

1st Progress Report

(25 November 2024 – 31 December 2025)

United Nations Development Programme in Georgia
Improving the Rule of Law and Access to Justice
for All – Phase II

May 2026

I. Summary

The project builds upon the results of Phase I with two overarching aims: first, to ensure that all people in Georgia enjoy access to equitable and people-centred justice and second, to support those fleeing conflict, violence and/or persecution, including Ukrainian refugees residing in Georgia, by integrating into the host society and improving their socio-economic resilience.

In 2025, the project achieved all three outcome-level indicators for that year. As for the 2025 output-level indicators, 12 out of 23 were over-achieved, nine were achieved, while the remaining two were mostly achieved. In addition, the project achieved two 2026-year indicators in 2025, one outcome-level and one output-level.

In 2025, the project operationalised a people-centred approach to justice by expanding engagement beyond state institutions and working closely with lawyers, independent professional associations, and community groups. This proved essential for bringing justice services closer to communities and ensuring that assistance responds to people's real needs.

The project also strengthened Georgia's rule of law system by enhancing the capacity, professionalism and outreach of key independent institutions, including the State Legal Aid Service (LAS), Mediators Association of Georgia (MAG), the Georgian Bar Association (GBA), and the Public Defender's Office (PDO). Through targeted training, mentorship and institutional support, covering international human rights litigation, jury trial procedures, disability-inclusive legal aid, and evidence-based analysis, among others, the project achieved measurable knowledge gains.

Environmental justice was advanced within the legal profession through cooperation with GBA. Rule of law professionals enhanced their substantive and practical knowledge on access to environmental justice, resulting in demonstrated behavioural change in real cases, such as a lawyer applying the knowledge of international non-judicial grievance mechanisms in an expropriation case by engaging the European Investment Bank to initiate accountability and mediation processes. Training modules, video lessons and a draft practical manual were developed to ensure inclusive, long-term access to knowledge for legal professionals and the wider public.

In parallel, the project supported the socio-economic integration of refugees and forcibly displaced persons, notably Ukrainian nationals, by strengthening livelihoods, community services and sustainable support structures in Georgia. Ukrainian Houses in Tbilisi and Batumi served as vital community hubs, reaching over 6,300 refugees with legal, social, cultural, and economic services, while steps were taken to improve their long-term financial sustainability. The project also advanced youth civic engagement.

II. Progress Review

State Legal Aid Service Supported to Improve Access to Justice (Outputs 1.1.1 and 1.1.2)

In July 2025, the project signed a partnership agreement with LAS, allocating USD 39,500 in funding. Within the framework of this partnership, the capacity of LAS lawyers and staff was increased in international human rights litigation, jury trial, rights of people with disabilities, and analytical reporting. In addition, the mobile legal aid clinic continued to operate, and regular visits took place to the Ukrainian Houses where LAS lawyers provided legal consultations for the Ukrainian refugees.

A three-day capacity-building training was conducted during 1–3 October 2025 for 21 legal aid lawyers, including 13 women. The training was complemented by expert coaching and focused on strengthening participants' knowledge and practical skills in international human rights litigation, particularly procedures before UN human rights mechanisms and the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR). Participants' knowledge was assessed through pre- and post-training tests, which showed an 81 per cent increase in knowledge. The training also led to submission of the case to the ECHR concerning an alleged violation of Article 6 of the European Convention on Human Rights - the right to a fair trial. The mentorship process remains ongoing, with the aim of bringing additional cases before international human rights mechanisms.

Training sessions on the jury selection process were held on 29 September 2025 in Kutaisi, on 30 September 2025 in Batumi and on 28 October in Tbilisi for 62 lawyers, including 32 women. Participants represented the legal aid bureaus of Tbilisi and regions (Kutaisi, Zestaponi, Zugdidi, Batumi, Poti and Ozurgeti). As a result of the pre- and post-training tests, 82.3 per cent of participants demonstrated an increase in knowledge.

The partnership also supported the capacity development of the LAS administration. During 6–8 October 2025, 12 staff members from the LAS Analytical Department and other support units, including eight women, were trained in evidence-based analytical and research skills. Pre- and post-training assessments showed that 83.3 per cent of participants increased their knowledge. Subsequently, UNDP consultants provided mentorship to support the development of the first comprehensive analytical document, which will serve as a model for future reports.

