Annex E: Results Tracker - Progress on Outcomes/Indicators Table

	Logframe Indicators			Target	Cumulative Results (total as of June 2020)			
	#	Indicator Description	Relevance		Armenia	Azerbaijan	Georgia	Program Total
Impact Level								
Women, particularly poor and socially excluded, in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia are economically empowered and participate in relevant decision-making		% of the female labor force participation in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia	LF Indicator	Increase by 2% in each country, i.e. 61.6% (AM); 69.4% (AZ); 65.3% (GE)				
		% of the gender wage gap in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia	LF Indicator	Reduction by 5% in each country, i.e. 29.4% (AM); 47.5% (AZ); 31.4% (GE)				
		% of women's employment categorized as vulnerable	LF Indicator	Reduction by 2% in each country, i.e. 40% (AM); 59% (AZ); 55% (GE)				
		Number of beneficiary women with increased income in wage employment or entrepreneurship	LF Indicator					
Outcome Level								
Outcome 1: Women, particularly poor and socially excluded, use skills, economic opportunities, and relevant	1.1	1.1: Number of women (self-) employed for at least 6 months due to improved skills and capacities	LF Indicator	120 (AM); 180 (AZ); 180 (GE) (out of them at least 30% poor and socially excluded women in all three countries)	141	94	181	416
		got self(employed) (w and w/o 6 months conti)	Not an LF indicator		151	119	203	473

information to be self-employed and/or to join formal labour sector in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia.	1.2	1.2: Number of women stating increased knowledge regarding women's rights and policies through advocacy initiatives	LF Indicator	Target: 140 (AM); 225 (AZ); 225 (GE) (out of them at least 30% poor and socially excluded women in all three countries)	140	To be verified	345	To be verified
		# of women receiving training to enhance employability and skills	Not an LF indicator		171	422	453	1,046
		# of women receiving grants for self-employment or wage employment	Not an LF indicator		128	55	203	386
		# of women trained on gender responsive budgeting & local budgeting processes	Not an LF indicator		0	0	153	153
Outcome 2: Armenia and Georgia implement adequate legislative and policy frameworks to enable women's economic empowerment	2.1	2.1: Number of legal and/or regulatory frameworks aligned with international standards that create decent work for women developed and/or being implemented		Target: 3 (AM); 3 (GE)	0		1	
		Description					Ministerial Decree on the Guidelines on Harmful and Hazardous Work for Pregnant, Post-partum and Nursing Women" had been signed and approved by the MoIDPOTLHSA.	

	2.2	2.2: Number of new and/or improved gender-responsive policies or programmes to enable women's economic empowerment developed and/or being implemented		Target: 2 (AM); 2 (GE)	0	0	1	
							The 2019-2023 National Strategy for Labour and Employment (MoIDPOTLHSA) – UN	
Outcome 3: Government and public institutions develop and deliver gender-responsive programs, public services, strategies and plans for women's economic empowerment in Armenia and Georgia	3.1	3.1: Number of government and public institutions that develop and institutionalize internal gender mainstreaming tools and policies in Armenia and Georgia		Target: 1 (AM); 3 (GE)	To be verified	To be verified	To be verified	
	3.2	3.2: % of Participatory Gender Audit (PGA) recommendations implemented by audited institutions in the frameworks of the project in Armenia and Georgia		Target: at least 40% in Armenia and at least 40% in Georgia	To be verified	To be verified	To be verified	
	3.3	3.3: Number of municipalities with specific measures related to gender equality incorporated in their development plans and budgets benefiting # of persons		11 consolidated municipalities in two regions of Armenia benefiting 122'276 persons; 9 municipalities of Georgia benefiting 406'300 persons	7	0	2	9

	3.4	3.4 Number and % of municipalities that conducted (one or more elements of) a gender-responsive budgeting		Target: 7% (GE) (5 out of 64 self-governments); 10% (AM) (5 out of 52 local governments in consolidated communities)	13%	0	3%	
Output Level								
Output 1.1: Women, particularly poor and socially excluded, obtain skills and opportunities to be (self-) employed in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia	1.1.1	1.1.1 # of women with strengthened capacities and skills able to join the formal labor sector		Target: 140 (AM); 225 (AZ); 225 (GE) (out of them at least 30% poor and socially excluded women in all three countries)	172	358	334	864
	1.1.2	1.1.2 # of women with strengthened capacities and skills able to become self-employed		Target: 140 (AM); 225 (AZ); 225 (GE) (out of them at least 30% poor and socially excluded women in all three countries)	187	240	320	747
Output 1.2: Women and women's groups are empowered to participate in local planning and budgeting (e.g. GRB discussions)	1.2.1	1.2.1 # of successful advocacy initiatives facilitated by women beneficiaries to overcome their socio-economic challenges		Target: 3 (AM); 3 (AZ); 5 (GE)	20	12	32	64
	1.2.2	1.2.2 # of women beneficiaries who contributed to local planning and budgeting / GRB discussions aimed at addressing their socio-economic concerns		Target: TBD (AM); TBD (AZ); TBD (GE)	97	0	62	159

Output 1.3 Selected private enterprises are empowered to serve as opinion leaders in terms of Women's Economic Empowerment Principles (WEPS)	1.3.1	1.3.1 # of private enterprises that signed the UNW/UN Global Compact Women's Empowerment Principles with a focus on implementing gender-responsive corporate policies/practices		Target: 12 (AM); 12 (AZ)	11	4	0	15
	1.3.2	1.3.2 # of private enterprises from Armenia and Azerbaijan exchanging their best practices on WEPS' implementation with the Georgian counterparts		Target: 12 (AM); 12 (AZ); 12 (GE)	4	14	5	23
Output 2.1: Data and evidence generated to develop legislative and policy frameworks that enable women's economic empowerment in Armenia and Georgia	2.1.1	2.1.1 The gender wage gap is regularly assessed by the National Statistics' offices of Armenia and Georgia based on internationally recognized comparative methodology		Yes	Gender pay gap (GPG) reports were co-published by UN Women and ARMSTAT	Not applicable	PGP report has been finalised and published	
	2.1.2	2.1.2 # of new indicators defined to measure WEE by the National Statistics' Offices of Armenia and Georgia in line with internationally agreed standards		TBD	Concrete indicators will be identified and agreed upon with ARMSTAT based on the Labour Force Survey analysis (including the GPG) and based on the Country Gender Brief for Armenia in the second half of 2020.		Concrete indicators will be identified and agreed upon with GEOSTAT based on the Labour Force Survey analysis (including the GPG) and based on the Country Gender Equality Profile for Georgia in the second half of 2020.	

Output 2.2: National gender machineries of Armenia and Georgia supported to carry out changes in policy and legislative frameworks enabling women's economic empowerment	2.2.1	2.2.1 # of documented evidences of utilization of research/data on women's economic empowerment for policy-making and legislating in Armenia and Georgia		Target: 3(AM); 3(GE)	<p>A pilot study of the Time Use Survey (TUS) is in progress. The WEESC project is providing technical assistance to ARMSTAT to improve coordination and support the process of the pilot study's development.</p>		The findings of the GPG reports are being utilized to inform policy responses to address persistent gender wage gaps	
					<p>The findings of the GPG reports are being utilized to inform policy responses to address persistent gender wage gaps</p>		<p>"Ministerial Decree on the Guidelines on Harmful and Hazardous Work for Pregnant, Post-partum and Nursing Women" came into effect with MoIDPOTLHSA approval in February 2020. The implementation of the guidelines will be monitored by the Labour Inspectorate</p>	
					<p>The Regulatory Impact Assessments (RIAs) of ILO Convention Nos. 183, 156 and 189 are in progress</p>		<p>UN Women has contributed to the development of the labour reform package initiated by MP Dimitri Tskitishvili (from the ruling Georgian Dream Party) by preparing the Gender Impact Assessment (GIA)</p>	
							<p>UN Women contributed to the Government of Georgia's 2019-2023 National Strategy for</p>	

							Labour and Employment,	
							The Parliament of Georgia initiated two Thematic Inquiries, including on "Women's Participation in State Funded Economic Development Programmes". UN Women	
							The Regulatory Impact Assessments (RIAs) of ILO Convention Nos. 183, 156 and 189 are in progress	
	2.2.2	2.2.2 # of regional policy dialogues and/or advocacy meetings carried out to advocate for improved policy and legislative frameworks supporting women's decent work and economic empowerment		Target: 3	Gender and economics training, which included policymakers from both Armenia and Georgia		Regional conference on gender statistics; Gender and economics training, which included policymakers from both Armenia and Georgia	
Output 3.1: Targeted government and public institutions are strengthened to mainstream gender in their operations	3.1.1	3.1.1: Number of government and public institutions that adopt, monitor and report on their respective internal gender equality strategies and action plans		Target: 1 (AM); 3 (GE)	(1) Participatory Gender Audit (PGA) is in progress with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MLSA).	na	(1) PGA with the MoLDPOTLHSA has been completed and will be validated in the third quarter (2) UN Women has revalidated the PGA	

and develop gender responsive programmes, services and plans in Armenia and Georgia	3.1.2	3.1.2: Number of government and public institutions in Armenia and Georgia that have mechanism in place to receive and respond to complaints of gender discrimination in employment including sexual harassment		Target: 1 (AM); 3 (GE)		na	with the Agricultural and Rural Development Agency (3) The Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure (MRDI) of Georgia, with support from UN Women and the Women's Information Centre (WIC), has developed draft guidelines for municipalities to standardize and systematize the Women's Rooms – a safe space where women can come to learn, discuss their needs, strategize how to actively participate in local decision-making and planning, and access services, among other activities.	
	3.1.3	3.1.3: Number of government and public institutions that develop and institutionalize Gender Impact Assessment (GIA) methodology in Armenia and Georgia		Target: 1 (AM); 3 (GE)		na		
	3.1.4	3.1.4: % of budget allocations by target municipalities for social infrastructure and services		Target: 20% (AM); 20% (GE)	34%	na	52%	

Output 3.2: Employees of targeted government and public institutions have knowledge and skills to mainstream gender in respective programs, public services, strategies and plans in Armenia and Georgia	3.2.1	3.2.1: % of the employees in relevant professional positions in the targeted institutions in Armenia (1 institution) and in Georgia (3 institutions) whose knowledge and skills to mainstream gender in programs, services and plans were strengthened		Target: 30% (AM); 30% (GE)	TBV		ISET has been engaged to develop the methodology for the GIA and provide the trainings in 2020. The draft manual for the GIA trainings has already been developed.	
	3.2.2	3.2.2: Number of targeted government and public institutions that offer institutionalized trainings to its employees on gender equality and women's empowerment		Target: 1 (AM); 3 (GE)	7 municipalities have approved gender-responsive annual action plans and gender-responsive budgets through public hearings held in the municipalities. Unified GRB manual has been developed jointly by UN Women (methodology), UNDP, GIZ and the MTAI. The manual will be used by local planners to include gender-responsive components in their municipal plans and budgets.		57 local government representatives from all nine target municipalities have undergone the GRB refresher training held online by the Association of Finance Officers of Georgian Local Self-Governing Units (GFA)	

Annex F Evaluation Terms of Reference

TERMS OF REFERENCE

for

External Final Evaluation of UN Women’s Regional Project “Women’s Economic Empowerment in the South Caucasus”

Geographic Coverage: Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan

Type of contract: Model Institutional Service Contract

Languages required: English, Georgian, Armenian, Azerbaijani

Application deadline: 28 September 2020

Starting date: 5 October 2020

Duration of the contract: up to 5 months from 5 October 2020 to 31 March 2021

Project: 00098240 – Women’s Economic Empowerment in the South Caucasus (WEESC)

1. Background and justification of the Project

Women’s economic empowerment is increasingly considered to be a prerequisite for realizing gender equality, strengthening women’s agency and achieving sustainable development for all. The goal of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is to reduce inequalities and to “leave no one behind”. This will require (a) identifying groups who have been left behind; (b) understanding the causes behind their exclusion; and (c) developing and implementing strategies of inclusiveness.

The economic empowerment of women (WEE) – to succeed and advance economically and to make and act on economic decisions – is a prerequisite for realizing gender equality and empowering women in all areas of life. It is also a cornerstone for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda. At the global level, there is widespread consensus that, all too often, discriminatory social norms constrain women’s ability to find economic opportunities, including decent jobs on an equal footing with men. Multiple disadvantages – poverty,

disability, age, geography and migratory status, to name a few – remain critical obstacles to equal rights and opportunities for hundreds of millions of women.¹

There has been progress in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia in terms of reducing gender inequalities since gaining their independence in the 1990s. Yet, much work remains to achieve the full and equal participation of women in society and in the economy. According to the 2017 *Global Gender Gap Report*, among 144 economies, Armenia ranked 71st, Azerbaijan 45th and Georgia 75th under the women's economic participation and opportunity sub-index.² In the 2012 *Women's Economic Opportunity Index*, Armenia scored 51.6, Azerbaijan 42.5 and Georgia 49.2, where a score of 100 represents the most favourable environment for women's economic empowerment.³ The results of these studies suggest that women's economic opportunities in the South Caucasus region continue to be limited.

The 2018 study commissioned by UN Women to the Caucasus Research and Resources Centres in the frameworks of the SDC supported inception phase of this project also concluded that the primary driver of women's economic inactivity in the region is traditional gender roles and the accompanying burdens associated with unpaid care work; women who are not working explicitly cite family-related reasons for not working. In Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia, having children, being married, and/or having left or not sought out work for family-related reasons are strong predictors of whether or not a woman participates in the labor force. In Armenia, married women are 16 percentage points less likely to participate in the labor force. In contrast, married men are 19 percentage points more likely to participate in the labor force, controlling for other relevant factors. Children are associated with a six-percentage point lower level of labor force participation among women in Georgia. In Azerbaijan, a woman's chances of being in the labor force are 12 percentage points lower if married, all else equal. Women who have at any point in their life left a job or not sought one out for family related reasons are 11 percentage points less likely to be in the labor force. In Georgia, if a woman has ever left a job or not sought one out for reasons related to family, she is 18 percentage points less likely to be in the labor force.⁴

As in other contexts, a **persistent gender pay gap affects women in the region**. According to the 2015-2016 *Progress of the World's Women* report, the pay gap stands at 34 per cent in Armenia, 53 per cent in Azerbaijan and 36 per cent in Georgia. As in other contexts, de facto educational segregation is likely to lead to pay gaps as well as lower rates of economic engagement. In Georgia, more men enter science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields than women. In Azerbaijan, the majority (58 per cent) of respondents thought that women should not pursue technical fields due to a lack of job opportunities.⁵ Educational segregation, in turn, can encourage occupational segregation; there is ample evidence of a variety of sectors being gender-skewed. For instance, women are overrepresented in the education

¹ Report of the UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment, *Leave No One Behind: A Call to Action for Gender Equality and Women's Economic Empowerment* (2016), 1-2.

² World Economic Forum, *The Global Gender Gap Report*. Available from <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2017/>. Of the 144 countries, the overall 2017 Global Gender Gap rankings are as follows: Armenia is 97th, Azerbaijan 98th and Georgia 94th.

³ The Economist, *Women's economic opportunity: A new pilot index and global ranking from the Economist Intelligence Unit* (2010), p. 8. Available from http://graphics.eiu.com/upload/weo_report_June_2010.pdf.

⁴ The Caucasus Research Resource Centers, *Women's Economic Inactivity and Engagement in the Informal Sector in the South Caucasus: Causes and Consequences* (2018). UN Women / SDC [unpublished draft report].

⁵ UNDP, *Gender Attitudes in Azerbaijan: Trends and Challenges* (2007). Available from <http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/nhdr2007gendereng.pdf>.

and social work sectors and men in construction, mining and manufacturing. Despite women's overrepresentation in some sectors, men in each of these sectors make more money. Notably, this pattern appears to be present in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia.⁶

The lack of women's participation in the economy is likely hurting economic growth. Some research suggests that **enhancing women's economic empowerment by improving entrepreneurship and leadership contributes to economic growth, job creation and prosperity.**⁷ In the region, the World Bank has estimated that women's lower levels of economic engagement depresses GDP by 12 per cent in Georgia and 14 per cent in Armenia.⁸ Other research suggests economies and firms become more efficient as women's economic engagement increases.⁹ Moreover, barriers to women's economic participation are likely to slow innovation since the best talent is not efficiently allocated. In Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, this issue is likely to be particularly problematic as women attain levels of education equal to that of their male peers.

2. Description of the project

The main goal of the project “**Women's Economic Empowerment in the South Caucasus**” (WEESC) is to ensure that **women, particularly the poor and socially excluded, in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia are economically empowered and participate in relevant decision-making**. To achieve this goal, UN Women is implementing the **first main phase** of this project with financial support from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and Austrian Development Cooperation (ADC) through the Austrian Development Agency (ADA). This first main phase is implemented from August 13, 2018 to July 31st, 2021. A second phase of the project has been proposed for an additional 36 months to build on the results achieved during the first main phase, followed by a final exit phase planned for an additional 12 months.

In order to contribute to the set overarching goal/impact, the first main phase of the project aims to contribute to the following **three outcomes and seven outputs**:

Outcomes	Outputs
1: Women, particularly the poor and socially excluded, use skills, economic opportunities and relevant information to	1.1: Women, particularly poor and socially excluded, obtain skills and opportunities to be (self-) employed in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia
	1.2: Women and women's groups are empowered to participate in local planning and

⁶ According to the official data of GEOSTAT (2017) and ARMSTAT (2016). See also: Melanie Hugie-Williams, Marten van Klaveren, Nuria Ramos Martin and Kea Tijdens, “An Overview of Women's Work and Employment in Azerbaijan”, *Decisions for Life MDG3 Project Country Report No. 9* (University of Amsterdam/Amsterdam Institute for Advanced Labour Studies, 2009), 1-13. Available from https://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/Country_Report_No9-Azerbaijan_EN_short.pdf.

⁷ OECD, *Enhancing Women's Economic Empowerment through Entrepreneurship and Business Leadership in OECD Countries* (2014). Available from http://www.oecd.org/gender/Enhancing%20Women%20Economic%20Empowerment_Fin_1_Oct_2014.pdf.

⁸ Mercy Tembon, *Beyond celebrating—Removing barriers for women in the South Caucasus* (World Bank, 2017). Available from <http://blogs.worldbank.org/europeandcentralasia/beyond-celebrating-removing-barriers-women-south-caucasus>.

⁹ Rachel Heath, “Women's Access to Labor Market Opportunities, Control of Household Resources, and Domestic Violence”, Policy Research Working Paper, No. 6149 (World Bank, 2012). Available from <http://hdl.handle.net/10986/11987>.

be self-employed and/or to join the formal labour sector in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia (<i>grass-roots level</i>)	budgeting (e.g. GRB discussions)
	1.3: Selected private enterprises are empowered to serve as opinion leaders in terms of Women's Economic Empowerment Principles (WEPs)
2: Armenia and Georgia implement adequate legislative and policy frameworks to enable women's economic empowerment (<i>policy and legislation level</i>)	2.1: Data and evidence generated to develop legislative and policy frameworks that enable women's economic empowerment in Armenia and Georgia
	2.2: National gender machineries of Armenia and Georgia supported to carry out changes in policy and legislative frameworks enabling women's economic empowerment
3: Government and public institutions develop and deliver gender-responsive programmes, public services, strategies and plans for women's economic empowerment in Armenia and Georgia (<i>institutional level</i>)	3.1: Targeted government and public institutions are strengthened to mainstream gender in their operations and develop gender responsive programmes, services and plans in Armenia and Georgia
	3.2: Employees of targeted government and public institutions have knowledge and skills to mainstream gender in respective programs, public services, strategies and plans in Armenia and Georgia

The first main phase of the project has been aiming at bringing about transformative change through a holistic approach, enabling linked interventions at three levels: grassroots, policies and legislation, and institutions. This **three-pronged approach** to increasing women's economic empowerment, as illustrated in the above three outcomes, was designed to bring about interrelated and transformative change at multiple levels (bottom-up and top-down), while promoting coordination and inclusive good governance. The project, therefore, has been aiming to provide a holistic and sustainable approach for the achievement of the project's goal/impact by consistent dialogue and participation of women – rights holders – so that relevant policies, legislation, services and institutions respond to their needs and demands and enable women with strengthened capacities to empower themselves economically. The project has also been supporting capacity development to mainstream gender in the relevant laws and policies, programmes and services to make sustainable contributions to women's economic empowerment.

Sustainability of results is being intended to be achieved at all three levels, corresponding with the project outcomes and outputs. At the grassroots level (all three countries), sustainable results are represented by women who successfully transitioned from informal to formal decent jobs and/or whose incomes increased as a result of the project's support, as well as by women's networks (country and regional) that have been created and/or strengthened as a result of the project. On the legal and policymaking level, sustainable results will include adopted laws and policies that remove discriminatory barriers for women to participate in and benefit from economic opportunities (Armenia and Georgia). At the institutional level, sustainable results will be represented by institutionalized capacities and mechanisms delivering gender-responsive programmes and services (Armenia and Georgia; national and local levels).

In addition to recommendations from international human rights bodies, such as the CEDAW Committee,¹⁰ and evidence-based research and global and national evaluations of UN Women's work on women's economic empowerment,¹¹ the design and selected priorities of this project have been informed by the commitments of UN agencies in all three countries. These commitments are defined within the multi-year agreements between the United Nations Country Teams (UNCTs) and the Governments of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, and thus are linked to national priorities through the United Nations Partnership for Sustainable Development in Georgia (UNPSD-Georgia) 2016-2020,¹² Armenia's United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF-Armenia) 2016-2020,¹³ and the UN-Azerbaijan Partnership Framework (UNAPF) 2016-2020.¹⁴

Beneficiaries of the project: Activities related to the first outcome are carried out in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia with a specific focus on poor and socially excluded groups of women in rural areas, including women engaged in agriculture. Activities aimed to increase women's access to income-generating opportunities, knowledge and training, including strengthening their capacities to organize and participate in decision-making at the national and local levels.

The activities related to the second and third outcomes are targeted at national and local government officials in Armenia and Georgia who benefit from technical support and capacity development. The final beneficiaries of the interventions at the second and third outcomes' levels are women who are engaged in both the formal and informal economies as this work results in their increased access to decent work opportunities, revised and strengthened gender-responsive policies and services, and increased access to information, skills development and decision-making spaces. The private sector is also provided with technical support to uphold their corporate social responsibilities and promote gender equality in the workplace, marketplace and community in Armenia and Azerbaijan; and the general population will be engaged through public awareness campaigns on issues related to gender equality and women's economic empowerment.

Geographic coverage:

For the grass-roots level work with women (Outcome 1) in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia as well as on the institutional level with local authorities (Outcome 2) in Armenia and Georgia, the following are the target geographic areas:

- Eleven consolidated municipalities have been identified in Armenia: four in Gegharkunik (Chambarak, Geghamasar, Shoghakat, Vardenis) and seven in Shirak (Akhuryan, Amasia, Ani, Arpi, Ashotsk, Marmashen, Sarapat) – Outcome 1 and 2
- Three regions have been identified in Azerbaijan: Baku-Khazar, Gusar and Sabirabad – Outcome 1.

¹⁰ The Concluding Observations of the CEDAW Committee to the State Party Reports of Armenia (CEDAW/C/ARM/CO/5-6), Azerbaijan (CEDAW/C/AZE/CO/5) and Georgia (CEDAW/C/GEO/CO/4-5) relevant to women's economic empowerment have all been considered in the design of this project document.

¹¹ UN Women Independent Evaluation Office, *An Empowered Future: Corporate evaluation of UN Women's contributions to women's economic empowerment* (December 2014).

¹² UNPSD-Georgia 2016-2020. Focus Area 2: Jobs, Livelihood and Social Protection; Outcome 3: By 2020, poor and excluded population groups have better employment and livelihood opportunities because of inclusive and sustainable growth and development policies.

¹³ UNDAF-Armenia 2016-2020. Focus Area 1: Equitable, sustainable economic development and poverty reduction; Outcome 1: By 2020, Armenia's competitiveness is improved and people, especially vulnerable groups, have greater access to sustainable economic opportunities.

¹⁴ UNAPF 2016-2020. Focus Area 1: Promoting Sustainable and Inclusive Economic Development Underpinned by Increased Diversification and Decent Work; Outcome 1.1: By 2020, the Azerbaijan economy is more diversified and generates enhanced sustainable growth and decent work, particularly for youth, women, people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups.

- Nine municipalities have been identified across three regions in Georgia: three municipalities in Kakheti (Akhmeta, Lagodekhi, Telavi); three in Kvemo Kartli (Bolnisi, Marneuli, Tetri Tskaro); and three in Samtskhe-Javakheti (Akhalkalaki, Akhaltsikhe, Aspindza) – Outcome 1 and 2.

3. Evaluation Purpose Objectives, Scope and Intended Use

Evaluation purpose and use

In the last year of the project implementation, as established in the Project Document, a mandatory final external evaluation is to be conducted by UN Women. The evaluation is expected to provide actionable recommendations and will have a formative focus to be utilized in developing the second phase of the project and will use relevance, effectiveness, organizational efficiency and sustainability criteria.

The information generated by the evaluation will be used by different stakeholders to:

- Contribute to building of the evidence base on effective strategies for the economic empowerment of women in all three countries;
- Facilitate strategic reflection, learning and further planning for programming in the areas of women's economic empowerment at policy, institutional and grassroots levels and promotion of women's participation in decision making.

Main evaluation users include UN Women office in Georgia as well as Governments of Switzerland and Austrian Development Agency (project donors). Furthermore, national stakeholders – UNDP in Armenia and Azerbaijan, NGO partners, Parliamentary counterparts, targeted state agencies, and local governments. All key stakeholders will be closely involved in the evaluation process to increase ownership of findings, draw lessons learned and make and greater use of the evaluation results.

The findings, lessons learned, conclusion and recommendations of the evaluation are expected to contribute to the second phase of the intervention and to overall effective programming on GEWE in the South Caucasus. The information generated by the evaluation will moreover be used to engage policy makers and other stakeholders at local, national and regional levels in evidence-based dialogues and to advocate for gender-responsive strategies to economically empower women.

Evaluation objectives

The **overall objective** of this final evaluation is to assess the achievement of programme results and performance of the above described intervention.

The specific evaluation objectives are as follows:

- Analyze the relevance of the implementation strategy and approaches of the "Women's Economic Empowerment in the South Caucasus" project;
- Assess organizational efficiency in progressing towards the achievement of the project's results as defined in the intervention;
- Validate the project results in terms of achievements and/or weaknesses toward the outcome and outputs;

- Assess the potential for sustainability of the results achieved by the project;
- Document lessons learned, best practices, and challenges to inform future work of UN Women on women's economic empowerment;
- Identify strategies for replication and up-scaling of the programme's best practices;
- Provide actionable recommendations for the implementation of the second phase of the project and maximize ownership by partners in the countries covered by the project in order to foster sustainability of the intervention;
- To assess how the project and its results relate and contribute to commitments and achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia with a focus on SDC 5 and 8.

Scope of the evaluation

The final evaluation of the WEESC Project is to be conducted externally by a company selected through a competitive process. It is planned to be conducted in the period of 5 October 2020 to 31 March 2021. The evaluation will cover project implementation period from 13 August 2018 to November 2020.

