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**UN JOINT PROGRAMME FOR GENDER EQUALITY
NARRATIVE PROGRESS REPORT
REPORTING PERIOD: 15 JANUARY 2016 – 30 JUNE 2022**

<p align="center">Programme Title & Project Number</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme Title: UN Joint Programme for Gender Equality • MPTF Office Project Reference Number: <i>00097295</i> 	<p align="center">Country, Locality(s), Priority Area(s) / Strategic Results¹</p> <p><i>Country/Region: Georgia</i></p>										
<p align="center">Participating Organization(s)</p> <p>UNDP, UN Women, UNFPA</p>	<p><i>SDGs 1, 3, 4, 5, 16; UNPSD Outcome 2 (focus area 1 - Democratic Governance) and Outcome 4 (focus area 2 - Jobs, Livelihood and Social Protection)</i></p>										
<p align="center">Programme/Project Cost (US\$)</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>Total approved budget as per project document:</td> <td><i>(SEK 94,611,000)</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td>MPTF/JP Contribution:²</td> <td><i>USD 11,005,977</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td><i>Government of Sweden (pass-through)</i></td> <td><i>(Amount transferred to PUNOs to date)</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total Contributions</td> <td><i>USD 11,005,977.06</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td><i>Government of Sweden</i></td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	Total approved budget as per project document:	<i>(SEK 94,611,000)</i>	MPTF/JP Contribution:²	<i>USD 11,005,977</i>	<i>Government of Sweden (pass-through)</i>	<i>(Amount transferred to PUNOs to date)</i>	Total Contributions	<i>USD 11,005,977.06</i>	<i>Government of Sweden</i>		<p align="center">Implementing Partners</p> <p>The programme is directly implemented by UN agencies UNDP, UN Women and UNFPA in partnership with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender Equality Council of the Parliament of Georgia • Inter-Agency Commission on Gender Equality, Violence against Women and Domestic Violence at the Administration of the Government of Georgia
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<p align="center">Programme Assessment/Review/Mid-Term Eval.</p>	<p align="center">Programme Duration</p> <p>Overall Duration: <i>77.5 months</i> Start Date:³ <i>15 January 2016</i> Original End Date:⁴ <i>31 December 2020</i> Current End Date:⁵ <i>30 June 2022 (extended)</i></p> <p align="center">Report Submitted By</p>										

Final Evaluation

Yes No **Date:** 2020

Mid-Term Evaluation

Yes No **Date:** 2018

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¹ Strategic Results, as formulated in the Strategic UN Planning Framework (e.g., UNDAF) or project document;

² The MPTF or JP Contribution, refers to the amount transferred to the Participating UN Organizations, which is available on the [MPTF Office GATEWAY](#)

³ The start date is the date of the first transfer of the funds from the MPTF Office as Administrative Agent. Transfer date is available on the [MPTF Office GATEWAY](#)

⁴ As per approval of the original project document by the relevant decision-making body/Steering Committee.

⁵ If there has been an extension, then the revised, approved end date should be reflected here. If there has been no extension approved, then the current end date is the same as the original end date. The end date is the same as the operational closure date which is when all activities for which a Participating Organization is responsible under an approved MPTF / JP have been completed. As per the MOU, agencies are to notify the MPTF Office when a programme completes its operational activities.

Acronyms and abbreviations

AoG	Administration of the Government of Georgia
ATIPfund	LEPL State Care Agency
AWF	Association of Women Farmers
BPfA	Beijing Platform for Action
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CC	Crisis centre
CSE	Comprehensive sexuality education
CSO	Civil society organization
CSRDG	Centre for Strategic Research and Development of Georgia
DEVAW	Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women
DV	Domestic violence
EU	European Union
EVAWGG	UN Women project “Ending Violence against Women and Girls in Georgia” (EU-funded)
GBV	Gender-based violence
GEC	Gender Equality Council of the Parliament of Georgia
GED	Gender Equality Department of the Public Defender’s Office
Geostat	National Statistics Office of Georgia
GoG	Government of Georgia
GTG	Gender Theme Group
ICPD	International Conference on Population and Development
ICT	Information and communications technology
IDP	Internally displaced person
LEPL	Legal entity of public law
LGBTQI	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex
LIO	LEPL Labour Inspection Office of Georgia
MIA	Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia
MoES	Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia
MoLHSA	Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia
MP	Member of Parliament
NCDC	National Center for Disease Control and Public Health of Georgia
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
PDO	Public Defender’s Office of Georgia

PoG	Parliament of Georgia
PUNOs	Participating United Nations Organizations
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SOGI	Sexual orientation and gender identity
SOP	Standard operating procedures
SRHR	Sexual and reproductive health and rights
STEM	Science, technology, engineering and mathematics
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNJP	UN Joint Programme for Gender Equality
UNSRVAW	United Nations Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
VAWG	Violence against women and girls
VAWP	Violence against women in politics
VET	Vocational education and training
WEE	Women's economic empowerment
WHO	World Health Organization
WIGs	Women Initiative Groups
WISG	Women's Initiatives Supporting Group

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Under phase II, UNJP continued its strong support to enhance the legal and policy frameworks and practical policy implementation for women's political and economic empowerment. Furthermore, under phase II, UNJP has significantly advanced its engagement with the most vulnerable groups, including LGBTQI communities.

The key result of the work on **women's political participation was the introduction of mandatory gender quotas**. This resulted from the multi-year advocacy of the Task Force on Women's Political Participation, co-chaired by UNDP and NDI. While further work is needed to achieve women's meaningful participation in decision-making at all levels, increased representation is the first vital step. Throughout phase II, women's representation at the central level increased by eight percent, compared to the baseline of 11.3 percent. Women's representation at the local level increased by 13 percent, compared to the baseline of 11.6 percent.

During phase II, UNJP has provided vital support to the **national gender equality machinery**. Namely, the permanent Parliamentary Gender Equality Council (GEC), Inter-Agency Commission for Gender Equality (CGE) and the Public Defender's Office (PDO). GEC served as the national stakeholder for the UNJP phase II. As a result, **GEC has been strengthened structurally, and since 2023 for the first time, it will have a separately allocated budget line under the Parliament's budget** – a result of UNDP's advocacy. A dedicated budget allocation will further enhance GEC's sustainability.

Furthermore, as a result of UNJP's continued advocacy, the Inter-Agency Commission at the AOG enhanced its functions as a coordinating body on gender equality issues at the executive branch, **with a solid capacity and positioning to champion the implementation of the gender equality policy**. Apart from the above-mentioned entities, UNJP supported **several state institutions at the legislative and executive branches to enhance capacity on gender mainstreaming, adopt and implement gender equality action plans**.

During phase II, UNJP has **increased its engagement with local municipalities** across Georgia, particularly focusing on Kakheti and Samegrelo regions. As a result, **the capacities of local governments to develop and implement gender equality policies have strengthened significantly, including using tools such as gender-responsible budgeting**. With UNDP's support, cooperation between local municipalities and community organizations has strengthened, **resulting in allocating of 9.2 million GEL for joint projects in local budgets**.

Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) has been at the centre of UNJP's work. Multi-year advocacy efforts to develop a state vision of WEE resulted in the first-ever **National Concept for Women's Economic Empowerment**. Furthermore, through phase II, UNJP introduced the concept of **care economy to Georgia** and advocated for the introduction of gender-sensitive economic policies in the country.

At the local level, UNDP advocated launching **tailored municipal programmes for women's economic development**. As a result, six municipalities have established such programmes.

UNJP provided systemic support to equip the women workforce with income-generating skills, including through tailored professional education programmes. **As a result of UNDP's advocacy efforts, state institutions took over UNJP-proposed professional education programmes and introduced gender equality, diversity, and inclusion among priorities**. UNDP also contributed to the **vocational education reform in Georgia**, with technical support directed at enhancing the diversity and inclusion components of the reform.

Furthermore, under phase II, UNJP strengthened its **support to individual women entrepreneurs** through small grants mechanism and a new programme - Women Entrepreneurs' Development Programme.

During phase II, UNJP devoted significant resources to **strengthening Georgia's civil society and empowering community organizations**. Including continued support to community-based organizations, Women's Initiative Groups, and national and local NGOs/CSOs. Furthermore, during phase II, UNDP transformed cooperation with LGBTQI community organizations by introducing community-centred approaches, capacity building and advocacy

initiatives to empower rights holders. As a result, **Georgia has vibrant CSO leaders at national and local levels who continuously advocate for issues of gender equality, diversity, and social inclusion.**

UNJP has dedicated significant resources to raise awareness on gender equality issues in Georgia. As a result, 63 percent of women and 54 percent of men think that Georgia has yet to achieve gender equality (2019).¹ In 2014 less than half of women agreed with the statement.² 60 percent of Georgians think that the involvement of women in politics would benefit the country. Though 85 percent of Georgian women say that women have to overcome more obstacles in their careers than men.³ Furthermore, attitudes towards vulnerable groups, such as persons with disabilities and LGBTQI communities, have been improving.

In 2017, Georgia ratified the Istanbul Convention⁴ and adopted a milestone legal framework aimed at harmonizing the domestic legislation with the requirements of the Convention with strong support by the UNJP. As a result, the scope of DV-related legislation, previously gender-neutral, has now been expanded to also apply to other forms of gender-based violence against women, thus taking into consideration its gender inequality dimensions; additionally, forced marriage, female genital mutilation, stalking and forced sterilization have been criminalized. Several waves of legislative reform supported and facilitated by the UNJP followed and a solid legal framework is now in place regulating prevention and response to VAWG/DV. Even though gaps remain, the legislation is largely compliant with the international standards and the UNJP's III Phase will continue addressing the remaining inconsistencies.

DV prevention and the protection of its victims is the responsibility of both the central government and local governments.⁵ As a result of advocacy efforts by the UNJP, in 2017, the Government of Georgia established the Inter-Agency Commission on Gender Equality, Violence against Women and Domestic Violence⁶ to serve as an institutional mechanism on gender in the executive branch of the Government.⁷

To further strengthen the efficiency of the response to VAW/DV, the UNJP advocated for and supported the MIA in the establishment of the Department of Human Rights Protection and Quality Monitoring within its structure in 2018 to oversee investigations into and administrative proceedings on domestic violence, violence against women (including sexual violence), crimes committed on the grounds of discrimination, hate crimes, trafficking and crimes committed by and/or towards minors.⁸ The department also provides witness and victim support services at the MIA, with the latter currently being piloted. As a result of UNJP's support, only specialized prosecutors are dealing with domestic violence and, as of May 2021, sexual violence cases. The nationwide hotline and five crisis centers have been established with UNJP's II phase support and are now fully funded by the state.

Overall, the state, with the active support of the UNJP and other development partners, has made remarkable progress in responding to VAW, especially DV, including by law enforcement and increased disclosure of incidents by victims/survivors in the past few years, as evidenced by the relevant administrative data and research. For example, some 18 per cent of women who have ever experienced intimate partner violence have appealed for support to the police,⁹ as opposed to only 1.5 per cent in 2009.¹⁰ As a result, in 2021, the number of restraining

¹ UNFPA, UNDP, 'Men, Women and Gender Relations in Georgia: Public Perception and Attitudes', 2020, retrieved from: <https://bit.ly/3VcDuVe>

² Ibid

³ Ibid

⁴ Council of Europe, *Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence* (Istanbul, 2011).

⁵ United Nations and others, *Gender in Disaster Risk Reduction: A Study on Specific Needs and Potential in Building Community Resilience* (2017).

⁶ The Inter-Agency Commission's existence and mandate is reflected in Article 12, paragraph 6, of the existing Law on Gender Equality.

