

Key GEDSI Results in the EGED Programme



1.1 INTRODUCTION

This document provides a spotlight on key achievements made through the **Effective Governance for Economic Development (EGED)** programme in relation to gender equality, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI). It captures key findings from an independent review aiming to take stock of what has been achieved on GEDSI under the EGED programme, from the start of the project to the end of April 2025.

Using a mixed-methods approach (combining a document review, key informant interviews and fieldwork), the review assessed GEDSI results, any positive or negative unintended GEDSI consequences of EGED's work, as well as any further significant results on GEDSI expected to be produced before 31 October 2025. This document provides an overview of the key GEDSI highlights identified in the EGED programme.

1.2 AN OVERVIEW OF THE EGED PROGRAMME

The EGED programme in Central Asia is a five-year UK-funded programme running from 12 August 2020 to 31 October 2025, with a total budget of £25 million. It aims to improve the effectiveness, accountability and transparency of economic policy delivery on select reform priorities in Kazakhstan (added in 2023), Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. The EGED portfolio includes 10+ projects or workstreams across the four countries. It has two pillars of work:

1. supporting effective, evidence-informed design and delivery of economic policies
2. empowering civil society to demand accountability of the governments for social and economic policies.

Whilst EGED does not have a standalone GEDSI component – these elements are mainstreamed into eight projects/workstreams within the programme.

1.3 EGED'S KEY GEDSI RESULTS

EGED has produced specific GEDSI results in four key areas: 1) inclusive regional economic development; 2) strengthening social protection policies; 3) supporting labour code reforms; and 4) improving economic opportunities for women and marginalised groups.

1. Enabling Inclusive Regional Economic Development

EGED's support to inclusive socio-economic development planning methodology in the Kyrgyz Republic resulted in **an increase in targeted development measures – and access to resources – for women and marginalised groups in regional socio-economic development plans**. This has resulted in the **formulation and approval of 235 socio-economic development plans** applying the inclusive approach.

EGED support:

- ▶ Supporting the introduction and institutionalisation of a new methodology for inclusive regional socio-economic development planning.
- ▶ Supporting the establishment of seven coordination councils in seven pilot districts.
- ▶ Providing training to council members and local working groups on inclusive planning processes, and participatory tools such as community hearings and public consultations – recommending them for validating draft plans.
- ▶ Supporting the establishment of Women's Entrepreneurship Committees in some municipalities ensuring that women's economic priorities were reflected in local plans.
- ▶ Supporting the Coalition for Women Entrepreneurship in advocating for gender equality in economic policy at the national level.

This is having a direct impact on women and marginalised groups in Kyrgyzstan in the following ways:

Economic benefits: Regional socio-economic development plans (SEDPs) developed under the new EGED-supported methodology in 2024 and 2025 show a marked increase in measures specifically designed to improve the economic conditions of women and socially marginalised groups.

Social benefits: Over 1,700 targeted measures have been integrated into district and municipal SEDPs, addressing the needs of women, youth, persons with disabilities, and remote populations.

Sustainability: The new methodology was formally submitted and adopted by the Ministry of Economy, and is now in use in pilot municipalities, with guidelines for national scale-up currently under development.

2. Strengthening Social Protection Policies

EGED-supported TSA reforms in Tajikistan have **improved the responsiveness of social protection policies to the needs of women and persons with disabilities**, through increased payment amounts, introducing payment top-ups for households with children, improving transparency, and laying the groundwork for graduation from cash assistance to employment.

EGED support:

- ▶ Holding national consultations to inform the revised legal framework and budget expansion.
- ▶ Using CODI (Core Diagnostic Instrument) assessments to guide TSA reform in Tajikistan.
- ▶ Using additional data from the Listening to Tajikistan tool to adjust TSA design.
- ▶ Aligning TSA design with the World Bank's ASIS software to automate eligibility calculations.
- ▶ Supporting legal and institutional reforms at the local level, including mandatory anti-corruption training for all newly recruited TSA staff.
- ▶ Advocating for and facilitating coordination between the Ministry of Health and Social Protection and the Ministry of Labour to create a referral pathway for employable TSA recipients.
- ▶ Conducting awareness-raising campaigns to improve public understanding of eligibility criteria entitlements.

3. Supporting Labour Code Reforms

EGED-supported Labour Code reforms in Uzbekistan have **enhanced legal protections for women and marginalised groups relating to equal pay, hiring practices and parental leave**. These reforms closed several long-standing gender gaps in labour market legislation and aligned Uzbekistan's legal framework more closely with international standards. They mark a significant shift in formal labour standards and contribute to reshaping deeply embedded social norms around women's economic roles and are supported by robust accountability mechanisms.

EGED support:

- ▶ Comprehensive legal review of Uzbekistan's labour legislation, mapped against International Labour Organisation (ILO) conventions and global good practice.
- ▶ A Listening to Citizens (LTC) survey, which captured public views – particularly those of women – on employment-related barriers, as well as by the Country Gender Assessment (CGA).
- ▶ Using these findings to work with the government to negotiate specific reforms within the 2021-2022 Labour Code revision process.

