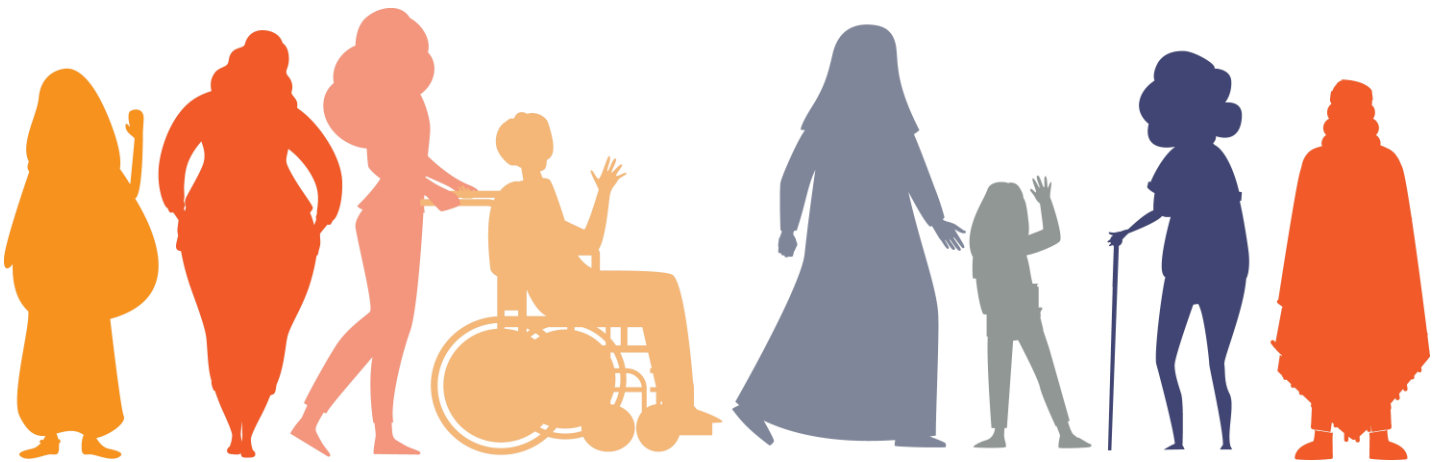




W A G E



**PRELIMINARY GENDER & INCLUSION ANALYSIS FOR MOLDOVA**

JANUARY 2022



W A G E

## PRELIMINARY GENDER & INCLUSION ANALYSIS FOR MOLDOVA

<b>Program Title</b>	Reducing Barriers to Women’s Economic Empowerment in Moldova
<b>Program Location</b>	Chisinau, Moldova
<b>Implementing Partners</b>	CIPE (Technical Program Lead), ABA ROLI (Operational Lead and Participating Partner)

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The statements and analysis contained in the report “Preliminary Gender & Inclusion Analysis for Moldova” are the work of the Women and Girls Empowered (WAGE) consortium, led by the American Bar Association Rule of Law Initiative (ABA ROLI) in close partnership with the Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE), Grameen Foundation, and Search for Common Ground (Search). The Board of Governors of the American Bar Association (ABA) has neither reviewed nor sanctioned its content. Accordingly, the views expressed in the report should not be construed as representing the policy of the ABA. Furthermore, nothing contained in this report is to be considered rendering legal advice for specific cases, and readers are responsible for obtaining such advice from their own legal counsel.

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#### **About WAGE**

Women and Girls Empowered (WAGE) is a global consortium to advance the status of women and girls, led by the American Bar Association Rule of Law Initiative (ABA ROLI) in close partnership with the Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE), Grameen Foundation, and Search for Common Ground (Search). WAGE works to strengthen the capacity of civil society organizations (CSOs) and private sector organizations (PSOs) in target countries to improve the prevention of and response to gender-based violence; advance the women, peace and security agenda; and support women’s economic empowerment. In this context, WAGE provides direct assistance to women and girls, including information, resources, and services they need to succeed as active and equal participants in the global economy and public life. WAGE also engages in collaborative research and learning to build a body of evidence on relevant promising practices in these thematic areas. To account for the deeply interconnected nature of women’s and girls’ experiences, WAGE’s initiatives employ approaches that are highly collaborative, integrated, and inclusive. WAGE is funded by the U.S. Department of State Secretary’s Office of Global Women’s Issues.

# METHODOLOGY

This preliminary “Gender and Inclusion Analysis” was prepared through the joint effort of CIPE and ABA ROLI. The analysis is based on desk research and qualitative data analysis. The desk research predominately covers the statistics and known facts regarding pertinent laws and policies, as well as applicable secondary sources for the Moldovan context. Qualitative data was collected in the form of key informant interviews between mid-February and mid-March 2021. Interviews were conducted in English, Romanian, and Russian. Quotes included from the interviews are transcribed and translated from interviews conducted in all three languages. CIPE and ABA ROLI identified key informants in consultation with their staff members, local partners and stakeholders in Moldova following the completion of a stakeholder analysis. A total of 30 respondents were interviewed across a range of backgrounds and perspectives to help inform the gender and inclusion analysis. Those backgrounds included in-country government decision makers, sociologists, development partners, women’s business associations, business associations that conduct programs for women, business associations with many women business owners, women entrepreneurs, civil society organizations, lawyers, and chamber of commerce representatives.

## LEGAL AND CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Moldova has laws and programs aimed at ensuring gender equality and has ratified various international instruments to that effect, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and various International Labor Organization (ILO) conventions. The Constitution of Moldova guarantees access to justice and equality to all individuals, regardless of sex.<sup>1</sup> However, despite the country’s comprehensive legal assurance of gender equality, Moldova lags in the implementation of these laws due to a lack of funding, accountability, and political will. As a result, Moldovan women do not enjoy equal rights with men in practice.

### SECTION 1: LAWS, POLICIES, AND INSTITUTIONAL PRACTICES

#### LEGAL SYSTEM

In 1991, Moldova was officially recognized as an independent country after the breakup of the Soviet Union and adopted its Constitution in 1994, declaring Moldova a democratic republic. The Constitution represents the supreme law for the country and is overseen by a Constitutional Court that is independent of the executive and legislative branches of government. Moldova’s legal system is based on civil law and has been reformed since independence to better conform with international standards. In 2003, Moldova’s new Civil Code, Penal Code, Civil Procedural Code, and Penal Procedural Code were adopted,

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<sup>1</sup> See CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA arts. 16, 19, 20 (*adopted 1994, as amended*), <http://www.presedinte.md/eng/constitution> [hereinafter CONSTITUTION]; see also Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, *Social Institutions and Gender Index: Republic of Moldova* (2019), <https://www.genderindex.org/wp-content/uploads/files/datasheets/2019/MD.pdf> [hereinafter SIGI 2019].

repealing those that governed the country under the Soviet Union. Moldova’s Constitution guarantees equal rights regardless of, *inter alia*, sex.

## LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR GENDER EQUALITY

### International and Regional Treaties

Moldova has ratified or otherwise acceded to the following international and regional agreements relevant to promoting gender equality:

- United Nations (UN) International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
- UN International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
- UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
- European Convention on Human Rights and its Five Protocols, as well as the European Social Charter
- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
- UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings
- ILO Convention concerning Discrimination in Respect of Employment and Occupation
- ILO Maternity Protection Convention

Notably, in 2017 Moldova signed the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combatting violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention). Parliament voted to ratify the convention in October 2021, which then filed with the Council in January 2022. However, the ILO Violence and Harassment Convention was not ratified.

### Gender Equality Provisions

Moldova has adopted the following laws to promote gender equality:

Title of the Law	Year of Adoption	Critical Provisions and Brief Analysis
Constitution	1994	The Constitution guarantees access to justice and equality before the law and public authorities to all individuals, regardless of sex.
The Family Code	2000	The Code stipulates equal rights between spouses and states that “[a]ll married persons shall have equal rights and obligations in the family, regardless of their sex, race, nationality, ethnic origin, language, religion, opinion, political views, property status and social origin.”
Law No. 5 (On Providing Equal Opportunities for Women and Men)	2006	The goal of Law No. 5 is “realizing the equal rights of women and men guaranteed by the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova in political, economic, social, cultural, and other spheres of life in order to prevent and eliminate all forms of discrimination based on sex.” The law expressly

		prohibits sex discrimination <sup>2</sup> and provides <i>inter alia</i> , equality of opportunity (i) in the public sphere (including with respect to public sector employment, political participation, and mass media content); (ii) in the socio-economic sphere (including with respect to employment opportunities, workplace discrimination, entrepreneurship, and access to goods and services (art. 12)); and (iii) with respect to education and health.
Law No. 45 (On the Prevention and Combating of Domestic Violence)	2007	In its amended form, Law No. 45 addresses physical, sexual, emotional, spiritual/religious, and economic violence, including from non-cohabitating family members or partners, and contemplates a variety of support mechanisms for survivors.
Law No. 121 (On Ensuring Equality)	2012	The law enshrines equal rights; prohibits direct or indirect discrimination on the basis of sex and other grounds, including with respect to employment, pay, public office, education, property rights, citizenship, travel, family relations, and others; and creates a Council on Preventing and Combating Discrimination and Ensuring Equality, which is tasked with implementation and monitoring of the law and considering complaints. <sup>3</sup> Law No. 121 mirrors Law No. 5 in specifically prohibiting discrimination in, <i>inter alia</i> , hiring, access to goods and services (including banking and financial services), and education.
Law No. 71 (On Amendments and Additions to Certain Legislative Acts)	2016	Law No. 71 amended and supplemented 15 national laws to strengthen provisions on non-discrimination and gender equality, <sup>4</sup> including the introduction of a 40 percent quota for political party candidate lists and lists for cabinet nominees and by prohibiting sexist language in advertising. <sup>5</sup>
Law No. 196 (On Amendments and Additions to Certain Legislative Acts)	2016	Law No. 196 amended Moldova's penal code to criminalize domestic violence, including economic harm, and strengthened Law No. 45 (on domestic violence). <sup>6</sup>

<sup>2</sup> LAW NO. 5 (ON PROVIDING EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN AND MEN) art. 1 (*adopted* Feb. 2006), <http://lex.justice.md/viewdoc.php?action=view&view=doc&id=315674&lang=2>. The law defines gender equality as “the equality of rights, equal opportunities for exercising rights, equal participation in all spheres of life, [and] equal treatment of women and men.” *Id.* art. 2.

<sup>3</sup> See also SIGI 2019. Discussing the interaction of these and other laws to provide a *de jure* equal society, including with respect to sale or lease of immovable property and equal property ownership rights.

<sup>4</sup> See SIGI 2019. “Changes were made to [*inter alia*] laws governing the Press (No. 243), Civil Protection (No. 271), Healthcare (No. 411), the Prison System (No. 1036), Advertising (No. 1227), Broadcasting (No. 260), the Electoral Code (No. 1381), State Labour Inspectorate (No. 140), Labour Code (No. 154), and on the Law for Ensuring Equality between Men and Women (No. 5).”

<sup>5</sup> “Moldova Takes Historic Step to Promote Gender Equality in Politics,” UN WOMEN, June 20, 2016, <https://eca.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2016/06/moldova-takes-historic-step-to-promote-gender-equality-in-politics>.

<sup>6</sup> LAW NO. 196 (ON AMENDMENTS AND ADDITIONS TO CERTAIN LEGISLATIVE ACTS) (*adopted* July 28, 2016), <http://lex.justice.md/index.php?action=view&view=doc&lang=2&id=366648>.