⁷ Georgia, *National-level Review of the Implementation of the BPfA Beijing +25*.

⁸ Human Rights Secretariat, *Midterm Report on the Implementation of the Action Plan of the Government of Georgia on the Protection of Human Rights 2018* (2020).

⁹ GEOSTAT, UN Women and the EU, *National Study on Violence against Women in Georgia 2017*, pp. 12–15, 83.

¹⁰ UNFPA and ACT, *National Study on Domestic Violence against Women* (2010).

orders issued amounted to 10,120,¹¹ while 93 protective orders were issued.¹² As for indictments on VAWG/DV, 5,144 cases, compared to 4,614 cases in the previous year, were brought forward, with charges dropped in only 0.3 per cent of the cases.¹³

Under Outcome 3, the UNJP managed to advance gender equality and reproductive rights, including for the most vulnerable women, adolescents and youth in the country. The program implementation period coincided with a turbulent political and aggravated social context in the country. UNJP was implemented during two parliamentary (2016 and 2020) and one presidential election (2018), coincided with a two-year Covid-19 pandemic period and was led under the constant turnover of the key governmental counterparts occupying strategic positions in the executive and the legislative branches of the government. Despite the aforementioned, the UNJP managed to pinpoint harmful practices and women and girls SRHR on the political agenda of the country and accelerate action in response to the commitments assumed at the Nairobi Summit of ICPD25.

UNJP supported the Government of Georgia to follow up on the international commitments assumed based on Human Rights treaties. The country accepted 69 out of 70 SRHR-related recommendations raised during Georgia's second review of the Universal Periodic Report (approximately 34% of the total 203 recommendations raised). While during the third periodic review in 2021, the country adopted 257 recommendations out of 285, which is 34.55% increase with respect to the 2nd cycle. 15% of recommendations are attributed to SDG 5. While almost 30% of the recommendations were related to one or the other aspect of the ICPD agenda.

I. Purpose

The overall goal of the programme is to promote gender equality and women's empowerment by strengthening capacities in the Government, civil society and communities. Achievement of the overall goal is being realized via the following outcomes:

1. Enhanced women's political and economic empowerment (led by UNDP)
2. Creation of an enabling environment to eliminate violence against women, especially sexual and domestic violence (led by UN Women)
3. Advanced gender equality and reproductive rights, including for the most vulnerable women, adolescents and youth (led by UNFPA)

The joint programme directly supports the further realization of the commitments to women's rights and gender equality undertaken by Georgia at both the international and national levels. As such, the UNJP scales up the results achieved by Georgia with the support of the international community, including UN agencies, in the area of gender equality and women's empowerment through innovative initiatives.

The UNJP is fully aligned with national priorities in the area of gender equality and women's empowerment and the stated goals and priority areas of the 2021–2025 United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF Outcome 1: Democratic Governance; Outcome 2: Access to Quality Services; and Outcome 3: Economic Development), in addition to the Results Strategy for Sweden's Reform Cooperation with Eastern Europe, the Western Balkans and Turkey (2014–2020) as well as the new Strategy for Sweden's Cooperation with Eastern Europe (2021–2027) and its goal around the enhancement of human rights, democracy, the rule of law and equality. The UNJP is further in line with Georgia's commitments under the nationalized Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially Goal 1 (target 1.4), Goal 3 (targets 3.1 and 3.7), Goal 4 (targets 4.3.a and 4.7), Goal 5 (targets 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.6 and 5.c) and Goal 16 (targets 16.1, 16.3, 16.7 and 16.b).

¹¹ Source: Official communication with the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia No. 0 22 00608746, dated 9 March 2022.

¹² Source: Official communication with the Supreme Court of Georgia No. P-147-22, dated 2 March 2022.

¹³Source: Official communication with the Prosecution Service of Georgia No. 13/14199, dated 11 March 2022.

II. Assessment of programme results

OUTCOME 1 – Enhanced women’s political and economic empowerment

Over the last six months, UNJP engaged in high-level advocacy, policy implementation and work with grassroots to enhance gender equality, focusing on women's political and economic empowerment and the protection of LGBTQI+ rights.

Mandatory gender quotas have been a vital enabler in enhancing **women's political participation** in Georgia. Building on quotas, UNJP promoted women's meaningful participation in decision-making through seven key tools of engagement: (1) **regional forums** on women's political participation, covering Kakheti, Imereti, Racha-Lechkhumi and Zemo Svaneti regions; (2) **inter-party workshops**, which support building dialogue between women from different political parties. Workshops brought together women from five political parties across three regions of Georgia; (3) **on-job coaching** for elected women councillors – members of municipal councils. Coaching and tailored training programmes developed based on a comprehensive assessment of the needs of newly elected women politicians; (4) **strategic planning support** for women's organizations within political parties; (5) **high-level advocacy** through Task Force on Women's Political Participation; (6) **evidence building** by conducting in-depth studies and issue-based policy papers. Study “Gender Quotas in Georgia: Experience of 2020 and 2021 Elections” conducted through UNDP-NDI partnership; (7) **youth engagement** in active citizenship practices. Overall, through these key tools, UNDP has directly engaged over 600 women and men politicians and decision-makers across Georgia, over 300 young people and the society at large.

To further advance **coordination between national and local levels**, UNJP provided technical expertise to develop a programme and conduct coordination workshops between the Gender Equality Council (GEC) and municipal Gender Equality Councils. In the reporting period, the coordination workshops covered 59 (out of 64) municipalities. Coordination efforts continued through a novel **coordination platform**, established with the inhouse support of UNJP.

UNJP continued to **strengthen GEC’s technical and expert capacities** to better position as a lead gender equality institution, developing national policy and vision. Including **technical assistance** to adopt GEC’s Action Plan for 2022-2024, Communication Strategy, and the Annual Report on key activities conducted in Georgia to enhance gender equality. Furthermore, UNDP and NDI supported **strengthening the evidence** base for further policy-making by conducting a thematic Inquiry on the Access of Women and Girls to Infrastructure. UNJP also contributed to the **knowledge building** of GEC members, as well as the bureau of the Parliament and other Members of the Parliament. As a result, GEC has been strengthened structurally, and since 2023 for the first time, **it will have a separately allocated budget line under the Parliament’s budget – a result of UNDP’s advocacy work**. A dedicated budget allocation will further enhance GEC’s sustainability.

To enhance **women’s economic empowerment**, UNJP continued high-level advocacy and provision of expert support with policy making. As a result, in December 2022, the Parliament of Georgia initiated the **National Concept on Women's Economic Empowerment**. The Parliament will discuss the adoption of the National Concept in 2023. Furthermore, to enhance the existing economic policy framework, UNDP and UNFPA launched the first national dialogue on the care economy and family friendly policies in Georgia.

State-provided support mechanism to enhance labour rights of the most vulnerable groups has been strengthened by bolstering the **Consultation Center of the Labour Inspection Office**.

At the sub-national level, UNJP strengthened cooperation with the Supreme Council of Ajara and its Gender Equality Council. At the request of the Supreme Council, UNJP provided knowledge-building opportunities on gender responsive budgeting (GRB). As a result, **the Supreme Council of Adjara adopted a novel tool/methodology for GRB**. The 2023 budget has already been analyzed and adopted based on GRB methodology. Through such approach, the Supreme Council of Ajara will enhance sustainable budgeting process, which is based

on principles of gender equality, diversity and inclusion.

UNDP supported five municipalities to establish **targeted municipal programmes aimed at women's economic empowerment**. Co-funded by municipalities, programmes in Keda, Shuakhevi, Kobuleti and Dusheti provide opportunities for local women entrepreneurs to develop their businesses and contribute to local economic development. The programme with Ozurgeti municipality is in development. As a result, on the one hand, municipalities increase capacity in delivering high-quality targeted social services, on the other hand product realization and business opportunities are created for SME, and also women entrepreneurs have the opportunity to contribute to the local economy and social development.

Furthermore, UNJP offers **opportunities to women entrepreneurs** countrywide. In the reporting period, UNJP continued the Women Entrepreneurs' Development Programme, hosting two cohorts. The educational component, alongside individual coaching and product realization opportunities covered over 70 participants of the programme.

In the reporting period, UNJP continued its work with **grassroots and civil society organizations (CSOs)**. Cooperation included technical assistance to conduct Community Forum 2022, partnership with the Union "Sapari" to launch work on economic violence against women, capacity building opportunities for newly emerged feminist organizations, such as "Femina," and already established organizations, such as "Identoba Youth". **Cooperation with LGBTQI+ community organizations resulted in the semi-formal coordination mechanism - Task Force on LGBTQI+ rights.**

To enhance diversity and inclusion in delivering state services, UNDP supported the State Care Agency in **building knowledge and developing national guidelines for social workers** on engaging with ethnic minorities, LGBTQ+ communities, and persons with disabilities. Through such approach, UNJP supports sustainable improvement of state practices. National guidelines will be adopted in 2023. The working group to develop **national guidelines for trans specific healthcare** has also been launched.

To enhance **women's and girls' participation in STEM and ICT fields**, in partnership with the Georgia's Innovation and Technology Agency (GITA), UNDP supported two hackathons, awarding the best prize for supporting gender equality in the respective fields of agriculture and protection of PWD rights.

Several awareness-raising campaigns were launched to combat existing discriminatory practices and shatter gender stereotypes. Special focus was placed to **promote women in decision-making at the local level**. The campaign will cover women Mayors and Deputy Mayors from across the country.

Legal framework and the gender equality machinery strengthened

As the largest programme for gender equality since the beginning, UNJP4GE has been at the centre of gender equality-related policy work in Georgia. During phase II, the legislative framework for gender equality has improved substantially. The most significant achievements include **enshrining the principle of substantial equality in the Constitution of Georgia (2017), ratification of the Istanbul Convention (2017), and introduction of mandatory gender quotas (2020)**. UNJP has contributed to the adoption of other legislation, such as the Labour and Employment Strategy, Labour Code reform, etc.

Furthermore, UNJP advocated for gender mainstreaming approaches through the legislative and executive branches. As a result, UNDP, in partnership with NDI and USAID, provided technical assistance to introduce **Gender Impact Assessment (GIA) methodology in Georgia**. Seven committees at the Parliament of Georgia have successfully piloted GIA of the national legislation. Later, the GIA methodology was transferred from the legislative to the executive branch. Namely, with UNDP's support, the Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure (MRDI) conducted the first GIA at the executive branch, examining the draft transportation law. The process included capacity building of the Ministry's staff to be able to utilize GIA methodology independently. MRDI was followed

by the Ministry of Education of Georgia.¹⁴

In 2018, new Rules of Procedure introduced a novelty of Thematic Inquiries in Parliament. UNJP has supported this monitoring and implementation tool by providing technical expertise to **GEC to conduct several thematic inquiries**, which were used to identify policy gaps and develop further recommendations to enhance women's rights and gender equality in Georgia.

Throughout phase II, UNJP provided technical support to GEC to plan a persistent and sustainable gender equality policy in Georgia. Namely, UNDP and NDI supported **the annual planning exercise for GEC**, which resulted in four rounds of the **Gender Equality Action Plans of the permanent Parliamentary Gender Equality Council** (2016-2018, 2018-2020, 2021, 2022-2024).

Throughout phase II, UNJP advocated for the **structural strengthening of the GEC**. As a result, the new Rules of Procedure (2018) introduced the GEC as a stand-alone entity within the legislative body with its own human resources, namely the coordinator of the GEC. Furthermore, **since 2023 for the first time, it will have a separately allocated budget line under the Parliament's budget** – a result of UNDP's advocacy. A dedicated budget allocation will further enhance GEC's sustainability.