The evaluation will be conducted in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, where the project is being implemented; including in the national capitals and the target project regions to collect data as defined by the agreed evaluation work-plan. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, respective country guidance on travel restrictions should be taken into consideration.

The evaluation will examine all the relevant documents of the WEESC Project, including logical framework of the project, its Monitoring and Evaluation Plan, annual work plan, semi-annual and annual reports to the donor, knowledge products produced in the frameworks of the project, etc.

4. Evaluation Methodology, Criteria and Questions

Evaluation methodology

The evaluation methodology will deploy mixed methods, including quantitative and qualitative data collection methods and analytical approaches to account for complexity of gender relations and to ensure participatory and inclusiveness processes that are culturally appropriate. A theory of change approach will be followed. The reconstructed theory of change should elaborate on the objectives and articulation of the assumptions that stakeholders use to explain the change process represented by the change framework that this project considered and should assess how the WEESC Project has contributed to promote gender equality and women's empowerment. Assumptions should explain both the connections between early, intermediate and long-term project outcomes and the expectations about how and why the project has brought them about. In all three countries, interviews and focus group discussions with all key stakeholders involved in the project implementation, including but not limited to WEESC project team, UN Agencies, local NGO partners' beneficiaries, legislative bodies, central and local government partners, etc. shall also take place.

The evaluation will address the criteria of project relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability. More specifically, the evaluation will address the following key questions:

Relevance:

- To what extent is the intervention aligned with international, regional and national agreements and conventions on gender equality and women's empowerment in each country including the CEDAW and the relevant SDGs?
- To what extent are the objectives of the intervention consistent with the demands and the needs of partner country (institutions respectively society) as well as the sector policies and strategies of the partner country?
- How does the project design match with the complexity of national structures, systems and decision-making processes?
- To what extent is the WEESC Project contributing to the implementation of the UN Women Georgia Strategic Note (SN)?
- To what extent is the design of the intervention adequate to achieve the goal and objectives?
- Is the project design based on quality analysis, including gender and human rights-based analysis, risk assessments, socio-cultural and political analysis?
- To what extent is the objective of the intervention consistent with the demands and the needs of the target groups (incl. gender-specific requirements)?

Coherence:

- To what extent does the project fit within UN Women's Strategic Plan and interrelated threefold mandate and UNDP priorities in the targeted countries?
- Are there any synergies and inter-linkages between the project and other interventions of UN Women/UNDP?
- To what extent the project is in complementarity, harmonisation and coordination with the interventions of other actors' interventions in the same context?
- To what extend the implementation of the project ensures synergies and coordination with Government's and key partners relevant efforts while avoiding duplications?
- To what extent are the interventions achieving synergies with the work of the UN Country Team?
- What is UN Women's and UNDP comparative advantage in this area of work compared with other UN entities and key partners in Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan?
- In all three countries, how does WEESC Project assure that the interventions reflect and align to national plans on gender equality as well as the country's internationally undertaken obligations and/or best practices?
- To what extent is the WEESC Project is aligned with the UN Development Partnership Frameworks and nationalized SDGs in each country?

Effectiveness

- To what extent the planned objectives at outcome level have been achieved taking into account their relative importance? If possible, distinguish the quality and quantity of results achieved.
- How effective have the selected programme strategies and approaches been in progressing towards achieving programme results?
- What contributions -if any- are participating UN agencies making to implement global norms and standards for GEWE in each of the countries in the framework of this project?
- Has the project achieved any unforeseen results, either positive or negative? For whom? What are the good practices and the obstacles or shortcomings encountered? How were they overcome?
- To what extent do the outcomes achieved contribute to improved governance from a systems perspective?¹⁵
- To what extent have capacities of relevant duty-bearers and rights-holders been strengthened at this stage of implementation?
- Does the project have effective monitoring mechanisms in place to measure progress towards results?
- How adaptably and rapidly did WEESC Project react to changing country contexts?
- What -if any- types of innovative good practices have been introduced in the programme for the achievement of GEWE results?
- Has the WEESC Project led to complementary and synergistic effects on broader UN efforts to achieve GEWE in the three countries?
- To what extent does the intervention contribute to poverty reduction, inclusion and/or reduction of vulnerabilities?¹⁶

Efficiency:

- Have resources (financial, human, technical support, etc.) been allocated and split amongst the different implementing entities strategically to progress towards the achievement of the project outputs and outcomes?
- Have the outputs been delivered in a timely manner?
- To what extend were relevant stakeholders and actors included in the project planning and implementation?
- Has there been effective leadership and management of the project including the structuring of management and administration roles to maximize results?
- To what extent are the programme's individual entity and joint monitoring mechanisms in place effective for measuring and informing management of project performance and progress towards targets?

¹⁵ Dimensions for consideration are: a) structure (informed policies, laws, corresponding to basic HR obligations; degree of decentralization/multilevel concertation/cooperation); b) good governance in the performance/interaction of responsible actors/institutions (Good Governance principles: participation, transparency, accountability, equality & non-discrimination, effectiveness & efficiency, rule of law); c) capabilities, behavior, empowerment of actors/institutions for positive change; d) consideration of important global or regional governance dimensions.

¹⁶ Dimensions for consideration are: a) economic (income and assets); b) human capacities (health, education, nutrition); c) ability to take part in society (status and dignity); d) political capacities (institutions and policies); e) resilience to external shocks.

- To what extent was the monitoring data objectively used for management action and decision making?
- To what extent are the approaches and strategies used by the intervention considered efficient (Cost-efficiency)?

Sustainability:

- How effectively has the project been able to contribute to the generation of national ownership of the project outputs in each country?
- To what extent will the positive results (outputs and outcomes) be continued beyond the end of the intervention? Considering also potential risks in the context
- To what extent has the project identified strategic partners that could pick up on supporting continued government and non-governmental action when the project comes to an end?
- Do national/local institutions demonstrate leadership commitment and technical capacity to continue to replicate some project activities?
- To what extend has UN Women been able to promote replication of project successes?

The questions outlined above are preliminary and are expected to be revised and refined by the evaluation team during the inception phase of the evaluation. An evaluation matrix that will include revised evaluation questions will be a key element of the inception report of the evaluation.

5. Evaluation Process

The evaluation process is divided in five phases: 1) **Preparation**, mainly devoted to structuring the evaluation approach, preparing the TOR, compiling programme documentation, and hiring the evaluation company; 2) **Inception**, which will involve reconstruction of theory of change, evaluability assessment, online inception meetings with the WEESC team, inception report and finalization of evaluation methodology; 3) **Data collection** including desk research and preparation of field missions, visits to project sites; 4) **Data analysis and synthesis stage**, focusing on data analyzed, interpretation of findings and drafting of an Evaluation Report; and 5) **Dissemination and follow-up**, which will entail the development of a joint Management Response by UN Women.

The contractor will be responsible for inception, data collection and data analysis and synthesis.

- **Inception phase:** at the beginning of the consultancy, the contractor will be provided with key sources of information for an initial desk review. The online inception meetings will be conducted with the WEESC team. At the end of this phase an inception report that will include the refined evaluation methodology will be delivered. The inception report will be validated and approved by UN Women and project donors.

- **Data collection phase:** based on the inception phase, the contractor will carry out an in-depth desk review, and field mission/s will be conducted to complete data collection and triangulation of information. Interviews and focus group discussions with key stakeholders, as relevant, will take place in all three countries.
- **Data analysis and synthesis phase:** The collected information will be analyzed and final evaluation report will be delivered. A validation meeting will be organized where the contractor will validate the final report with UN Women and the ERG and approved by UN Women.

In addition, UN Women is a UN-SWAP reporting entity and the contractor has to take into consideration that the evaluations managed by UN Women are annually assessed against the UN-SWAP Evaluation Performance Indicator and its related scorecard. The evaluation will be conducted in accordance with UN Women evaluation guidelines and UNEG [Norms](#) and [Standards](#) and [UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluations in the UN System](#).¹⁷

6. Stakeholders Participation and Evaluation Management

The evaluation will be a consultative, inclusive and participatory process and will ensure the participation of project beneficiaries. The evaluation will be Human Rights and Gender responsible.

UN Women will appoint an officer who will serve as the **Evaluation Task Manager** and who will be responsible for the day-to-day management of the evaluation and ensures that the evaluation is conducted in accordance with UN Women Evaluation Policies, United Nations Evaluation Group Ethical Guidelines and Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the United Nations system and other key relevant guidance documents. The evaluation process will be supported by the UN Women Europe and Central Asia Regional Evaluation Specialist.

Moreover, an **Evaluation Management Group (EMG)** comprising of senior managers from UN Women Georgia Office and relevant technical project staff from UN Women Georgia, UNDP Armenia and UNDP Azerbaijan (as these UNDP offices are implementing certain segments of the WEESC project in these two countries) will be established to oversee and support the evaluation process, make key decisions and quality assure the different deliverables. The EMG will quality assure and approve all deliverables. EMG will be responsible for the coordination in the field including logistical support during field missions.

The establishment of an **Evaluation Reference Group (ERG)** will facilitate the participation of key stakeholders in the evaluation process and will help to ensure that the evaluation approach is robust and relevant to staff and stakeholders. Furthermore, it will make certain that factual errors or errors of omission or interpretation are identified in evaluation products. The Evaluation Reference Group will provide input and relevant information at key stages of the evaluation: terms of Reference, inception report, draft and final reports and dissemination of the results. The establishment of an ERG will enable the participation of relevant stakeholders in the design and in the validation of the evaluation, raising awareness of the different information needs, quality assurance throughout the process and in sharing the evaluation results. The Evaluation

¹⁷ UNEG Ethical Guidelines: http://uneval.org/papersandpubs/documentdetail.jsp?doc_id=102; The UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluation: http://uneval.org/papersandpubs/documentdetail.jsp?doc_id=100

Reference Group will be engaged throughout the process and will be composed of relevant state and non-state actors. The ERG will review the draft evaluation report and provide substantive feedback to ensure quality and completeness of the report. The ERG will be composed of the designated representatives of the project donors (SDC and ADA), UN Women Georgia CO as well as UNDP Armenia and UNDP Azerbaijan as well as key government and civil society partners of the project from Georgia.

Within six weeks upon completion of the evaluation, UN Women has the responsibility to prepare a **management response** that addresses the findings and recommendations to ensure future learning and inform implementation of relevant projects.

7. Expected Deliverables, Duties and Responsibilities

The evaluation team is expected to deliver the following product:

1. **Inception Report** where the evaluation team will present a refined scope, a detailed outline of the evaluation design and methodology, evaluation questions, and criteria for the approach for in-depth desk review and field work to be conducted in the data collection phase. The report will include an evaluation matrix and detailed work plan. A first draft report will be shared with the evaluation management group and, based upon the comments received the evaluation team will revise the draft. The evaluation team will maintain an audit trail of the comments received and provide a response on how the comments were addressed in the final inception report. (International Evaluation Team Leader - 8 working days; International Expert on WEE - 5 working days; Local Evaluation Expert Georgia – 5 days, Local Evaluation Expert Armenia - 5 days, Local Evaluation Expert Azerbaijan - 5 days) by 18 December 2020
2. Conduct field visits to all three countries and project sites and key informant interviews and focus group discussions, observations **to collect the data and analyze data**. In the context of COVID-19, country specific travel restrictions shall be taken into consideration; due to this Evaluation Team Leader and International Expert on WEE may only travel to Georgia (where the largest part of the WEESC project is implemented) and not to the other two countries (no travel requirement is foreseen for Local Evaluation Experts). In the potential scenario onsite data collection is not possible due to travel restrictions alternative data collection methods will be explored and agreed with UN Women. (International Evaluation Team Leader – 10 working days; International Expert on WEE – 10 working days; Local Evaluation Expert Georgia – 10 days, Local Evaluation Expert Armenia - 7 days, Local Evaluation Expert Azerbaijan - 7 days) by 31 January 2021
3. **Power Point Presentation of preliminary findings** (conducted in Tbilisi and/or through a virtual platform) detailing the emerging findings of the evaluation will be shared with the Evaluation Management Group for feedback. The revised presentation will be delivered to the Evaluation Reference Group for comment and validation. The evaluation team will incorporate the feedback received into the draft report. (International Evaluation Team Leader - 5 working days; International Expert on WEE - 3 working days; Local Evaluation Expert Georgia – 2 days, Local Evaluation Expert Armenia - 2 days, Local Evaluation Expert Azerbaijan - 2 days) by 5 February 2021
4. **Draft Evaluation report** which will be shared with the Evaluation Management Group for initial feedback. The second draft report will incorporate Evaluation Management Group's feedback and will be shared with the Evaluation Reference Group for identification of factual errors, errors of omission and/or misinterpretation of information. The third draft report will incorporate this feedback and then be shared with the ERG for final validation. The evaluation team will maintain an audit trail of the comments received and provide a response on

how the comments were addressed in the revised drafts (International Evaluation Team Leader - 15 working days; International Expert on WEE - 10 working days; Local Evaluation Expert Georgia – 6 days, Local Evaluation Expert Armenia - 4 days, Local Evaluation Expert Azerbaijan - 4 days) by 26 February 2021

5. Final Evaluation report taking into consideration comments and feedback collected from the Evaluation Reference Group. The report shall include the following chapters: Executive Summary, Introduction and Background, Evaluation approach and methodology (including limitations), Findings, Conclusions, Lessons learnt, Recommendations and relevant Annexes (International Evaluation Team Leader - 10 working days; International Expert on WEE - 8 working days; Local Evaluation Expert Georgia – 4 days, Local Evaluation Expert Armenia - 2 days, Local Evaluation Expert Azerbaijan - 2 days) by 31 March 2021.

The evaluation will be conducted in the period of 18 November 2020 to 17 May 2021. All deliverables will be presented in English.

Tasks/deliverables	Expected delivery date
Inception phase	
Desk review of background documentation	December 2020
Inception report (including two rounds of revision)	December 2020
Data collection phase	
Additional documents review, (online) interviews	January 2021
Visit to programme sites ¹⁸ , debriefing with ERG	January 2021
Analysis and reporting phase	
Presentation of preliminary findings	February 2021
Draft report (including two rounds of revision) and case study summaries	March 2021
Final report, final case study summaries and evaluation communication products (brief PPT, two-pager)	March 2021
Final presentation of the evaluation	April 2021

8. Requirements

Minimum requirements for the Evaluation Company:

- At least 10 years of international experience in the field of evaluations of development interventions, preferably in the area of women's rights and gender equality;
- Demonstrated experience of the company to produce high quality evaluation reports (sample reports of previous assignments will be submitted)
- Experience of working in Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan or in a country with similar political, economic and social situation, preferably with particular focus on women's rights and gender equality will be consider an asset;
- Experience working with multiple stakeholders: government, civil society, community-based organizations, and the UN/multilateral/bilateral institutions;
- Financial Sustainability of the Organization
- General Organizational Capacity

The evaluation team should consist of at least five specialists Evaluation team leader, International gender expert – with experience in evaluation of women's economic empowerment interventions; one more international expert on gender responsive policies for women's economic empowerment including gender responsive planning and budgeting; and for each country, one local/national gender expert.

Team members	Estimated number of working days ¹⁹
International Evaluation Team Leader	48
International Expert on WEE	36
Local Evaluation Expert Georgia	27
Local Evaluation Expert Armenia	20
Local Evaluation Expert Azerbaijan	20
Technical Advisor Gender and Diversity	5

Duties and responsibilities of the International Evaluation Team Leader:

- Leading the inception phase and developing an inception report outlining design, approach and methodology of the evaluation and the work plan of the evaluation team

¹⁹ This estimation includes total amount of working days, including data collection missions

- Directing and supervising the work of the national consultants in carrying out collection, research and analysis of relevant documentation and other data, and reporting
- Overseeing and assuring quality of data collection and leading the analysis of the evaluation evidence
- Preparing for meetings with the reference groups and other stakeholders
- Leading the preparation of the draft and final evaluation reports and evaluation communication products

Duties and responsibilities of the International Expert on WEE:

- Act as an advisor on WEE/GRB
- Provide advice on WEE normative and legal frameworks and on the overall analysis from the WEE thematic perspective
- Provide feedback to all deliverables

Duties and responsibilities of the Local Evaluation Experts from Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan (one per country) are as follows:

- Supporting inception phase gathering documents, following up with UN Women/UNDP offices in the countries of programme's implementation and synthesizing relevant information;
- Assisting in the preparation of the missions with UN Women /UNDP offices as relevant;
- Participating in country data collection missions (if applicable due to COVID-19 situation);
- Conduct interviews and collect additional data as needed;
- Attending and supporting the preparation of all meetings and presentations;
- Supporting the analysis of the evidence at country level.

Duties and Responsibilities of the Technical Advisor

- Support the Team Leader with technical expertise and experience in the area of gender and policy, legal and regulatory environments
- Assist with integration of technical content in all deliverables
- Assist with quality control and assurance on all evaluation deliverables

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Annex G: BIOS of Evaluation Team

Jane Jamieson, Evaluation Team Leader is a senior international development professional with 28 years of experience in consulting and executive positions within a women-led international social enterprise that champions young women as leaders of digital transformation to drive economic empowerment and social inclusion. She is an active member in international networks that promote women's economic empowerment, including the ITU-UN Women EQUALS Global Partnership for Gender Equality in the Digital Age and the new ITU-UN Women Generation Equality – Technology and Innovation for Gender Equality Action Coalition. Over the course of her career, Jane has led multiple teams in project design, monitoring, reporting and evaluation work, including in the Caucasus and Central Asia. She is currently serving as Strategy Consultant for the United Nations Capital Development Fund for their new Inclusive Digital Economy Strategy, with a focus on leaving no one behind and women's economic empowerment. She is also a member of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation and has worked closely with large private sector companies to integrate gender equality into their CSR and inclusive business strategies. Jane is a former diplomat with Canada's Former Soviet Union desk and has been based in Turkey for 15 years, where she directs the PSI representative office.

Syeda Samira Saif, Women's Economic Empowerment Expert, has an advanced degree in International Development with a concentration in Economic Development Policy. A native of Bangladesh, Ms. Saif worked on women's economic empowerment for the Katalyst project between 2008 and 2012. She has 12 years of progressively more senior experience in monitoring and results measurement and women's economic empowerment across private sector development and governance programs. She has worked with multiple donors and development agencies including The World Bank, DFID, DFAT and Swisscontact program supported by the Swiss Development Cooperation. Ms. Saif has extensive experience in designing strategic frameworks and using qualitative and quantitative research methods for results measurement as well as working in different economic contexts across Asia and the Pacific. She was part of the PSI evaluation team that was recently awarded the UNDP Independent Evaluation Office's 2020 Evaluation Excellence Award for Gender-Responsive Evaluation for UNCDF.

Ilaha Abasli, Local Expert Azerbaijan, holds a Master degree in International Development from Kings College, London and currently enrolled in PhD research focusing on sustainability in the Global South. She has done extensive economic research and analysis work in addition to working on development oriented monitoring and evaluation for academic institutions, non-government organizations, government departments, GIZ, SIDA, Swiss Development Cooperation and the UN. She recently supported the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations Azerbaijan Country Programme as a gender mainstreaming advisor on a climate change mitigation project. Ilaha is also a co-founder of Femiskop - Feminist Research Collective in Azerbaijan that curates critical content on gender, environmental and socio-economic justice issues.

Anna Iluridze, Local Expert Georgia, is an international development professional based in Tbilisi, Georgia consulting on gender and human rights. With a degree in law and a Masters in Gender and Development, her focus is on the inclusion of women and other marginalized groups in political, economic and public lives. Her work has included a range of democracy, human rights and good governance issues, including working on monitoring and evaluation for GIZ, working on gender inclusion and governance for NDI and heading the gender department of the Public Defender's Office of Georgia, where she was responsible for monitoring, promotion and protection of human rights and gender equality to enhance and contribute to their realization in the country by addressing underlying causes of human rights violations.

Anahit Garibyan, Local Expert Armenia, has over 10 years of research experience focused on social issues and labour rights. She is a Sociologist who holds a Masters degree from Yerevan State University (2010) and pursued post-graduate studies until 2014. Based in Yerevan, she has undertaken several international development consultancies, including with UNICEF Armenia & BDO Armenia Consulting (risks assessments for the protection of victims of sexual exploitation and abuse), the Council of Europe Office in Yerevan (baseline and needs assessments for mediators), World Vision Armenia (fieldwork coordinator), DVV international (researcher) and other EU funded projects (monitoring specialist). Her national consultancies as an expert on employment policy in Armenia, labour rights trainer, for domestic institutions such as the Institute of Public Policy (project coordinator in an “Edu2Work Program” and SDG innovation lab), Unison NGO (policy brief and research on gender discrimination among people with disabilities) Media Initiatives Center (policy brief and research on labour rights of journalists), the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (labour market analysis, forecast and assessment), CRRC Armenia, NGO Center, Wikimedia Armenia, and a number of other organizations.

Pamela Branch, Evaluation Management and Supervision, has over 25 years of experience in international development, working for clients from the public sector, private sector, development agencies, international financial institutions and non-profit organizations, including the Canadian Government, Consultative Group for International Agriculture Research, the East African Community, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Parliamentary Centre Canada, the United Nations Capital Development Fund, the United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank. She has worked on all aspects of performance review and measurement of results achievement, including more than 40 evaluations, all including gender equality, most including economic development and many including governance. She is frequently asked to advise on results measurement for governance projects. Pamela Branch is one of the founders of PSI and is the managing director. Recently, PSI was honoured with the UNDP Independent Evaluation Office's 2020 Evaluation Excellence Award for Gender-Responsive Evaluation for UNCDF. Ms. Branch has degrees in economics and business.

Elaine Ward, Technical Advisor, is an international human rights lawyer with almost 25 years of experience in international development as well as domestic consulting with rural indigenous communities in Canada. Her specialties include gender equality and diversity; project management; human rights and the environment; results-based management, monitoring and evaluation; strategic planning; socio-economic impact assessments; promotion of indigenous peoples' rights; stakeholder engagement, consultation and accommodation; institutional-strengthening around effective governance, ethics and corporate social responsibility; as well as capacity-building in terms of training, coaching, and

mentoring. Her *modus operandi* focuses on rights and responsibilities based approaches, accountable organizations, and the rule of law, plus the integration of diversity and gender-sensitivity in evaluation criteria. Ms. Ward recently ensured the analysis of diversity and inclusion of marginalized populations in the Formative Evaluation of GAC's Volunteer Cooperation Program 2015-2020 for PSI. She has been affiliated with PSI for over a dozen years as a gender, human rights and governance consultant and holds degrees in humanities, law and international human rights.

Simon Chatelain, Administrative and Research Support, has a degree in Philosophy and is currently working on his Masters. He has worked for PSI for the past year, providing administrative and research support to two major evaluations, the Evaluation of Commonwealth of Learning and the Evaluation of Inclusive and Equitable Economic Development for the UNCDF, the latter which was recognized by UNDP's IEO for an award of excellence noted above for the PSI team.

Annex H: Evaluation Matrix

Evaluation Sub-questions	Indicators/Criteria	Data Sources and Methods for Collection
Evaluation Question 1: Relevance: Is the Intervention Doing the Right Things? - The appropriateness of the intervention's objectives to the real problems, needs and priorities of the target groups/beneficiaries and the quality of program design through which these objectives are achieved.		
1.1 To what extent does the intervention reflect and align with international, regional and national agreements, conventions and/or best practices on gender equality and women's empowerment in each country including the CEDAW and the relevant SDGs, especially 1,5 and 8 and their respective targets. ²⁰	-Extent to which WEESC's objectives and design respond to global and countries' policies, and agreements on gender equality and women's empowerment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -National and regional agreements and conventions on gender equality and women's empowerment, including CEDAW, ICESCR and UN documents -Steering Committee (UN Women, UNDP, donors) -Government representatives of Stakeholder Groups -Document Review, KIIs, Survey
1.2 a) To what extent are the objectives of the intervention consistent with the demands and the needs of partner country (institutions and society respectively)	-Extent to which WEESC's objectives respond to the priorities (economic, environmental, equity, social) expressed in government development plans and poverty reduction strategies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Country policies, strategies and sectoral plans Including: UN-Azerbaijan Partnership Framework, 2016-2020 Armenia-UN Development Assistance Framework, UN Partnership for Sustainable Development Framework Document, Georgia 2016-2020
1.2b) To what extent is the project contributing to the implementation of sector policies and strategies	-Extent to which WEESC is aligned with the policies and strategies of the UN Women Georgia Strategic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Steering Committee

²⁰ This sub-question has been merged with a very similar Coherence sub-question.

Evaluation Sub-questions	Indicators/Criteria	Data Sources and Methods for Collection
of the partner country UNDAF/UNSDCF and the overall UN Women Georgia Strategic Note? ²¹	Note and those in the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF)/UN Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAF) for each of the three participating countries in the South Caucasus.	-Government officials -Partners ²² -Document Review, KIIs, Survey
1.3 How is the project design organized to take into account the complexity of national structures, systems and decision-making processes? ²³	-WEESC's design reflects differing local country contexts and processes specifically addressing the economic empowerment of women	-Project documents, UN Country documents -UN and Government officials -Partners -Document Review, KIIs, Survey
1.4. To what extent is the design of the intervention adequate to achieve the goal and objectives?	-Extent to which the WEESC theory of change can reasonably be expected to support the achievement of the initiatives' high- level results -Alignment of design with lessons regarding WEE and potential pathways for change	-Design documents and reports, Theory of change analysis -Steering Committee -Partners -Document Review, KIIs, Survey
1.5. Is the project design based on quality analysis, including gender and human rights-based analysis, risk assessments, socio-cultural, economic and political analysis?	-Extent to which the analysis conducted during project design identified the right partners and implementation strategies, as well as risks.	-Design documents and reports -Evaluation Management Group (EMG) -Government representatives of Stakeholder Groups -Document Review, KIIs, Survey
1.6 To what extent is the objective of the intervention consistent with the demands and the needs of the target groups (incl. gender-specific requirements) and how has it contributed to poverty reduction, inclusion and/or reduction of vulnerabilities? ²⁴	-Extent to which target beneficiaries believe WEESC is responding to their needs and priorities -Extent to which WEESC has reduced poverty, improved inclusion, and reduced vulnerabilities for target beneficiaries by comparing results against SDGs 1,5 and 8 targets and conducting a UNDAF/UNSDCF analysis for each of the 3 countries to assess relevancy.	-Design documents and reports -Evaluation Management Group (EMG) -Government representatives of the Stakeholder Groups in each country -FGDs, KIIs, Possible Learning Brief
Evaluation Question 2: Coherence: How Well Does the Intervention Fit In? - <i>The compatibility of the intervention with other interventions in a country, sector or institution</i>		
2.1 To what extent does the project fit within the UN Women's Strategic Plan and interrelated threefold	-Extent to which WEESC's objectives respond to UN Women's and UNDP's policies and strategies in the	-UN Women's Strategic Plan -UNDP Country Project documents and other UN

²¹ The sub-question has been structured into 2 components and includes a reference to the UN Women Georgia SN.

²² Details of the intended multi-stakeholder Evaluation Reference Group (ERG) have not yet been shared with the Evaluation team.

²³ This sub-question includes revised wording for clarity purposes.

²⁴ This sub-question has been merged with a similar Effectiveness sub-question.