<p>Law No. 105 (On Promoting Employment and Unemployment Insurance)</p>	<p>2018</p>	<p>Law No. 105 legislates a variety of economic empowerment initiatives; prohibits discrimination based on sex in the law's implementation; and includes victims of trafficking in persons and victims of domestic violence among persons entitled to special assistance in the labor market. Specifically, the law directs the state to (i) adopt and implement employment promotion policies to, among others, promote employment of victims of domestic violence, ensure equal opportunities in the labor market, and encourage employers to employ job seekers; and (ii) provide additional job intermediation support as well as subsidized employment to victims of domestic violence and other vulnerable populations.<sup>7</sup></p>
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Further, the Moldovan government has adopted the following policies, strategies, and action plans:

- Strategy for Ensuring Equality between Women and Men (2017–2021) and its related action plan;
- National Strategy for Preventing and Combatting Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (2018-2023) and the action plan for its implementation (2018-2020), which includes among its objectives promoting women's economic empowerment and socio-economic independence, thus recognizing a key link between women's economic status and GBV;
- National Strategy for Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Human Beings (2018–2023) and its action plan (2018–2020);
- National Programme on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (2018–2022);
- National Programme on the Implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace, and Security (2018–2021) and the national action plan for its implementation;<sup>8</sup> and
- National Development Strategy "Moldova 2030."<sup>9</sup>

Notably, the country's National Employment Strategy 2017-2021 calls for creating formal, non-discriminatory, and productive employment opportunities, and for increasing inclusion in employment for vulnerable groups.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> LAW NO. 105 (ON PROMOTING EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE) arts. 2(4), 23(g), (i) (*adopted* 2018), <http://lex.justice.md/index.php?action=view&view=doc&lang=2&id=376758>; *see also* Government of the Republic of Moldova, Ministry of Health, Labor and Social Protection, *National Level Review on the Fulfilment of Commitments Taken Under the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*, [https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/Gender/Beijing\\_20/Moldova.pdf](https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/Gender/Beijing_20/Moldova.pdf) (describing law as providing women who register as unemployed with benefits like professional training, in-the-job training, subsidized employment, counseling, other entrepreneurial assistance, and supportive local initiative projects).

<sup>8</sup> UN CEDAW Committee, *Concluding Observations on the Sixth Periodic Report of the Republic of Moldova* (New York, 2020), [https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CEDAW/C/MDA/CO/6&Lang=En](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CEDAW/C/MDA/CO/6&Lang=En) [hereinafter UN CEDAW 2020].

<sup>9</sup> "The National Development Strategy 'Moldova 2030,' in the Parliament," The Government of the Republic of Moldova, State Chancellery, December 14, 2018, <https://cancelaria.gov.md/en/content/national-development-strategy-moldova-2030-parliament>.

<sup>10</sup> *Executive Approves Additional Measures to Increase Employment*, GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA (2017), <https://gov.md/en/content/executive-approves-additional-measures-increase-employment>.

## Discriminatory Laws and Policy Gaps

Certain Moldovan laws contain gaps and caveats that can be (and are) used to limit professional opportunities or protections for women. For example:

- The Labour Code, under Article 248, prohibits pregnant and breastfeeding women or those who have recently delivered from certain types of employment, which are included in a Governmental Decision which was abrogated in Autumn 2020. Employment that falls in this category includes underground mining and any other activities which present a risk to their safety and health, or which may impact pregnancy.
- Self-employed women are not entitled to maternity benefits.
- The law indicates different retirement ages for women (59 years and 6 months) and men (63) as of July 1, 2021, and women have disproportionately low pension benefits.
- The legal definition of sexual harassment is narrow and does not fully comply with international standards.
- The Contravention Code reduces criminal liability of perpetrators of domestic violence and restricts women's access to criminal justice (art. 78).<sup>11</sup>

Please refer to Section 3: Gender Roles and Power Dynamics for more details regarding women's labor force participation and sexual harassment.

Please refer to Section 5: Gender-Based Violence (GBV), sub-section Prevention, Protection & Accountability for more details regarding gender based-violence policy gaps.

## Customary and Religious Laws

According to current Moldovan law, there are no customary and religious laws where gender discrimination is indicated. However, some religious traditions may have that effect. As stated by a lawyer respondent, "*it is not considered discrimination if a woman is not hired by a representative of the [Christian Orthodox] church...it is religious custom.*" These practices contribute to perpetuating patriarchal gender norms and discriminatory attitudes in the society.

## Implementation of Gender Equality Provisions

**Has the government taken concrete steps and committed appropriate resources to implement gender equality provisions in practice? In general, are the legal principles of equality and non-discrimination observed in practice by state and non-state actors?**

While Moldova has adopted laws promoting gender equality - corresponding implementation, enforcement, and awareness of these laws have lagged; partly due to the lack of financial resources, staff turnover within the government, low intersectoral cooperation, persistent gender stereotypes, and

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<sup>11</sup> UN CEDAW 2020.



insufficient specialized services for different categories of vulnerable populations.<sup>12</sup> One lawyer respondent stated, “*There is the law, but we do not have enough financial means to implement it. Secondly, the government doesn't have the infrastructure.*” Similarly, a CSO respondent remarked, “*Approximately 50 percent of the actions from the regional strategy on gender equality do not [have sufficient resources. These are joint activities and roundtables, and interagency activities that involve healthcare, welfare, youth, and education management...The other 50 percent also require resources. These include advocacy to extend services to women in need.*” ABA ROLI’s local partner—the Women Law Center (WLC)—expressed concerns about the government’s ability to operationalize the provisions of Law No. 105, which aims to expand access to economic opportunities for victims of domestic violence in a safe and coordinated manner across the country. In its 2020 Concluding Observations for Moldova, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (UN CEDAW Committee) emphasized as ongoing challenges to women’s economic empowerment, “vertical and horizontal occupational segregation; the persistence of the gender pay gap; the insufficient investigation and prosecution of sexual harassment and sex-based discrimination in the workplace; and the “lack of affordable childcare facilities that would better enable parents to reconcile family and professional life.”<sup>13</sup> Because of this, a CSO respondent emphasized “*the need for a better gender impact assessment of new draft laws.*” This would help address the gender inequality gaps when designing new laws and ensure the appropriate resources are built into laws from the beginning so they can be successfully implemented.

Thus, although Moldova performs well on some gender-related metrics, inequalities persist, especially with respect to economic opportunities, political leadership, and response to gender-based violence (GBV).<sup>14</sup> Women who belong to marginalized populations (e.g., ethnic minorities like Gagauz and Roma) face additional vulnerabilities and are more likely to suffer from intersecting forms of discrimination.

### **Has the government taken concrete steps to repeal or amend any discriminatory laws and policies (formal and/or informal)?**

Respondents noted small changes in the security and defense sector including the repeal and removal of discriminatory laws and policies currently on the books in Moldova. In 2020, the Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Internal Affairs adopted bylaws which support gender equality and combating discrimination

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<sup>12</sup> See, e.g., “Moldova,” UN WOMEN, <https://eca.unwomen.org/en/where-we-are/moldova>; Government of Moldova, *Sixth Periodic Report Submitted by the Republic of Moldova under article 18 of the Convention, Due in 2017*, UN CEDAW Committee, para. 117 (January 2019), <https://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2005239/N1901905.pdf>. [hereinafter *Report Submitted by the Republic of Moldova to the UN CEDAW Committee (2019)*].

<sup>13</sup> UN CEDAW 2020.

<sup>14</sup> See, e.g., SIGI 2019; UNDP, *Human Development Index (2019)*, <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/MDA#> [hereinafter *HDI 2019*] (calculating Moldova’s gender inequality index as .226, an improvement from .479 in 1995 and superior to those of neighbors Ukraine (.284) and Romania (.316)); World Economic Forum, *Global Gender Gap Report: Moldova (2020)*, <https://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2020/dataexplorer/#economy=MDA> [hereinafter *GGGR 2020*] (ranking Moldova as 23<sup>rd</sup> out of 153 countries); World Bank, *Republic of Moldova: Moldova Country Gender Action Plan, Report No. ACS21875 (2017)*, <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/pt/990771505307981800/ACS21875-WP-PUBLIC-P160373-Moldova-CGAP-revised-after-DM-clean.docx> (“[A]ccording to both the Global Gender Equality Index and the National Gender Equality Index developed by the Moldova Partnership for Development Center, the level of gender equality on key indicators is declining.”). Gender Pulse, an interactive tool based on data published by Moldova’s National Bureau of Statistics, provides a helpful overview on relevant metrics, with links to further data from the Bureau itself. See *Gender Pulse*, <https://genderpulse.md/en/gender-statistics>.

and sexual harassment at an institutional level. Information on informal laws are discussed in the subsection Customary and Religious Laws under Section 1: Laws, Policies, and Institutional Practices.

## INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR GENDER EQUALITY

The following institutions have mandates to advance the status of women and girls in Moldova:

Institution	Brief Description
Government Committee for Equality Between Women and Men	The committee has suspended its activities and its future is uncertain.
Women’s Parliamentary Caucus	Multi-party caucus to advance women’s rights and gender equality.
Council for Preventing and Combating Discrimination and Ensuring Equality	The council does not have a strong mandate on human rights or sufficient funding. For example, it cannot issue binding rulings or impose sanctions for gender-based discrimination.
Ministry of Health, Labor, and Social Protection	The Ministry has established the Department of Policies for Ensuring Equality between Women and Men and taken steps to collaborate with civil society organizations to fulfill the principle of gender equality. For example, the Department convenes thematic meetings and consultations with civil society organizations to discuss draft laws, collaborates with civil society organizations to develop reports, studies, and analysis. However, its capacity to coordinate and monitor related laws and policies is still lacking. <sup>15</sup>
Inter-ministerial Coordinating Council in the field of Preventing and Combating domestic Violence	The Council was established in 2012 and is composed of representatives of the specialized central bodies of the public administration, representatives of civil society and other stakeholders. Its Secretariat is ensured by the Ministry of Health, Labor and Social Protection. It is an active entity in the field of preventing and combating domestic violence. It coordinates the activities and initiatives of state structures related to preventing and combating domestic violence, provides support in harmonization of the national normative framework to the international one, revises the reports and recommendations of national and international experts etc. <sup>16</sup>
Office of the People’s Advocate	The office has limited the necessary human and financial resources to help fulfill its gender equality mandate. <sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> UN CEDAW 2020.

<sup>16</sup> “Interministerial Coordinating Council in the field of preventing and combating domestic violence,” Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, July 20, 2019, <http://antiviolența.gov.md/consiliul-coordonator-interministerial/>.

<sup>17</sup> UN CEDAW 2020.

Moldova has also taken measures to strengthen its institutional mechanisms for supporting women at the national and local levels, including through gender coordination groups within various government bodies.<sup>18</sup>

## INSTITUTIONAL PRACTICES

### **Do formal and informal governance and justice institutions tend to treat women and men equally, without a gender bias?**

While Moldova has a history of gender equality being written into its legislation, patriarchal biases still tend to permeate society and government institutions. The UN CEDAW Committee recently noted with concern that women, especially those belonging to disadvantaged groups, face several barriers accessing justice and legal aid. For example, although Law No. 196/2016 promises free legal aid for victims of gender-based violence, this provision is not sufficiently implemented. A lawyer respondent noted how victims of gender-based violence are more likely to be “...discriminated on the basis of gender, based on stereotypes existing in society...the victim was treated less favorably compared to the accused.” Gender biases within the courtroom are also apparent when appropriate accommodations are not made for women with special circumstances. As noted by a lawyer respondent, “In this case we deal with indirect, rather than direct, discrimination. We should take into account the conditions under which legal proceedings take place. [For] example: if a young mother...is going through legal proceedings, she has to appear before [the] court no matter what, [she is not allowed] to attend the hearing with the baby, [but], there is no baby care room in the courtroom and so on. At the same time, default of appearance at the hearing will lead to rather negative consequences in terms of the results of the proceedings.”

Some respondents expressed a sense of good faith about the Moldovan justice system, believing that instances of gender bias are rare or do not occur at all.

## SECTION 2: SOCIOCULTURAL NORMS, BELIEFS, AND PERCEPTIONS

In 2020, the UN CEDAW Committee emphasized its concern “about the persistence of patriarchal attitudes and discriminatory stereotypes concerning the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and society,” particularly the lack of gender-sensitive language training for media and public officials and the persistence of gender stereotypes in school materials.<sup>19</sup> A CSO respondent emphasized this point by

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<sup>18</sup> See further Report Submitted by the Republic of Moldova to the UN CEDAW Committee (2019). Among the initiatives highlighted in Moldova’s most recent report to CEDAW, is the 2013 the Framework-Regulation on the organization and creation of the Joint Information and Services Bureau (JISB), intended to increase employment “including women from the vulnerable groups.”

<sup>19</sup> UN CEDAW 2020, see also Women’s Law Center, *Men and Gender Equality in the Republic of Moldova* (2016), <https://promundoglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/IMAGES-Moldova-English-web.pdf> [hereinafter WLC 2016]; Maria Vremis, UN Women & UNDP, *Profile of Women-Victims of Violence* (2016), [https://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20moldova/attachments/publications/2017/08/womens%20profiles%20-%20en/07%20women-violence\\_eng.pdf?la=en&vs=859](https://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20moldova/attachments/publications/2017/08/womens%20profiles%20-%20en/07%20women-violence_eng.pdf?la=en&vs=859) [hereinafter Vremis 2016] (“The historically unequal power relations between men and women [in Moldova] led to male dominance over women and the general discrimination against women in society, while the violence against women is recognized as one of the social mechanisms by which women are placed in a subordinate position

stating “...about this aspect, [children] are not even taught in schools from the small ages. There's no specific material...they do not even know what gender equality means.” Another CSO respondent expressed similar sentiments. There is a “lack of systematic educational programs based on the concept[s] of gender, gender equality, vulnerability, the criterion of vulnerability, personal fulfilment, economic independence, women self-sufficiency. [And also] the absence of so-called positive measures which can be expressed in special programs on women's leadership, or women's participation in politics...None of this exists. But as a matter of fact, if there is nothing like this, then everything will be changing with great difficulty.”