During phase II, UNDP has been closely working with the GEC. Including providing technical expertise and on-demand support. **As a result, GEC is a reliable national partner, leading the gender equality policy development in Georgia**. However, the GEC is not entirely free from the country's political turmoil and unstable political environment. Technical and expert support provided to GEC during phase II includes, but is not limited to: a self-assessment exercise of the Parliament of Georgia conducted in partnership with IPU and USAID; technical assistance to develop annual reports on the "state of Gender Equality" 2020 and 2021; fellowship programme with GEC; Gender Equality Index of the Parliament; support to present Georgia's results at the regional Beijing+25 events; technical support to create Maro Makashvili named chamber at the Parliament of Georgia; etc.

Gender Equality implementation and mainstreaming mechanisms strengthened at national and local levels. During phase II, UNJP utilized a three-fold approach. Strengthen legislative framework, on the one hand, enhance implementation and mainstreaming mechanisms, on the other hand, and empower right-holders to create demand-driven social transformation. Implementing and mainstreaming gender equality is at the heart of the three-fold approach. **UNJP has provided significant resources to build the capacity of national institutions for the implementation and mainstreaming of gender equality policies.**

UNDP was among the pioneers to introduce **Gender Responsive Budgeting** methodology in Georgia as a tool to mainstream gender equality. Tbilisi Mayor's Office and Tbilisi Local Council (Sakrebulo) were the two state entities to pilot the GRB approach. Since then, several state institutions at national and local levels have adopted GRB as part of the participatory budget development process. UNDP provided technical assistance to the Parliament of Georgia, the Ministry of Education, Legal Entities of Public Law (LEPLs), local municipalities and other state actors to introduce GRB methodology. In 2019, as a result of UNDP's advocacy efforts, **the Inter-Agency Commission for Gender Equality at the AOG declared GRB mainstreaming among its priorities and established a working group to enhance GRB approaches among national and local authorities**. Some state entities, such as the Supreme Council of Ajara, continue working to strengthen GRB approaches in the budgeting process.

During phase II, UNJP supported the development of several cycles of the Human Rights National Action Plans. UNDP contributed to adopting the gender equality chapters of the relevant National Human Rights Action Plans. Furthermore, **as a result of UNDP's advocacy work, in 2019, the Government of Georgia adopted the first-ever policy document on enhancing LGBTQI rights** – chapter 15 of the National Human Rights Action Plan on

¹⁴ At the time called *the Ministry of Science and Education of Georgia*

“Enhancement of the Equality Policy and Combating Discrimination”. UNJP also supported the AOG in developing an assessment of the implementation of the National Human Rights Action Plan (NHRAP). This assessment provides lessons learned invaluable for the formulation of the new NHRAP.

To further enhance equality, diversity and equality mechanisms, during the global pandemic, UNDP partnered with the Administration of the Government to establish a **Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM) for LGBTQI communities** responding to the most urgent socio-economic needs. Through this model of cooperation, the Administration of the Government brought together LGBTQI community organizations to develop criteria and methodology for the RRM, and community organizations also supported the implementation of the mechanism amid the high-level trust among the community. UNDP provided technical expertise and financial support to the mechanism. This model became a setting stone for more funding from the EU for RRM.

Furthermore, to form a long-term vision and respond to the socio-economic needs of LGBTQI communities, UNDP supported the AOG to draft a **concept on ensuring better responsiveness of state services to the LGBTQI community’s needs**. The resulting document proposes concrete and achievable actions for several state institutions in the domain of employment and livelihood promotion, violence prevention, and promotion of access to education and healthcare. UNJP’s work under phase III will be largely based on this concept.

During phase II, several capacity-building activities were carried out for the representatives of the legislative, executive and judiciary branches. UNDP partnered with the Civil Service Bureau (CSB) to **enhance gender equality principles in the civil service reform, to introduce a gender equality module in the public servants’ education programme** and to provide capacity building at national and local levels. As the revolving door remains to be a challenge in the public sector, reaching the critical mass of public servants with increased knowledge of gender equality remains to be a challenge.

Apart from the national level, UNJP **invested significant resources to institutionalize gender equality mechanisms at the local level to build knowledge and strengthen capacities for delivering gender equality policies at the local level**. As a result of the UNJP’s and partners’ advocacy work, all 64 municipalities in Georgia have municipal Gender Equality Councils and Gender Focal Points.

Throughout the years, UNJP contributed to creating gender-sensitive local self-government through several initiatives. Including support to develop and implement municipal Gender Equality Action Plans. UNDP was the first to support Kutaisi, Lagodekhi, Ozurgeti and Rustavi municipalities to sign the ‘European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life. By joining the charter, local governments committed to taking action to enhance gender equality in their respective municipalities. Later, other municipalities joined the initiative.

Systems for women’s political participation (WPP) transformed

Since Georgia’s independence, women’s political participation in decision-making has remained at the top of the political and development agenda. UNJP has contributed significantly to enhancing the WPP agenda in Georgia. **The introduction of mandatory gender quotas is among the key results**. This was a result of the multi-year advocacy of the Task Force on Women’s Political Participation, co-chaired by UNDP and NDI. Two failed attempts predated the Adoption of mandatory gender quotas in 2020. In 2018, the Task Force on WPP collected signatures of over 37,000 citizens in support of introducing gender quotas.

During UNJP, phase II, UNDP has significantly contributed **to strengthening high-level advocacy and systematic transformation of WPP**. Including by conducted nine annual Women Councillors’ Forums; building knowledge among 300+ women candidates; enhancing on-job learning and capacity building for 600+ women councillors; launching a series of discussions with women politicians; conducting awareness raising campaigns; organizing regional political forums; supporting the building of party’s women’s organizations; enhancing inter-party dialogue and cooperation; and advocating for the establishing a women’s Caucus at the Parliament. **As a result, all parties represented at the Parliament or local governments have already established or are working to establish the**

party's women's organizations. Research demonstrates that political parties have positive attitudes towards WPP and commit to empowering women within parties – though no internal democracy mechanisms are usually in place within political parties.

UNDP provided the technical capacity of women councillors to advocate for social and economic rights at the local level. **As a result, women councillors from across Georgia were able to successfully negotiate the preschool education reform** and advocate for other related initiatives.

As part of a public outreach strategy to promote the role of women in decision-making, UNJP launched **First Time Voters' Programme**. The programme employed a peer-to-peer education method and through series of workshops and awareness-raising activities aimed at sensitizing young women and men to the importance of equal representation in politics, critical thinking, democracy building, etc.

Systems for women's economic empowerment (WEE) strengthened.

During phase II, UNJP employed a five-pronged approach to advocate for and enhance women's economic empowerment in Georgia. Firstly, UNJP contributed to strengthening the policy framework for WEE. Multi-year advocacy efforts to develop a state vision on WEE resulted in the first-ever **National Concept for Women's Economic Empowerment**. Furthermore, through phase II, UNJP introduced the concept of **care economy to Georgia** and advocated for gender-sensitive economic policies in the country.

Secondly, UNJP advocated for WEE agenda implementation at the national and local levels. For example, UNDP advocated launching **tailored municipal programmes for women's economic empowerment**. As a result, six municipalities have established such programmes. Furthermore, UNJP supported the systematic strengthening of municipal social services. UNDP mapped the national social protection scheme and existing services in 64 municipalities and **advocated for reforming local social services**. New guidelines for social workers on engagement with LGBTQI and ethnic minority communities are already in place. UNDP supported the establishment of the **Consultation Center at the Labour Inspection Office** to enhance labour rights protection of the most vulnerable employees, including women.

Thirdly, by **enhancing the income-generating skills of women in the labour market**, UNJP contributed to addressing the skills mismatch in the labour market. UNDP provided systematic support to professional education programmes, including developing the curricula and launching a new profession (homecare professional) as part of introducing Care Economy principles in Georgia.

Fourthly, through regular small grants programmes and capacity-building activities, **UNDP aimed to support individual entrepreneurs in a systematic manner**. Including during COVID-19, when the protection of social and economic rights became especially critical.

Finally, UNDP **explored partnerships with the private sector** to enhance WEE – be it through introducing Care Economy principles in the private sector or by creating Women Entrepreneurs' Development Programme.

Evidence-based enhanced to enhance gender equality, diversity, and inclusion. Through phase II, UNJP contributed to enhancing evidence-based for promoting gender equality, diversity, and inclusion. **The continuity of the programme allowed to conduct repeated studies and observe gender equality related trends in time.** During phase II, UNDP contributed to conducting two cycles of two flagship studies. Namely, 1. "Men, Women and Gender Relations in Georgia: Public Perception and Attitudes", conducted in 2013/4 and repeated in 2019. 2. "Gender Equality in Georgia: Barriers and Recommendations", conducted in 2017 and repeated in 2021. Moreover, Perception Study on Public Attitudes towards LGBTQI people, conducted with WISG, also allowed comparability analysis.

Furthermore, in partnership with NDI, UNDP **launched the first-ever assessment of the effects of mandatory**

gender quotas in Georgia, based on the 2020 and 2021 elections. UNJP supported the development of a key evidence base for women's economic empowerment issues, including starting a public debate on WEE. Also, coordinated the drafting of gender equality and LGBTQI chapters of the AOG-initiated large-scale study of COVID-19 in Georgia. UNJP's advocacy work is always based on best international practices and nationally collected evidence.

Right holders strengthened, support to civil society and media deepened. Under phase II, UNJP paid special attention to strengthening rights holders and enhancing cooperation with CSOs and media. As a result, UNJP contributed to establishing a community leaders' network – 25 Women Initiative Groups (WIGs) in 11 municipalities of the Samegrelo and Kakheti regions. Equipped with advocacy skills, WIG's advocacy efforts **resulted in allocating 9.2 million GEL for joint projects in local budgets.** Furthermore, UNDP supported the annual Community Leaders Forum, which brings 300+ community leaders from across Georgia to develop priorities for the grassroots work for CSOs and for donors.'

Throughout phase II, UNDP supported numerous demand-driven NGO/CSO initiatives, with special emphasis on LGBTQI rights. As a result, UNJP contributed to strengthening civil society and demand-driven democracy building in Georgia.

UNDP has invested significant resources to enhance support to LGBTQI organizations. Including capacity-building support, joint advocacy efforts and grant mechanisms. Furthermore, **UNDP coordinated efforts of diplomatic core and donors to address LGBTQI rights challenges in Georgia, including the annual statement on IDAHOBIT** – more and more partners join each year.

UNJP invested significant resources to enhance **gender-sensitive media reporting.** Through enhanced cooperation with media and robust awareness-raising campaigns, **UNJP has contributed to vital shifts in Georgia society about gender stereotypes.**

OUTCOME 2 – Enabling environment to eliminate VAWG, especially sexual and domestic violence, created in Georgia

Within its II Phase, the UNJP has continued to aspire towards enhancing gender equality by contributing to the creation of an enabling environment to eliminate violence against women and girls (VAWG), especially sexual violence and DV. Efforts were targeted at further improvements to relevant policies and laws, as well as the development of services for VAWG/DV survivors provided by both state and non-state actors (such as shelters, crisis centers, access to justice, career advice and job placement for victims), focusing on maintaining access to the services *inter alia* during the pandemic.