Evaluation Sub-questions	Indicators/Criteria	Data Sources and Methods for Collection
mandate and UNDP priorities in the targeted countries? ²⁵	three countries. -Evidence of complementarity and coordination across the two agencies	agency documents -UN officials -Document Review, KIIs, Survey
2.2 a) Has the WEESC Project led to complementary and synergistic effects on broader UN efforts to achieve GEWE in the three countries? 2.2 b) To what extent are the interventions achieving synergies with the work of the UN Country Team? 2.2 c) Are there any synergies and inter-linkages between the project and other interventions of UN Women/UNDP and other actors' interventions in the same context? ²⁶ 2.2 d) To what extent the implementation of the project ensures synergies and coordination with Government's and key partners' relevant efforts while avoiding duplications?	-Evidence of complementarity and coordination across UN agencies in the 3 countries by conducting a UNDAP/UNSDCF analysis in all 3 countries to assess: - WEESC support to broader UN coordination efforts -Extent to which WEESC complements but does not duplicate other initiatives and projects - Extent to which there are synergies and interlinkages between WEESC and other UN work carried out in South Caucasus -Extent to which there are synergies and interlinkages between WEESC and other GEWE interventions carried out in SC - Extent to which there are synergies, complementarity and interlinkages between WEESC and other GEWE interventions carried out in South Caucasus, including government initiatives	-Project documents, UN Women and UNDP agency documents -Government and other GEWE stakeholder documents -UN officials -Government representatives of Stakeholder Groups -Document Review, KIIs, Survey -Project documents, Government and other GEWE stakeholder documents -Steering Committee -Government representatives of Stakeholder Groups -Partners -Document Review, KIIs
2.3 What is UN Women's and UNDP comparative advantage in this area of work compared with other UN entities and key partners in Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan? ²⁷	- Extent to which UN Women and UNDP policies and mandates support or undermine work on GEWE as compared to other UN entities	-UN Country Plans, national plans, and other documents -UN officials -Government representatives of Stakeholder Groups -Partners -Document Review, KIIs, Survey
2.4 To what extent is the WEESC Project aligned with the UN Development Partnership Frameworks and nationalized SDGs in each country?	-Extent to which WEESC's objectives responds to UN Partnership Frameworks and national SDG priorities and plans in the three countries.	-Country Plans, national plans especially on the SDGs -UN Development and Partnership Frameworks -UN officials -Government representatives of Stakeholder

²⁵ This sub-question has been merged with a similar Effectiveness sub-question.

²⁶ This sub-question has been merged with another sub-question in this section.

²⁷ This sub-question has been linked with another sub-question.

Evaluation Sub-questions	Indicators/Criteria	Data Sources and Methods for Collection
		Groups -Partners -Document Review, KIIs, Survey
Evaluation Question 3: Effectiveness: Is the Intervention Achieving Its Objective? The extent to which the intervention is expected to achieve its objectives and its results, including any differential results across groups		
3.1 a) To what extent the planned objectives at outcome level have been achieved taking into account their relative importance? If possible, distinguish the quality and quantity of results achieved. 3.1b) What are the principal reasons behind the project's achievement (or not) of its outcomes? ²⁸	-Extent to which the intervention achieved, or is expected to achieve, its objectives, and its results, including any differential results across groups -Reporting of performance against the identified outcomes - Extent of variances and reports explaining variances - Updates on risks and mitigation	-Project plans and reports, M&E data -Steering Committee -Stakeholder Groups, partners and beneficiaries -Document Review, KIIs, FGD, Survey
3.2 a) How effective have the selected project strategies and approaches been in progressing towards achieving project results? 3.2 b) How are outcomes 2 and 3 connected to outcome 1? ²⁹	-Comparative analysis of which strategies and approaches have been better able to achieve their intended results -Analysis of linkages and progress toward results at the grassroots level and policy/legislative and institutional levels, including intended and unintended synergies	-Project plans and reports, M&E data -Steering Committee -Stakeholder Groups, partners and beneficiaries -Document Review, KIIs, FGD, Survey, Possible Learning Brief
3.3 What contributions -if any- are participating UN agencies making to implement global norms and standards for GEWE in each of the countries in the framework of this project?	-Extent of mainstreaming GEWE into policy formulation and systems -Evidence of clear areas of change in WEE where WEESC is contributing (current and future potential pathways)	-Review of norms and standards -Project documents - UN and Government officials, -Stakeholder Groups, partners and beneficiaries -Document Review, KIIs, FGD
3.4 Has the project achieved any unforeseen results, either positive or negative? For whom? 3.4 b) What are the good practices and the obstacles or shortcomings encountered? 3.4 c) How were they overcome?	-Reporting of performance against the identified outcomes, indicators and outputs compared to targets and analysis of qualitative inputs from partner organizations and stakeholders - Explanation of variances - Updates on risks and mitigation	-Project plans and reports -M&E data - UN and Government officials, -Stakeholder Groups, partners and beneficiaries -Document Review, KIIs, FGD, Possible Learning Brief
3.5 To what extent do the outcomes achieved contribute to improved governance from a systems perspective?	-Extent to which WEESC results at the outcome level contribute to improved governance systems regionally and in the three countries.	-Project plans and report, M&E data -UN and Government officials, -Stakeholder Groups, partners and beneficiaries

²⁸ A second component was added to this sub-question.

²⁹ A second component was added to this sub-question.

Evaluation Sub-questions	Indicators/Criteria	Data Sources and Methods for Collection
3.6 To what extent have capacities of relevant duty-bearers and rights-holders been strengthened at this stage of implementation?	-Initial indications of changes in WEE capacity of direct beneficiaries (i.e. increased participation, skills, incomes, access to finance, productive partnerships etc).	-Document Review, KIIs, FGD -Project plans and reports, M&E data -UN and Government officials, -Stakeholder Groups, partners and beneficiaries -FGD, Document Review, KIIs
3.7 a) How adaptably and rapidly did WEESC Project react to changing country contexts? 3.8 b) How has the project responded to the COVID-19 pandemic and what have been the implications on the achievement of project results? ³⁰	-Evidence and timeliness of programming being adapted to country contexts, including responses to regional geopolitical conflict -Evidence of programming being adapted to address COVID-19 (negative, positive or both) and reporting of performance against the identified outcomes, indicators and outputs compared to targets	Project plans and reports, M&E data -UN and Government officials, -Stakeholder Groups, partners and beneficiaries -Document Review, KIIs, FGD, Possible Learning Brief
3.9 What -if any- types of innovative good practices have been introduced in the project for the achievement of GEWE results?	-Evidence of innovation in program approaches and tools to achieve GEWE	-Project plans and report, M&E data -UN and Government officials - Stakeholder Groups, partners and beneficiaries -Document Review, KIIs, FGD,
Evaluation Question 4: Efficiency: How Well Are Resources Being Used? - <i>The extent to which the intervention delivers, or is likely to deliver results, in an economic and timely way</i>		
4.1 How have resources (financial, human, technical support, etc.) been allocated and split amongst the different implementing entities strategically to progress towards the achievement of the project outputs and outcomes?	-Comparison of results targets and actual targets in the results framework -Cost of implementation arrangements as share of total budget expended -Access to and timeliness of donor funding	-Project documents, M&E data, monitoring and financial reports -UN and Government Officials -Stakeholder Groups, partners -Document Review, KIIs, Survey
4.2 Have the outputs been delivered in a timely manner?	-Reporting of performance against identified outputs, including consideration of COVID-19 implications on timeliness	-Project plans and reports including schedules, M&E data -UN and Government officials -Stakeholder Groups, partners -Document Review, KIIs, Survey
4.3 To what extent were relevant stakeholders and actors included in the project planning and implementation?	-Extent of stakeholder participation in project planning and evidence of stakeholder groups, meeting frequency and participation in decision-making	-Project plans and reports including consultation meetings and steering committee meeting reports, M&E data -UN and Government officials -Stakeholder Groups, partners -Document Review, KIIs, Survey

³⁰ A Covid-19 implications component has been added into this sub-question.

Evaluation Sub-questions	Indicators/Criteria	Data Sources and Methods for Collection
4.4 Has there been effective leadership and management of the project including the structuring of management and administration roles to maximize results?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -WEESC management and governance arrangements facilitate efficient implementation -Clear commitment at the Regional Office and Country office level for the two UN agencies to work together 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Project plans and reports, M&E data -Steering Committee -Stakeholder Groups, partners -Document Review, KIIs, Survey
4.5 Does the project have effective monitoring mechanisms (individual entity and joint) in place for measuring and informing management of project performance and progress towards targets? ³¹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Level of coordination between country and regional level M&E systems -Robustness of the performance measurement system in capturing results (both quantitative and qualitative changes) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Project plans and reports including consultation meetings and steering committee meeting reports, M&E data -Steering Committee -Stakeholders Groups, partners -Document Review, KIIs, Survey
4.6 To what extent was the monitoring data objectively used for management action and decision making?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Extent to which lessons and results performance integrated into internal decision-making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Project plans and reports, M&E data -UN and Government officials -Stakeholders Groups, partners -Document Review, KIIs, Survey
4.7 To what extent are the approaches and strategies used by the intervention considered efficient (Cost-efficiency)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Analysis of WEESC budgets across the outcomes, central and regional levels and across agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Project plans and reports including budgets and financial reports, M&E data, -UN and Government officials -Stakeholder Groups, partners -Document Review, KIIs, Survey
Evaluation Question 5: Sustainability: Will The Benefits Last? - <i>The extent to which the net benefits of the intervention continue, or are likely to continue</i>		
5.1 How effectively has the project been able to contribute to the generation of national ownership of the project outputs in each country?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Level of understanding of the economic empowerment needs and priorities of women -Changes in attitudes (positive or negative) of the economic empowerment needs and priorities of women 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Project documents including M&E data, monitoring and reporting documents -Perceptions of Stakeholder groups and partners -Document Review, KIIs, Survey
5.2 How does the project monitor sustainability across the different outcomes and to what extent will the positive results (outputs and outcomes) be continued beyond the end of the intervention? Considering also potential risks in the context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Performance measurement reporting system against identified outcomes and outputs -Demonstration of increased capacity of partner organisations and direct beneficiaries -Funding commitments by current donors to Phase 2 and potential for new partners/donors to contribute 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Project documents including M&E data, monitoring and reporting documents -Perceptions of Stakeholder groups and partners -Document Review, KIIs, Survey
5.3 To what extent has the project identified strategic partners that could pick up on supporting continued government and non-governmental action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Number and type of strategic partners who have or expressed interest in adaptations to programming outputs and interventions in line with country 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Project documents including M&E data, monitoring and reporting documents -Perceptions of stakeholders, partners and

³¹ This sub-question was merged with a similar Efficiency sub-question related to monitoring mechanisms.

Evaluation Sub-questions	Indicators/Criteria	Data Sources and Methods for Collection
when the project comes to an end?	contexts and emerging lessons	beneficiaries -Document Review, KIIs, FGD
5.4 Do national/local institutions demonstrate leadership commitment and technical capacity to continue to replicate some project activities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Level of ownership by national/local institutions -Changes in capacity of national/local institutions -Ongoing use of WEESC tools and approaches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Project plans and reports including consultation meetings and steering committee meeting reports, M&E data -UN and Government officials -Stakeholder Groups, partners and beneficiaries -Document Review, KIIs, FGD
5.5 To what extent has UN Women been able to promote replication of project successes?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The extent to which the project's model and successes have been adopted by other partners and stakeholders and evidence of replication amongst the three countries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Project plans and reports including consultation meetings and steering committee meeting reports, M&E data, -UN and Government officials -Stakeholders Groups, partners and beneficiaries -Document Review, KIIs, FGD

Annex I: Data Collection Tools: Key Information Interview Questionnaire Guide

INTRODUCTION TO THE KII:

We are pleased to have this chance to follow up with you directly as we understand that you have been involved in the implementation of the WEESC project as one of the key partners. The evaluation team is interested in learning more about your role in the project and would also like to obtain your perspectives on some key topics that will help us shape our overall evaluation approach and final report.

We will plan to conduct this interview over a 1-hour time slot and have prepared some general questions as well as more specific questions related to each of the evaluation areas: relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability. Given the diversity of stakeholders to be interviewed, we have also identified questions, specific to the various stakeholder groups (i.e. project staff, implementation partner, local/national government, private sector etc) so that not all questions will be posed to each interviewee.

Notes:

1. With your permission, we would like to do an audio recording of this confidential interview that will be used by the evaluation team for evaluation purposes only. Your anonymity will be protected so as to ensure candid responses to our questions.

GENERAL QUESTIONS:

1. What has been your engagement with the programme, and what activities were you involved with? (Note: *This is more relevant for stakeholders outside of UNWomen/UNDP/SDC/ADA*).
2. Are there any specific areas where you think **good progress** has been made to date in the project? Are there areas that have been **less successful**? (Note: *it will be helpful capture along the 3 different outcomes/levels and useful to understand why certain activities have been more successful than others*).
3. Follow Up: What has been the biggest **challenge** for program implementation from your perspective and why? (e.g. COVID-related? geo-political conflicts? identifying the poor women and most marginalized, ethnic groups, disabled, aged? lack of data disaggregated by diversity? etc.)

RELEVANCE:

For project staff/donors/public sector/non-government agencies:

1. As a representative of (...name of the agency/organization...) **what are your priorities** around women's economic empowerment (in general, at the grassroots level) and the women's economic empowerment framework for (... name of the country) at the macro level? How does the project align with the country's overall WEE strategy?

- a. To what extent does the intervention reflect and align with international, regional and national agreements and action plans, conventions and/or best practices on gender equality and women's empowerment, including the CEDAW and the relevant SDGs in [....name of the country)?
- 2. What are the main demands and needs in (...name of the country) in the area of WEE? Keeping in mind the above comments, to what extent are the objectives of the intervention consistent with the demands and the needs mentioned?
 - a. Does the project capture and cover the self-identified needs of the groups with multiple vulnerabilities? If yes, how has it contributed to poverty reduction, inclusion and empowerment of the most marginalized?

For local government institutions:

- 3. What need does gender responsive budgeting or gender responsive action plans address within your local context?

For the private sector (particularly on WEP):

- 4. What was your key motivation to be involved in the project activities? How does this align with your organisational performance or values?
- 5. What are some of the benefits and challenges of employing and retaining women in your organisation, both economically and socially? (*Note: skip this question if already responded in the previous one*)

COHERENCE:

- 1. As you are aware, WEESC is a regional project. To what extent is the design of the intervention adequate to achieve its goal and objectives? Does the regional nature of the project create positive synergies? If so, how?
 - a. Does the WEESC project have innovative approaches, tools, etc. compared to similar initiatives by national or development partners in unlocking public and private finance to support women's economic development?
 - b. How were the activities in your country prioritised while keeping consistency with the overall objective? Do you feel anything in particular has been compromised at the local context level in an effort to align it with the global program level objectives?
 - c. How are best practices shared?

Additional question specific to implementing partners e.g. NGOs:

- 2. Were you involved in the design of the project? If so, how?

EFFECTIVENESS:

- 1. Has the WEESC project achieved its planned outcomes? To what extent? And what are the reasons behind the project's achievements or shortcomings?

2. How are the achievements or the lack of progress on policy/legislation and institutional levels connected to women at the grassroots level? Share an example of how the activities with the program have been applied in practice and/or planned to be implemented. (*Note: refer to specific activities from the progress report*).
3. How has the project responded to the COVID-19 pandemic and to what extent has it influenced the WEESC project results?
4. Are there other external factors, such as the geopolitical situation in the region, that have impacted the project, and if so, has the project been able to respond and adapt to these challenges?
5. How was information gathered from the field used for decision making or to improve project activities? Share examples.

Additional question for local implementing partner (e.g. NGOs):

6. Have there been opportunities for you to suggest or recommend changes to activities based on field level learnings? Share examples.

For local government institutions:

7. What has been the key change(s) in how you prioritise budgeting or allocation of resources to be more gender responsive? Share examples. How have those changes been brought about?
8. What have been the key challenges (e.g. resistance from team members, etc.) and benefits of applying those changes and why?
9. What could be done to improve or make them more effective?

For the private sector (particularly on WEP):

1. What changes have you been able to apply or are intending to apply in your organisation as a result of your engagement with the project?
2. Why and how are they useful for the organisation (*Note: this is to understand the economic and social benefits to the organisation as a result of improved work-place practices*)
3. How could they be improved?

EFFICIENCY:

1. Do you think that the WEESC project resources (financial, human, technical support) have been allocated among different implementing entities in a strategic manner?
2. To what extent have you, as a partnering agency, been involved in project planning, implementation and monitoring?
 - a. Does the project have effective monitoring mechanisms in place? Did the project management team use monitoring data in the decision making process? Share examples.

SUSTAINABILITY:

1. What progress or achievements to date do you think will be sustained beyond the project interventions and how? *(Note: Across the different outcomes at the grassroots level and at the law and policy and/or institutional levels)*
2. Which interventions or approaches do you think will not be sustained after the project ends? Why not?
3. What changes do you recommend for the next phase of the project to address challenges you have identified above?

For the private sector:

4. How practical or realistic are is it for project achievements to date to be adopted by other organisations or businesses in your sector? Why? *(Note: Understand the challenges that could limit the scale up or replication of these activities to other organisations/businesses).*
5. Have you had the opportunity to share these best practices with others? Do you know of other businesses who have implemented similar changes?
6. What else can be done to improve workplace practices to empower women and enhance their opportunities for decision-making?

CLOSING QUESTION:

1. From your perspective, what are the main lessons learned from phase 1 of the WEESC project and what would be your recommendations for a Phase 2? *(Note: Bearing in mind both the negative impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on WEE and perhaps new opportunities it has presented such as the leverage of digital technology and solutions)*

(OPTIONAL) RESPONDENT DATA: (for disaggregated data /GBA+ analysis): **gender** (female/male/non-binary), **age** group (20 to 39; 40 to 59; 60 or over), **ethnicity/race/national origin** (majority/minority), **(dis)ability** group (able-bodied/physical handicap), **spirituality/religious affiliation** (majority/minority)?

Annex J: Data Collection Tools: Focus Group Discussion Guide

INTRODUCTION FOR ALL FGDs:

We are pleased to have this chance to speak with you as we understand that you have been directly involved in the project activities (i.e trainings, networking, grant recipients and job opportunities). The evaluation team is interested in learning more about your experiences during and after the WEESC project activities. Your insights will be used to help us evaluate Phase 1 of the project and influence design and decisions related to a Phase 2.

We will plan to conduct this discussion over a 1.5-hour time slot and as you can see from our (...Zoom/Google Hangouts/Skype...) call, there are (X..) number of participants in this group and we would like to thank ...Name of Relevant Implementing Partner...) for helping us organize this session.

Notes

1. Explain Zoom housekeeping rules. Not to open mic without raising hand. Speaking one at a time, ensure that everyone has an opportunity to give their views; respecting the opinions of others - everyone's views are valid although you might not agree with them; there are no right or wrong answers – we just want to know what you think and notes will be taken but everything that is said will be kept **confidential** – no names will be put against comments.
2. With your permission, we would like to do an audio recording of this confidential discussion that will be used for the evaluation team for evaluation purposes only. Your anonymity will be protected so as to ensure candid responses to our questions. Are you comfortable with that?

To start off, it might be useful to ask the participants:

1. Do you have any questions before we begin?
2. Do I have your consent to make reference to your country and region if any quotes are used in the report, bearing in mind our commitment to anonymity?

TOOL 9.1 FGD Questions for self-employed women who have received training and invested or improved their business

GENERAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Where and from whom did you first hear about the WEESC project?
- 2) What project activities were you involved with (that is, your engagement with the project)?
- 3) How did you decide which activities to take part in?

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES:

- 1) What types of barriers to self-employment in your field have you experienced, witnessed, or perceived? Could you name the most important reasons giving rise to the barriers you have encountered?
- 2) Explain how you or others may have overcome those barriers and the key reasons that enabled you to gain self-employment opportunity?

ACCESS TO AND UTILIZATION OF NEW SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE:

- 1) What are the key skills and knowledge that you gained from the WEESC project training(s) or other events attended, that you were not aware of before?
- 2) Which of those skills have you been able to utilize in order to: (a) secure a self-employment opportunity; and (b) continue to improve your skills in your existing business (self-employment), and why? *(Note: ask general reasons, then also WEESC activities, probe on what they have done differently post attending the training or being involved with WEESC activities that helped them address those barriers)*
- 3) What kind of skills and/or knowledge do you think the project **has not been** able to address, and why?

ACCESS TO SERVICES:

- 1) What other services are you able to access since your engagement with the WRC or after attending the training, that was not available to you before? *(this is to probe and understand their access to local financial services, information services, job adverts, information on loan facility etc.)*
- 2) Has your access to economic opportunities changed as a result of the project? If yes, how? If not, why not?
- 3) What are you doing differently in terms of finding and securing self-employment opportunities?

ALTERNATIVES AVAILABLE (COUNTERFACTUAL):

- 1) What alternative activities would you be involved with in the absence of the skills or self-employment activity that you have gained through the support of the program?
- 2) What are other alternative sources of accessing training or building skills for improving your chances of setting up and or improving your business (in the absence of such a project)? *(Note: optional question)*

DECISION-MAKING AND CONTROL:

- 1) What are the general perceptions of women's ability to earn and manage money and make economic decisions within their own household?
- 2) Have these perceptions changed? Why or why not?
- 3) What was your key motivation to engage in an economic activity through the WEESC project? For what key purposes are you able to use the income earned from your self-employment activity? How do you decide how much should be spent for what purpose? (*Note: understand the decision-making process- if it is a joint decision making or is the husband deciding etc.*).
- 4) Have there been any perceived and/or actual changes in your sense of self-confidence and self-esteem since being involved in the project? In what way(s) and why?
- 5) Do you experience any change in perception of your household members and community members as a result of your engagement in economic activities? How? (optional question)

SUSTAINABILITY AND KEY CHANGE

- 1) What do you see as the most significant changes/benefits of the project to you and your community?
- 2) In your opinion, what activities do you think have been most effective for creating self-employment opportunities in your community? What has worked well in the WEESC project? (ask only if it has not been answered earlier)
- 3) Have there been any negative consequences as a result of the project, and if so, what are they?
- 4) How should UN Women/UNDP/donors involve your community in planning these activities? (optional question) Which social networks, both formal and informal, exist within the community? Are these gender-specific for females or also inclusive of males? Has the project fostered the creation of new networks? If so, what might they be and how is it helping you or how are you using them?
- 5) In your opinion, how effective was the project in reaching out to you during the COVID-19 pandemic? Which method/activity did you find especially effective for you during this period? Were there any new economic opportunities arising out of the pandemic?
- 6) Has your community seen an increase in domestic violence since the COVID-19 pandemic?
- 7) What supports are there for women and their children in your community to protect against those risks? (optional question)

If the FGD includes women who participated in gender-responsive budgeting training:

1. What was your motivation behind joining the GRB training?
2. What are the most valuable learnings you have had from participating in the training?
3. Have you been able to use or apply any of those GRB skills/information to engage in your community? How? If not, why not?
4. What changes do you see (if any) as a result of those engagements?

CLOSING QUESTIONS:

- 1) Are there any specific recommendations or relevant issues we haven't raised here that you think we should know about?

FINAL REMARKS:

Many thanks for your time and feedback!

Explain how participants can contact us if they have any more questions or feedback.

(OPTIONAL) RESPONDENT DATA: (for disaggregated data /GBA+ analysis): **gender** (female/male/non-binary), **age** group (20 to 39; 40 to 59; 60 or over), **ethnicity/race/national origin** (majority/minority), **(dis)ability** group (able-bodied/physical handicap), **spirituality/religious affiliation** (majority/minority)?

TOOL 9.2 FGD with women who have received training and secured employment

GENERAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Where and from whom did you first hear about the WEESC project?
- 2) What project activities were you involved with (that is, your engagement with the project)?
- 3) How did you decide which activities to take part in?

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES:

- 1) What types of barriers to wage employment in your field have you experienced, witnessed, or perceived? Could you identify the most important reasons causing the barriers you have encountered, and explain how you or others may have overcome them?
- 2) Explain how you or others may have overcome those barriers and the key reasons that enabled you to secure employment opportunity?

ACCESS TO AND UTILIZATION OF NEW SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE:

- 1) What are the key skills and knowledge that you gained from the WEESC project training(s) or other events attended, that you were not aware of before?
- 2) Which of those skills have you been able to utilize in order to: (a) secure a job or self-employment opportunity; and (b) continue attempting to improve your skills in your existing job and business (self-employment), and why? *(Note: ask general reasons, then also WEESC activities, probe on what they have done differently post attending the training or being involved with WEESC activities that helped them address those barriers)*
- 3) What kind of skills and/or knowledge do you think the project **has not been able** to address, and why?

ACCESS TO SERVICES:

- 1) What other services are you able to access to improve your ability to secure employment, since your engagement with the WRC or after attending the training, that was not available to you before? *(this is to probe and understand their access to local financial services, information services, job adverts, information on loan facility etc.)*
- 2) Has your access to local wage employment opportunities changed as a result of the project? If yes, how? If not, why not?
- 3) What are you doing differently in terms of finding and securing job opportunities?

ALTERNATIVES AVAILABLE (COUNTERFACTUAL):

- 1) What alternative activities would you be involved with in the absence of the skills or wage employment that you have gained through the support of the program?
- 2) What are other alternative sources of accessing training or building skills for improving your chances of setting up and or improving your business (in the absence of such a project)? *(Note: optional question)*

DECISION-MAKING AND CONTROL:

- 1) What are the general perceptions of women's ability to earn and manage money and make economic decisions within their own household?
- 2) Have these perceptions changed? Why or why not?
- 3) What was your key motivation to engage in an economic activity through the WEESC project? For what key purposes are you able to use the income earned from job? How do you decide how much should be spent for what purpose? *(Note: understand the decision-making process- if it is a joint decision making or is the husband deciding etc.).*
- 4) Have there been any perceived and/or actual changes in your sense of self-confidence and self-esteem since being involved in the project? In what way(s) and why?
- 5) Do you experience any change in perception of your household members and community members as a result of your engagement in economic activities? How? *(optional question)*

SUSTAINABILITY AND KEY CHANGES:

- 1) What do you see as the most significant changes/benefits of the project to you and your community?
- 2) In your opinion, what activities do you think have been most effective for creating self-employment opportunities in your community? What has worked well in the WEESC project? *(ask only if it has not been answered earlier)*

- 5) Are these gender-specific for females or also inclusive of males? Has the project fostered the creation of new networks? If so, what might they be and how is it helping you or how are you using them?
- 6) In your opinion, how effective was the project in reaching out to you during the COVID-19 pandemic? Which method/activity did you find especially effective for you during this period? Were there any new economic opportunities arising out of the pandemic?
- 7) Has your community seen an increase in domestic violence since the COVID-19 pandemic? What supports are there for women and their children in your community to protect against those risks? **(optional question)**
- 8) Ultimately, thinking about the WEESC project and your involvement, are there specific ways that you feel like the project could be more useful to you (or assist you in wage employment, self-employment, or accessing decision-making positions within your community)?

If the FGD includes women who participated in gender-responsive budgeting training:

- 1) What was your motivation behind joining the GRB training?
- 2) What are the most valuable learnings you have had from participating in the training?
- 3) Have you been able to use or apply any of those GRB skills/information to engage in your community? How? If not, why not?
- 4) What changes do you see (if any) as a result of those engagements?