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*“We just recently started to talk of impact on men of gender stereotypes...with men from [the] police, [the] army...it's the most rigid area for law enforcement structures. So, men confessed, for example, during the trainings which I conducted, that they would like to take part in education or to stay with kids, to be fully involved in family life. At the same time, they fear being ridiculed by their friends. There are specific names for men who are helping in this way, such as “under the shoes of women.” These are bad nicknames for a man, you know. It is like touching his masculinity.” – CSO Respondent*

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The persistence of patriarchal values and discriminatory attitudes have been causally linked to the limitation of women’s educational and employment choices into lower-earning fields, persistent wage disparities, unequal participation in private and public sector leadership positions, shockingly high rates of GBV, and barriers to female entrepreneurship (for example, with respect to access to finance in the formal sector).<sup>20</sup> Further, GBV is often socially accepted and culturally tolerated, or blamed on women’s behavior.<sup>21</sup>

### SECTION 3: GENDER ROLES AND POWER DYNAMICS

Moldovan law provides for formal gender equality in the family (e.g., with respect to divorce, property, and decision-making). The Labor Code prohibits family-related discrimination in the workplace (e.g., the dismissal of pregnant workers), provides for 126 days of paid maternity leave, 14 days of fully paid paternity leave,<sup>22</sup> as well as partially paid childcare leave for either parent.<sup>23</sup>

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before men.”). Note, however, that some researchers characterize Moldovans as holding “largely egalitarian views”. See World Bank, *Moldova: Gender Disparities in Endowments and Access to Economic Opportunities* (2014) [hereinafter World Bank 2014] (“Largely egalitarian views exist in Moldova on gender roles and responsibilities. Research shows that women in Moldova feel relatively high autonomy over their own lives as compared to women in other countries. Additionally, majority of both men and women believe that women and men should take the same responsibility for home and children and contributing to household income. Majority of men and women also believe that a mother’s employment does not harm the relationship with children and that a job is the best way for independence of women. However, a majority also agree that while jobs are important, women really want a home and children.”).

<sup>20</sup> See, e.g., Georgeta Mincu, UNDP & UN Women, *Profile of Women in Economy and Business* (2016), [https://www.md.undp.org/content/dam/moldova/docs/Publications/04\\_machet-FEMEILE\\_econom\\_2018\\_ENG.pdf](https://www.md.undp.org/content/dam/moldova/docs/Publications/04_machet-FEMEILE_econom_2018_ENG.pdf) [hereinafter Profile 2016].

<sup>21</sup> See, e.g., SIGI 2019; Vremis 2016 (“the persistence of stereotypes insisting on gender inequality, tolerance of violence, shame and social exclusion . . . ensure an intergenerational continuation of this [GBV]”).

<sup>22</sup> The World Bank, *Women, Business and the Law: Moldova* (2020), <https://wbl.worldbank.org/en/data/exploreeconomies/moldova/2020> [hereinafter WBL 2020]; see also SIGI 2019.

<sup>23</sup> SIGI 2019 (such leave is available for up to 1,039 days until the child reaches the age of 3).

In practice, however, inequalities persist in Moldovan family life. Moldovan women perform almost twice as much unpaid care work as men (approximately 4.9 hours per day);<sup>24</sup> only 5 percent of men have benefited from allowances for raising children (compared to 94 percent of women);<sup>25</sup> and courts tend to award child custody to women.<sup>26</sup> A relatively recent study found that women were discouraged from participating in the labor market, with 80 percent of respondents stating that it was a woman's duty to perform all household chores, and 60 percent asserting that a woman's place is with her family and household.<sup>27</sup> As explained by a woman entrepreneur, *"women are expected - culturally [and] traditionally - to be caregivers and take care of families and children. So, women stay at home either taking care of children or somehow juggling between work and home.... This does not happen that much for married men."* The Moldovan government's own recent report to the UN CEDAW Committee cites findings that 90.5 percent of men and 81.5 percent of women consider taking care of the home to be a woman's most important priority, while 95 percent of men and 75.1 percent of women believe taking care of children is a woman's responsibility.<sup>28</sup> These findings are consistent with the experiences shared by most respondents. As noted by one of them, *"even from childhood in most families, especially in the countryside, it is said that the girl must be in the kitchen and even if the girl is more skilled and wants to go on to school, she is stopped by her parents, or she is told to let the man win. You know somehow, these stereotypes are very acute in our country...the husband has to sit [watching] TV, or read a book, but the wife has to cook and wash...there are other things she could do with her husband like well, be equal. Something like that, it seems to me, will not happen in the near future."*

Most respondents underscored the importance of addressing these stereotypes at an early age to break the discriminatory cycle. As stated by a CSO respondent, *"we need to promote the idea of partnership from the very beginning, you know, from a young age. Women and men need to be responsible for their lives and learn to form partnerships on the individual, family, and professional levels. And...nothing can be solved using violence or discrimination."*

Notwithstanding the adoption of anti-discrimination laws, it is not unusual for employers to demand special—and illegal—arrangements constraining women's ability to have children or get married, and to terminate women's employment due to pregnancy or childcare obligations.<sup>29</sup> As a woman entrepreneur noted, *"many employers prefer hiring divorced women with children because they are highly motivated and need money...the marital status has an impact on certain opportunities or decisions. If she is young and unmarried, she is going to get married. And if I am an employer, she might not be motivated to work, she might want to take maternity leave."* A CSO respondent commented on workplace attitudes towards mothers, noting - *"the attitude at the workplace towards mothers is you will be a burden for [the company]."*

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<sup>24</sup> SIGI 2019. Moldova's National Bureau of Statistics has a lower estimate for this metric. See Gender Pulse.

<sup>25</sup> Government of the Republic of Moldova & UN Moldova, *Adapting the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development to the Context of the Republic of Moldova* (2017), [https://moldova.un.org/sites/default/files/2019-11/Targets\\_ONU\\_EN.pdf](https://moldova.un.org/sites/default/files/2019-11/Targets_ONU_EN.pdf) [hereinafter *Adapting the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development to the Context of the Republic of Moldova* (2017)].

<sup>26</sup> SIGI 2019. This is a consideration likely to make leaving abusive situations even more difficult for women with few economic resources.

<sup>27</sup> Profile 2016.

<sup>28</sup> *Report Submitted by the Republic of Moldova to the UN CEDAW Committee* (2019).

<sup>29</sup> The Working Group for Women's Rights in Moldova, *Alternative/Shadow Report on Women's Rights in Moldova* (2013), [https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/MDA/INT\\_CEDAW\\_NGO\\_MDA\\_15258\\_E.pdf](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/MDA/INT_CEDAW_NGO_MDA_15258_E.pdf); SIGI 2019.

The lack of flexible work arrangements and declining availability of affordable childcare<sup>30</sup> exacerbate the impact of structural and social constraints on women's economic participation,<sup>31</sup> with one study finding that a high degree of household work combined with limited public services was a significant factor in economic inactivity for Moldovan women.<sup>32</sup> A woman entrepreneur shared, "...a woman gives birth to one child, then another one and she is on maternity leave for a longer period of time. For many women, this break is quite long. And yet we do not have any state programs that would support early learning for children. Kindergarten starts at the age of three. And practically up to three years, if the woman does not have her relatives' support, she cannot return to work. And only...5 percent of women who are on maternity leave can afford to hire a nanny."

Further, purportedly protective laws sometimes enforce harmful gender stereotypes. For example, pregnant women, breastfeeding women, and those who recently gave birth, are legally restricted from certain types of work, according to Article 248 of the Labor Code. Women also have an earlier retirement age.<sup>33</sup> This contributes to women's segregation into—usually lower-paying employment sectors. Women's economic activity is further negatively affected by sexual harassment in the workplace, which is not effectively addressed or sanctioned (including because related legislation is relatively new, and the definition of sexual harassment is narrow).<sup>34</sup> Women's economic advancement within the workplace is also hampered by gender discrimination. One respondent noted, "There may be another situation, where...the woman hired in that business...can be, perhaps smarter, perhaps more skilled than the boss who is a man, but she is not accepted to grow (from career point of view), or she is not accepted to give advice to her superiors. Sometimes she is even harassed or even fired, just because she is smarter and wishes all the best for the company she is hired in."

## GENDER ROLES AND POWER DYNAMICS IN THE FAMILY AND COMMUNITY

### **In law and practice, are women required to obey their husbands or other family members? Does the country have male guardianship laws or practices?**

There is no legal provision that requires a married woman to obey her husband, and under the law, a woman can be a "head of household" or a "head of family" in the same way as a man.<sup>35</sup> Therefore, the current legal guardianship system does not appear to discriminate on the basis of gender. A lawyer respondent provided details in the ways guardianship laws and practices can operate in Moldova. "The law stipulates that if the person named has health problems and cannot defend their rights and interests

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<sup>30</sup> The World Bank, *Republic of Moldova: Moldova Country Gender Action Plan, Report No. ACS21875* (Washington, D.C: The World Bank, 2017) <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/pt/990771505307981800/ACS21875-WP-PUBLIC-P160373-Moldova-CGAP-revised-after-DM-clean.docx> [hereinafter World Bank 2017].

<sup>31</sup> Moldova has one of the highest differences in rates at which women with and without children participate in the labor force: 20 percent. See World Bank 2017, pointing to policies and practices surrounding pregnancy and childcare as a driving factor of economic inequality.

<sup>32</sup> Andrea Spear et al., *Gender Analysis of the EU AA/DCFTAs with Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine: Final Report* (Stockholm: in develop, 2016), <https://www.sida.se/contentassets/1d7e165f86b349f7a4629d30ffdcde83/final-report---gender-analysis-of-eu-aadcfta-with-georgia-moldova-and-ukraine-29-jan-2016.pdf> [hereinafter Spear 2016]. According to the report, one of the reasons so many women accept lower-paying jobs in the public sector is the existence of better leave policies for taking care of family and children. See Profile 2016.

<sup>33</sup> SIGI 2019.

<sup>34</sup> SIGI 2019; UN CEDAW 2020.

<sup>35</sup> The World Bank, *Women, Business and the Law: Moldova* (2020) <https://wbl.worldbank.org/content/dam/documents/wbl/2020/sep/Moldova.pdf>.

alone, then a form of guardianship or curatorship may occur between family members. From a legal point of view, for a person to represent another person, a power of attorney is needed, but from a legal point of view it is said that the husband is the legal representative of the wife, and the wife is the legal representative of the husband, without the need for a power of attorney.”

**In law and practice, are women able to, on par with men, (1) influence major household decisions (e.g., regarding children and family finances), (2) be heads of households, and/or (3) have and control their own source of income?**

By law there are no stipulations which could restrict women’s ability to manage their own household or control their own income. In fact, an increasing number of Moldovan women – both single and married – are attempting to do just that. As a government decision maker explained, *“I can’t depend on anyone”*. The concept that the husband’s money is for the household expenses and the wife’s money is her pocket money is common in Moldova.

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*“I need to have my job with my money, a family budget is made from the resources that both husband and wife receive, but a woman must also have her own money that is authorized for her personal needs...That is why she always finds [an additional] job [she] can do... after work...so that she can have an additional source of income.” – Government Decision Maker*

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However, gendered social perceptions include expectations that women be the primary family caretakers and put family before career;<sup>36</sup> that men act as primary earners;<sup>37</sup> that increasing the rights of women comes at the expense of men;<sup>38</sup> and that women should not put themselves before others (for example, by acting as managers or entrepreneurs).<sup>39</sup> It may be difficult for women to have their own source of income, investments and/or financial

assets to rely on, within this context. As observed by a respondent, *“There is still financial dependence on a man. For example, in order to start a business, [a woman may] need a location that belongs to [her] husband, or she may want to grow something on land that belongs to him...most women have this problem...And there is also financial dependence, because if she stayed at home and raised two children...she did not produce anything financial, she produced something else. It is necessary [for her] to be supported financially by her husband, or by [her] family.”*

**How are roles and responsibilities typically divided between women and men in the families and communities?**

As noted above, Moldovan society remains patriarchal in nature with women assuming responsibility for most domestic duties and the role of main caregivers within the family. Women who operate outside this role are often met with disapproval. A woman CSO respondent stated, *“one of the most important challenges [is] for women to [be able to] balance between professional and personal [life]. For example,*

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<sup>36</sup> WLC 2016. See also Profile 2016 (describing expectations that women must give up careers for family needs prevail, and stereotypes that women are more suited to family, rather than business, environments).