This is having a direct impact on women and marginalised groups in Uzbekistan in the following ways:

Economic benefits: It is projected that the provision of equal pay for equal work could lift over 700,000 working women out of poverty and that national income will increase by 29% due to the improved gender parity within the workplace.

Social benefits: There is now a clear legal framework with protections for women and marginalised groups. This has also reduced discrimination against women by addressing the perception that hiring women incurs higher costs for employers.

Reputational benefits: Uzbekistan is now ranked among the top five countries making the most progress towards gender equality in the Women, Business and Law Index.

This is having a direct impact on women and marginalised groups in Tajikistan in the following ways:

Economic benefits: These adjustments helped reduce exclusion and inclusion errors and made assistance more aligned with actual household needs. As a result, 61% of TSA-recipient households in 2024 were headed by women, and 53% of household members receiving TSA are women. Furthermore, the TSA budget has increased from 70.9 million to 279 million Somoni between 2023 and 2025, reflecting recognition of the inadequacy of prior payment levels.

Social benefits: The revised framework also introduced legally embedded payment top-ups for families with children, older people, and persons with disabilities, while limiting payment amounts to meet the needs of the most vulnerable and encourages transitions to employment for those able to work.

Sustainability: Initially envisaged as a three-year initiative ending in 2024, the reform has already extended into 2025 with increased cash transfer amounts now in place. It is expected that this will continue in the future.

4. Supporting Social Entrepreneurship

The Social Entrepreneurship Law in Tajikistan, supported by EGED, provides a **legal mechanism to improve economic opportunities for women and socially marginalised groups, particularly persons with disabilities**.

EGED support:

- ▶ Providing technical and strategic support to the development and adoption of a new Law on Social Entrepreneurship, passed in 2024.
- ▶ Support to CSOs and business associations providing advocacy around the legislation.
- ▶ Involvement in policy process, preparing formal policy briefs, drafting amendment language, and participating in structured consultations with ministries.

This is having a direct impact on women and marginalised groups in Tajikistan in the following ways:

Economic and social benefits:

- Increased opportunities for persons with disabilities as enterprises that employ them are eligible for tax incentives.
- Marginalised women can access government-backed enterprise.
- Civil society have an increased role by being included in monitoring.



Spotlight 3: Enabling Inclusive Socio-Economic Development Planning in Kyrgyzstan

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Using a mixed-methods approach (combining a document review, key informant interviews and fieldwork), the review assessed GEDSI results, any positive or negative unintended GEDSI consequences of EGED's work, as well as any further significant results on GEDSI expected to be produced before 31 October 2025. This document provides an overview of the key GEDSI highlights identified in Kyrgyzstan.

The reforms included:

- Introduction of a **30% minimum requirement for women's representation in local coordination councils**, responding for leading the planning process.
- Inclusion of a **mandatory "Inclusivity" section** requiring analysis of the situation of women and socially marginalised groups.
- Embedding of the new methodology into the "Sanarip Aimak" digital planning system** – the digital architecture of local governance.

1.3 EGED's Impact in Kyrgyzstan

EGED's support to inclusive socio-economic development planning methodology resulted in **an increase in targeted development measures – and access to resources – for women and marginalised groups in regional socio-economic development plans**. This has resulted in the **formulation and approval of 235 socio-economic development plans** applying the inclusive approach

The EGED Programme

The EGED programme in Central Asia is a five-year UK-funded programme running from 12 August 2020 to 31 October 2025, with a total budget of £25 million. It aims to improve the effectiveness, accountability and transparency of economic policy delivery on select reform priorities in Kazakhstan (added in 2023), Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.

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1.2 EGED's support to Inclusive Socio-Economic Development Planning Methodologies

Through EGED, the World Bank and Development Policy Institute have supported the introduction and institutionalisation of a new methodology for inclusive regional socio-economic development planning in Kyrgyzstan. These policy reforms were accompanied by new institutional mechanisms to support inclusive participation in practice through the creation of seven coordination councils in pilot districts, responsible for creating socio-economic development plans. EGED provided council members and local working groups with training on inclusive planning processes, and participatory tools such as community hearings and public consultations were recommended for validating draft plans. EGED also supported the establishment of Women's Entrepreneurship Committees in municipalities such as At-Bashy, ensuring that women's economic priorities, such as access to credit, vocational training, and market linkages, were reflected in local plans. At the national level, EGED supported the Coalition for Women Entrepreneurship in advocating for gender equality in economic policy and disseminating information about the 2022–2026 National Programme for the Support and Development of Women Entrepreneurship.

This is having a direct impact on women and marginalised groups in Kyrgyzstan in the following ways:

Economic benefits: Regional socio-economic development plans (SEDPs) developed under the new EGED-supported methodology in 2024 and 2025 show a marked increase in measures specifically designed to improve the economic conditions of women and socially marginalised groups.