A consultant was also recruited to support the implementation of the Guidelines on Disability-Inclusive Legal Aid within LAS. Support combined workshop on 22 December 2025 with 16 lawyers, including 13 women from different legal aid bureaus of LAS and a needs assessment survey to capture practical challenges encountered in providing legal aid to persons with disabilities and on the application of the guidelines in daily legal practice. The mentorship support will build on the results.

The mobile legal aid clinic, established during the project's first phase, continued to expand access to free legal services for populations in hard-to-reach areas. In 2025, the clinic visited 42 new towns and villages, including locations along the administrative boundary line and provided group and individual legal consultations to 554 individuals, including 231 women.

To further strengthen outreach and enhance cooperation and coordinate support for Ukrainian refugees and conflict-affected persons, LAS initiated regular visits to the Ukrainian Houses in Tbilisi and Batumi and, in December 2025, signed memoranda of understanding with the governing NGOs of the Ukrainian Houses. Between August and December 2025, three visits were conducted in Tbilisi and two in Batumi, raising awareness of free legal aid services available in Georgia for refugees and delivering 89 on-the-spot individual legal consultations, including to 74 women.

Public Defender's Office Assisted in Delivering Information Sessions for Children (Output 1.1.1 and 1.3.2)

Between September and November 2025, PDO, with support from the project, conducted 14 information sessions on children and justice. A total of 443 children, including 236 girls, participated and gained knowledge about the mandate and role of PDO in protecting children's rights. The sessions also increased awareness of children's rights when interacting with the justice system, including their rights in contact with the police, procedural safeguards under criminal law, and the obligations of justice institutions to respect, protect, and fulfil children's rights.

Mediation Strengthened and Promoted as an Alternative to Litigation in Georgian Courts, with a New Group of Mediators Outside Tbilisi Passing the Certification Exam to Address the Regional Shortage (Output 1.1.3 and 1.3.2)

A partnership agreement with MAG was signed in February 2025 with USD 63,000 in funding, aiming to broaden societal awareness of mediation as an alternative dispute resolution among lawyers, businesses, ethnic minority communities and the general public, as well as to ensure certification of underrepresented groups as mediators.

Under this partnership:

- 15 mediation trainings were conducted in Tbilisi, Kutaisi, Zugdidi, Batumi and Telavi, building the capacity of 577 lawyers, including 355 women.
- Five awareness-raising sessions led by four certified trainers from ethnic minority backgrounds reached 114 community representatives, including 78 women.
- Meetings at six higher education institutions, including regional universities, engaged 180 law and business students, including 132 girls.
- Five professional development meetings were held for 95 mediators, including 71 women, to share their professional practices and challenges.
- Three roundtables were organised in Batumi, Kutaisi and Telavi for mediators and other rule of law professionals, bringing together 31 participants, including 25 women.

MAG produced an educational video on mediation in September 2025, which is integrated into the online platform of the GBA. This responds to strong demand from the lawyers who were unable to attend

mediation trainings in person, particularly women lawyers facing challenges with evening sessions due to caregiving responsibilities. Just in four months, 802 lawyers, including 430 women, enrolled for the video lessons.

At the same time, the project strengthened the capacities of 19 prospective mediators, including 17 women in rural areas, enabling communities, including women and ethnic minorities, to have access to faster and more accessible dispute resolution.

To address MAG's challenges in establishing a unified nationwide data collection system, a workshop was held on 18 October 2025 with the participation of the Statistics Unit of the Supreme Court of Georgia's Analytical Department and representatives of seven mediation centres. The workshop brought together 10 participants, including six women and resulted in the development of a unified statistical reporting form, simplifying the collection and analysis of mediation-related data nationwide.

