

Beyond the wit of GEORGIAN TAMADA

Legislative Efforts Made for Gender Inclusion in Georgia

It's well-established that gender inclusion has a major positive impact on economies - boosting productivity, innovation, and growth. And with gender equality outlined as one of the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals in its 2030 agenda, a study done by McKinsey found that equal participation of women in the economy could add as much as \$28 trillion to global GDP by 2025. In the words of famous civil rights activist Jesse Jackson, "Inclusion is not a matter of political correctness. It is the key to growth."

In Georgia, discussions around gender inclusion have been growing in recent years as several legislative initiatives have been passed to promote women's economic empowerment. BLC has outlined some of those key legislative efforts.

Gender equality is promulgated and guaranteed by Article 11 (3) of the Constitution of Georgia, and since 2017, Georgia has taken significant steps to promote gender equality through changes in legislation or policy, including measures to implement the country's international obligations. The state made significant changes to the Georgian Labor Code in 2020 to bring legislation in line with the standards set by the European Union and the World Trade Organization, particularly in the area of gender-based discrimination. For instance, prior to the 2020 amendments, the Labor Code of Georgia did not include the principle of equal pay. Another essential step forward was the adoption of a new regulation within the labor code that directly provides for paid parental leave for fathers. Giving fathers parental

leave allows women more flexibility in rejoining the workforce and promotes their prolonged participation in the labor market.

To support the equal representation of women in management, the National Bank of Georgia (NBG) approved a Corporate Governance Code in 2018 that mandates at least 40% of the supervisory board of commercial banks must be female. Also, it recommends, albeit not mandates, that at least 33% of the management of commercial banks are female. The code further provides that remuneration must be based on objective criteria like education, qualification, and responsibilities of the office.

Within the framework of 2020 electoral reforms, the Georgian Election Code introduced a mandatory gender quota for parliamentary elections until 2032 and for self-government elections until 2028. The Election Code has been amended to ensure that every fourth member on political parties' lists of MP candidates for the 2024 parliamentary elections is female; it also stipulates that every third member on the candidate list must be female for the 2028 parliamentary elections. At the local self-government level, the distribution of female candidates shall be every third member of the list for all elections until 2032.

Most recently, in February 2023, Georgia adopted the Law on Public Procurements, which introduced the possibility of announcing procurement limited exclusively to providers of goods or services that are inclusive of socially and professionally vulnerable groups, including women. To be eligible for such procurement, at least 30% of all employees of such entity must be a member of said vulnerable groups. This is, by all means, an excellent incentive for the entities to be mindful of inclusion and reap not only the benefits of inclusion and diversity but also benefit from a competitive advantage in public procurement.

While Georgia still has a long way to go to achieve gender inclusion and equality, legislative efforts made throughout recent years demonstrate the commitment of Georgian policy makers to this issue. True societal change requires a change of culture over time. However, policy makers play an important role in setting standards and accelerating social change that can create equal opportunities and access to education for women.

In the words of Indra Nooyi, former Chairman and CEO of PepsiCo, "We need the talent and insights of girls

today to lead our businesses tomorrow. That's why expanding educational opportunities for girls isn't charity. It's a smart investment in a stronger global economy and in our future." Indeed, any incentive, regulation, or policy adopted by Georgia in pursuit of gender equality and inclusion is an investment in our future - a seed that will grow into a beautiful garden.



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