CLOSING QUESTIONS:

- 2) Are there any specific recommendations or relevant issues we haven't raised here that you think we should know about?

FINAL REMARKS:

Many thanks for your time and feedback!

Explain how participants can contact us if they have any more questions or feedback.

(OPTIONAL) RESPONDENT DATA: (for disaggregated data /GBA+ analysis): **gender** (female/male/non-binary), **age** group (20 to 39; 40 to 59; 60 or over), **ethnicity/race/national origin** (majority/minority), **(dis)ability** group (able-bodied/physical handicap), **spirituality/religious affiliation** (majority/minority)?

TOOL 9.3 FGD with women who have received training but HAVE NOT secured any job or economic activity through self employment

GENERAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Where and from whom did you first hear about the WEESC project?
- 2) What project activities were you involved with (that is, your engagement with the project)?
- 3) How did you decide which activities to take part in?

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES:

- 1) What types of barriers to wage employment or self-employment in your field have you experienced, witnessed, or perceived? Could you identify the most important reasons causing the barriers you have encountered, and explain how you or others may have overcome them?
- 2) Explain how you or others may have overcome those barriers?

ACCESS TO AND UTILIZATION OF NEW SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE:

- 1) What are the key skills and knowledge that you gained from the WEESC project training(s) or other events attended, that you were not aware of before?
- 2) Which of those skills have you been able to utilize and how? If not, then what has been the key challenge in applying them?
- 3) What kind of skills and/or knowledge do you think the project **has not been able** to address, and why?

ACCESS TO SERVICES:

- 1) What other services are you able to access to improve your ability to secure any economic activity, since your engagement with the WRC or after attending the training, that was not available to you before? (*this is to probe and understand their access to local financial services, information services, job adverts, information on loan facility etc.*)
- 2) Has your access to local wage employment/self employment opportunities changed as a result of the project? If yes, how? If not, why not?
- 3) What has been the key challenge in finding jobs or self-employment opportunities despite the skills obtained from the training.

DECISION-MAKING AND CONTROL:

- 1) What are the general perceptions of women's ability to earn and manage money and make economic decisions within their own household?

- 4) What was your key motivation to join WEESC project activities?
- 5) Have there been any perceived and/or actual changes in your sense of self-confidence and self-esteem since being involved in the project? In what way(s) and why?

SUSTAINABILITY AND KEY CHANGES:

- 1) What do you see as the most significant changes/benefits of the project to you and your community?
- 2) What has worked well in the WEESC project? (ask only if it has not been answered earlier)
- 3) Have there been any negative consequences as a result of the project, and if so, what are they?
- 4) How should UN Women/UNDP/donors involve your community in planning these activities?
(optional question) Which social networks, both formal and informal, exist within the community?
- 5) In your opinion, how effective was the project in reaching out to you during the COVID-19 pandemic? Which method/activity did you find especially effective for you during this period? Were there any new economic opportunities arising out of the pandemic?
- 6) Has your community seen an increase in domestic violence since the COVID-19 pandemic?
- 7) What supports are there for women and their children in your community to protect against those risks? (optional question)
- 8) Ultimately, thinking about the WEESC project and your involvement, are there specific ways that you feel like the project could be more useful to you (or assist you in wage employment, self-employment, or accessing decision-making positions within your community)?

If the FGD includes women who participated in gender-responsive budgeting training:

- 5) What was your motivation behind joining the GRB training?
- 6) What are the most valuable learnings you have had from participating in the training?
- 7) Have you been able to use or apply any of those GRB skills/information to engage in your community? How? If not, why not?
- 8) What changes do you see (if any) as a result of those engagements?

CLOSING QUESTIONS:

- 3) Are there any specific recommendations or relevant issues we haven't raised here that you think we should know about?

FINAL REMARKS:

Many thanks for your time and feedback!

Explain how participants can contact us if they have any more questions or feedback.

Annex K: Data Collection Tool: Survey

(Refer to the separate attachment)

Annex L: Documents Reviewed

1. Agreements (10 documents)

- a. UN Women & SDC Donor Agreement (180893) signed with attachments
- b. UN Women SDC Agreement Amendment 1
- c. UN Women SDC Agreement Amendment 2
- d. ProDoc SDC-ADA October 2018
- e. UN2UN Contribution Agreement (UNDP & UN Women)
- f. UN2UN Armenia Agreement signed
- g. UN2UN Armenia 2019.17.19 Amendment 1
- h. UN2UN Azerbaijan Agreement signed
- i. UN2UN Azerbaijan 2019.07.15 Amendment 1
- j. UN2UN Azerbaijan 2020.08.07 Amendment 2

2. UN Treaty Bodies (Country Reports for CEDAW, CERD, CESCR, CCPR, CRPD, CMW, Special Rapporteurs on Violence Against Women) (28 documents)

- a. Armenia & UN Treaty Bodies (10 documents)
- b. Azerbaijan & UN Treaty Bodies (10 documents)
- c. Georgia & UN Treaty Bodies (8 documents)

3. Financials & Resource Mobilization (7 documents)

- a. Interim Financial Donor Report UN Women to SDC December 31, 2018
- b. Interim Financial Donor Report UN Women to SDC/ADA June 30, 2019
- c. Interim Financial Donor Report UN Women to SDC/ADA December 31, 2019
- d. UN Women Consolidated Financial Report to Switzerland, December 2019
- e. UN Women Consolidated Financial Report to Austria, December 2019
- f. Interim Financial Donor Report UN Women to SDC/ADA June 30, 2020
- g. Human Resources – Org chart

4. Minutes of Meetings (2 documents)

- a. GTG Task Force on WEE (Tbilisi) – December 20, 2018 morning
- b. Gender Theme Group (Tbilisi) on GRB – December 20, 2018 afternoon

5. Program Documents & Knowledge Products in Annexes (4 Documents)

- a. Progress Report I - August 2018 to December 2018 (Annex A: News article on the project launch in Tbilisi, Georgia from the UN Women website; Annex B: Media monitoring report; Annex C: Project briefs (regional, Georgia-specific and Armenia-specific); Annex D: Concept note on the project implementation strategy in the Sabirabad region of Azerbaijan; Annex E: Minutes of the meeting of the Gender Theme Group (GTG) Task Force on Women's Economic Empowerment; Annex F: Minutes of the GTG meeting on Gender Responsive Budgeting; Annex G: Private Sector Participants from Armenia and Azerbaijan; and Annex H: Minutes on the Gender Pay Gap meeting.

- b. Progress Report II – January 2019 to June 2019 (Annex A: List of Businesses Started by the Project Beneficiary Women in Azerbaijan; Annex B: Compilation of News Articles Covering the Project interventions from UN Women’s Website; Annex C: Analysis of the Gender Pay Gap and Gender Inequality in the Labour Market in Georgia (Draft Report); Annex D: Terms of Reference for Identification of a Partner Institution to Conduct Regulatory Impact Assessments and Gender Impact Assessments for Women’s Economic Empowerment in Georgia; Annex E: Terms of Reference of National and International Consultants to Develop the Methodology for the Assessment of Hazardous Occupations for Pregnant Women and Nursing Mothers in Georgia in Line with International Guidance; and Annex F: Terms of Reference for Identification of a Partner Institution to Standardize and Scale Up of Women’s Rooms in the Municipalities of Georgia)
- c. Progress Report III – July 2019 to December 2019 (Annex A: Details on (Self-) Employment of Project Beneficiary Women in All Three Countries; Annex B: Compilation of News Articles Covering the Project Interventions from UN Women’s Website; Annex C: Full List of Issues Raised through GRB in Armenia and Georgia; Annex D: Women’s Empowerment Principles, WEPs Action Plans from Signees in Armenia, WEPs Brochure for Armenia and Azerbaijan (in Armenian, Azerbaijani and English); Annex E: Reports on the Analyses of the Gender Pay Gap and Labour Market Inequalities, Analysis of the Gender Pay Gap and Gender Inequality in the Labour Market in Georgia, and Analysis of the Gender Pay Gap and Gender Inequality in the Labour Market in Armenia; Annex F: Documents that Informed the Policy and Legal Debates on Women’s Economic Empowerment in Georgia, UN Women Inputs to the National Strategy for Labour and Employment 2019-2023 of the Government of Georgia, UN Women Inputs to the Parliamentary Thematic Inquiry on Women’s Participation in State Funded Economic Development Programmes (presentation of the problems and the written comments for the report), and UN Women Inputs to the Parliamentary Working Group on Labour Legislation Reform; Annex G: Draft Ministerial Decree on the Methodology for the Assessment of Hazardous Occupations for Pregnant Women and Nursing Mothers in Georgia in Line with International Guidance; and Annex H: Draft Guidelines to Standardize and Scale Up the Women’s Rooms in the Municipalities of Georgia)
- d. Progress Report IV – January 2020 to June 2020 (Annex A: Update on Azerbaijan Country Context; Annex B: Details on (Self-) Employment of Project Beneficiary Women in All Three Countries; Annex C: Compilation of News Articles Covering the Project Interventions from UN Women’s Website; Annex D: Reports published or developed during the reporting period; Annex E: Gender Impact Assessment of the Selected Topics – Georgia (in Georgian); Annex F: Regulatory Impact Assessment for ILO Convention Nos. 183, 156 and 189 – Armenia (in Armenian); Annex G: Draft GIA Training Manual – Georgia; and Annex H: Draft GRB Manual – Armenia (in Armenian))

6. Reports (11 documents)

- a. Gender Pay Gap Report – Armenia
- b. Gender Pay Gap Report – Georgia
- c. Country Gender Equality Profile of Georgia, UN Women 2020
- d. Draft Social Protection Floors Assessment – Georgia
- e. Enhancing Women’s Economic Empowerment through Entrepreneurship and Business Leadership in OECD Countries, October 2014
- f. Global Gender Gap Report 2020, World Economic Forum, 2019
- g. Analysis of the Gender Pay Gap and Gender Inequality in the Labour Market in Georgia, UN Women March 2020
- h. UN Women, Women's Economic Inactivity and Engagement in the Informal Sector in Georgia, 2018
- i. UN Women, A Gender Analysis of the Labour Market Regulations in Armenia and Georgia
- j. Mentoring for Women’s Empowerment: Guide for workplace mentoring programmes, UN Women 2020
- k. Women’s Solidarity Circles in Georgia, UN Women Georgia and Norway, 2020.

7. Armenia (16 documents)

- l. Global Entrepreneurship Monitor: Armenia National Report 2019/2020, Armenia CJSC, 2020
- m. Youth-Focused And Gender-Sensitive Labour Market Research, MEDIA-MODEL LLC, 2018
- n. National Competitiveness Report 2019, EV Consulting, 2019
- o. Labour market transitions of young women and men in Armenia, ILO, 2014
- p. Preparing for the Changing Nature of Work in the Digital Era. OECD Economic Outlooks, 2019
- q. Making Women’s Voices Count in Community Decision Making : A Qualitative Study of Two World Bank-Supported Projects in Armenia, World Bank Group, 2021
- r. The Armenia 2019, 2020 Micro-Enterprise Surveys Data Set, World Bank Group, 2020
- s. Assessing the Vulnerability of Armenian Temporary Labor Migrants during the COVID-19 Pandemic, World Bank Group, 2020
- t. Migration and Remittances in the Former Soviet Union Countries of Central Asia and the South Caucasus : What Are the Long-Term Macroeconomic Consequences?, World Bank Group, 2020
- u. Work for a Better Future in Armenia : An Analysis of Jobs Dynamics, World Bank Group, 2019
- v. Armenia : Better Understanding International Labor Mobility, World Bank Group, 2019
- w. Inequality of opportunity in South Caucasus, World Bank Group, 2018
- x. South Caucasus in motion: economic and social mobility in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia, World Bank Group, 2018
- y. Doing Business 2018 : reforming to create jobs – Armenia, World Bank Group, 2017
- z. Armenia - Leveling the STEM playing field for women : differences in opportunity and outcomes in fields of study and the labor market : Armenia - leveling the STEM playing field for women : differences in opportunity and outcomes in fields of study and the labor market, World Bank Group, 2017
- aa. Armenia gender project report : wild harvest value chain analysis, World Bank Group, 2016

8. Azerbaijan (5 documents)

- bb. Country gender assessment, Asian development bank, December 2019
- cc. Women's economic empowerment in the South Caucasus. Results of an assessment of the capacity development needs of the Sabirabad women resource centre and INGO, PWC, January 2020
- dd. Women's resource centres in Azerbaijan: hope lives here, UN Women and UNDP Azerbaijan, 2020
- ee. Towards equality: in business putting gender equality at the heart of the business sector in Azerbaijan, UN Women and UNDP Azerbaijan, 2019
- ff. Women's economic inactivity and engagement in the informal sector in Azerbaijan. Causes and consequences, CRRC Georgia, 2018

9. Georgia and Other Data Sources (4 documents)

- Labour Force Survey anonymous micro data database and questionnaire (by household's members) (2019, <http://bit.ly/2T8DMNL>)
- The National Statistics Office of Georgia, Employment and Unemployment, 2020
- COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker platform, UNDP
- Enterprise Surveys Indicators Data - World Bank Group
- Caucasus Barometer Datasets - <https://caucasusbarometer.org/en/datasets/>

10. Strategic Frameworks and Work Plans (7 documents)

- a. *UN Women Strategic Note 2016-2020*, UN Women Georgia Country Office
- b. *United Nations-Azerbaijan Partnership Framework, 2016-2020*
- c. *Armenia-United Nations Development Assistance Framework, 2016-2020*
- d. *United Nations Partnership for Sustainable Development (Framework Document), Georgia, 2016-2020*
- e. *Swiss Cooperation Strategy: South Caucasus, 2017-2020*, SDC/SECO/HSD of Switzerland's Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, December 2016
- f. *International Cooperation Strategy 2021-24: Greater focus and impact*, Switzerland's Federal Council & SDC Guidance on Results Indicators, FDFA, November 2020.
- g. *The Government of Georgia: The Social-Economic development Strategy of Georgia, "Georgia 2020";*

11. UN Systems Guides for Evaluations (4 documents)

- a. United Nations Evaluation Group (2016). *Norms and Standards for Evaluation*. New York: UNEG.
- b. *UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation*, March 2008, Foundation Document
- c. *UNEG Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluations*, August 2014, Guidance Document
- d. *UN Supplier Code of Conduct*, Rev.06, - December 2017.

12. UN Women Best Practice for Evaluations (7 documents)

- a. UN Women Independent Evaluation Office, *how to Manage Gender-Responsive Evaluation: Evaluation Handbook*, 2015.
- b. *Stephens, A., Lewis, E.D. and Reddy, S.M. 2018. Inclusive Systemic Evaluation (ISE4GEMS): A New Approach for the SDG Era*. New York: UN Women.

- c. Independent Evaluation and Audit Services, *UN Women Global Quality Assessment and Rating* (GERAAS#2 ECA EVAW Regional Programme: *Ending violence against women in the Western Balkans and Turkey: Implementing norms, changing minds*) & *Evaluation Synthesis Report and Evaluation Brief*
- d. GRB Final Report Evaluation and Evaluation Brief: *Promoting Gender Responsive Policies in South East Europe Regional Programme, 2017-2019*
- e. Evaluation of UN Women's Contribution to Gender-Responsive Budgeting in the Europe and Central Asia Region, UN Women, 2017 & Annexes
- f. *Guidance on Country Portfolio Evaluations in UN Women*, 2016.
- g. *Guide for the Evaluation of Programmes and Projects with a Gender, Human Rights and Intercultural Perspective*, UN Women 2014.

13. Tools (4 documents)

- a. *ISE4GEMs* (Inclusive Systemic Evaluation for Gender Equality, Environments and Marginalized Voices), UN Women – evaluation tools for gender equality analyses and assessments
- b. ADA Results Assessment Form for Mid-Term and Final Evaluations/Reviews, November 2016
- c. ADA Guidelines for Programme and Project Evaluations (Annex 9): Results Assessment Form template
- d. *Assessment of Gender Policy of Local Self-Government Bodies: with special emphasis on women's economic empowerment*, Public Defender (Ombudsman) of Georgia, 2020.

14. COVID-19 Reference Documents (8 documents)

- a. Gender-Based Violence and COVID-19, UNDP Brief, 2020
- b. UNDP Data Futures Platform Links
- c. *Rapid Gender Assessment of the COVID-19 Situation in Georgia*, UN Women, June 2020
- d. IASC Key Protection Advocacy Messages – COVID-19, Inter-Agency Standing Committee, September 2020.
- e. Labor Relations and Social Protection During the Pandemic, EMC, 2020;

Armenia

- f. Poverty and Welfare Impacts of COVID-19 and Mitigation Policies in Armenia, World Bank Group, 2020
- g. Public, economic and legal manifestations of the COVID-19 pandemic in the Republic of Armenia, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, 2020

Azerbaijan

- h. *Rapid Gender Assessment of the impact of COVID-19 on the lives of women and men in Azerbaijan*, UNFPA, November 2020

Annex M: List of People Interviewed

1.1 List of People Interviewed During Inception Phase

N	Type of Instrument	Title	Agency	Location
1	KII	Programme Specialist WEE & UNWEESC Evaluation Manager	UN Women Georgia	Tbilisi, Georgia
2	KII	Project Analyst	UN Women Georgia	Tbilisi, Georgia
3	KII	Project Analyst	UN Women Georgia	Tbilisi, Georgia
4	KII	Head of Program	Swiss Cooperation Office for South Caucasus, Embassy of Switzerland	Tbilisi, Georgia
5	KII	Programme Manager	Coordination Office for Technical Cooperation, Embassy of Austria	Tbilisi, Georgia
6	KII	Portfolio Manager (GE, Women and Youth Empowerment, Social Cohesion)	UNDP Armenia	Yerevan, Armenia
7	KII	National Programme Officer	Embassy of Switzerland Armenia	Yerevan, Armenia
8	KII	Project Manager, WE	UNDP Azerbaijan	Baku, Azerbaijan
9	KII	National Programme Officer	Embassy of Switzerland Azerbaijan	Baku, Azerbaijan
TOTAL: 9 People Interviewed				

1.2 People Interviewed During Data Collection Phase:

N	Type of Instrument	Category of Respondent	Organization	Location
1	KII	Private sector	Coca-Cola CJSC	Yerevan, Armenia
2	KII	Private sector	IBIS hotel	Yerevan, Armenia
3	KII	Private sector	C-Quadrat	Yerevan, Armenia
4	KII	National Government	ARMSTAT	Yerevan, Armenia
5	KII	National Government	Ministry of Labour & Social Issues (includes Department for Women)	Yerevan, Armenia
6	KII	National Government	Ministry of Territorial Administration & Development	Yerevan, Armenia
7	KII	National Government	Small & Medium Entrepreneurship Development National Center	Yerevan, Armenia
8	KII	Local Government	Head of the community	Amasia, Armenia
9	KII	Local Government	Chambarak Municipality staff	Chambarak, Armenia
10	KII	Local Government	Vardenis	Vardenis, Armenia
11	KII	Community Organisations	3R Strategy LLC	Yerevan, Armenia
12	KII	Community Organisations	Green Lane	Yerevan, Armenia
13	KII	Other Stakeholders	UNIDO Armenia	Yerevan, Armenia
14	KII	Community Organisations	SDA Armenia	Yerevan, Armenia
15	KII	Other stakeholders	CRRC	Yerevan, Armenia
GEORGIA				
1	KII	Private sector	UN Women	Tbilisi, Georgia
2	KII	National Government	RDA	Tbilisi, Georgia
3	KII	National Government	MOH	Tbilisi, Georgia
4	KII	National Government	Gender Commission (Gov.)	Tbilisi, Georgia
5	KII	National Government	Gender Committee (Parl.)	Tbilisi, Georgia

A. Key Informant Interviews:

6	KII	Community Organisations	CARE	Tbilisi, Georgia
7	KII	Community Organisations	TASO	Tbilisi, Georgia
8	KII	Community Organisations	GFA	Tbilisi, Georgia
9	KII	Community Organisations	KRDF	Telavi, Georgia
10	KII	WEESC Project Staff	UN Women	Tbilisi, Georgia
11	KII	Other Stakeholders	ILO	Tbilisi, Georgia
12	KII	Other Stakeholders	ISET	Tbilisi, Georgia
AZERBAIJAN				
1	KII	Private sector	PwC Azerbaijan	Baku, Azerbaijan
2	KII	National Government	State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs	Baku, Azerbaijan
3	KII	Local Government	Executive Committees of Khazar	Khazar, Azerbaijan
4	KII	Local Government	Executive Committees of Gusar	Gusar, Azerbaijan
5	KII	Local Government	Executive Committees of Sabirabad	Sabirabad, Azerbaijan
6	KII	Community Organisations	Sabirabad WRC	Sabirabad, Azerbaijan
7	KII	Community Organisations	Khazar WRC	Khazar, Azerbaijan
8	KII	Community Organisations	Qusar WRC	Gusar, Azerbaijan
9	KII	Community Organisations	Association for Women Entrepreneurship Development in Azerbaijan(AWEDA)	Baku, Azerbaijan
10	KII	Community Organisations	Azerbaijan Micro-Finance Association	Baku, Azerbaijan
11	KII	WEESC Project Staff	UNDP Azerbaijan	Baku, Azerbaijan
12	KII	Other Stakeholders	EU Azerbaijan	Baku, Azerbaijan
13	KII	Other stakeholders	SDC Azerbaijan	Baku, Azerbaijan
14	KII	National Government	State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs	Baku, Azerbaijan
UN WOMEN GEORGIA OFFICE				
15	KII	Monitoring & Evaluation	UN Women Georgia	Tbilisi, Georgia
16	KII	Financial Analysis	UN Women Georgia	Tbilisi, Georgia
Total Number of People Interviewed: 43				

B. Focus Group Discussions:

N	Type of Instrument	Category of Respondent	Organization (N/A for FGDs)	Number of Participants	Location
ARMENIA					
1	FGD	Women trained and self-employed		6 participants	Gegharkunik, Armenia
2	FGD	Women trained and self-employed		11 participants	Shirak, Armenia
3	FGD	Women trained but have not secured job/self-employment		8 participants	Mixed, Armenia
4	FGD	Women trained and employed		3 participants	Amasia, Armenia
5	FGD	Women trained and employed		3 participants	Chambarak, Armenia
Total: 31 participants					
GEORGIA					
1	FGD	Women trained and self-employed		7 participants	Kahketi, Georgia
2	FGD	Women trained and self-employed		7 participants	Samstke Javakheti, Georgia
3	FGD	Women trained and self-employed	(Village of Mardisi)	7 participants	Kvemo Kartli, Georgia
4	FGD	Women trained but have not secured job/self-employment	(Villages of Kuldara, Molaghli)	7 participants	Kvemo Kartli, Georgia
5	FGD	Local Government		3 participants	Kahketi, Kvema, Kartli, Georgia
Total: 31 participants					
AZERBAIJAN					
1	FGD	Women trained and self-employed		5 participants	Khazar, Azerbaijan
2	FGD	Women trained and self-employed		5 participants	Gusar, Azerbaijan
3	FGD	Women trained but have not secured job/self-employment		5 participants	Khazar, Azerbaijan
4	FGD	Women trained but have not secured job/self-employment		5 participants	Gusar, Azerbaijan
5	FGD	Women trained and employed		5 participants	Sabirabad, Azerbaijan
6	FGD	Women trained and employed		5 participants	Gusar, Azerbaijan
Total 32 participants					
Total Number of FGDs: 16 and Total Number of People Interviewed During FGDs: 92 participants					

Annex N Preliminary Findings in Azerbaijan



FINAL EVALUATION OF WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT IN SOUTH CAUCASUS (WEESC) PROJECT

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS FOR AZERBAIJAN

Project Services International Inc.

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PURPOSE OF THE PRESENTATION

- Team has finished the data collection phase and now has some **preliminary findings**
- WEESC is a **complex project** and we want to ensure that we have understood everything correctly and have not missed important opinions or evidence
- This Presentation:
 - Provides an opportunity for **feedback** from the UN Women, UNDP and stakeholders on the emerging findings
 - Helps us as evaluators to identify if there are **any gaps** in the evidence we have that need to be filled
 - Lays the **analytical foundation** for the development of lessons learned and recommendations to inform the design of the next phase of WEESC, with **guidance** from the assembled Evaluation Reference Group
 - Objective—to make sure the evaluation **serves the needs** of the project stakeholders, including targeted beneficiaries

OBJECTIVES OF EVALUATION

- Assist UN Women, UNDP-Armenia, UNDP-Azerbaijan, SDC, ADA, and their partners to understand **the relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability** of WEESC Project results to date
- Validate the **project results** in terms of achievements and/or challenges toward outcomes/outputs
- Validate and/or refine the project's **theory of change (ToC)** at this stage of implementation
- Document **lessons learned, best practices and challenges** to inform future work of UN Women in **women's economic empowerment (WEE)**
- Identify strategies for replication and scaling of WEESC **best practices**
- Provide forward-looking **strategic and operational recommendations** for implementation of Phase 2 and maximisation of ownership by partners in the 3 countries to foster sustainability.

SCOPE AND FOCUS OF EVALUATION

Scope:

- Period from August 2018 to June 2020 (Years 1 & 2 of Phase One)
- Overall WEESC Project with a focus on Georgia, Armenia & Azerbaijan

Evaluation questions addressed issues of:

- Relevance:** Is the WEESC Project doing the right things given contextual changes and a greater emphasis on relevance to beneficiaries' priorities and needs?
- Coherence:** How well does the WEESC Project fit with a view to capture perspectives from partnerships and linkages, as well as to understand interventions within broader systems?
- Effectiveness:** Is the WEESC Project achieving its objectives, including by examining differential results and encouraging analysis of equity issues?
- Efficiency:** How well are the resources used (human, financial, material), including the notion of timeliness, and whether efficiency applied throughout the results chain?
- Sustainability:** Will the benefits last, focusing not on external funding, but on the continuation of benefits and highlighting the multidimensional nature of sustainability?