Educational Module on the Right to a Healthy Environment and Environmental Justice Integrated into the Georgian Bar Association's Curriculum (Output 1.2.1)

The project engaged a national consultant to develop a specialised training module on access to environmental justice and deliver a training of trainers programme during 27–30 July 2025 for 19 lawyers (including 15 women), of whom 18 also completed a skills-based training component. These trainers conducted sessions under supervision, training 75 lawyers, including 56 women and achieving an overall knowledge increase of 78 per cent. Up to 100 lawyers were trained in total.

By strengthening knowledge of environmental law and international accountability mechanisms, the project enabled lawyers to pursue more effective remedies for people affected by infrastructure projects. One trained lawyer applied this knowledge while representing a livestock farmer whose land was fragmented by a highway project financed by the European Investment Bank. The lawyer submitted a complaint to the Bank's accountability mechanism, triggering an independent mediation process with site visits and negotiations. Although the process is ongoing, it has already led to the readiness of authorities to construct an underpass allowing the farmer to move livestock between divided plots, restoring the land's usability and protecting the farmer's livelihood.

To ensure broader access to learning, the consultant developed a set of video-based lessons on environmental justice. This material is to be integrated at the GBA's online learning platform, enabling lawyers to engage with the content remotely and at their own pace.

The national consultant also developed the draft of a user-friendly manual tailored for rule of law professionals and the wider public. The manual provides practical guidance on seeking legal remedies on environmental issues, offering step-by-step explanations, case-based examples and references to relevant national and international standards. It is designed not only to enhance the capacity of rule of law professions but also to empower citizens with accessible information on their rights and available remedies. The manual will be presented in 2026.

Draft Regional Study on Refugee Legal Aid Standards across Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine Produced to Evaluate State Legal Aid Service (Output 1.1.2)

A team of consultants led by a German expert, Dr Stefanie Lemke, has been engaged in Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine to assess access to state-guaranteed legal aid for forcibly displaced populations. The assessment seeks to translate the commitments of the Tbilisi Declaration on State-Guaranteed Legal Aid for Forcibly Displaced Populations into concrete solutions that can form the basis for future programmatic interventions and policy reforms across the region. It fosters regional cooperation among state legal aid providers in the four countries by identifying and sharing best practices and aims to contribute to addressing the refugee crisis in Ukraine and its neighbourhood by advancing rights-based rule of law and ensuring that people remain at the centre of justice services. The report also provides 76 concrete recommendations on how to strengthen state legal aid systems throughout the region. The report will be launched in 2026.

Youth Trained on the Rule of Law and Human Rights (Output 1.3.2)

UNDP announced enrolment for the Summer School on Rule of Law for youth aged 18–24. Out of 347 applications, 27 participants, including 17 girls, were selected through a competitive process, ensuring fair regional distribution. The focus of the summer school was on youth living in the regions of Georgia, especially those who have not taken part in the rule of law or human rights-related donor-support activities before.

"What I enjoyed the most was the moot court proceeding and the preparation stage for it. For me personally, this was the activity that brought the participants closer together. When they work together toward a common goal, that is when relationships truly form."

Held in Kakheti during 3-8 August 2025, the participants explored key questions such as the link between law and daily life, state protection of rights, the impact of corruption, the meaning of equality, individual roles in advancing social justice, and the global rules-based system and the role of the UN. They also examined core legal concepts, including the definition of crime, the jury's role, and the presumption of innocence.

"The theory and practice were well integrated, making the sessions truly engaging. This seems to be a characteristic of UNDP - every time I have participated in your projects, I have been welcomed into a family-like atmosphere, made new friends, and left with wonderful memories. In fact, the main goal of the school is precisely to connect people, alongside sharing knowledge. You have achieved both, and I congratulate you on another outstanding Summer School."

The school offered interactive sessions, experiential learning, and practical exercises, including a moot court. As a result of the pre- and post-training tests, 89 per cent of participants demonstrated an increase in knowledge. Final evaluations showed that 75 per cent of participants felt the Summer School exceeded their expectations, and 100 per cent said they would recommend similar UNDP activities to peers.

In addition, the project hosted 18 students, including 11 girls, on 12 December 2025 at the UN House for an interactive session on sustainable development, environmental justice and the role of the United Nations in advancing human rights and civic engagement. Through presentations and discussions led by UNDP project representatives, students gained insight into the organisation's work and the broader UN development agenda in environmental governance.