Output 2.1. National laws and policies on VAWG, especially on sexual and domestic violence, improved in line with international commitments (DEVAW, CEDAW, BPfA, Istanbul Convention)

As a result of consolidated advocacy efforts by a multitude of actors led by the UNJP, the Parliament of Georgia has signed (2014) and **endorsed ratification of the Istanbul Convention** (2017) and adopted several packages of legislative amendments aimed at alignment of domestic legislation with the Istanbul Convention. The legislative reform was supported by the UNJP through a broad participatory process. As a result, more than 50 pieces of legislation have been amended, expanding the scope of the legislative framework on domestic violence and relevant protection mechanisms to also cover violence against women in general, taking into consideration the gendered nature of domestic violence and addressing the phenomenon of VAWG in a holistic manner. New articles criminalizing stalking, forced sterilization and female genital mutilation have been added to the Criminal Code of Georgia. In addition, the legislative amendments were aimed at further **improving the VAWG/DV-related**

legislative framework, by introducing a GPS electronic monitoring (ankle bracelets) system for VAWG/DV perpetrators;¹³ mandatory behaviour correction (rehabilitation) programmes for perpetrators; issuance of restraining orders based on a standardized risk assessment tool for police;¹⁴ increase in the time frames for restraining and protection orders; and revision of the relevant terminology.

On 30 November 2018, the Parliament of Georgia adopted the legislative amendments submitted by the MIA as a result of extensive consultations with development partners and the PDO. Pursuant to the bill, sanctions for committing domestic violence became tougher. Moreover, the amendments added a gender motive as one of the aggravating circumstances to the articles prescribing responsibility for the commission of intentional murder, incitement to suicide, intentional infliction of grave bodily injury and intentional infliction of less grave bodily injury,³¹ thus following the recommendation of the PDO as well as the UNJP and other development actors to introduce special regulations on femicide. It remains to be seen whether such legislative regulation will allow for better identification of a gender motivation in such crimes in practice.

In the spring of 2019, the Parliament of Georgia adopted the **sexual harassment legislation** establishing the legal definition of sexual harassment, as well as regulations against sexual harassment in public spaces and in the workplace. Advocacy by the UNJP and the evidence generated by UN Women and GEOSTAT under the EU/UN Women/GEOSTAT 2017 National Study on Violence against Women in Georgia has played a critical role in the advocacy efforts by presenting solid justification for sexual harassment regulation. However, reporting of sexual harassment cases, both at the workplace and in public space remains low. During the first half of 2022, the PDO¹⁵ and the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA)¹⁶ handled 2 and 19 sexual harassment cases respectively. It should be noted, that the MIA does not keep track of sexual harassment cases that have been dropped prior to reaching trial courts. It remains to be seen, therefore, whether the low number of cases brought is attributable to low reporting rates, or due to high rates in dropped cases.

The late legal requirement of obtaining “victim” status to access state shelters has been continuously identified as a major impediment to effective service provision to victims/survivors of VAW and contradicts the requirements of the Istanbul Convention (Article 23 – Shelters), as well as the CEDAW Committee’s general recommendation No. 35. A bill on the removal of this barrier to accessing services has been prepared with the UNJP support in 2019 and submitted to the legislature in early 2022 after substantive consultations with civil society, government and legislature. The bill is under review by the legislature to be adopted before the end of the year.

The UNJP has also supported the GEC in revising the **Gender Equality Concept of Georgia**. The revised draft concept reflects the aspiration of the Government towards the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and ensuring substantive gender equality in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil, domestic or any other spheres. The concept is pending for adoption to be endorsed before the end of the year.

Regardless of major changes in the legislative framework, significant gaps remain. To address these, the UNJP also supported the GEC in consulting CSOs on the challenges in terms of the prevention of and response to sexual violence crimes. One of the problem areas identified by the CSOs was the definition of rape in the Criminal Code of Georgia. UN Women has been advocating for the revision of sexual crimes’ articles, especially the one concerning rape, for many years now because they do not align with the requirements of the Istanbul Convention. Having consulted practitioners as well, UN Women has included this issue in UNCT Georgia’s confidential report to CEDAW, filed earlier in 2021 for the Committee’s attention.

Importantly, with the strong support of the UNJP, the GoG joined the global Generation Equality movement, which was launched in 2021 at the initiative of the United Nations. In the reality challenged by COVID-19, it creates a new space for the fight for women’s rights and gender equality. The movement is based on a comprehensive blueprint for the advancement of women’s rights—the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. One of the

¹⁵ Source: Official communication with the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia #454331 dated 26.02.2021;

¹⁶ Source: Official communication with the Public Defender of Georgia #24/127 dated 18.02.2021;

commitments undertaken by Georgia under the Gender-Based Violence Action Coalition of the Generation Equality global movement is to fully align its national legislation with the Istanbul Convention (including the legal definition of rape).¹⁷

In addition, the UNJP provided technical assistance to the GEC in developing legislative amendments to abolish the harmful practice of so-called ‘virginity testing’. This practice was another challenge that was identified by the CSOs during the consultation meeting with the GEC and that had been of concern for both the CEDAW Committee¹⁸ and the UNSRVAV to Georgia.¹⁹ The practice of virginity testing is performed in Georgia by the National Forensics Bureau as part of criminal investigations into sexual violence crimes, as well as upon the request of physical persons. The concern is that the virginity examination is performed on unmarried women and girls, often under force, threat or coercion, to assess their virtue, honour or social value. It is thus a form of discrimination. The developing legislative amendments aim to abolish this harmful practice by banning the testing both by the Forensics Bureau and by medical professionals upon the request of physical persons, as recommended by the Interagency Statement by WHO, OHCHR and UN Women entitled “Eliminating Virginity Testing”.²⁰ The bill has been submitted to the GEC for review.

Moreover, as part of the technical assistance provided to the GEC, a package of legislative amendments aiming to change the discriminatory criteria for obtaining the status of ‘single parent’ was also prepared with UNJP’s support. The bill has been handed over to the GEC for initiation in 2022. Since 2017, the national human rights institution—the Public Defender of Georgia—has raised concerns regarding the status of single parent in Georgia in its annual report on human rights. The discriminatory nature of single parents’ legislation and practice has also been criticized by a local human rights NGO. In order to change discriminative criteria for obtaining the status of single parent, a constitutional claim has been submitted to the Constitutional Court of Georgia, and the Parliament took the obligation to amend the discriminatory legislation. As a result, comprehensive analysis of the national legislation and best international practices on regulating single parents’ issues, which characterizes the existing situation, gaps and needed legislative amendments, was developed with UNJP’s support and served as the basis for the amendments aimed at granting access to social benefits, support measures and services for an extended cohort of single parents. In addition, to support justification for the amendments, UNJP will support the GEC in conducting a Gender Impact Assessment of the bill in 2023.

As a result of the technical support provided to the Government of Georgia in establishing an institutional mechanism on gender equality and violence against women and girls within the executive branch, relevant legislative amendments **establishing the GE/VAW Commission** have been adopted and its charter approved on 12 June 2017 as per the #286 Governmental Decree. The GE/VAW Commission has been established in the Prime Minister’s Office and is comprised of line ministries and relevant governmental agencies on the deputy ministerial level. The mechanism is tasked with policymaking in the area of gender equality, women’s empowerment, VAWG and DV. It also coordinates and monitors implementation of these policies.

To support effective implementation of the commitments undertaken by the Government as per the Istanbul Convention, the UNJP provided support to the GE/VAW Commission (and its predecessor – the DV Council) in the elaboration of the 2016-2017 **DV/VAWG NAP** and its subsequent cycles, including the 2022-2024 DV/VAG NAP approved in 2022. The plan is aimed at supporting implementation of Georgia’s key international commitments, in particular those deriving from the Istanbul Convention and builds on the lessons learned from the implementation of the previous national action plans, recommendations by relevant UN treaty bodies and special

¹⁷ UN Women, *Georgia for Gender Equality*” (2021). Available at: <https://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20georgia/attachments/publications/2021/generation-equality%20brochure%20eng.pdf?la=en&vs=5132>.

¹⁸ CEDAW Committee, *Concluding observations on the combined fourth and fifth periodic reports of Georgia*, paras. 20, 21.

¹⁹ UN General Assembly, Human Rights Council, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women*, paras. 32, 99.

²⁰ WHO, *Eliminating Virginity Testing: An Interagency Statement*.

procedures and the Public Defender of Georgia. Furthermore, the VAWG/DV NAP is aimed at contributing to the achievement of the relevant nationalized targets under the SDG 5, as its impact-level results. The NAPs have undergone extensive consultations with civil society and other development partners. As costing of NAPs represents a prerequisite for transparency, greater accountability and sustainability in its implementation, it has been costed including contributions by development partners.

To support evidence-based policymaking informed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the UNJP conducted a qualitative study on the **impact of COVID-19** on VAWG/DV service provision in 2020. The study findings were to inform policy decisions to ensure continuous, high-quality and uninterrupted access to services during the pandemic and ensure the safety of beneficiaries. The findings and recommendations of this study have been incorporated into the gender chapter of the broader COVID-19 impact study coordinated by AoG and implemented by UN agencies and USAID.

To promote women's political participation and leadership in decision-making in the run-up to the Parliamentary elections in October 2020, the UNJP, supported by the wider UN GTG, has steered strategic policy discussions on **VAWP**. Policy discussions were held with members of the Parliament, development partners and civil society organizations to promote the placement of the issue of VAWP on the political agenda and to enhance the political will for its prevention, especially in light of the October 2020 parliamentary elections in Georgia.

This advocacy and awareness-raising work enabled the UNJP to launch the first-ever study on VAWP in Georgia completed in 2021, providing needed evidence and data to work towards eliminating the violence faced by many women while exercising their active and passive political rights. A high-level meeting has been organized in March to raise awareness about VAWP and elections as one of the forms of gender-based violence; and to encourage the public in general and political parties to take measures for its prevention and elimination. The meeting was organized by the UNGTG with the support of the Government of Sweden and the participation of representatives from the legislative and executive branches, PDO, the diplomatic corps, political parties and civil society. At the meeting, the members of political parties were encouraged to sign a statement on the prevention of VAWP and elections (see Annex 2C). The document, on the one hand, recognizes the humiliating and excluding effects of such violence on women and, on the other, encourages parties to adopt a policy of zero tolerance to guarantee women's free and equal participation in political life. It is notable that two political parties - the European Democrats and United Georgia - signed the statement on the spot.²¹ The statement is currently signed by 9 parties.

The UNJP further initiated consultations with the **Central Election Commission** (CEC) on the technical support for capacity development on sexual harassment and GEWE ahead of the Parliamentary Elections in October 2020. Overall, about 18 and 15 managerial employees of the CEC have completed the UN Women/PDO online courses on sexual harassment and gender equality respectively.

To fill the gap of data on the human rights situation of the **LGBTIQ+** communities in Georgia and enable informed and evidence-based policymaking, the UNJP supported Public Defender's Office (PDO) in developing the first Special Report on the Human Rights Situation of the LGBTIQ+ Communities in Georgia looking at obligations undertaken by Georgia on an international level, national legislation and policy documents on LGBTIQ+ rights and situation regarding their implementations. According to PDO's report state LGBTIQ+ policy is inconsistent and is not based on the real needs of the community, which is evidenced by the lack of implementation of Georgia's international commitments, implementing legislative or policy measures that are not realized in practice and fail to improve the community's quality of life. The study was presented at an event on 6 May 2022 that was attended by representatives of the legislative and executive branches of the Government, international organizations and the

²¹ For more please see: <https://georgia.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2020/03/debate-begins-about-preventing-violence-against-women-in-politics-and-elections>

diplomatic corps, as well as human rights advocates and other activists.²²

Output 2.2. Capacity of key policy and service delivery institutions strengthened to promote and protect women's human rights to life free from sexual violence, VAWG and DV

An enabling institutional environment that allows victims/survivors of domestic violence to disclose their suffering and freely seek protection and assistance is the main result of the UNJP's work at institutional level under its Outcome 2. Capacity development work has been carried out targeting different service-providers in the field towards increased quality of, and demand on services, with an ultimate goal to increase trust of victims/survivors in these institutions. During the reporting period, with the support of the UNJP and co-funding from the state budget, the State Fund has opened the **first state-run crisis center** for DV victims/survivors in Georgia substantially contributing to closing a significant gap in ensuring universal, free of charge access to services to DV victims/survivors. The UNJP has further supported the State Fund in expanding the DV crisis center and hotline services to victims/survivors of intimate partner and non-partner sexual violence. Overall, the UNJP supported establishment of five crisis centers (out of seven) that are operational and funded by the state. To this end, a concept on the Standards of Services for Victims of Sexual Violence and the training module for the State Fund's relevant staff on the issues of sexual violence have been elaborated. In the first six months of 2022, the crisis centers have served 461 survivors²³ and the shelters have served 318 beneficiaries.