<sup>37</sup> WLC 2016.

<sup>38</sup> WLC 2016.

<sup>39</sup> Profile 2016.

*if a woman leave[s] her children with a nanny, she will be blamed and accused by [her] relatives and friends that she is not a good mother. And this is a quite strong social pressure...people will ask - why she chose her] career instead of taking care of her kids."*

However, some families are becoming increasingly aware about the importance of gender equality within the family and of allowing both men and women to pursue their professional goals. This awareness is partly linked to the introduction of paternal leave in Moldova. Although leave for fathers is still a fraction of that allocated to mothers, one Women CSO respondent remarked, *"it's normal that fathers can join and stay home and take care of kids and take care of the home and cook...it's not only women."* Disparity in leave time, however, does have an impact on the father's presence and ability to assist within the home. As one Women CSO respondent noted, *"we just recently started to have paternal leave for fathers...But it is a very small number of days. And because the traditional mindset is that it is the job of mothers to stay home and to take care of kids, men are more reluctant to use this paternal leave and to stay home."* It is expected that with increased awareness about gender equality, more men will feel motivated to cultivate egalitarian family relationships. Moldovan women have also begun to hold their partners and spouses more accountable. A woman entrepreneur, reflecting on her own family life, stated *"this is one of the lessons I tried to teach my husband, who used to consider until very recently, that he was helping me to raise our children. I made it very clear to him that he is not helping me, he is doing his job. Because our baby is as much his as it is mine."*

While changes in gender dynamics and men's increasing responsibilities within the family have been taking place, mostly in the cities, as noted above, patriarchal attitudes and traditional gender roles still prevail in Moldova's rural areas.

## **GENDER ROLES AND POWER DYNAMICS IN THE ECONOMY**

**Is a woman's legal capacity identical to that of a man? Can women, on par with men, work, execute all types of contracts, register a business, file or participate in a lawsuit, or transact in any other way? Does marital status affect any such capacity?**

Moldovan law guarantees equality of rights, regardless of sex, and does not appear to impose any formal restrictions on women's access to, use of, or control over economic resources and land, regardless of marital status.<sup>40</sup> In many instances, equality of rights is legislatively mandated<sup>41</sup> and Moldovan law expressly provides for the valuation of nonmonetary contributions to the family in the event of divorce, potentially mitigating the economic consequences of gendered divisions in household labor.<sup>42</sup>

**Can women meaningfully participate in the economic life? What are the key barriers they face? Are there disparities between women and men with respect to labor force participation (formal and informal), unemployment rates, income, wages, and ability to open and/or operate a micro, small, medium or large business? Are women more likely than men to participate in the informal economy?**

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<sup>40</sup> WBL 2020; SIGI 2019. According to national legislation, women and men have equal rights to land ownership and development of entrepreneurial activities. However, some inequalities do appear to persist with respect to land ownership, and as a practical matter, women own only 12 percent of agricultural machinery and have low rates of accessing capital for agricultural activity. See Profile 2016, SIGI 2019.

<sup>41</sup> WBL 2020; SIGI 2019. See also Section 1, *supra*.

<sup>42</sup> WBL 2020.



Despite legal protections, there are clear *de facto* inequalities in Moldova's economy. Moldovan women's employment rate is 5 percent lower than that for Moldovan men with 44.6 percent of women (compared with 49.4 percent of men) participating in the labor force,<sup>43</sup> the lowest overall rate for European countries.<sup>44</sup> As one CSO respondent noted, "...public employment policies do not sufficiently focus on unemployed women, especially those from the most disadvantaged groups. There is insufficient government effort regarding employment of unemployed women, reduced focus on improving women's access to decent jobs."

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*"This is quite a wide practice here in the country. Women are also participating in this informal market, the black market or however we call it. So usually when they are on maternity leave and if they do not want to lose the allocation - this payment from the state - then they do not get a formal job or a contract or they do not make it formal. Also, there is a combined approach by the employers; it can be...she can be officially employed with a very small salary, out of which both herself and the employer are paying taxes, which are quite big. The second part goes in the envelope and does not pass through the official recordings, which is risky in the long term." – Development Partner*

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Women are typically segregated into lower-paying occupations and hold significantly lower shares of managerial or decision-making positions than men.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, although Article 10(3)(c) of Law No. 5 guarantees equal pay, women are paid less for the same work despite having the same qualifications.<sup>46</sup> The Global Gender Gap Index scores Moldova's wage equality between men and women for similar work as .71 out of 1.00,<sup>47</sup> and Moldova's National Bureau of Statistics identifying an overall pay gap between men and women of 14.4 percent in 2018.<sup>48</sup> CSOs respondents confirmed these data points, noting that "*there is a difference between the remuneration of men and women, in particular in the well-paid fields, for example, [the] IT sector or financial sector.*" While the causes of professional segregation and wage inequalities have not been well studied, they are believed to be rooted in discriminatory social norms that are reinforced by the educational system, labor market, and the media.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> See GGGR 2020. See also, e.g., The World Bank, *Enterprise Surveys: Moldova* (Washington, D.C: The World Bank, 2019), <https://www.enterprisesurveys.org/content/dam/enterprisesurveys/documents/country/Moldova-2019.pdf> [hereinafter Enterprise Surveys] (39 percent of employees in registered businesses in qualifying sectors are female, albeit on par with Europe and Central Asia as a whole); Embassy Intake Form (quoting Profile 2016).

<sup>44</sup> Profile 2016. Only 44.6 percent of Moldovan women are in the workforce vs. 49.4 percent of men. See GGGR 2020.

<sup>45</sup> See, e.g., World Bank 2017; Profile 2016. Women hold fewer management positions. See HDI 2019 (45.4 percent of senior and middle management); GGGR 2020 (25.70 percent as top managers); Enterprise Surveys (19 percent of registered business in qualifying sectors had female top managers; 40 percent had female participation in ownership). Women also have fewer opportunities to advance to leadership roles. See GGGR 2020 (reporting a score of 4.65/7).

<sup>46</sup> Recent reports place the average wage gap at as high as 14 percent. See, e.g., Profile 2016 (noting, for example, that women are paid three times less than men when acting as managers and earn less than men by as much as 80 percent in certain sectors); see also Embassy Intake Form (quoting same).

<sup>47</sup> GGGR 2020 (further reporting a .75 ratio of earned income, with women earning on average USD 5,600 to 7,500 earned by men).

<sup>48</sup> See further Gender Pulse (providing wage gap data disaggregated by industry and linking to underlying statistics from the Moldovan National Bureau of Statistics).

<sup>49</sup> World Bank 2017.

Further, women account for only 27.5 percent of entrepreneurs in Moldova,<sup>50</sup> and in business incubators to support start-ups established in different regions, the share of resident businesses led by, and jobs offered to, women is usually only slightly above 30 percent<sup>51</sup> In general, women in Moldova are less likely than men to start a business, and when they do so, they are less likely to expand it, half as likely to employ others,<sup>52</sup> and more likely to fail.<sup>53</sup>

Women are also over-represented in the low-paying, lower status jobs in the informal economy, without the benefits of social protection. These include jobs in the cleaning and hospitality sectors, as well as in other small businesses.

**How are roles and responsibilities typically divided between women and men in the market economy (if at all)? For example, are women expected to work in certain sectors or occupy certain positions?**

Women-owned businesses are segregated by sector. As of 2014, nearly two-thirds of companies partially owned by women operated in only three sectors: retail, food, and construction.<sup>54</sup> In 2017, a study found that 38.4 percent of women entrepreneurs were involved in retail, 24.6 percent in other services, 13.7 percent in wholesale trade, 6.2 percent industry, 2.3 percent construction, 4.1 percent transportation and storage, 3.0 percent agriculture, 4.9 percent hotels and restaurants, and 2.8 percent in the ICT sector. This is in comparison to 21.1 percent of men entrepreneurs involved in retail, 20.7 percent in other services, 20.1 percent wholesale trade, 11.3 percent industry, 7.2 percent constructions, 6.0 percent transportation and storage, 6.5 percent agriculture, 3.3 percent hotels and restaurants and 3.9 percent in the ICT sector.<sup>55</sup> A woman entrepreneur confirms this by stating that *“women work mainly in the service sector, health, education, trade, restaurants, hotels - women predominate here.”* A CSO respondent also observed, *“there are the so-called feminized industries. Traditionally, these are education, health care, mail service, social welfare, and preschool education. They are connected with a low remuneration level. Why does [this] happen? Let’s get back to the gender stereotypes about the family breadwinner. That is, a woman agrees to a lower-paid job expecting that her spouse, partner, will earn more; she puts herself in his economic dependence. And, interestingly, if you look at the banking sector, it is feminized as well...department heads are all men and bank-tellers are all women; and, accordingly, [women have] lower incomes and poorer career prospects.”*

**Do women occupy, on par with men, leadership and decision-making positions in the private sector, including at the senior level?**

While there are some women operating in senior level decision-making positions within the private sector, most women have been unable to break the glass ceiling in business. A development partner shed light on why women continue to be shut out, *“we have a study which we launched in partnership with the National Bureau of Statistics [...] on women in business, with very concrete data...there is a gap...We do not see women having important leadership positions in companies. There is a lack of gender*

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<sup>50</sup> SIGI 2019.

<sup>51</sup> Profile 2016 (discussing data from 2016).

<sup>52</sup> World Bank 2017 (noting paucity of information on this topic); *see also* World Bank 2014 (men twice as likely to employ others as women); Spear 2016 (women-founded businesses like to remain small and under-capitalized).

<sup>53</sup> *See* World Bank 2014.

<sup>54</sup> *See* World Bank 2014.

<sup>55</sup> UN Women Moldova, 201.

*awareness...They do not even perceive that there might be barriers for women to join, expand, or create a business. It is very difficult to make notable change because men themselves...do not perceive or understand that their female peers may have issues with the same type of work. At the same time women are increasingly interested in entrepreneurship and business development.”*

While there is little related research,<sup>56</sup> available data points to barriers like social norms; reduced access to bank loans and other productive assets, including state-funded business and entrepreneurship development programs; and skills gaps with respect to leadership, management, and financial literacy.<sup>57</sup> Data also shows that women save and borrow slightly less than men, both generally and in the context of entrepreneurial activities.<sup>58</sup>

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*“I see women hungry for economic development, hungry for entrepreneurship with very brilliant and innovative ideas, maybe even more innovative than men.” – Woman Entrepreneur*

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**Are there initiatives to promote women’s economic empowerment, e.g., through quotas or incentives to include women on corporate boards or in chambers of commerce; by targeting sectoral inequalities; or by encouraging female entrepreneurship?**

Several women entrepreneurs and CSO respondents were aware of the various local associations connected to women’s entrepreneurship – such as the European Business Association (EBA), American Chamber of Commerce Moldova (AmCham), and Association of Women Entrepreneurs from Moldova (AFAM). However, they were unaware of any quotas or incentives being promoted by those entities or any others with the goal of encouraging more women to be included on corporate boards and in chambers of commerce. Respondents emphasized the positive impact this type of initiative would have in creating space and opportunities for women entrepreneurs. In late 2020, Women’s Law Center developed in partnership with Expert-Grup a study called “Assessing the Impact of Support Programmes for Women’s Economic Empowerment”. The study includes a list and detailed analysis of support programs for women in business, including women from vulnerable groups.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> World Bank 2017.