45 New Refugee-led Businesses Established, Creating Jobs and Livelihoods (Output 2.1.1)

UNDP signed a USD 365,000 agreement with CARE Caucasus in January 2025 to launch the second stage of the entrepreneurial grant scheme for refugee start-ups and businesses. CARE Caucasus delivered six specialised two-day trainings for 99 beneficiaries, including 81 women in Kutaisi, Tbilisi and Batumi on accounting, taxation and business planning.

Competition for grants was announced in two stages in February and June 2025. 45 projects were selected from 231 applications nationwide, including 40 led by women, creating jobs for up to 90 individuals. From June to December, 2025, CARE organised a series of workshops in Tbilisi and Batumi for 30 refugee entrepreneurs, including 26 women, on social marketing, for 20 beneficiaries, including 18 women, on food and labour safety, on identifying business and solving problems for 32 beneficiaries, including 29 women, and workshops on conflict management for 16 beneficiaries (all women). In addition, 272 individuals, including 225 women, received legal and business consultations.

Entrepreneurs were also supported by tailored guiding documents relevant to their business initiatives, such as food and labour safety standards (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point - HACCP) and legal and procedural standards for the beauty industry.

An assessment of Phase I grantees showed that of 39 funded businesses, 32 remain active - mainly in Batumi (11), Tbilisi (nine), and Kutaisi (five), with seven in other municipalities. Six suspended operations and two merged with existing ventures.

On average, these enterprises have operated for 16 months (range: 13–21 months) and report an average profitability of 50%, reflecting strong cost management and return generation. By the end of May 2025, the return on investment (ROI) reached 552%, meaning each 1 GEL invested by UNDP with support from the German Government and in partnership with CARE Caucasus, generated 5.52 GEL in profit. Fourteen businesses have surpassed 100,000 GEL (approx. USD 37,000) in sales, with three standing out: two exceeded a million GEL, and one reached over two million GEL in revenue.¹

Collectively, the 77 businesses funded under both phases of the project have employed 201 individuals.

¹ Empowering Refugees through Entrepreneurship: A Snapshot of Impact, available at UNDP Georgia's webpage <<https://www.undp.org/georgia/publications/refugee-entrepreneurs>>

Ukrainian Houses Sustained by Supplementary Income-Generated Activities, Serving over 6,300 Refugees (Output 2.1.2)

On 15 April 2025, UNDP signed a USD 77,000 grant agreement with the refugee-led organisation Unite Together to establish the Ukrainian House in Batumi, home to one of the largest concentrations of Ukrainian refugees in Georgia. The community hub opened in June 2025 to provide affordable space for NGOs, initiative groups, and entrepreneurs, facilitate access to legal and socio-economic services and host cultural, educational, and social events. By the end of December 2025, the Ukrainian House organised 231 events for 2,750 beneficiaries, including 2,209 women. A permanent information desk has also supported 169 beneficiaries, including 131 women, with issues such as pensions, legal assistance, healthcare, education, and employment. In addition, the Ukrainian House in Batumi partnered with the Embassy of Ukraine to host the Consul in Batumi, securing easier access to the Ukrainian governmental services for the refugee community in western Georgia.

Support for the Ukrainian House in Tbilisi continued through a new USD 47,000 partnership agreement with the Georgian-Ukrainian Platform for the period of February - December 2025. Over this period, the venue hosted 415 events, serving 3,412 individuals, including 2,861 women, through managing 209 referrals, psychotherapy sessions, literature discussions, exhibitions, cultural and language clubs, craft workshops, trainings and meetings with professionals and cultural representatives.

To reduce donor dependency, UNDP engaged a business consultant to conduct a comprehensive business needs and market assessment for the Ukrainian Houses, drawing on surveys, interviews and field research. The assessment analysed the key challenges faced by Ukrainian refugees in Georgia, identified their priority needs and highlighted viable opportunities for developing sustainable, income-generating service models within the Ukrainian Houses. Building on these findings, tailored business plans were developed for both Ukrainian Houses. Their implementation was supported through targeted capacity-building, including ten workshops delivered by CARE Caucasus and ongoing mentorship provided by the business consultant.