To standardize the psychological service provision to survivors of VAWG/DV, the State Fund has developed psychological rehabilitation guidelines/standards on psychological services and employees of the State Fund underwent relevant training.

The UNJP further provided support to the ATIPFund to develop internal safety and hygiene regulations related to COVID-19, in line with the WHO guidelines. The ATIPFund re-structured service models for ten shelters and crisis centers. During the State of Emergency period, the Tbilisi shelter was functioning as a quarantine zone for new beneficiaries, while old beneficiaries living in the Tbilisi shelter were referred to other regions temporarily; the personnel of shelters and crisis centers started working in shifts and when possible, some parts of the services were carried out remotely. The personnel were consistently provided with the necessary personal protective equipment (PPE). Emergency assistance and consultation hotlines continued to work non-stop. However, it is worth noting, that there was no publicly available information regarding the standard protocols of the organizations operations adapted to COVID-19. This finding has been corroborated by the Qualitative Research on Violence against Women within the Study on Impact of COVID-19 on Human Rights Protection and Government Response in Georgia²⁴. The UNJP also supported the ATIPFund in the development of the COVID-19 safety protocol for the shelters and crisis center in the next year and making it publicly available.

To further strengthen programming and advocacy on the rights of **LGBTIQ+** people, UN Women has continued its partnership with the NGO Women's Initiatives Supporting Group (WISG) to integrate LGBTI issues in relevant training programmes for a wide range of professionals. Two rounds of training of trainers were conducted by WISG for representatives of the MIA, Chief Prosecutor's Office, Judiciary, GBA, State Fund and Ministry of Corrections and Probation (now merged with the Ministry of Justice).²⁸

During the period from 24 September to 5 October 2018, the UN Independent Expert on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity, Mr. Victor Madrigal-Borloz, visited Georgia in the framework of his mandate. The UNJP provided

²² "LGBTQI people in Georgia experiencing greater acceptance but still face challenges to their rights" (UN Women 6 May 2022), available at <http://bit.ly/3An6bWX>

²³ 8 An alleged DV victim/survivor is a person without a legal status of DV victim/survivor, i.e. a person for whom a restrictive/protective order has not been issued, the DV victim status group has not granted her the status, or the person has not been found victim in a domestic violence criminal case.

²⁴ For more information, see Annex 2A

briefings about the LGBTI situation to the Independent Expert; organized several of his meetings, including his visit to the state-run shelter for victims of VAW/DV; and provided him with the draft package of proposed legislative amendments addressing the needs of LGBTI persons, developed by the WISG. The UN Women Georgia Country Office was delighted that the majority of the provided inputs to the Independent Expert were verified and reflected in his final exit report.

The UNJP has supported ATIPfund in the development of a draft concept on specialized service provision for the LGBTIQI community. The concept draws on the special report of the Public Defender of Georgia on the human rights situation of LGBTIQI in Georgia and was finalized in 2022 after a series of consultations with the relevant professionals and the LGBTIQI community. The concept will promote increasing access to ATIPfund's VAWG/DV specialized services for the LGBTIQI community. As a result, the UNJP is supporting the ATIPfund in the establishment of a specialized crisis center for the LGBTIQ+ people to be opened in 2023.

The UNJP has continued partnership with **the Public Defender's Office of Georgia**. As a result of the recommendation by the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, its Causes and Consequences, Ms. Dubrakva Šimonovic, the PDO committed to establish the “femicide watch” or “gender-related killings of women watch” in 2016. In the frameworks of this initiative, the PDO started to collect and publish each year data on the number of femicides and analyze each case in order to identify any failure of protection with a view of improving and developing further preventive measures. Several international conferences “Femicide Watch for Prevention” have been organized by the PDO and the UNJP to share best practices on femicide monitoring and prevention and discuss findings of the femicide watch on an annual basis. The femicide watch identified several persistent gaps including the lack of a uniform administrative data-collection methodology as well as deficiencies in identifying the gender motive in such cases. Positive trends include the identification of patterns of systemic violence, the non-application of plea bargains in such cases and the application of increasingly proportional sanctions., The PDO also identified positive trends in how the criminal justice system deals with femicide cases, including the identification of patterns of systemic violence and the process of qualifying femicide cases as gender-motivated killings.²⁵

In addition, the UNJP supported the Gender Equality Department of the PDO to carry out regular monitoring of the state-run shelters in Georgia on the basis of the monitoring tool developed with the support of UN Women in 2014. Detailed information on the main findings and recommendations are reflected in the special reports and feed into the Public Defender's annual report to the Parliament on the human rights situation in Georgia. As a result of the monitoring, the PDO recommended inter alia, that the ATIPfund improve the feedback system and appeals mechanism at the shelters; ensure a thorough medical check-up of the survivors of sexual violence upon their placement in the shelters; and better equip the libraries and gardens of the shelters. In addition preparing VAWG/DV survivors for independent life after leaving the shelter was highlighted as a critical challenge.

In 2022, the UNJP has supported the PDO to revise and update the monitoring methodology (including questionnaires) of the state shelters, crisis centers and hotlines for the victims of DV. In addition to that, as a follow-up to the monitoring visits held in all state shelters and crisis centers for the victims of DV and VAW operating in Georgia in 2021, the needs of the beneficiaries were assessed, main gaps and challenges were revealed and the final report with the respective recommendations was prepared by PDO. In addition to that, in order to strengthen capacity of PDO's GED to effectively monitor the rights of Asylum seekers and persons with international protection with a focus of GBV, with UNJP's support 18 representatives of PDO have undergone the training.

In addition, UNJP's support, the PDO has developed the first special report on the human rights situation of the LGBTIQI community in Georgia, which will strengthen the capacity of the PDO's GED to monitor implementation of the legislation around VAWG/DV and LGBTIQI. The report is divided into two parts and incorporates an overview of the international standards for the protection of LGBTIQI rights and the commitments of Georgia (with

²⁵ Ibid.

a special focus on discrimination and hate crimes) and an assessment of the legal status of the LGBTIQ community in Georgia. Furthermore, the special report provides evidence-based policy and lawmaking recommendations for the legislative and executive bodies. The special report found that, despite some positive steps taken by the GoG in the direction of acknowledging LGBTIQ rights, the realization of these rights remains a significant challenge.²⁶ LGBTIQ people experience discrimination and violence in almost every sphere, deteriorating their quality of life and creating critical barriers to the enjoyment of their rights. The social and health protection crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic made these problems even more visible.²⁷

Importantly, the findings of the special report along with its recommendations have been incorporated in the PDO's annual parliamentary report, which is one of the crucial national mechanisms supervising the status of the protection of human rights and freedoms in the country. In particular, after reviewing the annual report, the PoG will adopt an ordinance or a resolution evaluating the report as well as the Parliament's assignments regarding the PDO's recommendations and deadlines for monitoring their implementation.²⁸ The parliamentary Committee on Human Rights and Civil Integration will then oversee the implementation of the resolution within the set deadlines and will submit information to a parliamentary plenary session, which is entitled to take an appropriate decision.²⁹

During the reporting period, in line with efforts to support the process of decentralizing the provision of services for the survivors of violence with the support of the UNJP, the Women's Consultation Center **Sakhli** (Sakhli) has engaged in consultations with the municipalities of Telavi and Zugdidi on the allocation of administrative buildings to be rehabilitated and equipped by Sakhli for DV/VAWG crisis centers. The crisis centers were to be operated by Sakhli with UNJP funding until 2020 and then will be taken over by local municipalities. As a result, the Zugdidi and Telavi municipalities have allocated relevant buildings. Renovation works were completed in 2018 and the crisis centers were operational in 2019. The crisis centers were to be operated by Sakhli until 2020 and then taken over by local municipalities. Due to the fact that the crisis center in Zugdidi is larger than initially planned, additional funding from the Polish Embassy has been allocated to complete renovation works and furnish the full 400 square meters of the crisis center. However, due to the parliamentary elections in Georgia (election date: October 31, 2020) and subsequent unrest, as well as pandemic-related constraints and consequent shift in priorities, the municipalities have failed to meet their obligations as laid down in as per Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) signed with the municipalities and the UNJP continued transitional support to the crisis centers to cover operating expenses of the crisis centers, while at the same time, advocating with the municipalities on the take-over and exploring other sustainable funding opportunities. As a result, the relevant expenditures have been reflected in the Zugdidi municipality's 2022 budget.³⁰ To ensure the smooth transition of the crisis in Telavi to the local municipality, UNJP has conducted official advocacy meetings with the representatives of Telavi Municipality and the newly elected mayor of Telavi. The meetings were conducted together with the chair of the GEC and in partnership with the National Association of Local Authorities of Georgia (NALAG). As a result, the municipality expressed readiness to continue active consultations regarding the transition process.

However, despite the number of official advocacy meeting conducted together with the chair of the GEC and in partnership with NALAG and official correspondence with the representatives of Telavi and Zugdidi, the municipalities could not find the proper modality to take over management of the centers. Therefore, in order to ensure sustainability of the CCs, UNJP has initiated a new communication with the Atipfund in 2022, requesting the latter to take over funding and management of two new crisis centers in Telavi and Zugdidi. As a result of this communication, the ATipfund has expressed its readiness to take over funding and management of these two crisis

²⁶ Public Defender of Georgia, *Special Report of the Public Defender of Georgia on LGBT+ Rights in Georgia 2021* (2022, unpublished).

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ *Rules of Procedure of the Parliament of Georgia*, article 163. Available at <https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/4401423?publication=26>.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ *Budget of Zugdidi Municipality for 2022*, article 17, programme code 06 02 03. Available at <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/5288434?publication=0>.

centers and the process on transition is ongoing with the funding to be secured as of 2023.

To enhance national ownership and ensure sustainability of capacity development results of the UNJP, the II Phase of the programme contributed to the improvement of the institutionalized training curricula for the police officers, prosecutors and lawyers. Overall, during the second phase of the UNJP, more than 3,800 professionals from the justice system and social services have been trained.

In order to improve **police response** to the instances of DV, UNJP partnered with the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia (MIA) to develop and update VAWG/DV (including sexual violence) training modules for patrol and district police officers. Overall, some 1,695 police officers and investigators of the MIA received training on efficient response to DV, SGBV, VAWG and LGBTIQ+ issues.

