

## GENDER ACTION PLAN

### A. Gender Context

1. **National context.** In 2010, the Georgian Law on Gender Equality was passed, prohibiting gender-related discrimination and provisioning for guaranteeing gender equality. The legal provisions include ensuring equal access to education for boys and girls, equal employment opportunities for women and men, ensuring fair and equitable working conditions and pay, promoting equal rights and freedoms of women and men, enabling equal access to information, and supporting elimination of gender-based violence and harassment. Since 2012, the Government of Georgia has focused on enabling more inclusive economic growth in Georgia and made some significant progress on gender equality notably achieving near gender parity in educational attainment. However, the country needs further improvements on key global indicators of economic status and political voice, resulting in ranking among the lowest five countries for gender equality within the Eastern Europe and Central Asia region.<sup>1</sup>

2. **Gender in urban infrastructure development.** It is increasingly recognized that promoting gender equality and economic inclusion in urban planning contributes to reducing persistent gender and inclusion gaps in accessing essential services. The urban space can influence access to public services, such as childcare facilities, but may also disproportionately affect women's safety and accessibility in urban neighborhood and public spaces, and further prevent women from accessing economic opportunities.<sup>2</sup>

3. To support inclusive urban infrastructure, Tbilisi City Hall has considered increasing women's participation in urban planning and governance, or taking gender specific needs into account in the design of public spaces and affordable housing. The Tbilisi City Hall also created a gender advisor role within its urban development and environmental protection departments to work on gender sensitive aspects and guidelines in planning Tbilisi's open spaces.<sup>3</sup>

### B. Corporate Gender Profile

4. m2 Group LLC (m2 Group) was established as a housing development business to offer affordable housing to the emerging middle-class in Georgia and especially to young families, and further extending to reach the lower-end segment.<sup>4</sup> m2 Group demonstrates sound understanding of the concerns and importance of gender sensitive planning to increase the safety and security of housing areas and public spaces. The project has encouraged the company to enhance their gender lens in its infrastructure design for the new projects and represents a great opportunity to serve as reference on applying gender sensitive tools for the housing infrastructure industry.

5. m2 Group is committed to being a socially responsible employer, fostering employees' development and welfare as provisioned in its social responsibility strategy. It also promotes equal opportunities as an employer and prohibits unlawful and unfair discrimination.<sup>5</sup> The company is already active on gender initiatives in line with their commitment to the United Nations Women Empowerment Principles (WEP) since December 2016 and the subsequent implementation of

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<sup>1</sup> Asian Development Bank (ADB). 2018. [Georgia Country Gender Assessment](#). Manila.

<sup>2</sup> African Development Bank, Asian Development Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, Inter-American Development Bank. 2019. [Creating Livable Cities: Regional Perspectives](#). Manila.

<sup>3</sup> ADB. 2019. [Technical Assistance Consultant's Report: Promoting Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment \(Phase 2\)—Future Cities, Future Women Initiative](#). Manila.

<sup>4</sup> Georgia Capital PLC. 2019. [A Ground Floor Opportunity: Annual Report 2019](#). Tbilisi.

<sup>5</sup> Georgia Capital PLC. 2020. [Scaling Up Investment Opportunities in Georgia: Annual Report 2020](#). Tbilisi.

their WEP Action Plan.<sup>6</sup> This notably resulted in increased shares of women in technical/skilled, middle management and senior management positions, reaching 58%, 67% and 50% respectively. However, m2 Group reports similar observation on the difficulties in recruiting women in sectors that are culturally considered for men, such as construction work.

6. m2 Group has records about equal opportunities and anti-sexual harassment, anti-discrimination approaches and the mechanism of compliance in case of discrimination in its corporate handbook. The company does not set sex-based targets for any job category yet applies inclusive and pro-diversity practices. They also have a handbook regarding human rights principles. In terms of their human resources management system, they have established skills development and mentorship programs, open to both men and women employees.

7. m2 Group has also developed and has been implementing its anti-sexual harassment policy and processes since 2017, with supporting trainings, periodical staff interviews by external gender specialists, and strong advocacy and awareness raising activities. m2 Group reported during due diligence an uptake of the interest from men employees in gender issues and a rise of women's confidence as more are being promoted to higher positions and gain more respect.

### **C. Gender Action Plan for m2 Group**

8. The investment is categorized as effective gender mainstreaming wherein gender design features and targets will be incorporated in m2 Group operations and investments.

9. The gender measures are presented in the gender action plan below.

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<sup>6</sup> m2 Group joined the UN Women's Empowerment Principles on December 3, 2016, and further presented a 7-Point Action Plan, to be implemented in 2017–2020. The Action Plan notably included: (i) active communication regarding the women's empowerment within the company as well as throughout the country; (ii) controlling the statistics and ensuring the gender balance within the team, also eliminating discrimination; (iii) organizing trainings and creating a hotline; (iv) implementing mentoring programs; (v) creating code of ethics for suppliers; (vi) challenging the status quo, encouraging women on the positions stereotypically belonging to men; (vii) regular reporting to the society.

### Gender Action Plan

Results Chain	Performance Indicators with Targets and Baselines	Data Sources and/or Reporting Mechanisms
<b>Outputs</b>  1. Construction of affordable, energy efficient residential buildings with improved accessibility and gender equality completed  3. Support for gender equality in housing infrastructure enhanced	By 2023  1b. Two (2) dedicated areas per block specifically responding to women's personal needs <sup>a</sup> built (2020 baseline: 0)  3a. Two (2) annual awareness-raising open events <sup>b</sup> on women's inclusion in the infrastructure sector (baseline 2020: not applicable)  3b. One (1) good practice publication on women's participation in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics jobs and gender-inclusive infrastructure developed and disseminated <sup>c</sup> (2020 baseline: not applicable)	1–3. Optima's annual development effectiveness monitoring report

<sup>a</sup> These dedicated areas will be designed by consultations jointly with women's focus groups, m2 Group envisages that these could typically be safe areas for women, parents and children (both indoor and outdoor spaces) and market spaces.

<sup>b</sup> The events shall be organized virtually or in-person (on new construction sites and at m2 Group Training Center if COVID-19-related measures allow). m2 Group's practice of holding public events is envisaged as a means to encourage women to join the infrastructure sector and to sensitize men on gender equality issues. In addition to this, the gender target specifically aims to bring in other companies from m2 Group's ecosystem to open up for better gender balanced participation in the STEM and infrastructure industries.

<sup>c</sup> The good practice publication is envisaged as a tip sheet that m2 Group will produce to give concrete pointers on what gender inclusive infrastructure looks like. Dissemination of this knowledge product shall be conducted through m2 Group's public communication channels, which will include public displays on its construction sites, brochures distributed during events, and specific references in its media campaigns.

Source: Asian Development Bank.