The Ukrainian House in Batumi demonstrated steady progress toward partial financial self-sustainability. Income generated through café operations and room rentals covered approximately 63 per cent of the monthly rent, achieved target earlier than initially projected for 2026.

In Tbilisi, income generated through café operations, marketplace activities, fairs, and other initiatives covered 50 per cent of the monthly rent and enabled payment of two months' rent in advance for the new premises. The relocation to more suitable premises (effective from January 2026) positions the Ukrainian House in Tbilisi to more effectively implement its business plan and further strengthen prospects for sustainable income generation.

III. Impact on Gender Equality

The project made a strong contribution to advancing gender equality by integrating a gender-responsive and people-centred approach across its rule of law, access to justice, and socio-economic resilience interventions. In line with the leave no one behind principle, efforts targeted women and other groups

facing structural and intersecting vulnerabilities, including refugees, survivors of gender-based violence, persons with disabilities, and representatives of ethnic minorities.

In the area of access to justice, the project significantly improved protection outcomes for women, particularly survivors of Gender-based Violence (GBV) and Domestic Violence (DV). The project contributed to strengthening the responsiveness of legal aid services to gender-specific needs, including through capacity development on disability-inclusive legal aid and human rights litigation. However, while women represented the majority of beneficiaries, this reflects both effective targeting and persistent structural barriers that continue to limit women's independent access to justice, including economic dependency, care responsibilities, and limited awareness of legal rights.

The project also contributed to strengthening the institutional capacity of justice actors to deliver more inclusive and accessible services. Capacity-building activities reached a high proportion of women legal professionals, enhancing their participation and leadership within the legal sector. The introduction of flexible and digital learning formats, including video-based training, helped mitigate barriers related to time constraints and caregiving responsibilities, which disproportionately affect women. Economic empowerment of refugee women emerged as a key area of impact. Women constituted the majority of beneficiaries of entrepreneurial grants, business development training, and advisory services. Women-led businesses demonstrated strong performance, contributing to income generation, job creation, and improved financial resilience. These results indicate progress toward reducing economic vulnerability and dependency, which are key drivers of gender inequality and exposure to exploitation. The Ukrainian Houses played a critical role in promoting both social and economic inclusion, particularly for women. As safe and accessible community spaces, they provided integrated services, including psychosocial support, legal referrals, skills development, and income-generating opportunities. High participation rates of women in these spaces highlight both their relevance and the continued need for gender-sensitive service delivery models that respond to the specific needs of displaced women, including those related to safety, care responsibilities, and social isolation.

IV. Project Risks and Lessons Learnt

The project applied a robust risk monitoring approach, including regular risk monitoring meetings based on the detailed risk log. This enabled the project to address potential issues before or as soon as they impacted operations. All other identified risks remain valid and are being actively monitored and managed, with no material changes in their status.

Risks #2 (lack of ownership and commitment from some of the national partners) and #9 (further shrinking space for CSOs) materialised. For details on these risks, including the treatments pursued, please get in touch with the project team.

V. Visibility

The project ensured strong visibility of the German Government by applying donor branding across most of the activities and strictly adhering to the agreed visibility and communication guidelines. Project outputs and communication materials presented the logos of German Cooperation and UNDP. The project achieved broad nationwide exposure through a combination of social media outreach and traditional media coverage. Major national television networks covered multiple project events and activities, and representatives of the project team and partner organisations were invited to participate in interviews on national TV channels.

Various videos on the project activities and events reached up to a million social media users as of 31 December 2025.

VII. The Way Forward

In 2026, during the remaining months of Phase II, engagement with businesses will be a new area where the project will explore partnership opportunities, particularly on environmental justice and governance, promoting responsible business practices and integrating environmental and business and human rights considerations into corporate decision-making.

The project will also prioritise knowledge creation and regional policy dialogue. This includes advancing the regional [Tbilisi Declaration on Access to State-Guaranteed Legal Aid for Forcibly Displaced Populations](#) and identifying further actions based on a baseline assessment of the implementation of the Tbilisi Declaration. This effort will strengthen regional cooperation on access to justice.