<sup>57</sup> World Bank 2017; World Bank 2014 (reporting that female entrepreneurs tend to be less educated and to have no prior experience in business). As an example, loan applications made by companies with female leadership were rejected at higher rates and, in general, Moldovan women tend to rely on less formal financing (such as loans from family and friends or grants). See Profile 2016. Other than gender stereotypes (for example, women are considered more “risk-averse” with respect to taking on debt), practical reasons for women’s reduced access to formal finance include lack of assets to serve as collateral. See Spear 2016. In agri-business, only 14 percent of women-led businesses are formal, and therefore less likely to benefit from export-support programs. *Id.*

<sup>58</sup> Asli Demirgüç-Kunt *et al.*, *The Global Findex Database* (Washington, D.C: The World Bank, 2017),

<https://globalfindex.worldbank.org/#GF-ReportChapters>. Relevant findings show that in 2017, 10 percent of women, compared to 12 percent of men, saved to start, operate, or expand a farm or business, with 7 percent and 11 percent, respectively, borrowing to do so. The saving and borrowing rates were identical in 2014 (8 percent saving, 5 percent borrowing), with no available data for the earliest survey in 2011. Women borrowed less money in general, with 50 percent doing some borrowing in 2017 (59 percent of men), 7 percent borrowing from a financial institution (11 percent of men), 36 percent from family or friends (41 percent of men), and 1 percent from a savings club (3 percent of men).

<sup>59</sup> Women’s Law Center, Expert-Grup, *Assessing the impact of support programmes for women’s economic empowerment* (2020) <http://cdf.md/files/resources/150/Study%20Impact%20of%20women%20economic%20empowerment%20programs.pdf>

## GENDER ROLES AND POWER DYNAMICS IN THE POLITICAL AND CIVIC LIFE

### **Can women, on par with men, vote and stand for elections at the local and national levels of the government?**

Law No. 71 states that women and men must each make up a minimum of 40 percent of every political party's candidates in parliamentary and local elections. The law, adopted in 2016, amended 15 national laws, including the Electoral Code and the Law on Political Parties. In 2019, the Parliament amended the Electoral Code, by introducing the placement provision. According to this provision, when nominating candidates to their lists, political parties must ensure the inclusion of at least four candidates of the same gender for each position. While the law may exist on paper, a CSO respondent noted that there has been a lack of enforcement to ensure that this threshold is met and that the appropriate resources are provided to develop the women sections of Moldova's political parties and prepare women to run for elected office. *"There is a special budget line dedicated to the women wings of political parties, that should be reported against annually to Central Electoral Commission. But there is no record because the law was passed only in 2019. And for the first semester of 2020, nobody reported any expenses on that budget line."* Additional barriers to women's participation in politics include limited support from political parties and reduced access to financing, support networks, and training.<sup>60</sup> A few organizations in Moldova hope to help women run successful campaigns for elected office in the political sphere. As one development partner noted, *"we have extensive programs on women in politics, decision-making, and so on. We start first by identifying women leaders, then we work with them to prepare them to run for local office."* The 2021 early Parliamentary elections demonstrated progress towards meeting some provisions of the summer 2019 amendments, namely observing a minimum representation quota of 40 percent for both women and men in the lists of candidates of political parties, as well as candidate placement in the list according to the formula: at least four candidates out of every 10 positions.<sup>61</sup> Yet, the 40 percent quota system for political parties' candidate lists adopted in 2016, and the placement provisions adopted in 2019, do not appear to have resulted in significant improvements, especially for elected women at local level.<sup>62</sup>

Most respondents noted that they were unaware of any barriers associated with women or men's ability to arrive at the polls to cast their votes, or to perform other political advocacy activities connected to local or national elections.

### **Can women meaningfully participate in political and civic life? What are the key barriers they face? Are there disparities between women and men with respect to political participation?**

Notwithstanding the legislative protections and gender quotas described above, women remain under-represented in elected office.<sup>63</sup> According to the World Bank, "women are under-represented in leadership positions in local and national government, in the legislature, among judges, senior civil

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<sup>60</sup> SIGI 2019.

<sup>61</sup> Record Number of Women Elected as MPs and Included in the List of Candidates for the 2021 Parliamentary Elections, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 15 Sept. 2021, <https://www.md.undp.org/content/moldova/en/home/presscenter/pressreleases/2021/record-pentru-numrul-femeilor-alese-in-calitate-de-deputate-i-al.html>.

<sup>62</sup> The law provides for sanctions against parties that fail to meet the quota. See U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights and Practices, Moldova* (2019), <https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/moldova/> [hereinafter DOS 2019]. It is not clear whether these are enforced.

<sup>63</sup> See SIGI 2019.

servants, senior foreign servants, and in the media.”<sup>64</sup> As of the 2019 Parliamentary elections, only 25.74 percent of parliament seats<sup>65</sup> and 36.4 percent of ministry positions were held by women.<sup>66</sup> While the 2021 elections saw a significant increase of women’s participation in parliament with 39.6 percent of parliament seats being held by women, the share of women ministers decreased to 23 percent after the appointment of the new Government in August 2021<sup>67</sup>. In local politics, women occupy only 36.51 percent of seats in local council, 27.8 percent in rayon (district) councils, while they represent 21.8 percent of mayors - well short of associated development goals in 2017.<sup>68</sup> In 2019, following local general elections,

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*“The public [is] not oppose[d] when a female candidate’s competences make her suitable for office. If she’s built a reputation as a capable businessperson or manager, if she has some relationship with her constituency or the public, if she has a reputation for certain good actions, then she has more chances in politics. She can win the elections. However, it’s difficult.” – CSO Respondent*

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the share of women in decision making positions at the local level slightly increased. The few women who do occupy elected public office are met with additional challenges that hamper their meaningful participation in politics, particularly in performing their duties. As a government decision maker remarked, *“in our Parliament, women are not given the floor to speak, or to come up with a proposal or a change in the legislation. More men than women are coming up with proposals to change legislation.*

*Although the number of women deputies has increased, I still see that women do not go to briefings, are more reluctant, more shy.”* This is not only an issue for women in Parliament, but also those holding local level political positions. A CSO respondent noted, *“sometimes, female mayors complain that it’s exceedingly difficult to get serious consideration for their decisions by male colleagues.”*

Women constitute only 6 percent of public servants in central public authorities with an economic mandate,<sup>69</sup> whereas only 2 out of 10 women in public functions hold managerial positions.<sup>70</sup> As with other sectors where women are under-represented, their participation in politics is hindered by socio-cultural norms that create the perception that politics is a man’s domain. This is supported by studies that have found men are skeptical of women wishing to run for office.<sup>71</sup> A CSO respondent shared a recent study her organization had conducted which showed that *“25 percent of men believe that a woman is not able to fulfill her political potential because she cannot make decisions due to the fact that she is a woman.”* As observed by a woman entrepreneur, *“usually men think that women can’t make serious decisions and can’t represent the country.”* Other respondents noted how typically older males are perceived to be the

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<sup>64</sup> World Bank 2017. Under-representation of women also exists at every level of the legal community: in December 2018, the Moldovan government reported that all 6 of the Constitutional Court judges were men, only 3 out of 12 seats on the Superior Council of Magistracy were held by women, and women constituted only 33.7 percent of prosecutors total and only 9.6 percent of prosecutors in leading positions. See *Report Submitted by the Republic of Moldova to the UN CEDAW Committee* (2019).

<sup>65</sup> “Republic of Moldova,” Inter-Parliamentary Union, accessed November 11, 2021, <https://www.ipu.org/parliament/MD>.

<sup>66</sup> See GGGR 2020; see also HDI 2019. Data for 2018 supplied by the National Bureau of Statistics reports this number as 33.3 percent, along with 48.3 percent of women in the judiciary and 19.4 percent in police service. See *Gender Pulse*.

<sup>67</sup> See: composition of the Cabinet of Ministers, <https://gov.md/en/profiles/team>

<sup>68</sup> UNDP Moldova, *Gender profile of the 2019 Local General Elections* (UNDP, 2020)

[https://www.md.undp.org/content/moldova/en/home/library/effective\\_governance/analiza-din-perspectiva-egalitii-de-gen-a-legerilor-locale-gene.html](https://www.md.undp.org/content/moldova/en/home/library/effective_governance/analiza-din-perspectiva-egalitii-de-gen-a-legerilor-locale-gene.html).

<sup>69</sup> Profile 2016.

<sup>70</sup> *Adapting the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development to the Context of the Republic of Moldova* (2017).

<sup>71</sup> SIGI 2019.

most electable candidates due to the belief that those who are female, and young, are/would be riskier, less reliable choices.

Moldovan women also appear to be more apprehensive to vote for a woman candidate as noted by a woman entrepreneur, *“We, women, are not a united tribe. We are not. Women hold these same fierce social judgements about women political candidates even if the woman candidate is competent. Another CSO respondent emphasized the need for women to break this internalized gender discrimination within themselves. “When women come as a voter, they will not vote for a woman. I do not know why. It's kind of jealousy. In my mind, I think every time of how to help women to understand, we need to have more women in the parliament because we need to design legislation in the support of women and legislation that reflects women’s perspective.”* Hate speech and discriminatory stereotypes in political discourse are notable barriers to women’s participation in public life. While the Council for Preventing and Eliminating Discrimination and Ensuring Equality was established to address these issues, among others, its decisions are nonbinding recommendations. As one CSO respondent explained *“[this is] the weakness of the council...for example, the last decision of the council was against the former president of the country. He used a lot of sexist language during the presidential election and even harassed the current president [a woman]. So, the council recommended that he publicly apologize. But of course, it was not mandatory. It was public shaming. But here in Moldova, public shaming doesn’t work.”*

Moldova has low women’s representation in decision-making positions, including in the civil and foreign service, as well as in the security and defense forces. As one CSO respondent remarked, *“the lower the level of responsibility in decision-making, the greater the participation of women. Such an inverse proportion is at play.”* The level of political and public participation is especially low for women from disadvantaged/marginalized groups.<sup>72</sup> For instance, in the context of general local elections held in 2019, only 6 Romani women and 6 women with disabilities were elected as local councilors, out of 3,823 elected women local councilors.<sup>73</sup>

As in other sectors, women’s competing family obligations as well as fears of gender-based violence and negative media portrayals further reduce women’s participation in the political sphere.<sup>74</sup> Respondents also commented on the different standards men and women are held to in politics.

A recent study revealed that female candidates believed they were not adequately competent for the positions they campaigned for: 18.7 percent of women, compared to only 10.9 percent of male candidates stated that, at the time they decided to run, they did not feel ready for it.<sup>75</sup> Such dramatic

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*“And we all know even when our President, when she ran for office, how much people were talking about her not having a family, and not having children. Society in general, I think, has much greater expectations from women than from men. When a woman is in the political spotlight the public starts commenting on her hairstyle, the way she is dressed, whether she has a family or not. I mean, women, I think, are much more harshly criticized and much more thoroughly analyzed than men.” – Woman Entrepreneur*

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<sup>72</sup> UN CEDAW 2020.

<sup>73</sup> UN Women Moldova 2019.

<sup>74</sup> SIGI 2019.

<sup>75</sup> UN Women Moldova 2018

inequality not only excludes women from leadership and decision-making, but also perpetuates harmful gender norms and stereotypes.<sup>76</sup>

Following the November 2020 election of Maia Sandu as Moldova’s first woman president, hope has been reignited for female politicians in the future. One development partner noted, *“until very recently, the public opinion polls were very negative towards having a woman in presidency, but you see, we finally succeeded to have a woman as a president.”* A woman entrepreneur respondent expressed similar thoughts saying, *“but now it is different from a little bit back. Yes, we have now a lot more women in politics than I think we had 20 years ago.”*

## SECTION 4: ACCESS TO, USE, AND CONTROL OVER ASSETS & RESOURCES

### PROPERTY AND INHERITANCE RIGHTS

**In law and in practice, do women and men have an equal right and ability to access, use, and control property and assets, including income, cash, savings, productive assets (e.g., land, machinery, animals), and intellectual property?**

Moldovan women and men have equal property and inheritance rights, at least under the law.<sup>77</sup> According to the Global Gender Gap Report (2020), women and men have the same legal rights and secure access to land and other assets. A woman entrepreneur confirmed this by stating *“I think that currently in our country women...definitely make decisions about the income, the use of land, etc.”*

In practice though, especially in the context of divorce, there appear to be some inconsistencies. A lawyer respondent mentioned a case where a female client was denied access to pertinent financial information by the Cadastral Service. *“She went to the Cadastral Service and asked to be notified about all real estate registered in her husband's name during her marriage but was refused on the grounds that this is personal data...and told that if she is his wife, she must know what wealth they have.”* Situations like this can result in the economic disenfranchisement of women, whether currently married or seeking a divorce.

**What types of marital property regimes does the law stipulate (community property, separate property, or variations)? What is the default marital property regime?**

Community property is Moldova’s default marital property regime.<sup>78</sup> As noted above, Moldovan law guarantees equality of rights, regardless of sex, and does not appear to impose any formal restrictions on women’s access to, use of, or control over economic resources and land, regardless of marital status.<sup>79</sup> A lawyer respondent confirmed this, by stating that *“we have clear, strict rules that stipulate that the goods acquired by the spouses during the marriage are common property and, in case of divorce or separation,*

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<sup>76</sup> World Bank 2017.