OVERVIEW OF EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)

N = 62 in person and via telecom

Semi-structured interviews with representatives from (a) national government, (b) local government, (c) private sector, (d) community organizations/NGOs, (e) donors and (f) UN agencies/project staff

- Armenia: 16
- Azerbaijan: 14
- Georgia: 13
- UN Women Georgia Staff: 6
- Donors: 4
- Inception Phase: 9

Focus group Discussion (FGDs)

n = 16 FGDs with 92 women participants

FGDs were conducted focused on (a) women trained and self employed, (b) women trained and secured jobs and (c) women trained but economically inactive and (d) women trained in GRB

FGDs completed per country:

- Armenia: 5 covering Geghakunik, Shirak, Armasia, Chambark (31 participants)
- Azerbaijan: 6 covering Gusar, Khazar, Sabirabad (30 participants)
- Georgia: 5 covering Marmeuli, Akhatsikhe, Lagodekhi, Telavi, Aspindza (31 participants)

Document and data review

Detailed desk review for all 3 countries, including:

- Project documents
- Inception reports/studies
- Strategic documents
- M&E documents and trackers
- Progress Reports
- Financial Reports

Structured Survey

n = 28

Structured questionnaires were sent to 28 staff of WEESC and Implementing partners

Response rate: 39%

Learning Briefs

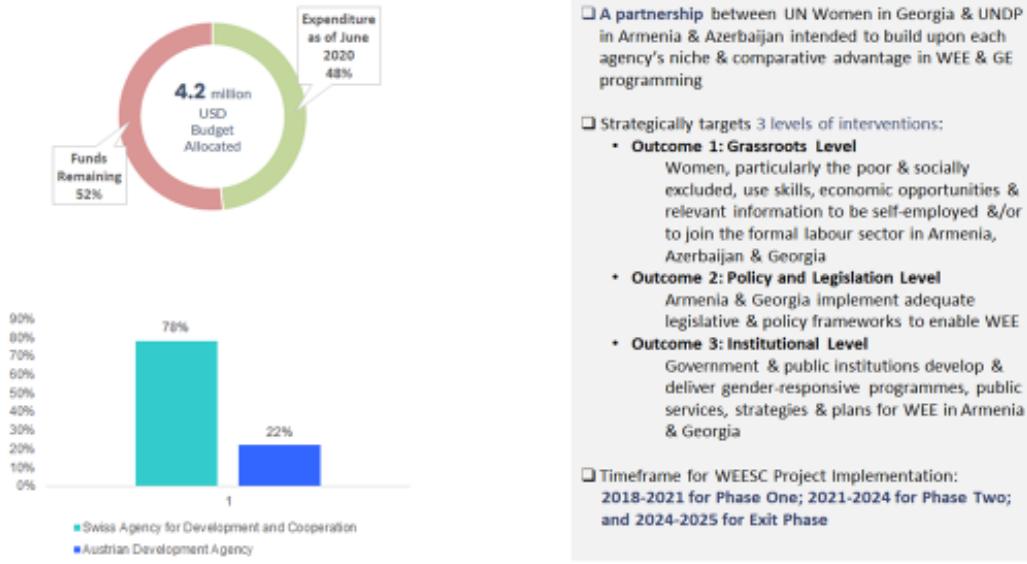
N = 3

Armenia: focused on interconnection between three outcomes

Azerbaijan: focused on outcome 1 and contrasting learning between a mature and 2 new WRCs

Georgia: focused on the success and learnings on WEESC's work on the Labor Code and Gender Based Budgeting

WEESC OVERVIEW



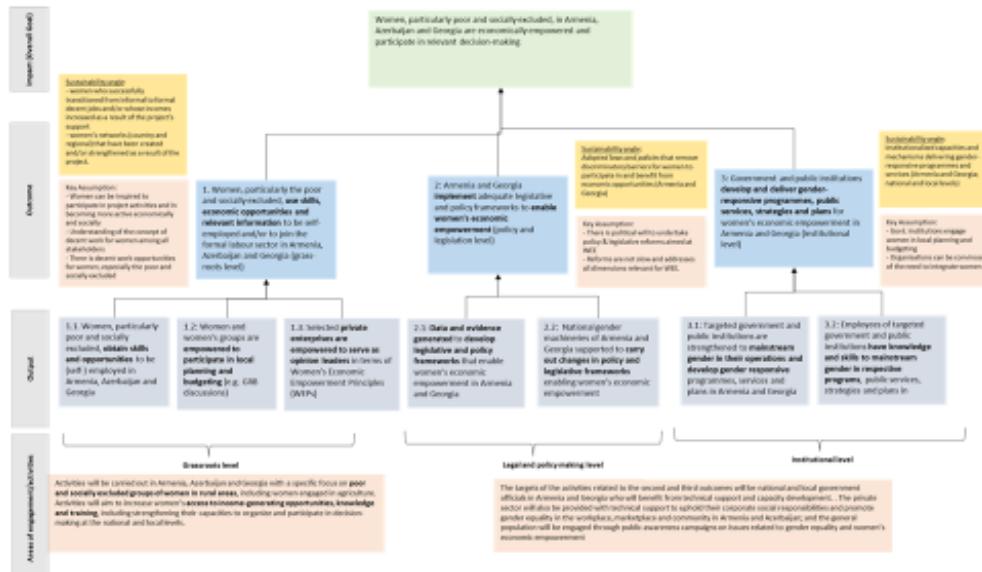
□ A partnership between UN Women in Georgia & UNDP in Armenia & Azerbaijan intended to build upon each agency's niche & comparative advantage in WEE & GE programming

□ Strategically targets 3 levels of interventions:

- **Outcome 1: Grassroots Level**
Women, particularly the poor & socially excluded, use skills, economic opportunities & relevant information to be self-employed &/or to join the formal labour sector in Armenia, Azerbaijan & Georgia
- **Outcome 2: Policy and Legislation Level**
Armenia & Georgia implement adequate legislative & policy frameworks to enable WEE
- **Outcome 3: Institutional Level**
Government & public institutions develop & deliver gender-responsive programmes, public services, strategies & plans for WEE in Armenia & Georgia

□ Timeframe for WEESC Project Implementation:
2018-2021 for Phase One; 2021-2024 for Phase Two; and 2024-2025 for Exit Phase

WEESC THEORY OF CHANGE



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES: OUTCOME 1: IS THE PROJECT DOING THE RIGHT THINGS?

HOW THE WEESC PROJECT GOALS & OBJECTIVES RESPONDED TO THE AZERBAIJAN RURAL CONTEXT

- Establishment of two new Women Resources Centers (WRC) in Gusar and Baku-Khazar districts and Support the existing WRC in Sabirabad
- Training and capacity development of socially mobilized women for securing self and wage-employment
- Support start-ups and establishment of women-owned small businesses, and expansion of existing businesses
- To provide technical support to companies to adopt the WEPs with a focus on implementing gender-responsive corporate policies/practices

9

RELEVANCE: IS THE WEESC PROJECT DOING THE RIGHT THINGS?

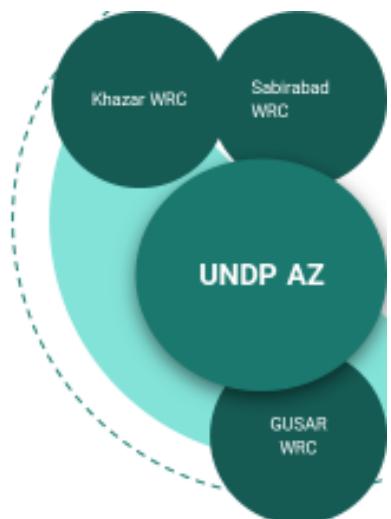
Main Findings:

The goal and design of the project was found to be well-aligned with the interests (women economic empowerment through self-employment & wage employment), as well as main area of focus of both local government entities and the national government.

- The project is especially well-aligned with SDG 5 (gender equality), SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth) and SDG 10 (reduced inequalities), but also SDG 1 (poverty alleviation)
- National Plan on Local Development of the Regions (2015-2018; 2020-2024) which emphasizes creating opportunities for self-employment of the women and empowering women to actively engage in rural and urban life in the regions
- According to the CEDAW Committee's report in 2015, Azerbaijan is progressively passing, amending, and updating legislation in line with its commitments under international conventions on gender equality. The Committee made specific recommendations for improvement in women's employment, economic empowerment & entrepreneurship, as well as measures targeting disadvantaged & marginalized groups of women (rural, disabled, IDPs, refugees, & older women).

Designing the project through the WRC model relevant decision, as this model has worked well before in 7 other regions, and had a strong reputation among public and private stakeholders and local communities

- The locations for the existing WRCs in Azerbaijan were particularly chosen to address the vulnerabilities, in areas where women face challenges for a variety of reasons besides restrictive cultural norms.
- Since their launch in 2011, 11 Women Resource Centers have provided more than 6,200 women with free training courses on a range of hard and soft skills women's human and economic rights, and accounting and financial literacy, computer science and networking techniques.
- Gusar WRC was specially relevant for integrating women from ethnic minorities, Khazar WRC has targeted the women employed in informal sector, and already experienced Sabirabad WRC has also included the women from IDP backgrounds.



RELEVANCE: IN RELATION TO THE NEEDS AND DEMANDS OF THE TARGET GROUP

- Out of 30 women in FGD, 28 highlighted their increased understanding of markets, career and personal development, as well as women's capabilities in a formal labour market.
- FGDs in all 3 regions in all 3 categories of currently employed, non-employed, and self-employed women have mentioned that the project interventions were very relevant to their needs of receiving free trainings, gaining skills, certificates, network and grants for the ensuring either wage or self-employment. None of the 3 regions has an alternative career and training center for women.
- The project mainly included (81% of trained and employed women) women from marginalized social backgrounds such as single mothers, women with no income, and women from ethnic minorities (Tat from Bine village, Lezgis from Gusar).
- Challenge:** a singular and non-tailored approach to the needs of women. Though the general needs of women and labour market was studied and integrated into the design by UNDP, the FGDs revealed that the trainings were generic in nature & did not completely take into account their existing knowledge, experience, skills, age, qualifications, learning and language abilities.
- Challenge:** Mobility and lack of transportation opportunities for the women living far from the centers has hindered the outreach and relevance of WRCs. For example, Khazar WRC was more mobile during the project, and has organized events and trainings in different villages, while Gusar and Sabirabad WRCs could not manage to reach out to the all interested women living in remote villages.

1

COHERENCE: HOW WELL DOES THE WEESC PROJECT FIT?

85% of KIs consider the design and the goal of the project to be coherent with their principles and programs in Azerbaijan on gender equality and human rights.



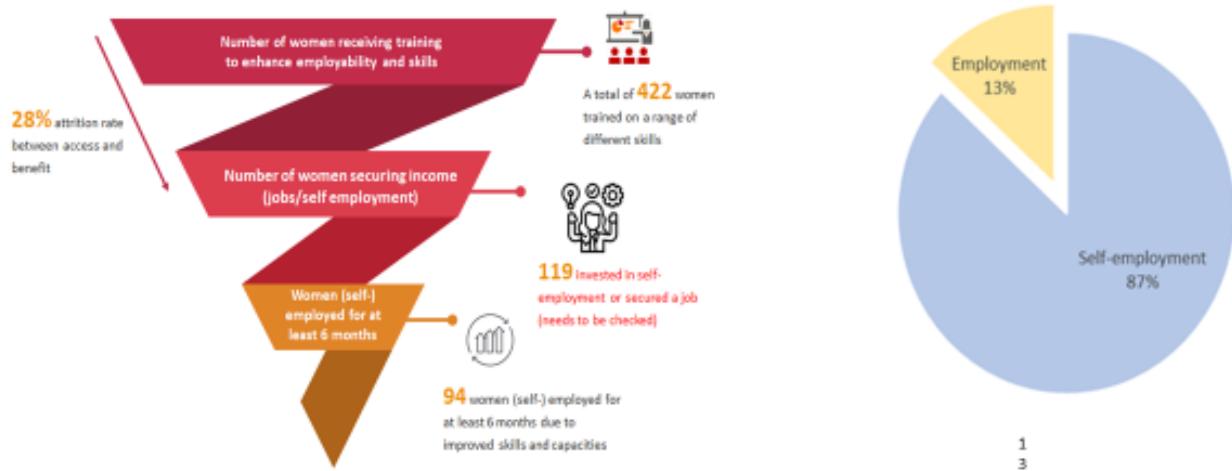
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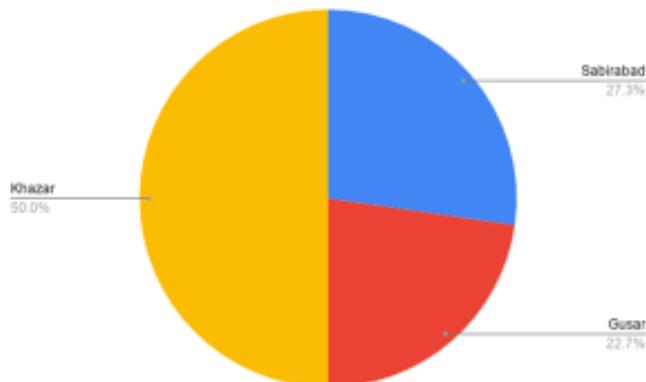
EFFECTIVENESS: IS THE WEESC PROJECT ACHIEVING ITS OBJECTIVES FOR OUTCOME 1?

The WEESC Project focused on establishing and developing capacities of WRCs in 3 regions in Azerbaijan (Gusar, Sabirabad, Khazar).

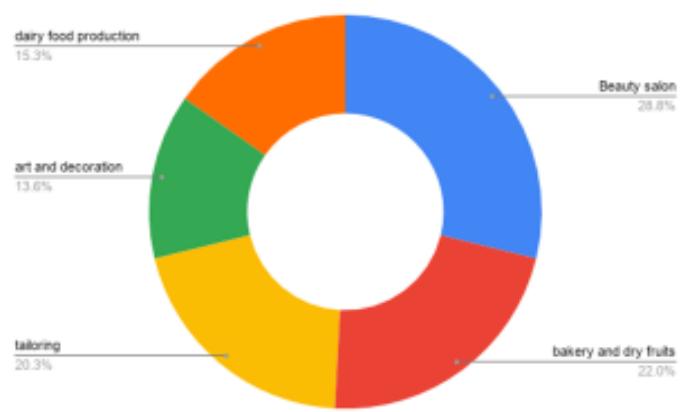
- The project trained a total of 422 women on a range of different skills sets such as, training on CV writing, computer skills and English language, financial literacy, business management, design and marketing.
- Of the total number of women trained, 119 women (28%) engaged in self-employment opportunities or secured a job, of which 94 women have been operating or being in employment for more than 6 months.



EFFECTIVENESS: SELF-EMPLOYED WOMEN AND THEIR ESTABLISHED BUSINESSES

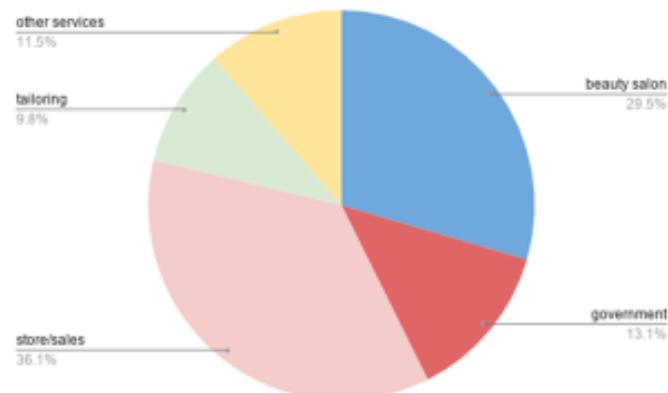


Distribution of business grants over the 3 regions

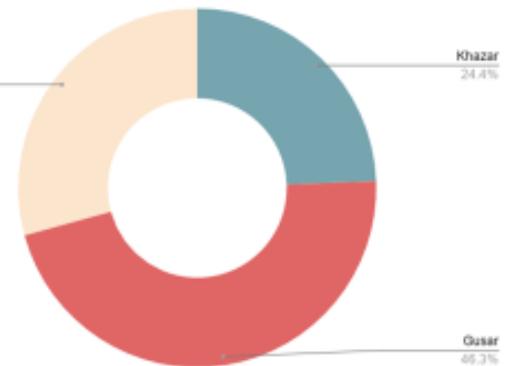


Distribution of self-employed women across the sectors

EFFECTIVENESS: WAGE-EMPLOYED WOMEN



Distribution of the wage-employment across the sectors



Distribution of the wage-employment across the regions

EFFECTIVENESS: WHAT WORKED WELL?

Trainings

Beneficiaries in 3 categories (currently wage-employed, self-employed and unemployed) mentioned they have applied and benefited from the gained knowledge and skills (specially, financial literacy, CV writing, business proposal development, english lessons) both in the job search process and in general livelihood.

Networking

All 6 FGDs suggest that networking opportunities, both internal and external at WRCs have helped women either to secure jobs, earn friendships, social circle, or create business partnerships. It also increased the self-confidence and social/soft skills.

Community Trust

All 3 WRCs managed to gain the trust of the local communities. Even conservative villages of Khazar (Shagan, Shuvelan), women have attended the events at WRC and spread the word around the community which was one of the major successes of the project.

Transition to formal labour market

Around 40% of the women participated in FGD had some experience being employed or working in an informal sector previously. 90% of the women in FGDs mentioned effectiveness of tax reporting for transition to the formal market labour, financial literacy which helped them to get taxpayer ID and report quarterly income taxes.

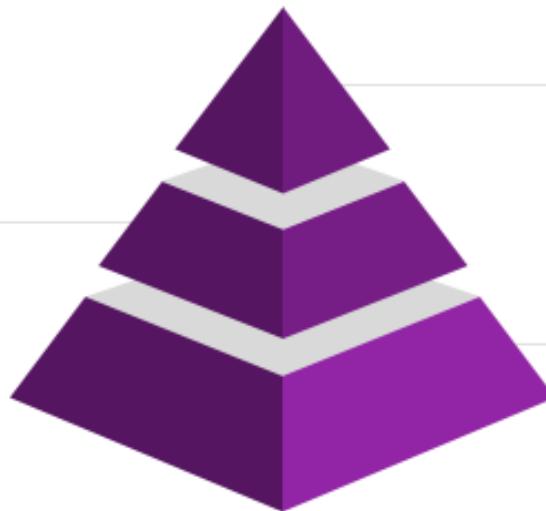
EFFECTIVENESS: FINDINGS ON CHALLENGES REGARDING EMPLOYMENT OF TRAINED WOMEN



EFFECTIVENESS: OTHER CHALLENGES

Gender Stereotypes concerning Women's Economic Participation

Perceptions of what's "women work" have mainly not been challenged, as most of the self/employment areas are considered female-appropriate such as tailoring, bakery, food production, beauty sectors.



A holistic and learning centered approach to capacity development

1 Project interventions were not completely built around a holistic approach of trainings, experience in-field and application of knowledge.

Social Status & Power Relations

2 Project interventions have not completely challenged and changed the power relations and social positions of women in the communities. Women still have less or no say in the household budget keeping and have less control over the economic decisions.

EFFICIENCY: HOW WELL ARE RESOURCES BEING USED?

- Overall, the project implementation partners consider the project resource allocation efficient. Also, milestones and timeline of the project implementation could be more efficient, by decreasing the bureaucratic obstacles from national government and UNDP side.
- Cost-efficiency was challenging to determine due to the lack of information on actual inputs vs. outputs/activities. However, it was flagged as an issue by a survey respondent. It is still obvious that most of the budget was spent on the output 1.1, to establish two new WRCs in Gusar and Baku-Khazar districts and to support the existing WRC in Sabirabad. Sustainability and independent operational capacity of WRCs remain as one of the major sustainability challenges for the project according to KIs.
- WRC coordinators have been delivering monthly reports to UNDP management on expenses, monthly statistics of events, visits. The UNDP project team has been conducting monthly site visits with different stakeholders to the WRCs, also visiting and checking on established businesses. COVID-19 and lockdown have hindered the quality and intensity of monitoring visits to the regions.
- Challenge: lack of an accessible (in terms of terminology and language), singular Monitoring and Evaluation framework that could be communicated and updated accordingly by all implementing partners.
- Challenge: over-involvement of UNDP in developing and delivering capacity building measures, as well as its bureaucratic procedures have hindered the efficiency according to the implementation partners. Implementation partners consider that outsourcing of capacity-building activities from UNDP would increase the efficiency of the project.

SUSTAINABILITY: WILL THE BENEFITS OF THE WEESC PROJECT LAST?

Grassroots level sustainability:

- 80% of the interviewed KIs and FGDs mentioned that the results of the project both for self-employed and wage-employed women will likely sustain after the project;
- Women's networks that have been created and/or strengthened as a result of the project;
- Income of wage-employed women has been increased on average by 200 AZN, and for the self-employed women increase in the income was around 180 AZN;
- 85% of FGD participants mentioned that they have referred at least 2 other women to the center;
- Knowledge created within the project has been exchanged with the stakeholders and implementers.
- Technological Challenges to be Addressed: lower general digital skills, and especially digital sales skills for self-employed women was one of the most frequently mentioned concerns by KIs for sustainability, especially during the ongoing pandemic where the digital skills were equally important as general knowledge on business management and operations.
- Next Steps Challenge: besides grant provision, established businesses need mentoring and guidance in entering the markets, marketing and quality control.
- Phase 2 Design Challenges: designing the projects/WRC operations based on a participatory approach by holding FGDs with both experts and beneficiaries.



Source: UNDP Azerbaijan

SUSTAINABILITY: WILL THE BENEFITS OF THE WEESC PROJECT LAST?

Institutional level sustainability:

- WRCs as institutions is an important element indicating sustainability and according to KIIs and FGDs, a way forward for the sustenance of WRCs could be to operate them as an NGO and fundraise for their activities;
- Ensuring the independence and formulation of WRCs as independent NGOs is one of the major sustainability concerns.
- According to the private sector KIIs, the 2nd phase of the project should also aim to strengthen WRCs governance systems, the leadership capacity of its management, and financial capacity and management systems. Therefore, training in the area of organizational development, financial management, fundraising and proposal writing to be provided for the NGO working group.
- There is a consensus among the stakeholders of the project that in the 2nd phase, there is a need for more policy and institutional level interventions in Azerbaijan too. It can be combined with grassroots level components, as achieving gender equality is one of the priorities for the country now alongside with SDGs and National Development Plans.

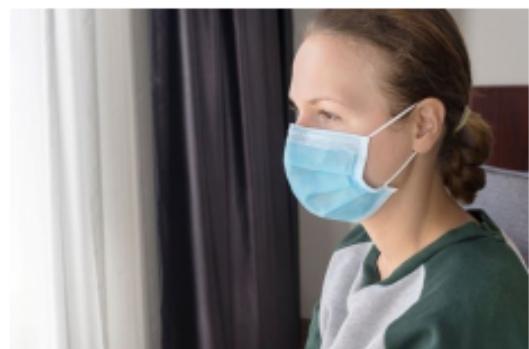


Source: UNDP Azerbaijan

PROGRAM RESPONSE AND ADAPTATION TO COVID-19 AND GEO-POLITICAL CHALLENGES

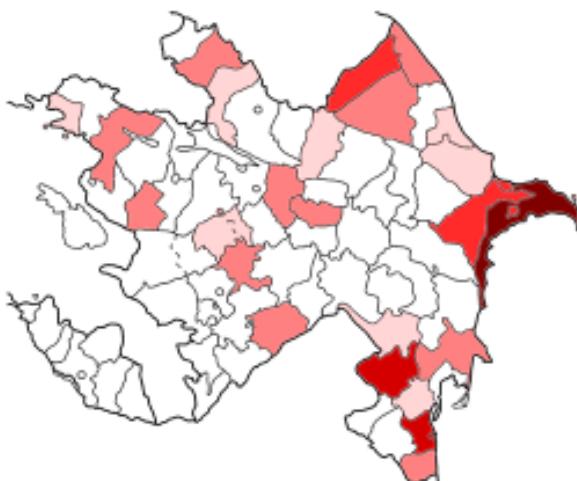
Success factors:

- The project has adapted well to the new realities of COVID-19, conducting the planned trainings and support sessions online, except the events such as trade exhibitions, and networking meetings;
- UNDP AZ has provided internet packages to the women in need, specially in the regions of Gushar and Sabirabad, where the internet costs might be higher based on the income of the families.
- UNDP AZ has delivered sessions on psychological assistance and domestic violence during the pandemic, which women were very supportive and useful to them and it has decreased the feeling of isolation during the pandemic.
- According to the FGD, women felt connected to the project and WRCs during the pandemic thanks to check-in calls from WRC coordinators to catch up on their learning, employment progress and self-employment challenges, and their internal whatsapp groups where they have shared the news and opportunities.



Source: Europe Council, Azerbaijan

PROGRAM RESPONSE AND ADAPTATION TO COVID-19 AND GEO-POLITICAL CHALLENGES

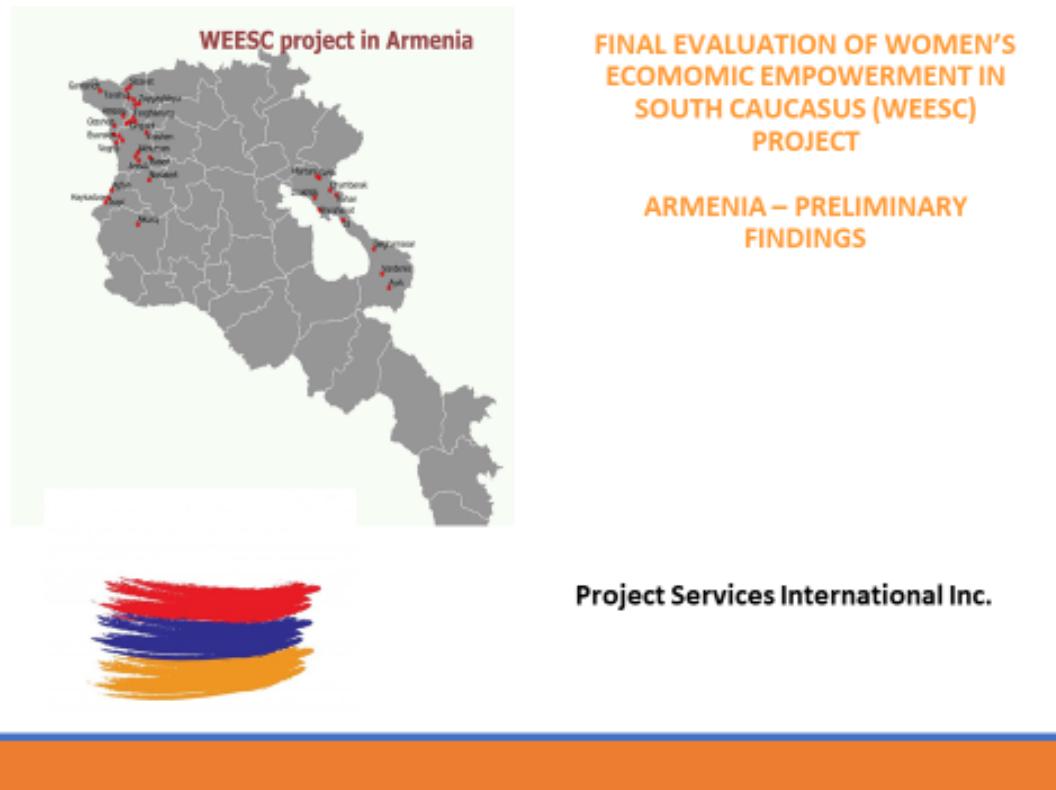


Source: COVID-19 map of Azerbaijan, Wikipedia
 Darker red areas had more COVID cases, which included Gusar and Khazar

Challenges:

- Pandemic, followed by cross-country lockdown and martial law due to the disrupted war between Azerbaijan-Armenia has increased the socio-economic challenges and decreased the overall consumer capacity in these regions.
- Self-employed women have experienced a major decrease in their sales and business opportunities; only few of them managed to digitize their services and goods and sustain the sales over the COVID-19 period.
- 80% of FGDs had either non-positive or mixed stands on online/digital trainings. The primary reason is the poor quality of internet connection, lack of well functioning devices to access the online trainings, as well as learning difficulties via digital tools.
- It is also linked to the workload factors (as children and other family members were home, so women had double burden of unpaid care work, sometimes triple burden of unpaid care work for household, animal husbandry and other work).