To strengthen institutional capacity of the MoIA, the UNJP has engaged in consultations with the MoIA to advocate for the establishment and development of a specialized unit/division to oversee investigations into and response to VAWG, in particular sexual violence and DV cases and analyze relevant data to inform policymaking. As a result, in January 2018, the Minister of Internal Affairs has made an announcement regarding the establishment of the MIA's specialized Human Rights Department on the basis of Ministerial Order No. 1 dated 12 January 2018.¹⁸ The commitment, among others, was reflected in the MoU concluded between UN Women and the MoIA on 26 July 2017 in order to strengthen the capacity of the police forces to promote and protect women's human rights to life free from violence, especially from domestic and sexual violence. The UNJP, together with its partners have been advocating for the creation of a specialized unit within the MIA on VAWG/DV cases for several years.¹⁷

The department is tasked with ensuring the timely response to and effective investigations into domestic violence and VAW cases (as well as cases involving juvenile perpetrators or victims, hate crimes and trafficking in persons). The core functions of the department are to monitor the process of investigations into and administrative proceedings on the above-mentioned cases; to identify gaps and shortcomings in the police performance within these proceedings; to prepare and enforce measures to enhance the police response; and to analyze data related to the investigations and related administrative procedures for informed policymaking within the ministry. The results of the technical assistance provided to the MIA within the framework of the programme were referenced as key achievements in the national response to VAWG/DV by the Georgia Human Rights Country Report issued by the U.S. Department of State in 2019.¹⁹ As a result, the quality of police response to VAWG/DV cases has increased dramatically, as evidenced by an increased number of reporting and application of legal protection measures by the police. For instance, the number of issued restraining orders increased from 2,877 in 2016 to 10,120 in 2021.³¹

However, in 2021, there was a 9 per cent decrease in the number of issued restraining orders compared to the previous year, while the number of calls related to VAWG/DV made to the unified emergency number 112 amounted to 18,007,³² compared to 18,848 in 2020.³³ This slight decrease could be partially due to the COVID-19 pandemic, lockdown measures and their implications.

In line with UNJP's recommendations, in April 2020, MIA massively spread information via SMS, regarding the functioning of alternative reporting mechanisms on VAWG/DV, such as the 112 application and SOS button for VAWG/DV survivors. The information was also disseminated in ethnic minority languages. Information was also available in the pharmacies and grocery shops, as well as in quarantine hotels. Short videos were created and disseminated via social media and TV. Importantly, the police were instructed not to fine persons who violated the curfew to escape domestic violence; The UNJP further facilitated that relevant measures taken by the Government to address VAWG/DV in COVID-19 times are featured in the Global COVID-19 Gender Response tracker.³⁴

³¹ Official correspondence from the MoIA.

³² Source: Official communication with the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia No. 0 22 00608746, dated 9 March 2022.

³³ Source: Official communication with the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia No. 454331, dated 26 February 2021.

³⁴ See at: <https://data.undp.org/gendertracker/>

During the reporting year, the emergency hotline 112 under the MIA continued to provide free services 24/7 for all. The mobile app has a chat mode and silent SOS button, which means that a potential victim could call the police by pushing the SOS button, even without dialing the phone number. The SOS button within the 112 app was added with UN Women's support through the EU-funded project "Ending Violence against Women and Girls in Georgia" (EVAWGG). The VAWG/DV consultation hotline 116 006, run by the ATIPfund, continued to provide legal, psychological and social consultations in eight languages: Georgian, Arabic, Armenian, Azerbaijani, English, Farsi, Russian and Turkish and Ukrainian as of 2021. The consultation hotline 1481, run by the PDO, also continued to provide consultations on GBV 24/7.

In addition, the UNJP also started to gather data on calls related to alleged sexual violence made to 112, which amounted to 196 calls in 2021 and 168 in the first half of 2022. The 112 mobile app was downloaded by 13,463 users, while no data are available in terms of how many people have used it to report VAWG/DV.

Apart from that, the electronic surveillance of high-risk perpetrators was used in 15 cases in 2021 and 4 in the first six months of 2022,³⁵ compared to 8 cases in 2020.³⁶ A special GPS system that allows the MIA to permanently control the movement of perpetrators and thereby prevent the reoccurrence of violence was established with the technical assistance of UN Women through the EU-funded project EVAWGG in 2020.

To enhance capacity of prosecutors to efficiently work on VAWG/DV cases, the UNJP has continued collaboration with the Chief Prosecutor's Office of Georgia (CPOG). During the reporting period, 590 prosecutors and investigators were trained by the UNJP at the Chief Prosecutor's Office on DV, SGBV, VAWG and LGNTIQ+ issues.

Due to the latent and sensitive nature of VAWG/DV crimes, law enforcement requires special knowledge and skills to be able to handle these cases with care, prevent re-victimization, ensure the safety of survivors and, ultimately, deliver convictions with proportional sanctions against perpetrators. For the last few years, therefore, the UNJP has been advocating with the CPOG for the designation of VAWG/DV specialized prosecutors and investigators with specialized knowledge and skills. Consequently, the Chief Prosecutor issued Decree No. 26-m dated 20 February 2018 stipulating that, as of 1 May 2018, DV cases will be handled exclusively by DV-specialized prosecutors and investigators, having completed a special advanced course. The decree further spells out requirements for consistent capacity development of specialized prosecutors and investigators on DV. The current cohort of 194 specialized prosecutors (114 men and 80 women) are working on VAW/DV cases and enhancing the analysis of prosecutors' intervention in VAW/DV cases.

In addition, the UNJP, the Council of Europe and Equality Now have joined forces to improve the response to sexual violence in Georgia through the development of the Sexual Violence Investigation Manual. The manual is instrumental for improving the relevant practice and legislation related to sexual violence, ensuring de facto compliance with the standards set forth in the Istanbul Convention and the effective administration of justice. The manual represents an investigative methodology tool, designed primarily for practical application and implementation by investigators, prosecutors and judges in Georgia. As such, it covers the relevant procedures starting from the reporting process through the prosecution and punishment stages for acts of sexual violence. Based on its compliance with international human rights standards and commonalities among States concerning sexual violence, the manual is a valuable for post-Soviet countries and worldwide.

As of 2021, only specialized investigators and prosecutors handle sexual violence crimes in Georgia thanks to the technical assistance provided by the UNJP. Based on the manual, the UNJP in partnership with the CoE, has conducted a cascade of specialization trainings on handling sexual violence cases for investigators, prosecutors and

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

lawyers.³⁷ The trainings will be continued in 2023.

In addition to that, UNJP supported the mainstreaming of LGBTQI issues in relevant capacity development interventions. Hence, in 2021, UNJP in partnership with WISG, a local feminist organization with expertise and proven experience in working on the rights of women and LGBTQI persons, has developed training modules on SOGI, LGBTQI issues and discrimination. As a result, 36 prosecutors, 103 representatives of the MIA and 40 lawyers of the Legal Aid Service (LAS) were trained to strengthen their capacity to ensure an efficient response to VAWG/DV cases and hate crimes against the LGBTQI community. Apart from that, the capacities of 10 representatives of local CSOs on advocacy around LGBTQI and discrimination issues have also been strengthened.

To develop capacities of the critical service providers to the DV victims/survivors in the justice system, the UNJP worked together with the Georgian Bar Association (**GBA**) to revise a training module (developed with UNJP I support) for lawyers on DV issues has been revised to cover recent legislative changes as well as sexual violence issues and train trainers. The UNJP further supported cascade training of lawyers. Overall, 1,317 lawyers have been trained.

In 2015 in cooperation with the USAID's EWMI/JILEP program, UNJP I partnered with the **HSOJ**, to develop a comprehensive training program for sitting judges on gender equality, women's rights and domestic violence issues. The UNJP's II phase supported training of trainers and cascade training of judges. Overall, 158 judges and judicial assistants have been trained.

During the reporting period, with UNJP support, the Analytical Department of the Supreme Court of Georgia conducted a study on the application of international standards in domestic violence cases. An analysis of 1,236 judgments revealed an increase in the number of DV cases having reached the trial courts, as well as an increase in the number of judgments in which a gender-based discrimination motive was identified and in the number of judgments with reference to the relevant international standards.²⁴ However, more work needs to be done in cooperation with the prosecution to better detect gender-based discrimination in VAWG/DV cases during the investigation and indictment stages to ensure the imposition of proportionate sanctions on perpetrators at the sentencing stage.

In 2016, UN Women has also supported the LEPL **National Probation Agency of the Ministry of Corrections** (NPA) in the development and institutionalization of the GBV Perpetrators Rehabilitation Programme for probationers as a result of the Study Tour on Prevention and Response to Domestic Violence in Spain, organized by UN Women in November 2014 for the representatives of the Government of Georgia. The programme is operating throughout Georgia and is built on the Spanish model "GBV – Intervention Programme for the Rehabilitation of Perpetrators" (PRIA), selected by NPA in consultation with UN Women as one of the most successful models of its kind worldwide. In 2019, the programme has been updated and replicated in 8 correctional facilities across Georgia with UN Women/EU support. Since its establishment, 540 probationers and prisoners have participated the programme.

In order to enhance victims' access to justice, the UNJP has supported two women's rights CSOs - Sapari and Partnership for Human Rights (PHR) to carry out strategic litigation on VAWG/DV and women with disabilities issues. In the frameworks of this support, interests of two survivors of sexual violence were represented before the ECHR and a case of a women with disability who was placed in a psychiatric hospital illegally is being prepared for international treaty body UN CRPD. Moreover, with UNJP's support Sapari has started monitoring of fulfilment of ECHR judgment on **Tkheldize vs Georgia** case, which obliges Georgian government to implement effective investigation of the case and the CEDAW decision in the case of **Khanum Jeiranova**, namely recommendations on appropriate reparation and official apology to the victim's children.

Furthermore, with UNJP's support PHR and Sapari started litigating three strategic cases in Common and

³⁷ See Annex 2A for more details.

Constitutional Courts. One of them involves a former resident of Ninotsminda Boarding School seeking compensation of inflicted damages. Another case concerns women athletes who were sexually harassed. The constitutional court case requests to declare criminal law articles unconstitutional as violating the fundamental rights of women with disabilities.

Output 2.3. Public awareness raised to support prevention and disclosure of the instances of VAWG, particularly sexual violence and DV

The work under Outcome 2 of the UNJP at the grassroots level aims supporting prevention as well as disclosure of DV instances, aiming specifically targeting a) increased awareness among the target audiences of the problem of VAWG/DV, b) encouraging disclosure of the instances of DV/VAWG and promote the use of the existing victim support services; c) preventing violence from occurring in the longer run by promoting zero tolerance with regard to VAWG/DV as they constitute criminal offences.

To ensure sustainability of the results of UNJP's engagement with the **Ministry of Education and Science (MoES)**, on 5 May 2017 a joint Memorandum of Understanding has been signed covering gender mainstreaming in three main areas – formal education in schools; non-formal education, including for optional courses and parents' education; and vocational education and training. As part of the MoU, the UNJP supported training of 171 trainers of the Teachers' Professional Development Center (**TPDC**) – the official teacher training agency under the Ministry of Education and Science, underwent intensive trainings on gender equality issues during the two sessions organized jointly by UN Women and Millennium Challenge Account - Georgia. The trainers then trained public school teachers and principals throughout the country.

As such, the reporting period saw substantial progress in the Government's engagement in information dissemination about VAW and essential services for survivors of violence aimed at increased awareness and more favourable social norms, attitudes and behaviours among Georgia's general population.

For example, the Government of Georgia joined the world in commemorating the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence in 2019. The governmental campaign focused on sexual harassment, especially by raising awareness about the new sexual harassment legislation and by encouraging reporting. Fourteen State agencies from the municipalities were engaged in the campaign, encompassing approximately 50 awareness-raising events across Georgia including but not limited to awareness-raising meetings, training sessions, an essay contest and an intensive social media campaign launched by the Office of the Prime Minister. All campaign events were united under one overarching theme – that ending sexual harassment and other forms of VAW is a national priority and that the Government of Georgia is committed to supporting victims/survivors and holding perpetrators accountable.