<sup>77</sup> WBL 2020.

<sup>78</sup> WBL 2020.

<sup>79</sup> WBL 2020; SIGI 2019. According to national legislation, women and men have equal rights to land ownership and development of entrepreneurial activities. However, some inequalities do appear to persist with respect to land ownership, and as a practical matter, women own only 12 percent of agricultural machinery and have low rates of accessing capital for agricultural activity. See Profile 2016, SIGI 2019.

they can be shared 50/50. Only the property obtained by donation or inheritance by one of the spouses is not subject to division.”

### **Are property rights different for married and unmarried women? Do women and men have equal financial rights before, during, and after marriage?**

Women and men appear to have equal legal property and financial rights regardless of their marital status. A CSO respondent remarked “If a married woman wants to sell the [family] apartment, the written consent of her marriage partner is required...The apartment is joint property...The requirement acts both ways: if a married man wants to sell a property his wife will have to...make a written statement of consent. Otherwise, the status of being married or not does not affect [the ability to make transactions].”

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*“I was quite amused when the women at the Cadastre [property registration] office asked me about my marital status. It is a weird question, and I think it should be excluded from the list of questions...when applying to register a company...I think it is better to draw up a marriage contract than allowing the state to control this information. When you own a premise and want to register it with the Cadastre, the first question is about your marital status so that your spouse can be included in the registration too.” – Woman Entrepreneur*

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In the context of divorce, a lawyer respondent shared that there appear to be some stereotypes associated with property rights which may play in favor of either party. For example, ownership of the car will be typically assigned by the court to the husband, while ownership of the apartment will be equally divided between the spouses although, when there are children, the woman will likely be allowed to live in it.

In practice, however, women are often put at a disadvantage in the sharing of property upon divorce. As a woman entrepreneur stated, “a woman does not necessarily have a chance to get a share of the marital property. Especially since nowadays husbands are very smart, signing their mothers, sisters, grandparents’ names on purchase agreements [concluded during the marriage]. Today we see a new trend in Moldova. It is not uncommon to make marriage contracts (i.e. prenuptial agreements), which would protect women in terms of property [rights].” A lawyer respondent similarly commented on cases which resulted in a negative financial impact for the wives involved. “A common method applied by the [divorcing husband] is to bring to the court various loans or agreements, [as if they had borrowed from other family members] exactly the amount that would go to the wife as a result of sharing the property...One, for example, brought 48 loan agreements, as if he had borrowed money from his mother 48 times and the total amount comes out [to] exactly half of what would go to his wife after the sharing.” With this tactic, the husband has an opportunity to get out of providing the wife with her share of the property value on the basis that debts need to be satisfied first and therefore there is no financial windfall she will receive in the divorce related to the property ownership. This typically results in economic instability for a recently divorced Moldovan woman. Moldovan law expressly provides for the evaluation of non-monetary contributions to the family in the event of divorce, potentially mitigating the economic consequences of gendered imbalances in the division of household labor.<sup>80</sup> However, women generally find themselves in precarious

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<sup>80</sup> WBL 2020.



financial situations when going through a divorce, in part because they lack financial means to secure quality legal representation. As one CSO respondent pointed out, *“the very process of divorce is also discriminatory. Because the man has the money...Women don’t have money to have a good lawyer, to have good representation in the process.”*

**In law and in practice, do women and men have an equal right and ability to inherit property, including—without limitation—from parents and deceased spouses?**

The Civil Code (art. 2178) was thoroughly amended, including its provisions related to inheritance, and republished in 2019. It stipulates that both female and male descendants have equal rights to inherit assets from their parents. Similarly, female and male surviving spouses have equal rights to inherit.<sup>81</sup> There are special provisions related to the surviving spouse (i.e., inherits ¼ of the inheritance, regardless of the number of descendants).

**Does the law envision effective protections against arbitrary deprivation of property, including land grabbing from women?**

Based on current Moldovan law surrounding property rights, there are equal protections for both men and women against arbitrary deprivation of property and/or land grabbing.

**Does the country have a land registry and a registry of movable assets? If yes, can women use it on an equal with men?**

According to property law or the Land Code in force in Moldova, both women and men can register property in the Cadastral register. A lawyer respondent explained *“the registry can be accessed online. The idea is that if the husband buys and registers property, then...the wife will also appear as co-owner when you request information from the Cadastre registry. To sell the estate, the consent of both spouses is required.”*

## **ACCESS TO CREDIT**

**In law and practice, can women, equally and independently, open bank accounts and take out loans in their own name? What are the key barriers that women face in access to credit?**

There are no legal restrictions which would impact a woman’s ability to open bank accounts or take out loans in her name. In fact, many women entrepreneurs reported that they did not have issues receiving credit or loans through Moldovan banking institutions when launching their businesses. However, information on women’s access to loans and financial credit remains limited, while corruption within financial institutions may hinder women’s entrepreneurship, especially in the small and medium-sized enterprises.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> WBL 2020.

<sup>82</sup> UN CEDAW 2020; Freedom House, *Freedom in the World, Transnistria* (Freedom House, 2019) <https://freedomhouse.org/country/transnistria/freedom-world/2019>. [hereinafter Freedom House 2019].

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*“There is an element of discrimination, based on anecdotal data [from women entrepreneurs leading small to medium sized businesses]; there is no institutional data on this because the commercial banks are not interested to share, they are even hiding this data. A lot of the data in Moldova is still not gender disaggregated. So, we are insisting on a more comprehensive approach from the national bank towards the regulation of [activities of] the commercial banks.” – Development Partner*

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Available data reveals that loan applications made by large and well-established companies with female leadership are rejected at higher rates than those made by male-led companies – with one woman entrepreneur citing “*risk aversion*” as a potential reason behind this. In addition, Moldovan women tend to rely on less formal forms of financing, such as loans from family and friends or grants.<sup>83</sup> According to a woman entrepreneur “*women have a harder time obtaining loans than men. Most of the time when they start a business, this is a*

*very small business, a microenterprise. And most often they rely on personal funds - family savings, or support from their relatives. In general, statistical data shows that women have a harder time obtaining loans than men.”* A CSO respondent stated “*I...if you are going to obtain loans, for example, as a sole proprietor or for a business, issues will arise. I cannot say in detail what the practice really is... We have not worked with any banks, but it is also unlikely that they would share this information. They always hide behind the law on banking secrecy. I do not have access to the statistical data to be able to tell you that women get fewer bank loans. But I think, the principle at work is the same here: women are welcome to get small loans...but if they want to obtain larger, longer-term loans, then problems start arising as women are much less likely to receive them.”* A woman entrepreneur offered her perspective on why this was the case, stating that “*we do think that women are good for small businesses and not for big businesses. We still think that women business[es] or women led business[es] [are] a bit different from a man led business.”* to express the disparity in the loan amount given by banks to women entrepreneurs in comparison to male entrepreneurs.

Women entrepreneurs are reportedly subjected to additional scrutiny, and banks will typically inquire as to their marital status, taking this into account when deciding whether to grant a loan. As pointed out by a respondent, “*even if the bank institution does not discriminate based on the documents that they have...when they take credit, women need to provide more information than men.*” Consultations with local partners, including the Association of Women Entrepreneurs (AFAM) and various professionals have indicated that requirements for collaterals can sometimes create additional barriers to accessing loans since women will typically need the consent of their spouse or other male family members.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> See World Bank 2017; World Bank 2014; Profile 2016. Other than gender stereotypes (for example, women are considered more “risk-averse” with respect to taking on debt), practical reasons for women’s reduced access to formal finance include lack of assets to serve as collateral. See Spear 2016. In agri-business, only 14 percent of women-led businesses are formal, and therefore less likely to benefit from export-support programs. *Id.*

<sup>84</sup> Consultation with AFAM, March 6, 2020; The World Bank, The Global Findex Database (2017). Relevant findings show that in 2017, 10 percent of women, compared to 12 percent of men saved to start, operate, or expand a farm or business, with 7 percent and 11 percent, respectively, borrowing to do so. The saving and borrowing rates were identical in 2014 (8 percent saving, 5 percent borrowing), with no available data for the earliest survey in 2011. Women borrowed less money in general, with 50 percent doing some borrowing in 2017 (59 percent of men), 7 percent borrowing from a financial institution (11 percent of men), 36 percent from family or friends (41 percent of men), and 1 percent from a savings club (3 percent of men).

As reported by some, women entrepreneurs also cite a lack of overall knowledge of how bank loans work. *“Most of the time women lack the necessary knowledge of how to obtain loans: how to find the information, how to find the best sources of financing, how to prepare a loan package and how to submit this package to the bank, and how to negotiate with the bank.”* The lack of information about how to access bank credit is further compounded by limited basic financial literacy among women from different socio-economic strata, including understanding of how to open and operate bank accounts. As observed by a respondent, many women entrepreneurs are reluctant to open bank accounts for professional or personal use. *“I worked with three of them, none of the three ladies, have a bank account. When I asked why they did not want to open banks accounts they said they were afraid, they did not know anything about banking, if I need money I know where it is, I don’t know what happens to the money when it is in the bank. I do not know any men who feel or think this way.”* Women’s lack of confidence to open bank accounts and take advantage of bank programs and loans, which could allow their business to progress to the next level, also impacts their ability to participate as entrepreneurs.

Due to widespread financial insecurity, some women entrepreneurs may opt to forgo taking loans altogether when first launching their businesses. As stated by one of them, *“I did not take a loan, and in the near future I do not plan to resort to such financing because I’m afraid. Perhaps you can take loans when the business is very well developed.”*

**Do women have equal and meaningful access to a diversity of financial products (e.g., microloans, bank loans, mortgages, or saving accounts)? Do women who lack collateral have alternative options to prove creditworthiness? Are there incentives or initiatives to promote women’s financial inclusion? Are they effective?**

Some women entrepreneurs reported not encountering any issues with accessing financial products through the bank when attempting to start their own businesses. As stated by one of them, *“the banks have special products for women...a bank has recently approached us, offering a loan guaranteed by ODIMM (the Organization for Small and Medium Enterprises Sector Development) and available to women. The banks...are quite open to women entrepreneurs.”*

For others, development organizations may help bridge the financial gap by providing grants or other financial support of various nature.

Women entrepreneurs also mentioned some other programs they had come across when procuring seed funding for their respective ventures, citing *“a number of crediting programs from bank[s] and loans like a line of credit for microfinance institution offered by Prime Capital. The program is called Prima. Through Prima, women can access all the programs available to men as well, including personal consumption credits, mortgages and credits for buying homes.”*

Local and international organizations have made various financial education programs available as well. These have included workshops on basic financial literacy (e.g., on banking, savings, and credit instruments); counseling, mentorship, and coaching for women business owners, managers, and those who lost their jobs due

to the pandemic; comprehensive skills building; basic concepts of banking and nonbanking sector solutions. These initiatives have also established network platforms.