Annex O Preliminary Findings in Armenia



External Evaluation Team Members



2

Purpose of Presentation

- Team has finished the data collection phase and now has some preliminary findings
- WEESC is a complex project and we want to ensure that we have understood everything correctly and have not missed important opinions or evidence
- This Presentation:
 - Provides an opportunity for feedback from the UN Women, UNDP and stakeholders on the emerging findings
 - Helps us as evaluators to identify if there are any gaps in the evidence we have that need to be filled
 - Lays the analytical foundation for the development of lessons learned and recommendations to inform the design of the next phase of WEESC, with guidance from the assembled Evaluation Reference Group
- Objective—to make sure the evaluation serves the needs of the project stakeholders, including targeted beneficiaries

3

Objectives of Evaluation

- Assist UN Women, UNDP-Armenia, UNDP-Azerbaijan, SDC, ADA, and their partners to understand the relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of WEESC Project results to date
- Validate the project results in terms of achievements and/or challenges toward outcomes/outputs
- Validate and/or refine the project's theory of change (ToC) at this stage of implementation
- Document lessons learned, best practices and challenges to inform future work of UN Women in women's economic empowerment (WEE)
- Identify strategies for replication and scaling of WEESC best practices
- Provide forward-looking strategic and operational recommendations for implementation of Phase 2 and maximisation of ownership by partners in the 3 countries to foster sustainability.

4

Scope and Focus of Evaluation

Scope:

- Period from August 2018 to June 2020 (Years 1 & 2 of Phase One)
- Overall WEESC Project with a focus on Georgia, Armenia & Azerbaijan

Evaluation questions addressed issues of:

- Relevance:** Is the WEESC Project doing the right things given contextual changes and a greater emphasis on relevance to beneficiaries' priorities and needs?
- Coherence:** How well does the WEESC Project fit with a view to capture perspectives from partnerships and linkages, as well as to understand interventions within broader systems?
- Effectiveness:** Is the WEESC Project achieving its objectives, including by examining differential results and encouraging analysis of equity issues?
- Efficiency:** How well are the resources used (human, financial, material), including the notion of timeliness, and whether efficiency applied throughout the results chain?
- Sustainability:** Will the benefits last, focusing not on external funding, but on the continuation of benefits and highlighting the multidimensional nature of sustainability?

OVERVIEW OF EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

Key Informant Interviews (KIs)

N = 62 in person and via telecon

Semi-structured interviews with representatives from (a) national government, (b) local government, (c) private sector, (d) community organizations/NGOs, (e) donors and (f) UN agencies/project staff

- Armenia: 16
- Azerbaijan: 14
- Georgia: 13
- UN Women Georgia Staff: 6
- Donors: 4
- Inception Phase: 9

Focus group Discussion (FGDs)

n = 16 FGDs with 92 women participants

FGDs were conducted focused on (a) women trained and self-employed, (b) women trained and secured jobs and (c) women trained but economically inactive and (d) women trained in GRB

FGDs completed per country:

- Armenia: 5 covering Geghakunk, Shirak, Armasia, Chambark (31 participants)
- Azerbaijan: 6 covering Gusar, Khazar, Sabirabad (30 participants)
- Georgia: 5 covering Marmeuli, Akhatsikhe, Lagodekhi, Telavi, Aspindza (31 participants)

Document and data review

Detailed desk review for all 3 countries, including:

- Project documents
- Inception reports/studies
- Strategic documents
- M&E documents and trackers
- Progress Reports
- Financial Reports

Structured Survey

n = 28

Structured questionnaires were sent to 28 staff of WEESC and Implementing partners

Response rate: 38%

Learning Briefs

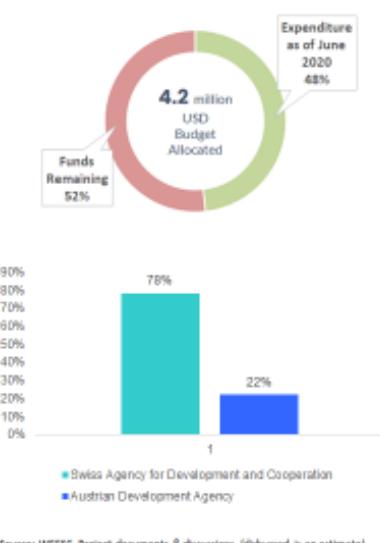
N = 3

Armenia: focused on interconnection between three outcomes

Azerbaijan: focused on outcome 1 and contrasting learning between a mature and 2 new WRCs

Georgia: focused on the success and learnings on WEESC's work on the Labor Code and Gender Based Budgeting

WEESC Overview



A partnership between UN Women in Georgia & UNDP in Armenia & Azerbaijan intended to build upon each agency's niche & comparative advantage in WEE & GE programming

Strategically targets 3 levels of interventions:

- **Outcome 1: Grassroots Level**

Women, particularly the poor & socially excluded, use skills, economic opportunities & relevant information to be self-employed &/or to join the formal labour sector in Armenia, Azerbaijan & Georgia

- **Outcome 2: Policy and Legislation Level**

Armenia & Georgia implement adequate legislative & policy frameworks to enable WEE

- **Outcome 3: Institutional Level**

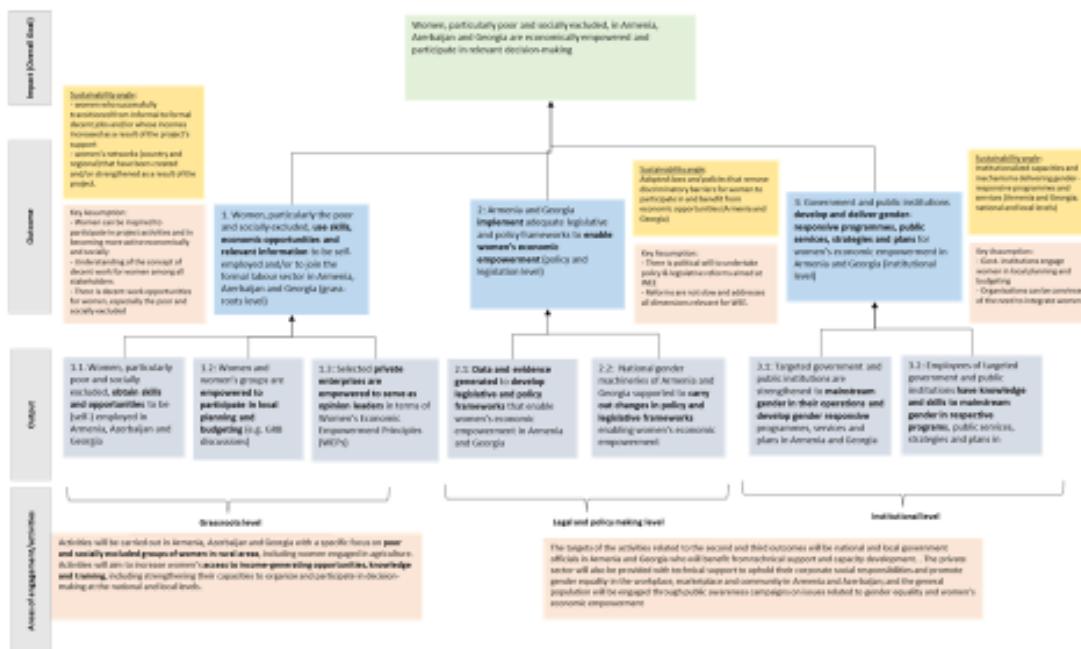
Government & public institutions develop & deliver gender-responsive programmes, public services, strategies & plans for WEE in Armenia & Georgia

Timeframe for WEESC Project Implementation:

2018-2021 for Phase One; 2021-2024 for Phase Two; and 2024-2025 for Exit Phase

7

WEESC Theory of Change



8

Overview: How Has the WEESC Project Responded to the Country Context?

Outcome 01

- Armenian rural women, particularly the poor & socially excluded, use skills, economic opportunities and relevant information to become self-employed and/or to join the formal labour market.
- Women involved in community-based discussions, meetings, and events actively raised their voices and revealed their needs, demands. Women's participation brings a new vision and fulfills the gap between the government and the community members.*

Outcome 02

- Armenia's national and local governments implement adequate legislative and policy frameworks towards achieving women's economic empowerment
- Meetings and discussions among beneficiaries, stakeholders, donors and local government entities for assessing the capacities, needs and demands of community members
- Women's capacity building and awareness raising on GRB and public policy
- Women's participation in regular sessions of Councils of the Elder's
- Public discussions and women's participation in "Communities 5 year Strategic Plan"*

Outcome 03

- UN Women Georgia in partnership with the national Statistical Committee of Armenia (ARMSTAT) has concluded a study with the objective of calculating the adjusted gender pay gap and the associated economic inequalities of women in the labour market in Armenia.

9

Relevance: Is the WEESC Project Doing the Right Things?

The design of the WEESC Project is highly aligned with international, regional and national GEWE conventions, including CEDAW, and is particularly relevant to:

- the government & public sector;
- the private sector; and the
- target group at the grassroots level (poor marginalized women)
- SDGs

National documents in Armenia illustrating harmonization with WEESC Project's goals:

- 1) Gender Equality Strategy 2019–2023;
- 2) RA Law on Ensuring Equal Opportunities & Equal Rights for Women & Men;
- 3) RA Human Rights Strategy (2019);
- 4) The Strategic Programme 2019–2023 on the "Implementation of Policy Ensuring Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Women and Men" in RA

MAIN FINDINGS

- The project built good cooperation with local government entities, other institutions and municipalities. The government supported the program by giving them free space and amenities to hold meetings and discussions at a local level.
- The most valuable, relevant and effective skills that the beneficiaries gained were related to public budgeting in their respective communities. The skills obtained were useful for preparing effective project proposals that better reflect their community's needs and existing capacities.
- The project was very relevant and well-received, especially in the agricultural production and the food processing industry. Key successes were achieved in the economic development of the household where the women became more aware of their strengths and capacity and developed family-based businesses.
- The GRB discussions among the women were also relevant, as women understood their crucial role in the society and their collective power in addressing the issue of gender inequality in education, politics, and the social and economic development of the community, etc.

Final Evaluation of WEESC Project Phase One

10

Relevance: Is The WEESC Project Doing The Right Things?

Relevance: To what extent does the intervention reflect and align with Armenia's international, regional and national agreements, conventions and/or best practices on gender equality and women's empowerment?

Outcome 1. Grassroots Level

Good progress: The project design reflected the GEWE priorities of both the stakeholders and the implementing partners. It was very relevant and well-received by the rural communities, especially in the agricultural production and the food processing industry.

Shortcomings: Despite the overall favourable regulatory environment, women remain mostly disadvantaged, the main causes of which are high burden of family and overall household responsibilities, & discriminatory social customs & practices in rural areas.

Outcome 2. Legislative and Policy Level

Good progress: Armenian law extends significant protection to women and workers with family responsibilities, and notable legal amendments have been made in relation to eliminating discrimination, yet there are still certain shortcomings.

Shortcomings: Armenian law does not directly address domestic workers, and the overall regulatory framework is discouraging to the formalization of domestic work. It means that women engaged in agricultural activities will not obtain high pensions and will become dependent on others since the pension is calculated based on the formal activities.

Outcome 3. Institutional Level

Good progress: Accessibility of kindergartens is an essential obstacle for working mothers. In September 2019 the Yerevan municipality launched an extended kindergarten service program, which allows parents to get paid extended stay for the child. In addition to kindergarten care, in 2018 the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs introduced a program for subsidizing nanny pay to working parents of children under 3 years old.

Shortcomings: Even in the Yerevan municipality, the latest data indicates a significant shortage of kindergarten facilities, resulting in a waiting line to enroll children in kindergartens. Meantime, a lack of accessibility to kindergartens is a major obstacle for working mothers, & even more so in the rural areas targeted by the project.

Coherence: How Well Does the WEESC Project Fit?

- WEESC design was coherent and comprehensive in terms of reaching the UN's wider goals of equality for all people and GEWE goals of the Armenian UN Country Team (e.g. UNDP)
- The threefold nature of the program (bottom-up & top-down) contributed to its effectiveness and addressed the needs of women at all levels (grassroots, law & policy, and institutional)

Good progress was in ensuring linkages and partnerships within the broader WEE ecosystem and partners and stakeholders were involved in the following activities:

- Baseline assessment on respective needs, priorities and concerns of the beneficiaries at grassroots level
- Participation in the meetings and workshops with donors, local government entities in order to prevent possible duplication in project interventions with other programs and/or projects
- Building business relationships with potential stakeholders, beneficiaries, government entities and enhancing their capacities through training courses
- Business consultations
- Generating resources for the project implementation and providing back-up support for field visits
- Sharing information in terms of gender-based data that was collected for respective regions with local government entities and the national government
- Networking among different government entities, CSOs, private sector, consultants, etc.

Coherence: How Well Does the WEESC Project Fit?

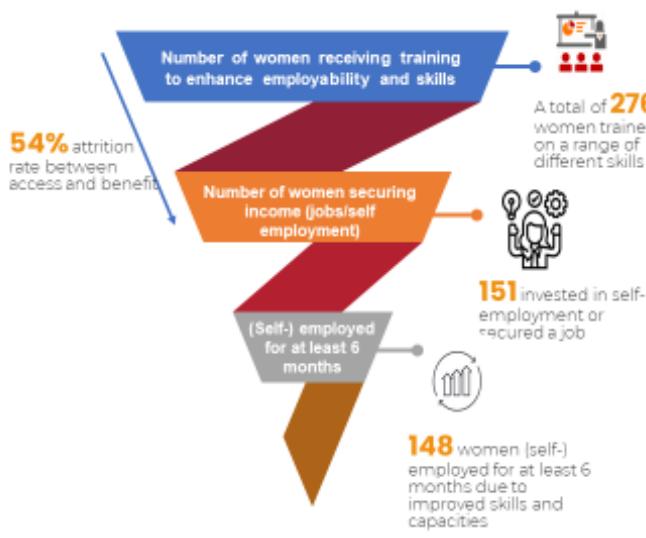
Main findings:

- In terms of positive synergies, the implementing partners share the grassroots women's contacts with other stakeholders and partner organizations to engage them in additional programs and initiatives. "Green Lane" as an implementing partner, provided free work space for newly established enterprises, engaged lots of connections and undertook significant effort to empower women in their communities. They also engaged the children of the beneficiaries. In this regard, they created amenities for the children in order to give the women an opportunity to visit the center and attend training courses.
- The networking processes were effective especially at the grassroots level, since women in each region had very strong bonds with each other and could easily cooperate together.
- In terms of synergies, they cooperated with many NGOs and international organizations working at the place and exchanged beneficiaries within other programs.
- At the institutional level, the project contributed to synergies and inter-linkages across countries, i.e. CRRC Georgia, in close cooperation with CRRC Armenia, conducted research around women's economic inactivity.
- Another example is the Statistical Committee of RA that conducted a "Gender Pay Gap" analysis in which data collection and processing procedures were synchronized to address project objectives in both Georgia and Armenia.
- The main risk of the program is the fact that it could overlap and duplicate other WEE related being led by programs USAID, World Bank, Austrian Development bank, etc.

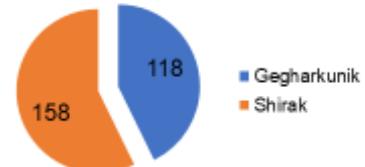
Final Evaluation of WEESC Project Phase One

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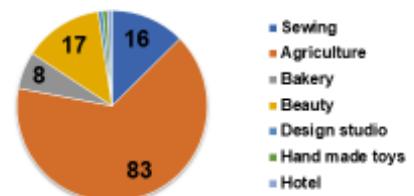
Results of Capacity-Building in Shirak & Gegharkunik Marzes

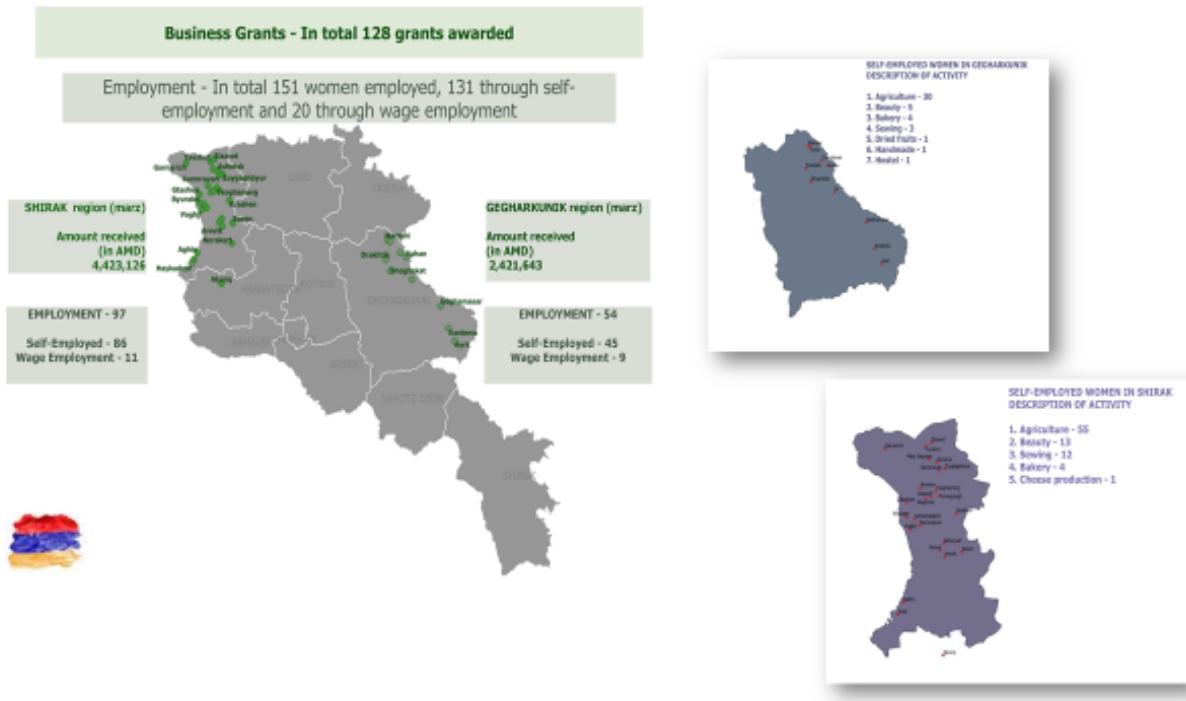


Total number of women trained



Business grants





Effectiveness: In Relation to the Target Group at the Grassroots Level

Women learned life skills, gained capacities for their agricultural activities, obtained new equipment, new crops for developing their small businesses, and gained self-esteem and improved self-confidence, leading to increased roles within their household.

Good progress:

- Built capacity to establish small businesses
- Increased self-esteem and self-reliance for participation in decision-making at regional level
- Increased social networking skills and social capital.
- Accessed potential markets and new opportunities
- Introduced to new crops and techniques in agriculture and marketing
- Learned to create Facebook pages to promote their businesses which is the cheapest and the most effective way of marketing for small and medium businesses. The women also used their Facebook pages for communication and following up on the issues in the community such as COVID issues, transportation and road issues, etc.
- Economic support provided for migrant workers' families as, due to the Pandemic, seasonal workers stayed in the country and the HH were deprived of remittances. Armenian labor migrants and their families are likely to emerge as a vulnerable group during the COVID19 crisis, but the government is yet to formulate support measures specifically targeted to this group.
- Women were not only professionally trained but also experienced a change in perception and self-esteem. Due to their increased confidence and self-esteem, their roles in the household increased, resulting in them taking more initiative and becoming self-determined.

Effectiveness: In Relation to the Private Sector

Good Progress:

- Equal proportion of women and male workers in workplace
- Equal income/salary
- Capacity building training for staff
- Training courses related to the code of ethics in organizational policy
- Changes in the attitudes of women towards their life, gender roles in the society and to work itself.
- Gender-sensitive policy within organizational policy and HR systems (selection of the staff, the career development code of ethics, people policy etc.).
- In the Covid-19 context, the private sector responded to the obstacles of the global crisis and changing the trends in the labour market.
- Digitally-enabled businesses increased as well as the already sizable number of workers in non-standard forms of employment: temporary, part-time, and self-employment. Women and disenfranchised groups, such as disadvantaged youth, migrants and the least-skilled, are over-represented in non-standard forms of employment.
- The willingness of the women to participate in decision making processes increased in recent years. Moreover, there was a change in mentality towards child-care, parental time investment, safeguarding, etc. In light of this, women secured with jobs obtained new privileges from both the state and their employers. Women, having children under their care, also gained benefits from the state.

Barriers:

- Further capacity building is needed to develop the necessary skills and knowledge needed to empower women working in the private sector.
- Men are found to be more successful in financial works and STEM, but in Armenia women have engaged in STEM increasingly in recent years. Similarly, women are found to be more responsible, committed, detail oriented, well-organized, and can multitask. They always do more than expected. But unfortunately, even though they may have more skills than males, they lack self-confidence.
- Women in rural areas need continued support to become empowered.

Effectiveness: In Relations to the Government & Public Sector

Early Signs of Progress:

- Women are actively involved in GRB meetings and have improved skills in gender sensitive budgeting in Shirak region.
- Increased number of women from the rural areas and vulnerable groups participating during budget discussions.
- Engagement of the local government in program implementation at the grassroots level helped the community organizations select vulnerable groups and program beneficiaries who, then in turn, established their own businesses as a result of the project. The training courses held in local government entities for women, bring new ideas to create active women groups/networks in each community for advocacy.
- At a local level, the head of the enlarged community of Amasia is a women with significant experience in many community-based programs. Her experience enables an understanding of the needs of each community, and facilitates the coordination and allocation of activities in an efficient and effective way. For example, new schools were opened in Amasia which has contributed to addressing the challenge of child care for women in the community.
- At a national level, the launch of different approaches and new programs to promote the development of small and medium enterprises, social entrepreneurship, and agro-tourism have positively influenced women's economic empowerment. For example, the loan policy was changed recently to ease the tax burden for small and family-based enterprises.
- New decisions and regulations have also been adopted to improve the situation of SMEs during Covid-19

Effectiveness: In relation to the Government and the Public sector

Shortcomings:

- Small size of grants given - shortage of financial support
- Difficulties in organizing fieldwork and data collection procedure for "Gender pay gap" report
- Difficulties in coordinating a complex project in the field involving many people, facilities and supplies. (In terms of activities connected to the Statistical Committee of RA)
- Lack of digital and technological support for women in rural areas (i.e. difficulties with Zoom)
- Low motivation among women to participate in GRB in Gegharkunik region. NOTE* During FGDs, participants noted that they didn't want to be engaged in decision making processes as they were not typically well-informed about municipal discussions and matters of the Municipality
- The low number of CSOs in Gegharkunik region limited opportunities for synergies across the project interventions.

Barriers:

- Gender stereotypes and existing prejudices that women should stay at home and only men should earn money
- All of the members of the Council of the Elders are men
- Lack of transportation among communities. Public transportation connects only cities and there are no appropriate vehicles for transportation among villages. This causes difficulties for women in terms of securing employment and participating in decision-making.
- Existing education system causes the gender inequality of the society and this issue should be brought to the attention of policy makers. Local government representatives think that formal education can have a great impact and play an important role in reinforcing gender equality.

Effectiveness: Shortcomings and Barriers & Obstacles to Achieving Results

Outcome 1,2,3

Shortcomings:

- Generally, the main target group could have been more clearly defined in accordance with their economic inactivity and vulnerability status. Most of the beneficiaries were previously involved in similar programmes.
- Prior to the programme implementation phase, priority spheres for women's empowerment weren't highlighted very well given the local context and capacities (social, economic, political infrastructures) of each community.
- Lack of face-to-face interactions in the field (as a result of COVID-19)
- Online modality of meetings, restrictions of field-work, difficulties with Zoom
- The project's relatively short time span. In terms of quantitative measures, the project is achieving its objectives, but for policy makers and experts there are qualitative changes that are not yet visible now and require more time. Also, 1.5 years is not sufficient time for establishing a business given the many risks involved with start-ups. In this regard, most of the beneficiaries wanted to enlarge their businesses, to create more employment opportunities in the future.

Barriers and obstacles:

- The refugees from Artsakh (NKR) living with beneficiaries' families become very despondent as their family members were participating in the war in Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh).
- Mental health issues of the beneficiaries during the war. The project team tried to engage those who were most affected during the war especially in Gegharkunik region, as it is on the borders of Azerbaijan and most of the refugees from Artsakh were relocated there.
- Psychological stress and deteriorating social economic conditions of the country because of the war and COVID-19
- Existence of climate risks for agricultural businesses, since there are no supports for harvest protection, stations against hail etc.
- Very few opportunities for social enterprises & appropriate legislation systems.
- Women in Armenia face many challenges and stereotypes that affect them deeply, one of them being the issue of gender inequality. The main reason lies within the mindset and the many stereotypes of the rural population.
- Global changes caused by COVID-19 and political circumstances

Efficiency: How Well Are Resources Being Used?

Shortcomings:

- Beneficiaries weren't involved in preparation and design of the programme from the beginning. Increased engagement during design could improve the targeting of the many activities and initiatives of the project and improve the likelihood of achieving the intended outcomes.
- Access to finance (fundraising) is the main challenge at the grassroots and community levels. In this regard, establishing women's cooperatives would enhance opportunities and financial stability.
- There have been some challenges related to the management of the project on the ground, including structure and administration. It is important to have a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities within the UNDP team and implementing partners.
- Lack of project awareness-raising campaigns, at the beginning of the programme and also during implementation.
- Some respondents reported insufficient monitoring and evaluation procedures for the WEESC project and also for GRB in each region.

Successes:

- The programme has delivered the planned outputs and implementing partners have contributed to the also secured the project's efficiency through monitoring mechanisms such as:
 - Follow-up calls
 - Field visits
 - Feedback discussion regarding projects' shortcomings, outcomes, etc.
 - Short-term, mid-term evaluation questionnaires
- At a grassroots level, the women participants have been very engaged with various activities and efforts to improve their economic situation.
- The implementing partner, Green Lane, didn't limit the number of participants in the project, on the contrary, they also encouraged participation of members of the household, which is why they exceeded the target number of participants (180).
- The project has had a positive impact not only on the women but also on their entire families.

Final Evaluation of WEESC Project Phase One

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Sustainability: Will The Benefits Last?

Over half of the interviewed stakeholders and beneficiaries considered the program's activities, initiatives and actions as sustainable.

At the grassroots level:

- The creation of groups of women, became a platform of dialogue and sharing among rural women. This cooperation helped them share different information about their businesses and strengthened the bonds among them.
- Application of their knowledge and skills gained into practice was limited due to mismatch between realistic economic opportunities and training received in. For e.g. in Shirak region women were trained in agriculture but there is a lack of infrastructure such as irrigation system and transportation for producing and marketing their product.
- Training content has been appreciated by participants but timing of the trainings were not ideal for women to attend affecting their participation rate.
- Training content and delivery is reliant on WEESC partners and continuation of training service is at risk without program support.
- No clear evidence that grants were able to help small women's businesses to continue or expand. Some only saw it as a one-time financial support without the view of sustaining or expanding the business. Those that did well mostly had existing businesses, skills and capacity.

At the private sector level:

- Although companies signed WEPs, there was very little understanding and application of their engagement. While international companies have an implied interest to meet WEE outcomes, local companies have very little understanding.

At the institutional level:

- Local government and other State officers have committed to align GRB with national priorities, but practical application has been low. Most of the policies are top down in nature with little bottom up involvement.
- However, they did share that gender equality takes a lower priority than other issues such as infrastructure, etc.
- Participation of both women and men from the community continue to be low in GBB as they do not see enough value in it.