In the reporting period, considering the implications that COVID-19 has had on violence against women – the Shadow Pandemic – we have seen substantial progress in the Government's engagement in information dissemination about violence against women and essential services for survivors of violence aimed at increased awareness and more favourable social norms, attitudes and behaviours among Georgia's general population.

The UNJP supported the CGE to develop a Communication Strategy on Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence during COVID-19 crisis, aiming at raising awareness on these issues, as well as spreading information on the alternative ways of reporting violence cases. In addition, UN Women supported the CGE in promoting existing services for survivors. Two videos promoting the nationwide VAWG/DV hotline and the national emergency service center 112 have been produced and aired on twice a day on one of the famous Georgian TV stations and 15 regional TVs (for a month, considering the dates of 16 days of activism against GBV campaign). Outdoor billboards were also produced and placed in Tbilisi and regions. UN Women supported the CGE to address the increased risk of violence against women and domestic violence, in 2020 the Inter-Agency Commission by supporting development and implementation of a communication strategy on VAW/DV during the COVID-19. The strategy outlines key messages and priority actions of the governmental entities and NGOs to ensure that information on

state-provided services is available for all.³⁸

In addition, GOG joined the world in commemorating the 16 Days of Activism against GBV, and the President of Georgia delivered a speech on 24 November at the high-level forum at UN Headquarters dedicated to combating GBV during the pandemic. The governmental campaign focused on carrying across the message that despite the strains on the health-care sector and the various social distancing, isolation and lockdown restrictions, combating violence against women remains a priority item on the political agenda and that victims/survivors will be treated with relevant attention. Still, the UN Women study on the impact of COVID-19 on VAW service provision identified very specific barriers faced by women, especially women belonging to ethnic minority groups, in accessing relevant protection and services. The recommendations generated by the study will be incorporated and addressed into the broader government-coordinated study on the socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19.

Despite the increasing trend of using electronic surveillance, the cases are still few in number. Reportedly due to a low level of awareness on the new prevention system among society, many survivors of violence refrain from using the electronic surveillance system. Therefore, UN Women through its EU-funded EVAWGG project will support the MIA in producing awareness-raising products about the electronic surveillance of high-risk perpetrators in 2022 and beyond.

In 2016, PDO has designed and institutionalized a training module for journalists on gender-sensitive and ethical reporting with a focus on VAWG/DV in its Human Rights Academy. Overall, more than 200 journalists have undergone the training. In addition, In the run-up to the Parliamentary Elections in October 2020, the UNJP commissioned an international expert to strengthen the role of the media in advocating the empowerment of women and gender equality. More specifically, the consultant conducted a training dedicated to the topic of VAWP for 30 journalists from around Georgia. Eva Barboni, founder and CEO of Atalanta, conducted the training. She spoke to Georgian journalists on the types of VAWP, the need for fair and gender-sensitive reporting on the matter, various aspects to consider, disinformation and other important questions.

During the reporting period, the Kakheti Regional Development Fund (KRDF) reached out to more than 1500 boys and girls to raise their awareness on GE and VAWG issues and promote existing services for VAWG/DV victims/survivors in the Kakheti region, Pankisi gorge densely populated with ethnic and religious minorities. KRDF has conducted different types of sports activities; excursions and camps, meetings, trainings, movie screenings and similar activities were conducted for local Kist, Chechen and Georgian children aged 14-16 aimed at raising their awareness on gender equality and VAWG/DV.

Over the years, the UNJP also supported several art projects to promote zero tolerance to VAWG/DV. For instance, The theatre play *Lysistrata* by Lasha Bugadze, based on the comedy by Aristophanes about power relations between men and women staged by the Rustaveli theatre with the support of UN Women has achieved substantial critical acclaim in 2016. On 27 December, 2016 at the eighth annual Duruji Theatre Award ceremony hosted by the Ministry of Culture and Monument Protection of Georgia three of the four principal awards went to *Lysistrata*. UNJP has organized screenings of the documentary “Speak Out!” produced by UNJP in cooperation with the Georgian National Film Center throughout Georgia for different audiences inter alia different professionals (more than 200 participants in total). The screenings were typically associated with follow up discussions about VAWG/DV issues, with participation of experts and/or gender equality advocates.

Fairy tales can contribute to shaping a child’s value system and may serve as a powerful tool in promoting gender equality. This potential motivated UN Women Georgia to engage 12 Georgian authors in producing an illustrated collection of 21 fairy tales inspired by real female figures from Georgian history, folklore and fiction titled *There Once was a Girl*.³⁵ The fictional stories recount the courageous deeds, determination, wisdom, dignity and fight for

³⁸ See at: http://gov.ge/files/41_76497_133739_COVIDRESPONSEREPORTGoG_ENG.pdf

justice of female heroines. The collection was published in the summer of 2018. Copies of the book were distributed to 106 public libraries in Tbilisi and the regions of Kakheti and Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti. Within the framework of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence campaign, the collection was also presented to 150 children living in the Georgian regions.³⁶

To promote gender equality and tackle sexual harassment in sports, UNJP has continued to work with the Georgian Rugby Union. Apart from awareness-raising initiatives, the UNJP conducted a training for 16 women representatives of the Georgian Rugby Union, including referees and players, on the general concepts of gender equality, VAWG/DV, sexual harassment and existing legal protection mechanisms and services. The training has laid the groundwork for further programming in this area, specifically exploring opportunities for the establishment of a formal sexual harassment complaints mechanism at the Georgian Rugby Union, the first one ever in Georgian sports. Apart from that, to share knowledge on local and international experiences and regulations of gender-based violence and sexual harassment and distribute information about the rights of women in sports and legal mechanisms for their protection UNJP together with PHR conducted meetings with about 100 women athletes and personals of sports federations and women's sport clubs in Tbilisi and regions. Furthermore, to promote zero tolerance for VAWG/DV and sexual violence three video footages were prepared with UNJP's support.

In order to promote zero tolerance for VAWG/DV, homophobia and transphobia UNJP supported the Women's Initiatives Supporting Group (WISG) to conduct a National Study of Societal Attitudes, Knowledge and Information on the LGBTIQ+ Communities in Georgia. First conducted in 2015, the second round of the Study allows for a comparative analysis of the trends and changes in public perceptions of the LGBTIQ+ communities in Georgia. Even though the negative attitudes are still largely present, the Study identified some positive trends in how the Georgian society perceives the LGBTIQ+ communities and their rights and sexual orientation and gender identity issues in general. For example, the share of respondents who support the restriction of employment of LGBTIQ+ people in the education sector has decreased by almost a quarter (from 77% to 50-53%). Furthermore, even though the stigma toward manifestation of intimacy and sexuality in public regardless of gender remains, the number of respondents supporting restriction of the right to assembly and expression of LGBTIQ+ people has decreased by 25% (from 78% to 53%).

The study was presented at an event on 6 May 2022 that was attended by representatives of the legislative and executive branches of the Government, international organizations and the diplomatic corps, as well as human rights advocates and other activists.³⁹ Moreover, based on the study findings, with UNJP's support WISG has prepared a Communications Strategy and Action Plan for 2022-2023.

OUTCOME 3 – Advanced gender equality and reproductive rights, including for the most vulnerable women, adolescents and youth

The UNJP strengthened gender equality national machinery and shifted harmful practices and women and girls SRHR high on the country's political agenda. The program supported elaboration of the Governmental Action Plan on Human Rights (2018-2020) and National Action Plan on Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (2018-2020). The program supported the operation of the Task Force on Harmful Practices of Early/Child Marriage chaired by the Advisor to the Prime Minister on Human Rights and Gender Equality Issues. The Task Force supported strengthened coordination among the relevant government entities and international and civil society stakeholders working in the field of Child Marriage to maximize effectiveness of actions and synergies.

The UNJP introduced legislative amendments to create a better regulatory framework for combating harmful

³⁹ "LGBTQI people in Georgia experiencing greater acceptance but still face challenges to their rights" (UN Women 6 May 2022), available at <http://bit.ly/3An6bWX>

practices of Early/Child Marriage. The Civil Code of Georgia was amended to strictly determine the legal age of marriages without any exception⁴⁰, and the Criminal Code of Georgia was amended to criminalize sexual intercourse of an adult with a minor under 16, as well as forced marriages⁴¹.

The UNJP supported elaboration of the gender-sensitive Family Policies in support of women's economic empowerment, and their involvement in the labour market. The program advocated for the introduction of the new regulation for maternity, paternity, and parental leaves. Although falling short of some of the advocacy points put forward by the UNJP, the reformed Labour Code entitles fathers to take a leave for childcare for the first time.

The program produced high-quality knowledge resources on various issues of the ICPD agenda. In total, 13 studies were launched by the program (please see Annex 3.1 – List of Publications). The evidence generated has become a solid foundation for leading policy advocacy and informed program formulation.

The UNJP supported participatory partnership platforms to advocate for increased investment in marginalized adolescents and youth. UNJP invested in young people's empowerment and capacity development (608 direct beneficiaries, acting as the multipliers of information) through informational sessions, youth local (3) and national forums (2). UNJP managed to empower young people to become advocates of change, and many have become the activists in their respective communities. Moreover, UNJP supported the development of the National Youth Policy Concept (2020-2030) and compiled Youth Index to measure multidimensional progress on youth empowerment and development in the country.

The UNJP strengthened healthcare system response to GBV/VAW. With the UNJP's technical assistance, MoH has developed and adopted Standard Operational Procedures for primary health system workers to respond to, document, and refer cases of GBV/VAW. Some key normative acts regulating the healthcare system – Documentation for Ambulatory Care (MoLHSA Ministerial Decree No. 01-41/n) and Stationary Hospital Care (MoLHSA Ministerial Decree No. 108/n) – were approved, enabling primary healthcare professionals to document cases of VAWG/DV appropriately. The state funding mechanism for the services available for the victims of sexual violence was elaborated and adopted. The SOP was piloted in Kakheti region covering 110 ambulatory units and 300 doctors and nurses in the Kakheti region. Throughout the implementation of the pilot, out of 3,542 medical consultations provided in primary healthcare settings, 459 were counseled on GBV/DV issues, 14 women were referred to referral services, and criminal proceedings were launched on four cases.

The UNJP strengthened the National Curriculum of Georgia by integrating various topics of Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) in the formal education system. The national curriculum is relatively well-loaded with topics from CSE on the basic education level, while primary education and secondary education levels still need to ensure the provision of age-relevant and culturally-appropriate education adolescents. UNJP invested in improving the quality of the school textbooks in Biology and Civic Education, provided technical assistance to the MoES to train the “master trainers” of biology and civic education (78 in total) on CSE. In cooperation with the local Education Resource Centers, MoUs were concluded with four schools in Kakheti and 10 schools in Samegrelo to carry out peer education training sessions. In total, UNJP reached 5,861 young people through peer education training sessions in Kakheti and Samegrelo regions, and 941 pupils – through school-based peer education.