While many agree that programs which assist women entrepreneurs financially and help them develop money management skills are much needed, some question how effective these will be in practice, especially given the bleak prospects of the post-COVID economy. *“There were so many small loans given to the population to finance their needs. And people without proper education or understanding of this loan started to take the loan...as a loan to cover the first loan. This has created a snowball effect of becoming deeper in debt. As a result, the need for speaking about financial intelligence and financial literacy increased. I think COVID pushed the need to talk about money more because poor people started to get even more poor, and women are among those.”*

Women entrepreneurs noted that it is often difficult to find and access these programs and resources. Many of them also agreed on a need for more peer-to-peer networking and knowledge sharing opportunities. *“There is a need to develop associations of women,”* commented a woman entrepreneur. *“Women do not have the same ability or opportunities to connect as men, they do not have networking skills. They...do not know how to build a network that can help them grow in the business...And these associations can be a tool for that. But, unfortunately, the associations of women entrepreneurs we have in Moldova are not good...they are not sustainable. Their activities, especially post-COVID, have been somehow ad hoc and poorly planned. And I think that's another barrier...to business growth because women...do not have access to quality networks.”* Another woman entrepreneur expressed a similar sentiment and recalled a time when having a network to lean on would have been advantageous for her business progression. *“Recently I learned accidentally about a free seminar conducted by an NGO, during which they talked about the ODIMM program for the digitalization of SMEs. They also spoke about systems that help you mechanize your business processes. When you start a business, you need a lot of information about suppliers and equipment, thus, it would probably be good to collaborate with entrepreneurs with experience in the field, to learn about recommendations.”*

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*“Most of the assets in Moldova belong to men. The more assets you have, the easier it is for you to get bigger, get loans, credit partners and so forth. In Moldova, you have every year, more and more, I would say, businesses run by women, but the majority of them are small and micro enterprises - and they stay that way. Why? Because they do not have assets on which to grow. In 2011, the National Bureau of Statistics, they have done this census in agriculture and they have calculated that out of ten tractors in Moldovan agriculture, only one belongs to a woman working in agriculture. So that's number one. So that kind of shows you, for instance, the level of productivity and level...of inequality in terms of access to basic equipment for men and women.”* – CSO Representative

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## ACCESS TO ESSENTIAL SERVICES

### **Do women face any unique barriers in access to education, healthcare, housing, water, food, electricity, social benefits, justice, technology, and any other essential services?**

Women’s educational attainment is generally on par with that of men but diverges significantly at the tertiary level. As one CSO respondent explained, *“women need opportunities for education, tertiary education. Yes, they do receive basic schooling. But after that, if their families are strained financially, girls cannot afford to learn a profession. They cannot take short professional training courses or enroll into higher education. They don’t always have such possibilities.”* Another CSO respondent stressed that Roma and disabled women and girls are particularly disadvantaged, facing considerable challenges when trying to pursue education and a professional career.

Women are over-represented in traditionally female-dominated fields, like education, but constitute only 12.1 percent of graduates in sciences, mathematics, engineering, manufacturing, or construction.<sup>85</sup> As observed by a CSO respondent, *“technical specializations are rarely in demand among girls. They are mainly considered to be the prerogative of boys. Hence the problems in the IT sector, where a very small number of women and girls fulfill their potential.”* To address this gap, development organizations have offered a number of STEM and IT educational programs specifically targeting women and girls including the most vulnerable such as Roma, those with disabilities, and single mothers, among others.

Even when women do attend university, they still face hurdles. As noted by a respondent, *“The National Employment Agency does not necessarily provide proper guidance to women in need, even those who are highly skilled...Usually, what they offer are low-level, poorly paid jobs, typically around the beauty industry.”*

Moldova’s health care system is affected by severe shortcomings, a situation which has been further compounded by the pandemic. As with education, challenges in accessing good-quality health care are exacerbated for the most vulnerable (e.g., Roma and disabled women and girls, as well as those residing in rural areas, where teenage pregnancy rates are high). Overall, there is a lack of education and awareness about sexual and reproductive rights.

As noted above, Moldovan women also face barriers in accessing justice and legal aid.<sup>86</sup>

## SECTION 5: GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE (GBV)

### PREVALENCE AND FORMS OF GBV

#### **How prevalent is GBV nationwide and in communities where the program will operate? What are the predominant forms of violence faced by women in these communities?**

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<sup>85</sup> HDI 2019, GGGR 2020.

<sup>86</sup> UN CEDAW 2020.

Domestic violence is by far the most prevalent form of gender based violence (GBV) in Moldova and tends to be the primary focus of related legislation and initiatives, although over 6 percent of women experienced other types of violence (with the real number almost certainly higher due to under reporting).<sup>87</sup> While estimates vary, 63 percent of Moldovan women over the age of 15 have experienced at least one form of domestic violence (physical, psychological, or sexual) in their lifetimes, and over 10 percent experienced economic violence at least once, with rural, elderly, and divorced or separated women reporting the highest rates of multiple types of violence.<sup>88</sup> The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)-led survey states that nearly three-quarters of women in Moldova (73 percent) who have ever had an intimate partner have experienced some form of intimate partner violence (IPV). The most common form of violence experienced at the hands of an intimate partner is psychological violence, which 71 percent of women say they have experienced, followed by 33 percent of women who experience physical violence.<sup>89</sup> A woman's residence (especially whether she lives in a rural area), social and economic status, ethnic identity, marital status, and age play an important role in her vulnerability to violence.<sup>90</sup> Development partners explained how location can impact the prevalence of different forms of GBV and the ways in which the COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated the issue. *"In urban areas GBV is much higher than in the rural areas. In rural areas, people have bigger houses, more space. During spring and summer, they had a lot of work on the land...they were not confined, locked down in a small place with the aggressor...Overall, calls to the hotline increased by 40 percent during the lockdown."* Respondents who work on GBV also noted that, in rural areas, physical violence is more likely to be reported, whereas in urban areas forms of economic and psychological abuse are more common.

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*"Because the most complex and serious cases of domestic violence we have, or I represent are from the regions, and I want to give here an example, a case that is open until now: The husband was constantly aggressing the wife, he was working in roads construction, in the evenings he was usually drunk and beat the victim and the children, and he was doing this every week. In one of the episodes of this case I got involved in, he hit her in the eye and took her out..., she lost sight in one eye. She did not file a complaint about this. Later, shortly after, he took the stove and burned her and she suffered burns on 40 percent of her body and went to the hospital, but still did not file a complaint to the police, but the police were notified from the hospital, and they filed a complaint and that's how they started a criminal case." – Lawyer Respondent*

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Violence against women is widely accepted and tolerated by both women and men, including by young people. According to a 2014 study, 25 percent of Moldovan youth believe that beating one's wife is

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<sup>87</sup> See Vremis 2016 (noting that while domestic violence is more prevalent in rural areas, other forms of GBV are more prevalent in urban areas, although this finding may be due to lower rates of rural reporting for sexual assault).

<sup>88</sup> See, e.g., Vremis 2016; Freedom House 2019 (citing equivalent statistic based on a 2016 NGO report); SIGI 2019 (citing study finding that violence is higher in rural areas and in families where men have a lower level of education and low income; and that violence is twice as high for Roma women). *But see* HDI 2019 (34 percent of women experienced intimate partner violence and another 4 percent other violence); GGGR 2020 (45.5 percent of women experienced GBV). *See also* Embassy Intake Form (citing a 2012 UN study).

<sup>89</sup> OSCE, *Well-Being and Safety of Women* (2019) <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/8/6/445501.pdf>.

<sup>90</sup> See Vremis 2016.

justified under certain circumstances.<sup>91</sup> According to another study, 41.1 percent of men and 19.1 percent of women agreed (totally or partially) that there are moments when a woman deserves to be beaten up, and 27.7 percent of men and 17.5 percent of women declared that the woman must tolerate violence in order to preserve the family.<sup>92</sup> As a CSO respondent observed, *“usually, the family abuser does not actually realize that what he is doing is wrong. Or rather, he does realize that, but he got used to it, because this is something probably passed on from father to son, from generation to generation. When the family abuser arrives at the Center, he is informed about the current law, and the fact that he is not allowed to engage in acts of violence. And obviously we enumerate all forms of violence...and, as a rule, many abusers do not even know that what they were doing was considered violence...If up to that moment he considered the beating of the child to be a lesson, by participating in the program he realizes that what he is doing cultivates in their child the same sort of behavior that they also had, which is aggressive and violent. And if he doesn’t want his children to become victims or abusers, then he has to stop engaging in these forms of violence.”*

Moldova has a high rate of human trafficking (primarily as a country of origin), with women who have experienced domestic violence more likely to fall prey to it.<sup>93</sup> Jointly, both reflect and exacerbate women’s vulnerability to exploitation and crime, with a lack of public awareness<sup>94</sup> further contributing to the problem. It has been argued that GBV, unequal economic opportunities (which drive female migration), and trafficking are “intimately connected.”<sup>95</sup> As one CSO respondent pointed out, *“domestic violence is linked to trafficking because women trying to escape [abusive relationships] find themselves in another form of abuse.”*

One in five Moldovan women experience workplace sexual harassment, with the same proportion stating that they have been harassed by a teacher, though these incidents remain underreported.<sup>96</sup>

## PREVENTION, PROTECTION & ACCOUNTABILITY

As described in Section 1, Moldova has sought to improve its legal framework and support programs for addressing GBV. However, a number of gaps remain, and women correspondingly tend not to report or seek help. A 2016 study found that while many women (68 percent of respondents) were aware about social services available to victims of domestic violence, only 3 percent sought them out.<sup>97</sup> In general, women are reluctant to participate in police investigations due to fear of social stigma, widespread attitudes of victim blaming, and a lack of trust in a judicial system that is perceived as heavily biased against victims. As one respondent put it, *“women are not ensured that if they report the violator...they*

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<sup>91</sup> World Bank 2014. See also Embassy Intake Form (citing OSCE survey findings that nearly half of female Moldovan respondents believed that violence against women is “often provoked by the victim,” in contrast to 15 percent offering this view in European Union Member States).

<sup>92</sup> Diana Cheianu-Andrei et al., *Men and Gender Equality in the Republic of Moldova* (SocioPolis and Women’s Law Center, 2015), [http://cdf.md/files/resources/147/Studiul\\_B%C4%83rba%C8%9Bii%20C8%99i%20Egalitatea%20de%20gen%20C3%AE%20Republica%20Moldova.pdf](http://cdf.md/files/resources/147/Studiul_B%C4%83rba%C8%9Bii%20C8%99i%20Egalitatea%20de%20gen%20C3%AE%20Republica%20Moldova.pdf)

<sup>93</sup> See World Bank 2017. The 2019 State Department Report on Trafficking in Persons for Moldova finds that, notwithstanding Moldova’s “increasing efforts” to address trafficking, it still does not meet minimum standards. See U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report: Moldova* (2019), <https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-trafficking-in-persons-report-2/moldova/>.

<sup>94</sup> World Bank 2017.

<sup>95</sup> SIGI 2019.

<sup>96</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Moldova (2020)*, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/moldova/>. [Hereinafter U.S. Department of State 2020].

<sup>97</sup> SIGI 2019.

*will be protected.*” This is especially true where the perpetrators are members of the police or the military.<sup>98</sup> Complaints of discriminatory police practices towards women reporting abuse are quite common, contributing to their revictimization, while lack of coordination among service providers at the local level leaves survivors vulnerable.<sup>99</sup> Despite the existence of legislation on sexual harassment in employment, no criminal penalties or civil remedies are contemplated for these cases.<sup>100</sup>

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*“The measures applied by [the] police depend a lot on the urban or rural setting. In rural setting[s], they are usually friends or in very good relationships with the aggressor. Everyone knows each other, and the case may not be [investigated]. Even if there is a proper response from the police officer, still the victim is suppressed by community, by relatives, by everyone. And she withdraws the case. This demotivates the police officers, because it is a lot of paperwork for nothing if the victim changes her mind.” – Development Partner*

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Women from the most vulnerable groups, especially those from the Roma community, are even more reluctant to report GBV and to rely on state mechanisms for redress.<sup>101</sup> In the absence of effective state support for survivors of GBV, women’s low socio-economic status exacerbates GBV risks and consequences, as victims find themselves unable to leave abusive relationships and are at increased risk of sex trafficking.

## LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR ADDRESSING GBV

### **What concrete measures are undertaken by state and non-state actors to reduce the prevalence of GBV, protect the victims, and ensure accountability for perpetrators?**

The Criminal Code criminalizes rape, including spousal rape, and provides various degrees of punishment.<sup>102</sup> In its amended form, Law No. 45 (On the Prevention and Suppression of Domestic Violence) addresses physical, sexual, emotional, spiritual/religious, and economic violence, including that committed from non-cohabitating family members or partners. The law also provides a variety of support mechanisms for survivors, specifically emergency barring orders, protection orders, emergency shelters, counseling, comprehensive victim’s services and rehabilitation centers, as well as a 24-hour hotline and free legal services.<sup>103</sup> Domestic violence not resulting in significant bodily harm (e.g., broken bones), while a contravention, may only be subject to a fine or community service.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> *Id.*

<sup>99</sup> U.S. Department of State 2020.

<sup>100</sup> *Id.*

<sup>101</sup> *Id.* Because Roma women face exacerbated economic inequality and socialized dependence on partners, they face particular challenges in reporting and leaving abusers. Further, they are not only excluded from the formal justice sector (whether by choice or prejudice), but also face harmful community reconciliation practices (where, for example, victims can be forced to marry their abusers). *Id.*

<sup>102</sup> SIGI 2019.

<sup>103</sup> SIGI 2019 (The law allows survivors to claim compensation from the state in cases of severe bodily injury or if proper state assistance is not provided).

<sup>104</sup> DOS (2020).