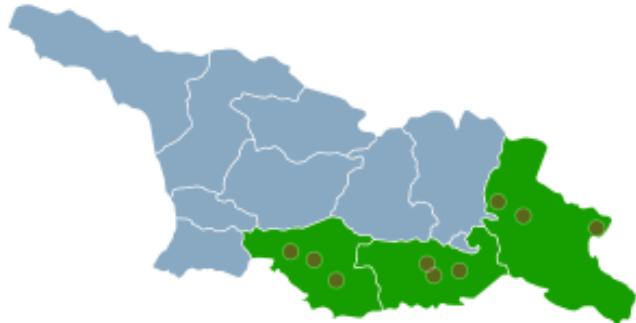
Final Evaluation of WEESC Project Phase One

22

Program Response and Adaptation to COVID-19 and Geopolitical Challenges

- Many beneficiaries needed to have consultations and techniques on certain areas of agriculture to increase effectiveness. For that reason, the implementing partners created online toolkits and solved the problem.
- Self-employed women found new ways and technologies for selling their products.
- For agricultural groups, Green Lane helped beneficiaries by different kinds of advertisements among clients. Indeed, the Social Media Marketing (SMM) skills gained during the program helped beneficiaries to overcome the barriers of communication created by the pandemic.
- Women, also developed a special delivery system and increased their income as a result.
- Due to the COVID-19 restrictions, other stakeholders organized interventions to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on households that have seasonal workers.
- Child education, was also among the many problems risen by the pandemic for the beneficiaries, since the duties of the mothers were increased.
- This year hit the hardest for the beneficiaries from the Gegharkunik region, because the region is situated on the borders of Azerbaijan. Municipalities were closed due to the pandemic, and there was no motivation to do any work towards GRB or other.
- COVID had many disadvantages and advantages for all. As an advantage, the implementing partners were able to organize training courses such as SMM, marketing and digital tools, and because of it women were able to acquire new skills that would be beneficial for them in the future.
- As a disadvantage, all the courses were done virtually on Zoom which created many difficulties. Participants had trouble understanding the content, organizers felt a lot of pressure to transfer the content in an efficient way, field visitations were done online, and the program as a whole was postponed and was left uncertain.

Annex P Preliminary Findings in Georgia



FINAL EVALUATION OF WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT IN SOUTH CAUCASUS (WEESC) PROJECT

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS FOR GEORGIA

Project Services International Inc.

1



PURPOSE OF THE PRESENTATION

- Team has finished the data collection phase and now has some **preliminary findings**
- WEESC is a **complex project** and we want to ensure that we have understood everything correctly and have not missed important opinions or evidence
- This Presentation:
 - Provides an opportunity for **feedback** from the UN Women, UNDP and stakeholders on the emerging findings
 - Helps us as evaluators to identify if there are **any gaps** in the evidence we have that need to be filled
 - Lays the **analytical foundation** for the development of lessons learned and recommendations to inform the design of the next phase of WEESC, with **guidance** from the assembled Evaluation Reference Group
 - Objective—to make sure the evaluation **serves the needs** of the project stakeholders, including targeted beneficiaries

OBJECTIVES OF EVALUATION

- Assist UN Women, UNDP-Armenia, UNDP-Azerbaijan, SDC, ADA, and their partners to understand **the relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability** of WEESC Project results to date
- Validate the **project results** in terms of achievements and/or challenges toward outcomes/outputs
- Validate and/or refine the project's **theory of change (ToC)** at this stage of implementation
- Document **lessons learned, best practices and challenges** to inform future work of UN Women in **women's economic empowerment (WEE)**
- Identify strategies for replication and scaling of WEESC **best practices**
- Provide forward-looking **strategic and operational recommendations** for implementation of Phase 2 and maximisation of ownership by partners in the 3 countries to foster sustainability.

SCOPE AND FOCUS OF EVALUATION

Scope:

- Period from August 2018 to June 2020 (Years 1 & 2 of Phase One)
- Overall WEESC Project with a focus on Georgia, Armenia & Azerbaijan

Evaluation questions addressed issues of:

- Relevance: Is the WEESC Project doing the right things given contextual changes and a greater emphasis on relevance to beneficiaries' priorities and needs?
- Coherence: How well does the WEESC Project fit with a view to capture perspectives from partnerships and linkages, as well as to understand interventions within broader systems?
- Effectiveness: Is the WEESC Project achieving its objectives, including by examining differential results and encouraging analysis of equity issues?
- Efficiency: How well are the resources used (human, financial, material), including the notion of timeliness, and whether efficiency applied throughout the results chain?
- Sustainability: Will the benefits last, focusing not on external funding, but on the continuation of benefits and highlighting the multidimensional nature of sustainability?

OVERVIEW OF EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

Key Informant Interviews (KIs)

N = 62 in person and via telecom

Semi-structured interviews with representatives from (a) national government, (b) local government, (c) private sector, (d) community organizations/NGOs, (e) donors and (f) UN agencies/project staff

- Armenia: 16
- Azerbaijan: 14
- Georgia: 13
- UN Women Georgia Staff: 6
- Donors: 4
- Inception Phase: 9

Focus group Discussion (FGDs)

n = 16 FGDs with 92 women participants

FGDs were conducted focused on (a) women trained and self employed, (b) women trained and secured jobs and (c) women trained but economically inactive and (d) women trained in GRB

FGDs completed per country:

- Armenia: 5 covering Geghakunk, Shirak, Armasia, Chambark (31 participants)
- Azerbaijan: 6 covering Gusar, Khazer, Sabirabad (30 participants)
- Georgia: 5 covering Marmuleti, Akhalkalaki, Lagodekhi, Telavi, Aspindza (31 participants)

Document and data review

Detailed desk review for all 3 countries, including:

- Project documents
- Inception reports/studies
- Strategic documents
- M&E documents and trackers
- Progress Reports
- Financial Reports

Structured Survey

n = 28

Structured questionnaires were sent to 28 staff of WEESC and implementing partners

Response rate: 39%

Learning Briefs

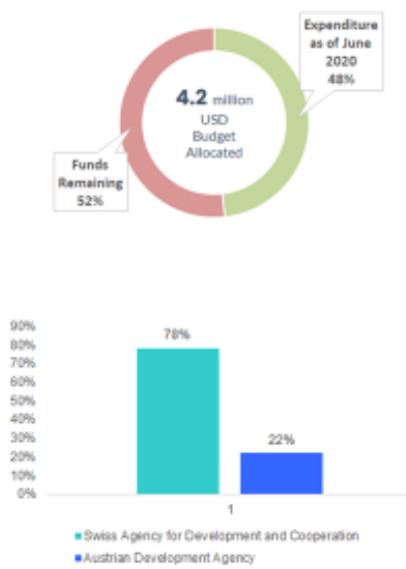
N = 3

Armenia: focused on interconnection between three outcomes

Azerbaijan: focused on outcome 1 and contrasting learnings between a mature and 2 new WRCs

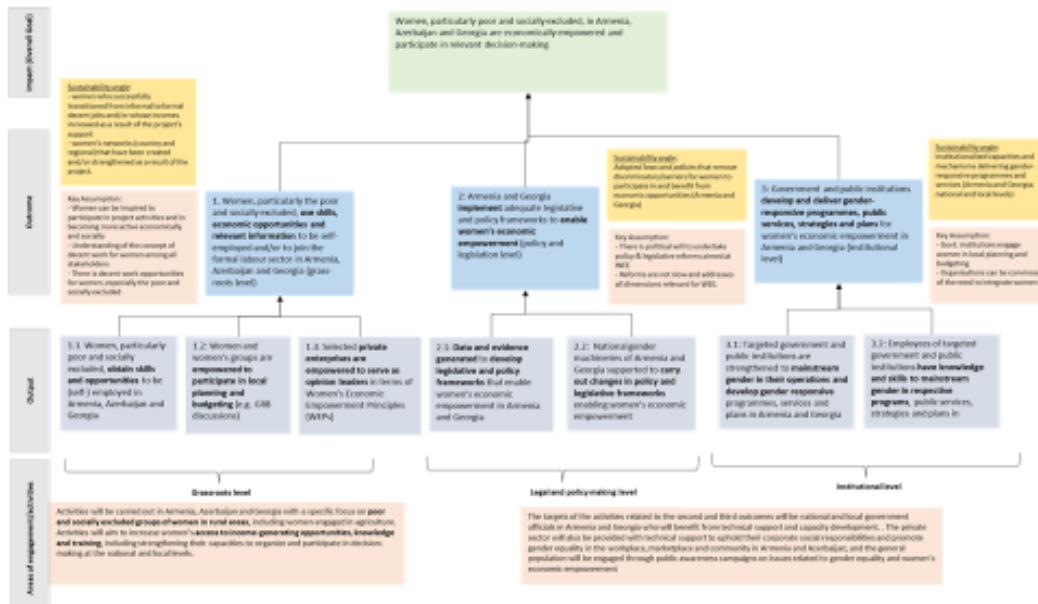
Georgia: focused on the success and learnings on WEESC's work on the Labor Code and Gender Based Budgeting

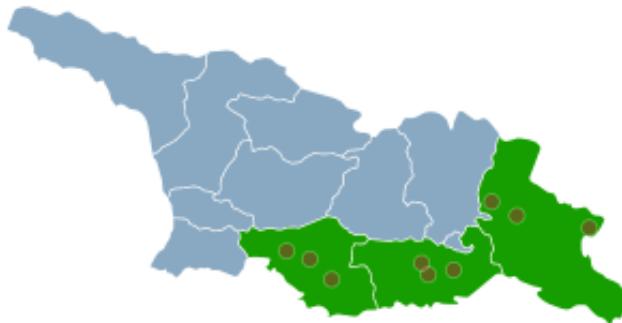
WEESC OVERVIEW



- A partnership between UN Women in Georgia & UNDP in Armenia & Azerbaijan intended to build upon each agency's niche & comparative advantage in WEE & GE programming
- Strategically targets 3 levels of interventions:
 - **Outcome 1: Grassroots Level**
Women, particularly the poor & socially excluded, use skills, economic opportunities & relevant information to be self-employed &/or to join the formal labour sector in Armenia, Azerbaijan & Georgia
 - **Outcome 2: Policy and Legislation Level**
Armenia & Georgia implement adequate legislative & policy frameworks to enable WEE
 - **Outcome 3: Institutional Level**
Government & public institutions develop & deliver gender-responsive programmes, public services, strategies & plans for WEE in Armenia & Georgia
- Timeframe for WEESC Project Implementation:
2018-2021 for Phase One; 2021-2024 for Phase Two; and 2024-2025 for Exit Phase

WEESC THEORY OF CHANGE





PRELIMINARY FINDINGS FOR GEORGIA

Anna Iluridze, WEE Specialist
for Georgia

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Strategic Objective

How the WEESC responded to the country context:

Outcome 01

- Social mobilisation of women, particularly poor and excluded, in nine municipalities from the three target regions of Kakheti, Kvemo Kartli and Samtskhe-Javakheti and establishing self-help groups.
- Training and capacity development of socially mobilized women on topics but not limited to financial literacy and business management.
- Creating a platform for dialogue and exchange between mobilized women and local authorities around the issues relevant for women's economic empowerment.

Outcome 02

- Technical support to GEOSTAT in the development of the assessment methodology of the gender wage gap, employment status and access to economic resources (land and finances) in line with international best practices.
- Assessment of prospective ratification of ILO convention No. 183 (Maternity Protection), No. 156 (Workers with family responsibilities) and No. 189 (Domestic Workers) in Georgia.
- Development of the assessment matrix to conduct mapping of existing social protection floors based on ILO standards.
- Providing technical support in the development of methodology for assessment of hazardous occupations for pregnant women and nursing mothers in Georgia.
- Organizing expert group meetings and policy dialogues in relation to gender wage gap and advocating with the Government of Georgia to join the Equal Pay International Coalition (EPIC).

Outcome 03

- Conducting Participatory Gender Audits (PGAs) in selected government agencies (3) and providing support in the development and institutionalization of Gender Impact Assessment (GIA) methodology;
- Providing technical support in the development and institutionalization of mechanisms to receive and respond to complaints of gender discrimination in the workplace, including sexual harassment in at least three targeted institutions in Georgia;
- Introduction of Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) methodology in at least 5 of 9 targeted municipalities in Georgia.

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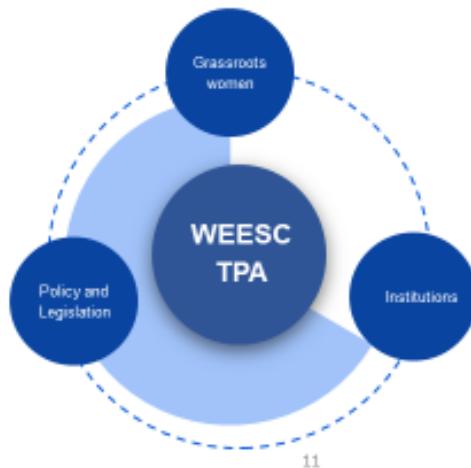
Relevance

Women's economic empowerment is one of the main goals to access gender equality and Georgia has committed politically and legally to gender equality in economic participation.

- Project focuses and builds upon the synergies between gender equality and economic, social and environmental sustainability
- This focus is in line with Georgia's international commitments under EU Association agreement, SDGs, CEDAW committee recommendations and are linked to national priorities through the UN Partnership for Sustainable Development in Georgia (UNPSD-Georgia 2016/20).
- The WEESC project document directly speaks to the strategic priorities in Switzerland's Cooperation Strategy for the South Caucasus (2017/20) and of Austrian Development Agency

FINDING: the project is not only aligned with the key gender equality legal and policy frameworks but often engages for further development of women's economic empowerment agenda and gender mainstreaming.

Programme interventions have been consistent with the demands and needs of the target groups. % of project beneficiaries interviewed confirmed that the interventions enhanced and supported their livelihoods, even during pandemics and all of the women confirmed increased capacities or to the resilience of their communities, including but not limited to increased understanding of women's rights and economic empowerment possibilities.



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Relevance

Success Factors for Relevance and Quality of Design:

- Political commitment of the Georgian Government and high engagement in the project implementation process of the Inter-Agency Commission on Gender Equality, Violence against Women and Domestic Violence of the Government of Georgia
- Active cooperation and participation from public institutions, local governments and communities.
- EU integration agenda and respective reforms that promote all efforts to women's economic empowerment

Challenges and Obstacles:

- Weak or underperforming governmental institutions at central and local levels because of:
 - lack of information/knowledge on gender equality and women's economic empowerment;
 - difficulties of the Administrative Unit staff to provide relevant services due to lack of information on resources;
 - High staff turnovers jeopardizing institutional memory. Institutional memory is a nationwide problem which undermines progress made by the government;
 - Lack of political will at the local level;
 - Lack of availability of gender disaggregated data for effective implementation of the GRB component at local level;
- Extremely deregulated economic policy in the Country and nearly nonexistent infrastructures to work on the intersections of gender and economy in Government agencies;
- Neoliberal approaches in entrepreneurship and business development - they often don't recognize their social protection mission.

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Coherence: How well does the Project fit?

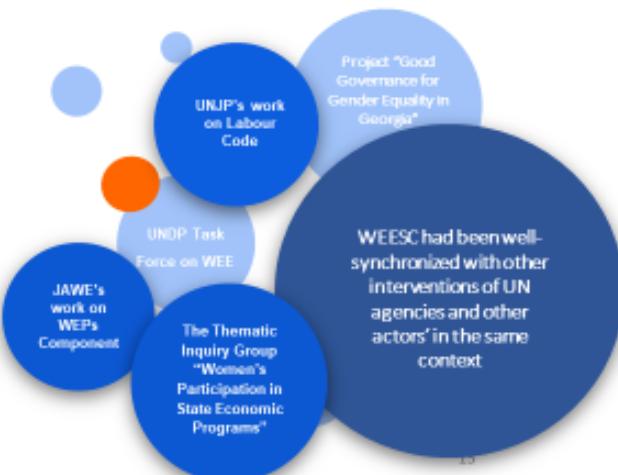
UN Women Strategic Plan (2018-2021) aspires to women having income security, decent work and economic autonomy, while project address different critical aspects that are instrumental for the achievement of the above outcome.

UN Women Georgia's work since 2010 to reach out to poor and socially excluded populations in Georgia, including ethnic minority women and the victims of GBV made the organization in a perfect position to assess the needs and priorities, form and design local decision-making spaces. Long term partnership with the CSO's like TASO and application of already successful social mobilisation methodology has enabled the project to reach the most vulnerable communities and address their needs.

FINDINGS: In relation to SDG's, the WEESC supported Georgian Government to (a) further design and reform programmes and policies to accelerate WEE and (b) helped them to fill the gender data gap through the successful partnership with GEOSTAT.

Implementing partners and other stakeholders recognize many comparative advantages of UN Women, including competencies and expertise in WEE and providing support beyond the mere funding of projects, such as technical support and strengthening the expertise, management, project preparation and implementation skills of organizations, which was particularly beneficial to grassroots organizations.

Particularly highly valued was UN Women's flexibility during implementation to respond to unexpected circumstances (especially, to the changes of political context) and willingness to enable organizations to adjust activities in order to provide more effective results.

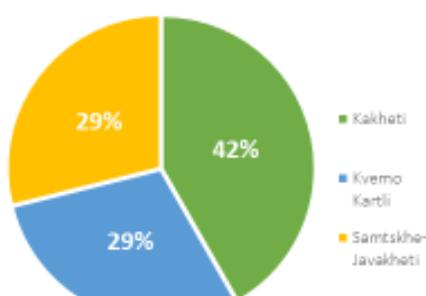


EFFECTIVENESS: OUTCOME 1

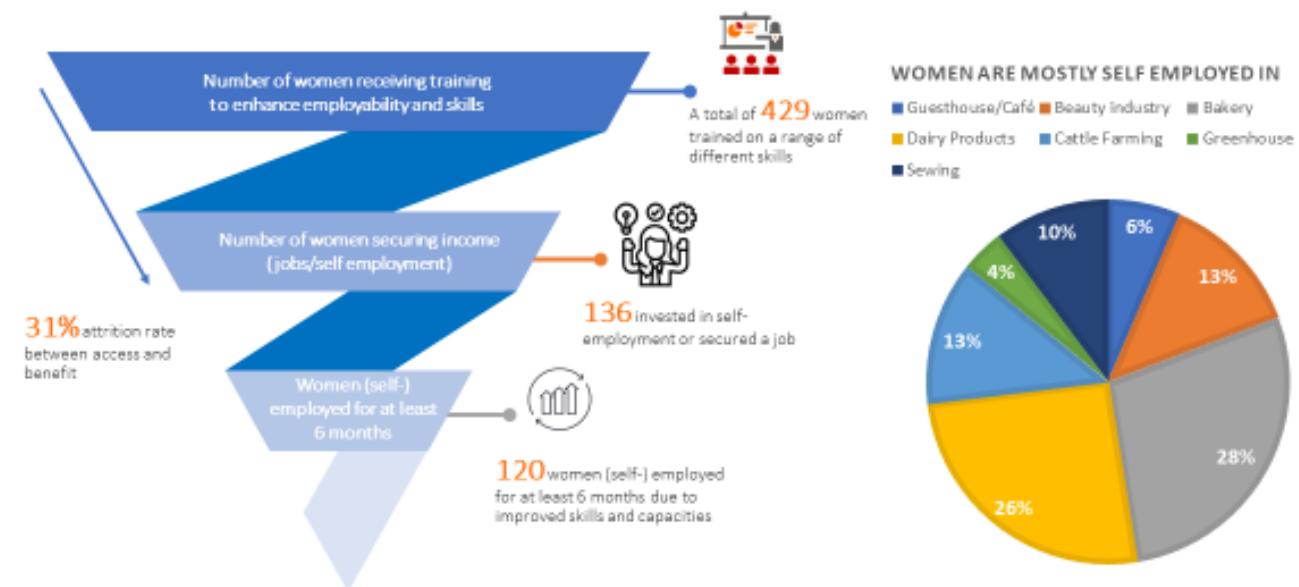
The WEESC project focused on establishing and developing capacities of vulnerable rural women in Georgia in the 3 regions: Kakheti, Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kvemo Kartli, as the project delivered results by:

- (a) training and capacity development of socially mobilized women on topics but not limited to financial literacy and business management; and
- (b) by creating a platform for dialogue and exchange between mobilized women and local authorities around the issues relevant for women's economic empowerment

Regional Distribution of Trainings Done



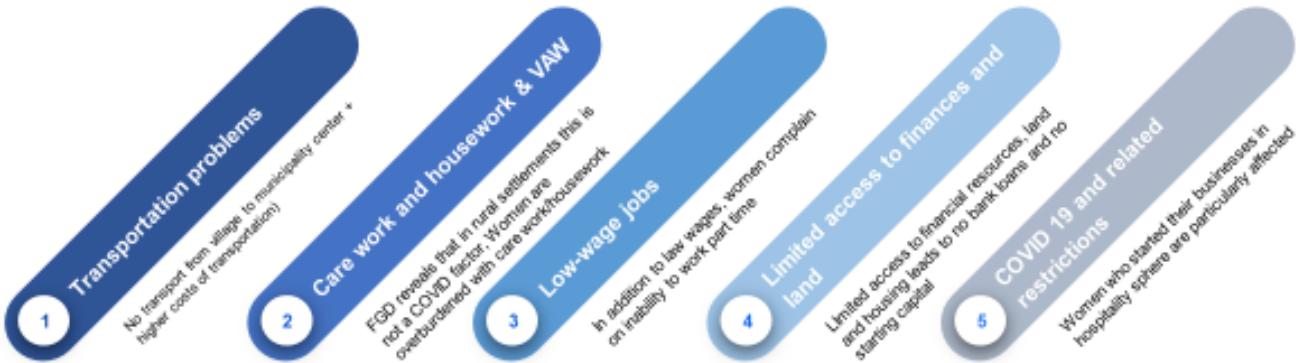
EFFECTIVENESS: OUTCOME 1



Skills and knowledge gained and applied:



Main Barriers to Employment and Self- Employment:



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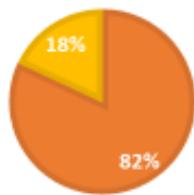
EFFECTIVENESS

SUCCESS FACTORS RELATED TO EFFECTIVENESS AT GRASSROOTS LEVEL

- The most effective approach, with visible results, involved capacity building of the women beneficiaries:
 - Gaining the skills connected to programme budgeting and project writing that allowed them to prepare successful project proposals for different donor organizations (outside WEESC) based on their community's or household's needs and capacities.
- Social mobilisation of women, particularly poor and excluded and establishing self-help groups that resulted in the improved socio-economic status of their families of beneficiaries:
 - Better access to financial resources (grants and municipal funds)
 - Increased income because of self-employment or own businesses
 - Better access to the decision making process on municipal level
- The Programme's success stories used in awareness campaigns helped to engage rural women to bring change.

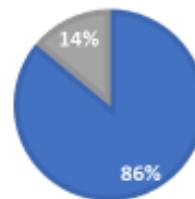
KEY RESULTS: GRANTS

■ Business Grants ■ Educational Grants



KEY RESULTS: EMPLOYMENT AND SELF-EMPLOYMENT

■ Self Employed ■ Employed



EFFECTIVENESS

CHALLENGES AND OBSTACLES TO EFFECTIVENESS AT GRASSROOTS LEVEL

- The social mobilization method implemented by TASO and KRDF captured the needs of those, the most vulnerable, however, the women, who got training but could not secure any economic activity have usually had several vulnerability criteria that formed an unique set of needs to be addressed in the empowerment context.
- 59% of trained women are invested in creating self-employment or secured a job or were self-employed for at least 6 months), thus the attrition rate was 31%, which can partly be attributed to the following factors:
 - Some women with multiple vulnerability criteria had difficulty in applying the specific skills/knowledge gained
 - Gender stereotypes and limited access to economic resources of Parental family or husband's family.
 - Time poverty because of the unpaid care responsibilities: Limited access to internet and electronic devices during pandemics. Limited access to schools and kindergartens during pandemics.
 - Early marriage and psychological violence on women family members to stay home.
- Most of the selected programme strategies and approaches towards achieving programme results are focused on employment but at the beneficiary level majority is securing self-employment. This translates into disconnection between the outcome 2, 3 and Outcome 1. Involving women in formal employment remains a challenge that the project needs to address.

EFFECTIVENESS

ON POLICY MAKING AND INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL

The cooperation with the Government sector (both central and local level) and the organizations like ILO and ISET, allowed the WEESC project to work on the policy making level and meantime, support the government agencies in gender mainstreaming process and increase their capacities to address the issues connected to WEE in the country, namely:

- development of the assessment methodology of the gender wage gap, employment status and access to economic resources in line with international best practices.
- ministerial decree on "Harmful and Hazardous Work for Pregnant, Postpartum and Nursing Women".
- Organizing expert group meetings and policy dialogues in relation to the gender wage gap that resulted in Government of Georgia officially declaring its intention to join Equal Pay International Coalition (EPIC).
- The Government announcing its consideration of the ratification of several Conventions, as its contribution to the ILO Centenary celebrations.
- Assessment of prospective ratification of ILO convention No. 183 (Maternity Protection), No. 156 (Workers with family responsibilities) and No. 189 (Domestic Workers) in Georgia and in development of the assessment matrix to conduct mapping of existing social protection floors based on ILO standards.

SUCCESS FACTORS: Participatory gender audits have been named by the respective government agencies as the best way to support gender mainstreaming on the institutional level, as it was followed with relevant, very concrete recommendations and gender action plans.

CHALLENGES AND OBSTACLES: GRB-component has been introduced with the financial offices of the municipalities that do not have the decision-making capacity and lack the data and support from the rest of the municipal apparatus, including political support from the decision makers + The project underestimated how much staff capacity is needed for partnering government agencies that does not have institutional mechanisms and knowledge of gender equality to focus on policy making (full time professionals working with partners)



EFFICIENCY:

HOW WELL ARE RESOURCES BEING USED?

- The WEESC has allocated resources to create a foundation for further WEE reforms in alignment with the international standards and quality essential tools and policy instruments in the country. Ensuring the Project supported reforms are linked to creating and analysing the data, developing methodologies, regulatory impact assessments and gender impact assessments will ensure sustainability of WEESC initiatives.
- Implementing partners have been included in the project planning and implementation. CSOs have been voicing women's feedback at the roundtables with UN Women that enabled them to swiftly react to the changing circumstances during global pandemics. Hence, the Programme was responsive to the needs of women in the region, especially women from minority and marginalized groups.
- Leadership and management of WEESC has been effective to maximize results. Results-based management and reporting enhanced the results and contributed to communications on Project achievements. The Programme overcame quite substantial challenges related to regional conflicts and COVID 19.

SUCCESS FACTORS: Use of an innovative three-pronged approach for the successful implementation of the WEESC which involved all relevant institutions and CSOs. Having grassroots and policy components ongoing at the same time as focus monitors (via GIA) enabled project to focus on how grant-giving agencies addressed existing inequalities;

CHALLENGES AND OBSTACLES: COVID-19 related travel restrictions limited the capacity of the UN Women team to gather the information and feedback via field visits that negatively influenced the monitoring quality.

SUSTAINABILITY

WILL THE EFFECTS LAST?