The UNJP Strengthened the capacity of the PDO to monitor women and girls' SRHR and well-being within the framework of the overall Human Rights Monitoring Framework. As a result of UNFPA's technical assistance, PDO prepared one Country Assessment⁴² and three Country Inquires on various topics of SRHR⁴³. The results of

⁴⁰ Civil Code of Georgia, Article 1108: <https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/31702?publication=115>

⁴¹ Criminal Code of Georgia, Article 137, 140, 150, 150¹: <https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/16426?publication=241>

⁴² Country Assessment on Women and Girls SRHR and Well-being: https://georgia.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Sexual%20and%20Reproductive%20Health%20and%20Rights%20Country%20Inquiry_GEO.pdf

⁴³ SRHR of Minority Women: <https://www.ombudsman.ge/eng/spetsialuri-angarishebi/sakartveloshi-aradominanti-etnikuri-jgufebis-tsarmomadgeneli-kalebisa-da-gogoebis-seksualuri-da-reproduktsiuli-janmrtelobis-da-uflebebis-kutkhit-arsebuli-mdgomareoba>; SRHR of Women in Psychiatric Facilities: <https://www.ombudsman.ge/eng/spetsialuri-angarishebi/kalta-seksualuri-da-reproduktsiuli-janmrtelobis-da-uflebebis-datsvis-mdgomareoba-fsikiatriul-da-sakhelmtsifo-zrunvis-datsesebulebebshi>; Women and Girls SRH and Well-being: Maternal

the country inquiries were continuously reflected in the PDO's Parliamentary Reports and some were translated into the Parliamentary Resolutions. CI methodology was adapted to the PDO institutional framework and embedded in the institution's overall human rights monitoring framework. The Terms of Reference of the Gender Equality Department was amended to reflect the continuous responsibility of the PDO to monitor the state of women and girls' SRH and well-being.

The UNJP significantly contributed to the change of Georgian population's perceptions and attitudes on gender equality through issue-based communication campaigns. Research shows that the Georgian society has become more sensitive to gender inequalities. Importantly, gender equality in Georgia is not seen as a zero-sum game, meaning that in order to achieve gender equality, somebody must lose out. UNJP engaged men in advancing gender equality through gender-transformative programming. National campaign MenCare Georgia has become one of the most recognizable and well-perceived campaigns in the country continuously expanding the circle of like-minded people supporting involved fatherhood, and responsible and non-violent partnerships.

The program spearheaded flagship initiatives and partnerships with private sector representatives to reinforce advocacy and communication for the elimination of harmful practices and women and girls' empowerment. These include Body Shop, Avon, Football Federation, Tegeta Motors etc.

The UNJP Secured partnerships with the media representatives to positively change public discourse on various aspects of gender equality. UNJP invested in the capacity development of journalists to ensure sensitive reporting. Media dedicated around 800 pieces on various aspects of ICPD agenda.

Output 3.1. The program provided technical assistance to the Advisor of the Prime Minister on Human Rights to design National Human Rights Strategy 2022-2030. As a result of the advocacy the need to tackle harmful practices, address women and girls' reproductive health and rights, and support comprehensive sexuality education have been prioritized by the government for the coming years. Moreover, it has been agreed that an independent section will be dedicated to the harmful practices within the National Human Rights Action Plan.

For the first time, UNJP started investing in the capacity development of the local governments to ensure the localization of the national priorities. UNJP piloted interventions with the municipalities of Samegrelo region to build the capacity of the gender equality councils, gender and youth focal points for leading evidence-based programming on the selected issues of gender equality; ensure that local action plans and interventions reflect the priorities identified by the Human Rights Strategy and the Action Plan; and support local government representatives to plan and implement various activities through utilizing local budgetary and/or human resources. In cooperation with the National Association of Local Authorities of Georgia (NALAG), nine (9) municipalities from Samegrelo region participated in an extensive workshop. As a result of the workshop, the local action plans were scrutinized to integrate priorities of the Human Rights Strategy into them and identify the possible areas of future cooperation.

UNJP continued producing quality knowledge resources as the basis for future policy formulation and informed programming. For the first time, UN Agencies jointly supported Women's Initiatives Supporting Group (WISG) to conduct a National Study of Societal Attitudes, Knowledge and Information on the LGBTIQI Communities in Georgia. First conducted in 2015, the second round of the study allowed for a comparative analysis of the trends and changes in public perceptions of the LGBTIQI communities in Georgia.

Besides, in cooperation with international partners (NDI, PROLOG, UNDP), UNJP supported preparation of the study - Gender Equality in Georgia: Barriers and Recommendations. The study enabled to draw recommendations for the Parliament of Georgia regarding the progress achieved and the gaps to be addressed in comparison to the first round of the study. The document covered the wide areas of gender equality agenda, such as harmful practices, gender-based violence and violence against women, comprehensive sexuality education, etc.

Health and CSE: <https://www.ombudsman.ge/eng/spetsialuri-angarishebi/seksualuri-da-reproduktiuli-janmrtelobis-da-uflebebis-sakitkhebeze-erovnuli-kvleva>

Finally, UNJP initiated a study on a yet unexplored direction of the violence against women – obstetric violence. During the reporting period, an international consultant was hired to elaborate the methodology of the qualitative research on obstetric violence. NCDC&PH finalized the field work within the reporting period.

Under Output 3.2, UNJP committed to strengthening the capacity of public institutions and National Human Rights Institution (NHRI) to advance gender equality and reproductive rights and prevent gender-based violence and harmful practices.

In consultations with the relevant civil society organizations working on the rights of the LGBTQI community and women with disabilities, UNJP revised the Standard Operational Procedures on Healthcare System Response to GBV/VAW. The exercise aimed to ensure the compliance with the principle of LNOB and reflect specific needs of the LGBTQ+ people and WwDs in it. The SOP was discussed with the representatives of the Ministry of Health and officially submitted to the Ministry for approval.

Moreover, the online training module on Healthcare System Response to GBV/VAW has been amended following the requirements of the new SOP. Experts added relevant information and tests in the module to ensure alignment of the training module with the SOP.

Based on the request from the LEPL Agency for State Care and Assistance for the (statutory) Victims of Human Trafficking, UNJP conducted the online training - “Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights of Women with psycho-social needs” for the representatives of ten psychiatric facilities, five community houses, and three boarding houses. Moreover, following the capacity development trainings, the institutions were supported to develop short-term action plans on SRH/GBV activities in their relevant districts (in Lagodekhi and Telavi municipalities).

To support integration of the Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) in formal education system, UNJP continued partnership with the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia. The regulatory framework of the general education in Georgia was assessed using UNESCO’ Sexual Education Review and Assessment Tool (SERAT). SERAT scrutinized legislative framework, as well as the National Curriculum, subject standards, and teaching methodology to draw conclusions on the state of the CSE in the country. The exercise revealed that despite the obvious improvements, the National Curriculum lack information on gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, specifically at the primary education level (grades I-VI). Following the findings, the Ministry of Education re-opened the primary education level subject standards to integrate more topics from the CSE in the formal education.

To complement formal education with informal education, UNJP piloted the project “School Doctors’ Hour” in six (6) public schools in the capital and Sagarejo municipalities. School doctors and head teachers of the primary education level participated in an extensive training proceeding the implementation process. The Ministry monitored the lessons conducted by the trained teachers and doctors and provided recommendations for the expansion of the project nation-wide. UNJP ensured that the project is firmly fixed within the institutional framework of the education system. The ToR of the school doctors approved by the Minister’s Decree mandates the professionals to conduct informational sessions with children and adolescents. Moreover, the National Curriculum will explicitly mention School Doctors Initiative as a mandatory mechanism within formal education system.

Finally, with technical assistance from the UNFPA Regional Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia, UNJP designed a multi-year plan for social norm transformation on CSE. The plan envisages a tiered approach and stipulates working on the policy, institutional and grass-roots levels to debunk myths around sexuality education and consolidate public support to lead quality CSE.

Furthermore, UNJP continued its partnership with the Public Defender’s Office of Georgia (PDO). During the extension period, particular emphasis was made on strengthening regional offices of the PDO to carry on the ICPD

agenda. UNJP conducted an extensive capacity development workshop to capacitate staff on the topics of women and girls' SRHR and harmful practices. The workshop was followed by a brainstorming session on the possible interventions to be implemented locally on the aforementioned issues.

Moreover, UNJP supported PDO to elaborate the methodology of the fourth round of the Country Inquiry on the SRHR of LGBTQ + people. International and national experts jointly conducted focus group discussions to build the methodology and to ensure the inclusion of the community members in the exercise. Besides, PDO released the findings of the third round of the CI, SRHR of Women in Psychiatric Facilities and a small-scale study on the harmful practices of Early/Child Marriage in minority populated areas⁴⁴. Representatives of the national government, local NGOs, and international organizations participated in the discussion following the dissemination of findings.

Under Output 3.3, UNJP committed to strengthening public advocacy for enhancing de facto gender equality and promotion of SRHR. In the reporting period, UNJP scaled up gender-transformative programming with a focus to promote involved fatherhood and responsible partnership and challenging toxic masculinities. National campaign MenCare Georgia celebrated Father's Day for the seventh time in 2022. The campaign organized an outdoor game for fathers and their children – a treasure hunt. The event celebrated involved fatherhood and gathered 170 teams around the celebration. Private companies joined the event within the framework of their CSR and established prizes for the winners of the game (four companies), while some⁴⁵ joined in celebrating Father's Day by dedicating various offers, discounts, and activities to the day.

According to the research, the change in social norms is particularly remarkable in the younger generation. Therefore, UNJP started to prepare the ground for the replication of the Global Boyhood Initiative within the Georgian context. The program conducted a capacity development workshop for the civil society representative and activists involved in the National Campaign. Moreover, the UNJP conducted a qualitative study among young boys aged 11-13 to explore the attitudes and perceptions of adolescents on various aspects of gender equality. The study enabled to shape the future campaign and design relevant activities to be implemented within the framework of the Boyhood Initiative.

To promote responsible parenthood MenCare Georgia arranged the Fathers' Cup in cooperation with the Georgian Football Federation. The event hosted more than 20 teams of children and fathers promoting equal participation of girls and boys in sports activities and encouraging engaged fatherhood for the healthy development of children. Moreover, following the request from the Georgian Football Federation, UNJP conducted five (5) training sessions for women's national football teams, including football players and support team (doctors, trainers, referees) on the topics of Gender Equality, harmful practices, and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR)).

To eliminate harmful practices of Early/Child Marriage, UNJP supported the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia in carrying out awareness- raising campaign "Do Not Deprive of Childhood". In the framework of the campaign awareness raising activities have been held, such as panel discussion, where high-level representatives of the governmental agencies and Public Defender's Office presented their views on fighting against early/child marriage, informational meetings with different stakeholders in Tbilisi and the regions, disseminating informational booklets in Georgian, Azerbaijani and Armenian languages, arranging drawing contest for school students on the topic of Early/Child Marriage, etc.

⁴⁴ The Rights of the LGBT + People in Georgia: <https://www.ombudsman.ge/eng/spetsialuri-angarishebi/lgbt-jgufis-uflebrivi-mdgomareobis-shefaseba-sakartveloshi>; Harmful Practices of Early/Child Marriage in Kvemo Kartli: Perceptions Study: <https://www.ombudsman.ge/eng/spetsialuri-angarishebi/adreulibavshvobis-asakshi-kortsinebis-saziano-praktika-kvemo-kartlishi-gantsqobebis-kvleva>

⁴⁵ McDonalds, Dunkin Donuts, GPC, Aversi, Voulez-Vous, ICI Paris, Europroduct, Flying Ace, Mihouse, Arena Sports Complex, Sulakauri Publishing, etc.

To support young people's awareness-raising on their SRHR, UNJP launched a social media campaign – Protection of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights of Children and Adolescents – in cooperation with the local NGO Sapari. The campaign ran on three different platforms: Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. Through the project, UNJP targeted parents to emphasize the problem of sexual violence against children, thus highlighting the importance of the CSE. Moreover, various activities were designed and implemented with the participation of the adolescent girls to develop them as agents of change and speakers with their peers. Within the framework of the project, the feminist group of teenage girls - "Girls' Voice" - was trained on various topics of SRHR through a three-day training session. After the completion of the training, participants prepared the TikTok videos on topics such as the right to abortion, puberty in girls and boys, sexually transmitted diseases, cyber security, hygiene products, etc. Materials prepared and posted on various social media platforms reached approximately 435,136 people, with an engagement of 10,146.