In 2016, Law No. 71 amended existing laws to address sexual harassment (including through criminal penalties), although the associated burden of proof is high and the definition of the criminal act is too narrow.<sup>105</sup> Further, Law No. 71 prohibited the use of sexist language by amending the Law on the Press, the Law on Advertising, and the Audiovisual Code. As noted in Section 1 of the law, the Moldovan government has also adopted the National Strategy on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (2018–2023) and the action plan for its implementation (2018–2020).

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*“You know, on the surface, everything looks fine in the village... But when you start digging, it turns out that in villages all this is much more neglected, and a greater number of cases occurs. They just do not identify them as domestic violence. It is not a problem for them. That is how they live... And so, in general, the scale is larger in rural areas and [the problem] has more serious consequences...For example, if there is only one community police officer [responsible] for several villages...the help will not arrive quickly, even if the victim wants it. In general, there is no one to count on... In rural areas, the scale is much larger ...”*  
– CSO Respondent

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In addition to state efforts, various Moldovan CSOs work to prevent and respond to GBV, and many of them, including the Women’s Law Center (WLC), belong to the national coalition Life without Violence, formed in 2015. A CSO respondent shared that, overall, there are *“Twenty-three NGOs and public institutions providing direct services, mostly to women and children. These include shelters and long-term rehabilitation centers, alongside advocacy organizations working at the national level.”*

### **To what extent are these measures effective?**

Notwithstanding these efforts, and those described in Section 1, the 2019 U.S. Department of State Human Rights Report found that the Moldovan government still does not provide effective GBV remedies and response.<sup>106</sup> The Moldovan government has itself recognized that such laws are inadequately enforced and that related services are inadequately resourced.<sup>107</sup> Gaps and challenges reported by various international organizations include (i) insufficient resources, including financial and limited number of shelters, for assisting survivors and rehabilitating offenders; (ii) lack of assistance and protections for victims and insufficient concern for their safety in the judicial system, including as exemplified by inadequate provision and enforcement of protective orders; (iii) inconsistent enforcement of GBV laws and reluctance by police, prosecutors, and judges to enforce harsher new standards in favor of more lenient provisions; (iv) lack of diligence among police, prosecutors, and judges in investigating and prosecuting GBV crimes, including sexual harassment; (v) lack of appropriate training for police officers and other professionals working with domestic violence victims-like social workers, health care professionals, judges, prosecutors, and lawyers providing free legal representation; (vi) lack of legal representation for survivors, even though the state is required to provide free counsel to abusers; (vii)

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<sup>105</sup> SIGI 2019; UN CEDAW 2020.

<sup>106</sup> DOS 2019; Freedom House 2019; SIGI 2019.

<sup>107</sup> See Freedom House 2019.

excessive burdens of proof placed on survivors,<sup>108</sup> and (viii) lack of public awareness regarding applicable laws and services.<sup>109</sup>

As one CSO respondent remarked, *“we don’t have laws that would protect women against violent spouses. Criminal liability occurs only after the victim gets severe traumas.”* In its 2020 report on Moldova, the UN CEDAW Committee expressed concerns about the country’s insufficient implementation of the provision on free legal aid for victims of GBV under Law No. 196/2016; provisions in the Contravention Code that reduce the criminal liability of perpetrators of domestic violence and restrict women’s access to criminal justice; limited enforcement of the pertinent legislative framework; underreporting of GBV and limited access to justice for survivors; and a lack of shelters and support services for victims, particularly in rural areas and in the Transnistria region.<sup>110</sup> Poor coordination among local service providers leaves domestic violence survivors vulnerable to abuse, a situation that was exacerbated during the pandemic when shelters remained closed despite an increasing number of new applicants with the government failing to provide alternatives.<sup>111</sup>

A CSO respondent noted how education around this issue is one of the keys to being able to completely eradicate it. *“Today, the situation is better. They [the authorities] have some practice offering services to victims of domestic violence and their children and protecting their rights. So, now it is much easier to work than several years ago...Three years ago, they would say: ‘we don’t have domestic violence in Gagauzia.’ Mayors, social workers, and even residents would say this. We reached out and met with potential victims in villages. And they all would say: ‘we don’t have violence in our village.’ After we explained to them what it meant, what rights women had, and how they could defend them, then a completely different situation came to light.”*

While acknowledging the progress made in raising awareness about GBV, CSO respondents stressed the need to strengthen multi-sectoral responses and providing quality rehabilitation and reintegration services to survivors. One CSO representative shared, *“We are supporting the Minister of Health, Labor and Social Protection to create a proper mechanism for the reintegration of the victims in the labor market...And we are now piloting this at the local level in two districts of Moldova...As part of our work, we are supporting a lot of capacity building for multidisciplinary teams in Moldova...We are also supporting the referral mechanism for the inter-sectoral approach and enabling the multidisciplinary teams to properly act in cases of domestic violence.”*

## **SECTION 6: CONFLICT, CRIME, AND EXTREMISM**

In 1992, following the collapse of the Soviet Union, tensions between Moldova and the breakaway region Transnistria, located along Moldova’s border with Ukraine, escalated into a military conflict that ended in a ceasefire that same year. The conflict has remained “frozen” since the ceasefire, with occasional violent flare ups between Moldova and the Russian-backed territory. WAGE does not plan to cover any conflict-related themes in its proposed program.

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<sup>108</sup> SIGI 2019; DOS 2019; World Bank 2014.

<sup>109</sup> Vremis 2016.

<sup>110</sup> UN CEDAW 2020.

<sup>111</sup> DOS 2020 (reporting that, during the state of emergency declared in March-May 2019, shelters closed to new applicants to reduce the risk of COVID-19 contagion).

## SECTION 7: INTERSECTIONALITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION

WAGE has identified the following groups of women as facing unique challenges, heightened discrimination, marginalization, or unique gaps in services or opportunities in Moldova:

Vulnerable Group(s)	Root Causes, Nature, and Forms of Discrimination
<b>LGBTI Women</b>	Members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) communities are particularly vulnerable in Moldova and face discrimination and harassment despite the understanding that Law No. 121 ( <i>see</i> Section 1) is broad enough to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity under the ‘similar grounds’ provision in Article 1(1) of the law. <sup>112</sup> Programs like ABA ROLI’s National Partnership for Equal Rights, implemented in collaboration with GENDERDOC-M, have made headway in improving legal and social protections for LGBTI individuals, <i>inter alia</i> , by training judicial, legal, police, and media professionals. <sup>113</sup> However, pervasive discrimination remains. For example, a recent report found that police have sometimes been unable or unwilling to guarantee the safety of LGBTI individuals, and Moldova’s former President has publicly criticized the community, calling a pride march contrary to “traditional values.” <sup>114</sup> Additionally, same-sex unions and marriage are not recognized under the law. <sup>115</sup>
<b>Ethnic Minorities (e.g., Gagauz and Roma)</b>	Women belonging to ethnic minorities, including the Gagauz peoples, a Turkic minority concentrated in Moldova’s south, allege that their interests are not well represented at the national level. Roma people experience persistent discrimination and low levels of political participation. <sup>116</sup> Roma women are especially vulnerable to GBV and economic disempowerment due to economic dependence on husbands and ingrained gender roles in married and family relations, <sup>117</sup> cultural practices surrounding early and forced marriage, <sup>118</sup> and general discrimination against the Roma people. Although six Roma women were elected to local councils in 2019, Roma women report that Romani men discourage them from running in local elections. <sup>119</sup> In general,

<sup>112</sup> Freedom House 2019.

<sup>113</sup> ABA, *Out for Justice: Promoting LGBT Equality through the Rule of Law Worldwide*, The Equalizer vol. 1 no. 3 (Summer 2016), 6-10, [https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/sexual\\_orientation/2016-summer-equalizer-newsletter-sogi.pdf](https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/sexual_orientation/2016-summer-equalizer-newsletter-sogi.pdf); *see also* ABA ROLI & GENDERDOC-M, *Moldova: National Partnership for Equal Rights (NPER) Program, Final Report: March 2013 – March 2016* (2016) (not published).

<sup>114</sup> Amnesty International, *Report 2017/2018: The State of the World’s Human Rights* 261-262 (London: Amnesty International, 2018), [https://www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/pages/attachments/2018/03/06/ai\\_2018.pdf#page=261](https://www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/pages/attachments/2018/03/06/ai_2018.pdf#page=261).

<sup>115</sup> Freedom House 2019.

<sup>116</sup> Freedom House 2019.

<sup>117</sup> SIGI 2019 (“Roma women and girls are one of the most disadvantaged groups from Moldova, facing intersectional discrimination based on gender, class, ethnicity and race. Their social exclusion reduces their access to services, social welfare and employment within the formal economy”).

<sup>118</sup> *Adapting the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development to the Context of the Republic of Moldova* (2017).

<sup>119</sup> DOS 2019.

	women from national and linguistic minority groups face discrimination from the Moldovan justice system when bringing GBV complaints. <sup>120</sup>
<b>Rural Women</b>	Women in rural areas are also more vulnerable to GBV; <sup>121</sup> experience more poverty; unequal access to land, credit, and social services; and greater barriers to participation in decision-making processes at the community level. <sup>122</sup> According to the UN CEDAW Committee, rural women are also disproportionately affected by economic migration, which reduces their business and employment opportunities.
<b>Women in Transnistria Region</b>	Women in the Transnistria region have few economic opportunities, and many fall victim to traffickers. Domestic violence is not criminalized and is a growing concern, although increased awareness has resulted in more dedicated services for victims, primarily through civil society organizations funded by international donors. Although Transnistrian women can exercise some political rights, they are excluded from the political elite (there are only two women in the 43-seat ruling body for the region). <sup>123</sup> Harmful gendered practices, like pressure to have large families, persist. <sup>124</sup>
<b>Women with Disabilities</b>	More generally, women and girls with disabilities face limited access to justice, mainstream and inclusive education, and good-quality health care and medical insurance. Women and girls with mental or intellectual disabilities face higher risks of GBV due to Moldova’s guardianship system, which also creates barriers to reporting abuse. They also face GBV by their caregivers, staff in residential institutions and psychiatric hospitals, and other health personnel. This can include rape, forced sterilization, abortion, neglect, restraint, and seclusion. The government of Moldova has adopted a national program for the social inclusion of persons with disabilities (2017–2022), but there is no information on its impact. <sup>125</sup>

## DATA SOURCES

Sources of Information	Explanation
<b>Desk Research</b>	WAGE reviewed reports and statistics compiled by international organizations such as the World Bank, UN CEDAW Committee, OECD, UNDP and UN Women, as well as local statistics and other published research on gender and inclusion in Moldova. WAGE also studied relevant laws and policies.

<sup>120</sup> SIGI 2019.

<sup>121</sup> SIGI 2019.

<sup>122</sup> UN CEDAW 2020.

<sup>123</sup> “Deputies,” The Supreme Council of the Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic, accessed September 23, 2021 <http://www.vspmr.org/structure/deputies/>.

<sup>124</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2020: Transnistria, accessed September 28, 2021 <https://freedomhouse.org/country/transnistria/freedom-world/2020>.

<sup>125</sup> UN CEDAW 2020.

<b>Key Informant Interviews</b>	WAGE consulted WLC and CAPE for key stakeholder who needed to be interviewed based off the completed stakeholder analysis. Those individuals were contacted and serve as the qualitative data source for the gender analysis.
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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

<b>ABA ROLI</b>	American Bar Association Rule of Law Initiative
<b>AFAM</b>	Association of Women Entrepreneurs
<b>CAPE</b>	Center for Entrepreneurship and Economic Politics
<b>CEDAW</b>	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
<b>CIPE</b>	Center for International Private Enterprise
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organization
<b>CWEE</b>	Center for Women’s Economic Empowerment
<b>GBV</b>	Gender-Based Violence
<b>GGGR</b>	Global Gender Gap Report
<b>HDI</b>	Human Development Index
<b>ILO</b>	International Labor Organization
<b>LGBTI</b>	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Intersex
<b>M&amp;E</b>	Monitoring and Evaluation
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organization
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>SEA</b>	Sexual exploitation and abuse
<b>S/GWI</b>	Department of State Secretary’s Office of Global Women’s Issues
<b>SIGI</b>	Social Institutions and Gender Index
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>USG</b>	United States Government
<b>WAGE</b>	Women and Girls Empowered
<b>WB</b>	World Bank
<b>WBA</b>	Women’s Business Associations
<b>WBL</b>	Women, Business and the Law
<b>WEE</b>	Women’s Economic Empowerment
<b>WLC</b>	Women Law Center