On policy-making and institutional levels, WEESC secured the sustainable results. During the first phase the project team invested a lot of time in creating and analyzing the data, developing methodologies, with the involvement of international and local experts to build the capacity in the field and there is a room

- **Successful partnerships established or improved due to the project increase prospects for sustainability.** Evaluation evidence indicates some progress in the development of partnerships at national and especially, on grassroots levels. However, **there is a room for supporting the establishment of regional partnerships** on all three levels during the next phase of the project.
- However, there is a strong commitment and understanding among key stakeholders that the **Project should continue for the results achieved to be more sustainable.** The KIs with partner Government Agencies reveal that it will be almost impossible to continue work and address all the PGA's recommendations without project support, mainly to strengthen the capacity component.
- While women at grassroots level are empowered and well - equipped to voice their needs, there is the feeling of an unfinished process with regards to Gender Responsive Budgeting in the selected municipalities. The FGDs with municipal representatives and CSOs reveal that for the sustainable results on GRB component, the project needs to continue work with the decision makers on the municipality level to raise their awareness on the benefits of gender-responsive budgeting + influence the institutionalization of GRB related work.

On grassroots level:

- The partnership and solidarity in rural women's communities have already spread beyond the WEESC activities and resulted in several grants awarded to cover the communal needs voiced by them.
- **Grassroots approaches to raise awareness and influence behaviors have been successful and will be important to incorporate into the design of Phase 2.** However, the 31% attrition rate in terms of access of women participating in training and actual benefits achieved in terms of being invested in self-employment or securing a job, will need further analysis and attention in design of WEESC Phase 2
- FGDs reveal that sharing and upscaling successful practices in the community positively influenced the raise of awareness of rights and women's economic empowerment possibilities among local communities

PROGRAMME RESPONSE AND ADAPTATION TO COVID-19 AND GEO-POLITICAL CHALLENGES

Success factors for responding and adapting to challenges:

- The project managed to successfully adapt to new reality and conduct most of the planned activities without ability of personal contact and travel due to the COVID-19 restrictions at place. **The savings have been used for supporting women's economic empowerment during the crisis.**
- Women in SHG supported one another by managing members' crops, particularly for those who were in quarantine due to COVID-19, or by accessing online training for those who did not have Internet access.
- Due to the sudden and strict lockdown that was enforced in the target municipalities of this project, the project provided food and hygiene packages as a one-time assistance to the most vulnerable households.
- For women, **being involved in the project activities during pandemics, especially during lockdowns, although remotely, have had a positive influence on their psychological well-being.**

450

food and hygiene kits were distributed in the nine target municipalities. The packages included basic food (e.g. rice, flour, sugar, oil) and hygiene products. The value per package is approximately GEL 100.

Disseminating information in the early days of the pandemic



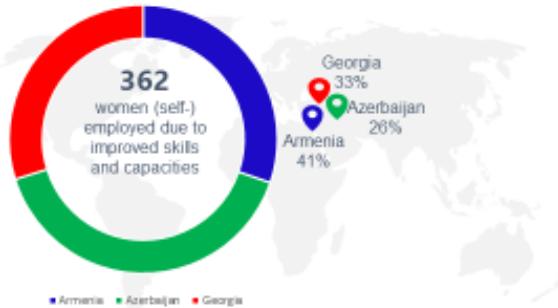
■ By Phone ■ Social Media ■ Posters

PROGRAMME RESPONSE AND ADAPTATION TO COVID-19 AND GEO-POLITICAL CHALLENGES

Ongoing challenges and obstacles:

- Knowledge sharing among the implementing partners provided an opportunity for networking and improving project outcomes in all three countries, however, the COVID-19 and related restrictions had a negative influence on the regional dimension of the project.
- Some of the self-employed women could not apply the knowledge gained in practice as all the activities have been suspended because of the pandemics.
- Limited access to the internet, **beneficiaries could not fully attend the training and info sessions because of technical reasons** (they either could not afford to buy internet packages, don't have access to computers and smartphones or they do not have access to the private space at home because they share the spaces with other family members) **the unpaid care work and house related labour**.
 - It's interesting that women in rural settings mentioned that COVID 19 did not affect their workload. Women indicated that they are always overburdened with the **unpaid care work, household related labour, animal husbandry and unpaid work**.
 - Also, women had quite ambivalent feelings about online and offline training. While most of the women at focus groups mentioned that online training and info sessions enabled them to deal with the increased burden of unpaid care work at home while attending the training, they also mentioned the benefits of the trainings in the face-to-face spaces, especially the value of personal contact, and its importance in women's empowerment and experience sharing.

Infographics for Outcome 1



Infographics for Outcome 2



Gender pay gap (GPG) reports were published in both countries and the findings are being used to inform policy responses

In Armenia the GPG/month is estimated to be 40%; GPG/hr is 23%
 In Georgia the GPG/month is 37%; GPG/hr is 17.7%



A pilot study of the Time Use Survey (TUS) is in progress and technical assistance is being provided to ARMSTAT to improve coordination.

Inputs were made into the 2019-2023 National Strategy for Labour and Employment



The Regulatory Impact Assessments (RIAs) of ILO Convention Nos. 183, 156 and 189 are in progress

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"Ministerial Decree on the Guidelines on Harmful and Hazardous Work for Pregnant, Post-partum and Nursing Women" came into effect with MoIDPOTLHSA approval

Preparation of the Gender Impact Assessment report was used to feed into the labour reform package development initiated by MP Dimitri

The program's inputs informed 2 Thematic Inquiries initiated by the Parliament of Georgia. These include "Women's Participation in State Funded Economic Development Programmes".

Infographics for Outcome 3



Participatory Gender Audit (PGA) is in progress with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MLSA).

Participatory Gender Audit (PGA) has been completed with MoIDPOTLHSA.

UN Women has revalidated the PGA with Agricultural and Rural Development Agency

The Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure (MRDI) of Georgia, with support from UN Women and the Women's Information Centre (WIC), has developed draft guidelines for municipalities to standardize and systematize the Women's Rooms



Gender-responsive annual action plans and gender responsive budgets have been approved in 7 municipalities

Unified GRB manual has been developed by UN Women in collaboration with UNDP, GIZ and MTAI for its use by local planners in the municipal plans and budgets.

7 municipalities incorporated specific measures related to gender equality in their development plans and budgets

57 local government representatives from 9 target municipalities have undergone the GRB refresher training

2 municipalities incorporated specific measures related to gender equality in their development plans and budgets

Annex Q: WEESC Project Outputs, Activities, Expenditures to June 2020

Outputs	Activities	% of Two Year Budget for Output	Expenditures Years 1 & 2
Output 1.1: Women, particularly poor and socially excluded, obtain skills and opportunities to be (self-) employed in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia Overall Output 1.1 Budget for Years 1 & 2: \$980,160 Spent: \$650,342 Under Budget: \$329,818 Year 3 Budget: \$529,203 plus \$329,818 under spent from Years 1 & 2 \$859,021 remaining for Year 3 for Output 1.1	Use of social mobilization to facilitate vulnerable women's access to decent work and sustainable livelihoods (AM & GE) AM 1.1.1; GE 1.1.1; Regional 1.1.1	is 11% of Output 1.1 Budget	2018: 41,048 2019: 51,290 2020: 14,863 = \$107,201
	To link vulnerable groups of women with information on opportunities related to VET, job placement programs, cooperatives, and grants and scholarships for further education & training: AZ 1.1; AM 1.1; GE 1.1	is 1% of Output 1.1 Budget	2019: 1,600 = \$1,600
	UN Women work in Azerbaijan with grassroots women for WEE in order to build capacities of rural women – the WRC constituencies - to start or further develop existing businesses (vocational trainings in the areas but not limited to financial literacy, business management (marketing, record keeping, financial planning): AZ.1.1.3 & AZ 1.1.7	is 30% of Output 1.1 Budget	2019: 272,128 2020: 20,065 = \$292,193
	UN Women work in Armenia with grassroots women for WEE in order to build capacities of rural women – the WRC constituencies - to start or further develop existing businesses (vocational trainings in the areas but not limited to financial literacy, business management (marketing, record keeping, financial planning): AM 1.1.2 & AM 1.1.5 & GE 1.1.5	is 14% of Output 1.1 Budget	2019: 127,065 2020: 8,131 = \$135,195
	To provide technical knowledge and incentives to women farmers, women-businesses and groups to start and grow their businesses and move up the value chain: AZ 1.1.4 & AM 1.1.3 & GE 1.1.3	is 8.5% of Output 1.1 Budget	2019: 75,563 2020: 8,229 = \$83,792
	To support country exchange visits for women working	is 3% of Output 1.1	2019: 21,890

	in specific industries to share skills and develop new products and techniques: AZ 1.1, AM 1.1 & GE 1.1	Budget	2020: 8,471 = \$30,361
Output 1.2: Women and women's groups are empowered to participate in local planning and budgeting (e.g. GRB discussions) Overall Output 1.2 Budget for Years 1 & 2: \$116,000 Spent: \$33,168 Under Budget: \$82,832 Year 3 Budget: \$56,500 plus \$82,832 under spent from Years 1 & 2 \$139,332 remaining for Year 3 Output 1.2	To support socially mobilized women and women's groups to engage in local planning and budgeting processes: AZ 1.2, AM 1.2 & GE 1.2	Is 29% of Output 1.2 Budget	2019: 24,851 2020: 8,317 = \$33,168
Output 1.3: Selected private enterprises are empowered to serve as opinion leaders in terms of Women's Economic Empowerment Principles (WEPs) Overall Output 1.3 Budget for Years 1 & 2: \$89,400 Spent: \$37,724 Under Budget: \$51,676 Year 3 Budget: \$56,770 plus \$51,676 under spent from Years 1 & 2 \$108,446 remaining for Year 3 Output 1.3	Enhanced understanding of private businesses of gender dimension of corporate sustainability and strengthened capacities to implement the WEPs: AZ 1.3, AM 1.3 & GE 1.3	Is 30% of Output 1.3 Budget	2018: 11,644 2019: 15,384 = \$27,028
	To support companies adopt WEPs in Armenia: AM 1.3	Is .6 % of Output 1.3 Budget	2019: 568 = \$568
	To support companies adopt WEPs in Azerbaijan: AZ 1.3	Is 11.3% of Output 1.3 Budget	2019: 10,128 = \$10,128
Output 2.1: Data and evidence generated to develop legislative and policy frameworks that enable WEE in Armenia and Georgia Overall Output 2.1 Budget for Years 1 & 2: \$133,500 Spent: \$105,475 Under Budget: 28,025 Year 3 Budget: \$90,000 plus \$28,025 under spent from Years 1 & 2 \$118,025 remaining for Year 3 Output 2.1	Generate data and evidence in support of WEE (gender analysis of rural development, agriculture and labor policies and examination of root-causes of women's economic inactivity and their participation in informal labor): AM 2.1 & GE 2.1.	Is 79% of Output 2.1 Budget	2018: 9,965 2019: 67,922 2020: 27,588 = \$105,475

<p>Output 2.2: Advocacy work carried out in Armenia and Georgia to lobby changes in policy and legislative frameworks to enable WEE</p> <p>Overall Output 2.2 Budget for Years 1 & 2: \$351,849</p> <p>Spent: \$313,967</p> <p>Under Budget: 37,882</p> <p>Year 3 Budget: \$165,524</p> <p>plus \$37,882 under spent from Years 1 & 2</p> <p>\$203,406 remaining for for Year 3 Output 2.2</p>	<p>Engage in policy dialogue and advocacy with relevant government and development partners on the basis of data and evidence generated in the field of WEE: AM & GE</p>	<p>Is 89% of Output 2.2 Budget</p>	<p>2018: 74,175 2019: 166,408 2020: 73,384 = \$313,967</p>
<p>Output 3.1: Targeted government and public institutions are strengthened to develop and adopt gender mainstreaming policies to deliver gender responsive programmes, services and plans in Armenia and Georgia</p> <p>Overall Output 3.1 Budget for Years 1 & 2: \$361,726</p> <p>Spent: \$283,481</p> <p>Under Budget: \$78,245</p> <p>Year 3 Budget: \$112,500</p> <p>plus \$78,245 under spent from Years 1 & 2</p> <p>\$190,745 remaining for Year 3 Output 3.1</p>	<p>Undertake participatory gender audits or gender gap analysis of selected state and private sector partners to enhance gender mainstreaming: AM 3.1 & GE 3.1</p>	<p>Is 21.5% of Output 3.1 Budget</p>	<p>2018: 15,370 2019: 55,363 2020: 6,912 = \$77,645</p>
	<p>To support selected government institutions in Georgia in development and adoption of mechanisms to receive and respond to complaints on gender discrimination in employment including sexual harassment: GE 3.1</p>	<p>Is 19% of Output 3.1 Budget</p>	<p>2019: 53,324 2020: 16,388 = \$69,712</p>
	<p>To support selected government partners in Armenia with gender mainstreaming at central and local levels: AM 3.1</p>	<p>Is 37.5 % of Output 3.1 Budget</p>	<p>2019: 136,124 = \$136,124</p>
<p>Output 3.2: Employees of targeted government and public institutions have knowledge and skills to mainstream gender in respective programs, public services, strategies and plans in Armenia & Georgia</p> <p>Overall Output 3.2 Budget for Years 1 & 2: \$216,165</p> <p>Spent: \$87,652</p> <p>Under Budget: \$128,513</p> <p>Year 3 Budget: \$50,175</p> <p>plus \$128,513 under spent from Years 1 & 2</p>	<p>Training of labor inspectors, trade unions and employer associations on gender-based discrimination and women's rights in the workplace: AM 3.2 & GE 3.2</p>	<p>Is 4.5% of Output 3.2 Budget</p>	<p>2018: 9,940 = \$9,940</p>
	<p>To facilitate introduction of GRB in 5 municipalities in each of Georgia and Armenia: AM 3.2 & GE 3.2</p>	<p>Is 29% of Output 3.2 Budget</p>	<p>2019: 47,453 2020: 15,589 = \$63,042</p>
	<p>To support capacity development of targeted public servants in gender mainstreaming and gender impact assessment (GIA): AM 3.2 & GE 3.2</p>	<p>Is 7% of Output 3.2 Budget</p>	<p>2020: 14,670 = \$14,670</p>

\$178,688 remaining for Year 3 Output 3.2			
Direct Project Management Costs (including M&E) Budgeted for Years 1 & 2: \$250,659 Spent: \$268,436 Over Budget: -\$17,777 Year 3 Budget: \$285,725 minus \$17,777 over spent from Years 1 & 2 \$267,948 remaining for Year 3 Direct PM/M&E	Salaries: 1 @ 30%, 2 @ %100 Audit costs for local NGO partners Logistics & operational costs (rent, security, communications, equipment) Documentation & public relations Cost recovery for UN Services in Georgia (e.g. Accounting, Admin. Services delivered by local office) Evaluation @ 3% of total budget	Is 107% of Project Management Costs Budget	2018: 40,521 2019: 144,976 2020: 82,939 = \$268,436
Depreciation Not budgeted for Spent: \$1,886	On capital equipment over \$1,000	Not budgeted	2018: 195 2019: 1,349 2020: 342 = \$1,886
Program Support Costs (or Cost Recovery) Budgeted for Years 1 & 2: \$198,556 Spent: \$237,654 Over Budget: -\$39,098 Year 3 Budget: \$110,937 minus \$39,098 over spent from Years 1 & 2 \$126,717 remaining for Year 3 Program Support	General administration fee of 8% Plus UN Coordination Levy of 1% (collected by the UN entity on behalf of the UN Secretariat for UN Coordination)	Is 112% of Program Support Costs Budget	2018: 74,074 2019: 111,111 2020: 52,469 = \$237,654
TOTAL YEAR 1&2 EXPENSES (To June 2020)	(excluding funds committed)		\$2,019,785

Annex R: Explanation of Proposed Changes to Theory of Change and Indicators

Output level:

1. Revision to the language of Output 1.1: Proposed change emphasizes “women’s organisations offer relevant skills....to women”. This is to highlight the importance of the capacity of women’s organisations to offer needed services, otherwise the focus only remains on how many women have been trained rather than who is offering the training and whether they are able to offer such services or not.
2. Revision to the language of Output 1.2 to ‘Women and women’s groups are **empowered to participate in local planning and budgeting** (e.g. GRB discussions) and greater awareness is created to influence gendered norms in the community’. This is to highlight the importance of empowering women and the community not just on GRB but also on the influencing gendered norms, given the continue stigma that women face from their communities that limit them from engaging in economic activities.
3. Inclusion of ‘service providers’ in output 1.3: FGDs and KIIs strongly indicate the need for support to women to reduce their load of unpaid care to continue economic engagement and access to financial and legal services to invest in or expand their business. Therefore, it is important for the program to facilitate partnerships with local services providers to ensure access to such services. It is also an important reminder for the project to steer away from offering the services directly to women and act more as a ‘facilitator’ between the women and other commercial or semi-commercial entities (e.g. other NGOs/CSOs, etc.). These services could also be embedded as services offered by the women’s groups (WRCs/Women’s Rooms).

Outcome level:

4. An additional outcome has been added to capture behaviour change of the private sector and service providers: ‘Private sector enterprises and local service providers (including FIs/NGOs/CSOs) make provisions and enable access to services (e.g. care/finance/legal support) that respond to women’s needs and/or facilitate women’s economic participation’ has been added to monitor the adoption of practices at the organisational level by the private sector to facilitate increased absorption and retention of staff, and for service providers to enable access to finance, business and legal support to invest in and expand their business and other services such as care services etc., to enable women to engage in economic activities.

It is important to note that this change also influences Outcome 1 as it enables women to use certain services to improve their economic engagement. This change is also linked to Outcomes 2 and 3, because policy alone does not mean that it is implemented. The policies need to be adopted by the private sector to improve formal employment of women and in the future some policies should improve access to finance and local provision of services through improved budgeting and an enabling environment. Hence, the connections are very important to highlight indicating causality.

5. A higher order outcome level has been added to include:

- a. Women, particularly poor and socially excluded, in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia benefit from new investment/increased enterprise growth;
- b. Women, particularly poor and socially excluded, in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia benefit from retaining existing and securing new jobs; and
- c. Women and their community members experience improved perception of gendered roles and women's engagement in economic activities.

This level has been added to avoid the big leap of assumption from immediate outcome to impact level. It also allows to capture the nuanced changes in self-employment and wage employment and the importance of any signs of change in terms of self-confidence and change in perception of gendered roles.

Changes proposed to the Indicators:

ToC Change Box	Proposed changes to indicator	Reason for change
1.1. SPs and/or women's organisations offer relevant skills, information, networks, opportunities/linkages and support services to women to be (self-) employed in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia	<p>OP1.1:</p> <p>1.1.1 # of women with strengthened capacities and skills able to join the formal labor sector (exclude)</p> <p>1.1.2 # of women with strengthened capacities and skills able to become self-employed (exclude)</p> <p>Proposed:</p> <p># of women's organisations with increased capacity to offer skills training, information and linkages to women.</p> <p>Proportion of revenue coming from external sources to fund the services.</p> <p>Type of trainings and services offered to women to gain employable and entrepreneurial skills. (Qualitative narrative)</p> <p># of women reached through these organisations (from membership and trainings) overlap adjusted and disaggregated by age, ethnicities, location and other relevant vulnerability criteria.</p>	<p>Strengthened capacity is defined by women's ability to use or apply the training. At this level the number of women trained should be enough to capture how many women have had access to the training content.</p> <p>The focus here is to capture 'access' or reach of women, the capacity of these women's organisations to offer the services and the sustainability of the organisations.</p>
1.2: Women and women's groups are empowered to participate in local planning and budgeting (e.g. GRB discussions) and greater awareness is created to influence gendered norms in	<p>OP1.2:</p> <p>1.2.1 # of successful advocacy initiatives facilitated by women beneficiaries to overcome their socio-economic challenges (no change)</p> <p>1.2.2 # of women beneficiaries who contributed to local planning and budgeting / GRB discussions aimed at addressing their socio-economic concerns (no change)</p>	Only additions have been suggested.

the community	<p><u>Proposed:</u> Add to current: # of women trained on gender responsive budgeting & local budgeting processes # of awareness campaigns initiated to promote increased gender awareness in the communities.</p>	
1.3: Private enterprises and service providers are empowered to (a) serve as opinion leaders and demonstrate changes to include Women's Economic Empowerment Principles (WEPs) and (b) introduce products/services that meet women's needs to be economically active	<p>OP1.3: 1.3.1 # of private enterprises that signed the UNW/UN Global Compact Women's Empowerment Principles with a focus on implementing gender-responsive corporate policies/practices. (no change) 1.3.2 # of private enterprises from Armenia and Azerbaijan exchanging their best practices on WEPs' implementation with the Georgian counterparts (exclude)</p> <p><u>Proposed:</u> Add to current: Number of regional exchanges between companies across the three countries. Number of private companies attending the exchanges. Nature of those regional exchanges (Qualitative narrative)</p>	No clear evidence was gathered of the effectiveness of the regional exchanges therefore there is a need to focus on the nature of those exchanges.
2.1: Data and evidence generated to develop legislative and policy frameworks that enable women's economic empowerment in Armenia and Georgia	<p>OP2.1: 2.1.1 The gender wage gap is regularly assessed by the National Statistics' offices of Armenia and Georgia based on internationally recognized comparative methodology (no change) 2.1.2 # of new indicators defined to measure WEE by the National Statistics' Offices of Armenia and Georgia in line with internationally agreed standards (no change)</p> <p><u>Proposed</u> Add to current:</p>	

	Narrative of type of data and evidence generated.	
2.2: National gender machineries of Armenia and Georgia supported to carry out changes in policy and legislative frameworks enabling women's economic empowerment	<p>OP2.2:</p> <p>2.2.1 # of documented evidences of utilization of research/data on women's economic empowerment for policy-making and legislating in Armenia and Georgia (no change)</p> <p>Add: Narrative of evidence.</p> <p>2.2.2 # of regional policy dialogues and/or advocacy meetings carried out to advocate for improved policy and legislative frameworks supporting women's decent work and economic empowerment (Replace with # of reforms proposed and lessons shared as a result of regional policy dialogues)</p>	# of meetings carried out is not a good indicator. It often acts as an incentive to count number of meetings but misses out the importance of the purpose.
3.1: Targeted government and public institutions are strengthened to mainstream gender in their operations and develop gender responsive programmes, services and plans in Armenia and Georgia	<p>OP3.1:</p> <p>3.1.1: Number of government and public institutions that adopt, monitor and report on their respective internal gender equality strategies and action plans (no change)</p> <p>3.1.2: Number of government and public institutions in Armenia and Georgia that have mechanism in place to receive and respond to complaints of gender discrimination in employment including sexual harassment (no change)</p> <p>3.1.3: Number of government and public institutions that develop and institutionalize Gender Impact Assessment (GIA) methodology in Armenia and Georgia (no change)</p> <p>3.1.4: % of budget allocations by target municipalities for social infrastructure and services that respond to women's needs (rephrased)</p>	Allocation alone does not mean it responds to women's needs. Hence, the suggestion.
3.2: Employees of targeted government and public institutions have knowledge and skills to mainstream gender in respective programs , public services, strategies and plans in	<p>OP 3.2:</p> <p>3.2.1: % of the employees in relevant professional positions in the targeted institutions in Armenia (1 institution) and in Georgia (3 institutions) whose knowledge and skills to mainstream gender in programs, services and plans were strengthened (no change)</p> <p>3.2.2: Number of targeted government and public institutions that</p>	

Armenia and Georgia	offer institutionalized trainings to its employees on gender equality and women's empowerment (no change)	
OC 1. Women, particularly the poor and socially excluded use skills, networks, economic opportunities, information and support services to be self-employed and/or to join the formal labour sector in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia (grass-roots level)	<p>OC1: 1.2: Number of women stating increased knowledge regarding women's rights and policies through advocacy initiatives (no change)</p> <p>Proposed: Add to current: % of women reached, applying skills or information in investing in new or existing enterprises % of women reached, applying skills to gain employment Types of skills applied for self-employment and employment and challenges to applying the skills. (Qualitative narrative) # of women receiving grants for self-employment or wage employment (currently a NON LF indicator)</p>	
Additional Outcome: Private sector enterprises and local service providers (including FIs/NGOs/CSOs) adopt changes and enable access to support services (e.g. care/finance/legal support) that respond to women's needs and/or facilitate women's economic participation	<p>Proposed: # of private enterprises adopting gender-responsive practices Investment leveraged by the private sector (in USD) Type of changes adopted and reason for change. (Case studies/narratives) # of service providers offering services to address women's needs. # and types of new services offered to women to support/navigate unpaid care responsibilities and facilitate economic activities. (Qualitative narrative) Women's perception of actual changes initiated to those proposed in local planning and budgeting. (Qualitative narrative)</p>	<p>It is important to capture the changes in practices adopted and services offered as a result of WEPs and new opportunities.</p> <p>'Reason for change' is critical to monitor to understand the financial and social motivations of the private sector and to check the potential for continuity.</p>
2: Armenia and Georgia implement adequate	OC2: 2.1: Number of legal and/or regulatory frameworks aligned with	

legislative reforms and policy frameworks to enable women's economic empowerment (policy and legislation level)	international standards that create decent work for women developed and/or being implemented (no change) 2.2: Number of new and/or improved gender-responsive policies or reforms or programmes to facilitate women's enterprise development/self employment being implemented (a qualitative narrative needs to be added) Add: Proportion of proposed reforms or policy commitments initiated at national and sub-national levels.	
3: Government and public institutions develop and deliver gender-responsive programmes, public services, strategies and plans for women's economic empowerment in Armenia and Georgia (institutional level)	OC3: 3.1: Number of government and public institutions that develop and institutionalize internal gender mainstreaming tools and policies in Armenia and Georgia (no change) 3.2: % of Participatory Gender Audit (PGA) recommendations implemented by audited institutions in the frameworks of the project in Armenia and Georgia (no change) 3.3: Number of municipalities with specific measures related to gender equality incorporated in their development plans and budgets benefiting # of persons (edit to exclude # of persons) 3.4 Number and % of municipalities that implemented (one or more elements of) a gender-responsive budgeting. (no change) Proposed: Add to current: % of budget allocation for gender-responsive activities spent on needs identified in the budget cycle (proposed)	
New higher-order outcome: Women, particularly poor and socially excluded, in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia benefit from new investment/increased enterprise growth.	Proposed Total # of women in self-employment post 6 months after training completion (Cumulative) Proportion of women with registered businesses. Additional net income generated by women in self-employment.	

<p>New higher-order outcome: Women, particularly poor and socially excluded, in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia benefit from retaining existing and securing new jobs</p>	<p>Proposed: Total # of women securing new jobs (Cumulative) Proportion of women with service contract vs formal contract. Total additional income from wage employment</p>	
<p>New higher-order outcome: Women and their community members experience improved self-confidence and perception of gendered roles and women's engagement in economic activities.</p>	<p>Proposed: Change in perception (a study once in 3 years)</p>	
<p>Impact: Women, particularly poor and socially excluded, in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia are economically empowered and participate in relevant decision-making</p>	<p>No change in indicators % of the female labor force participation in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia % of the gender wage gap in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia % of women's employment categorized as vulnerable Number of beneficiary women with increased income in wage employment or entrepreneurship</p>	