Social benefits: Over 1,700 targeted measures have been integrated into district and municipal SEDPs, addressing the needs of women, youth, persons with disabilities, and remote populations.

Sustainability: The new methodology was formally submitted and adopted by the Ministry of Economy, and is now in use in pilot municipalities, with guidelines for national scale-up currently under development.



Spotlight 2: Improving Social Protection Policies in Tajikistan

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1.2 EGED's support to strengthen Social Protection Policies

Through EGED, the World Bank and ACTED conducted several activities **to improve Targeted Social Assistance (TSA) in Tajikistan**. This included national consultations led by the World Bank which directly informed the revised legal framework and budget expansion of the TSA; the use of CODI (**Core Diagnostic Instrument**) assessments **to guide TSA reform** in Tajikistan; **using additional data from the Listening to Tajikistan tool to adjust TSA design**; and aligning TSA design with the World Bank's ASIS software to automate eligibility calculations. ACTED supported legal and institutional reforms at the local level, including mandatory anti-corruption training for all newly recruited TSA staff. ACTED has also **facilitated coordination between the Ministry of Health and Social Protection and the Ministry of Labour** to create a referral pathway for employable TSA recipients, especially those in households with multiple able-bodied adults. This was supported by **awareness-raising campaigns** to improve public understanding of eligibility criteria and entitlements, reducing the prevalence of informal payments.

The reforms included:

Improvements in poverty targeting and accountability through a new Proxy Means Test formula preventing errors and increasing precision and fairness, particularly for households previously excluded.

Introduction of a child-sensitive top-up mechanism, which adjusts benefit levels based on the number of children in the household.

Revision of the flat rate benefit amount to reflect inflation.

1.3 EGED's Impact in Tajikistan

EGED's support has led to increasingly **gender-responsive and socially-inclusive design, delivery, and accountability mechanisms for Tajikistan's TSA programme**. This has improved the responsiveness of social protection policies to the needs of women and persons with disabilities, through increased payment amounts, introducing payment top-ups for households with children, improving transparency, and laying the groundwork for graduation from cash assistance to employment.

This is having a direct impact on women and marginalised groups in Tajikistan in the following ways:

Economic benefits: Social protection benefits are directly supporting women and marginalised groups. These adjustments helped reduce exclusion and inclusion errors and made assistance more aligned with actual household needs. As a result, 61% of TSA-recipient households in 2024 were headed by women, and 53% of household members receiving TSA are women. Furthermore, the TSA budget has increased from 70.9 million to 279 million Somoni between 2023 and 2025, reflecting recognition of the inadequacy of prior payment levels.

Social benefits: The revised framework also introduced legally-embedded payment top-ups for families with children, older people, and persons with disabilities, while limiting payment amounts to meet the needs of the most vulnerable and encourages transitions to employment for those able to work.

Sustainability: Initially envisaged as a three-year initiative ending in 2024, the reform has already extended into 2025 with increased cash transfer amounts now in place. It is expected that this will continue in the future.



Spotlight 1: Supporting Labour Code Reforms in Uzbekistan

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1.2 EGED's support to Labour Code Reforms

Under EGED, the World Bank provided extensive support to labour law reform in Uzbekistan, ultimately supporting the revision of the Labour Code. This included: 1) a **comprehensive legal review of Uzbekistan's labour legislation**, mapped against International Labour Organisation (ILO) conventions and global good practice; 2) a **Listening to Citizens (LTC) survey**, which captured public opinion – particularly those of women – on employment-related barriers, as well as by the Country Gender Assessment (CGA); and 3) using these findings to **work with the government to negotiate specific reforms within the 2021-2022 Labour Code revision process**.

This is having a direct impact on women and marginalised groups in Uzbekistan in the following ways:

Economic benefits: It is projected that the provision of equal pay for equal work could lift over 700,000 working women out of poverty by addressing wage disparities - this disparity has averaged 36% over the past five years. In addition, it is estimated that national income will increase by 29% due to the improved gender parity within the workplace.

Social benefits: There is now a clear legal framework with protections for women and marginalised groups. This has also reduced discrimination against women by addressing the perception that hiring women incurs higher costs for employers.

Reputational benefits: Uzbekistan is now ranked among the top five countries making the most progress towards gender equality in the Women, Business and Law Index.

The reforms included:

Legal guarantees for equal pay for equal work.

Prohibitions on gender-based discrimination in hiring and dismissal.

The introduction of **government-employer cost-sharing for maternity leave**, which previously fell fully on employers and created disincentives around hiring women.

Informed by CGA recommendations, additional provisions were introduced through secondary legislation in 2025, including **mandatory paternity leave and legal protections against workplace sexual harassment**.

1.3 EGED's Impact in Uzbekistan

EGED-supported Labour Code reforms in Uzbekistan have **enhanced legal protections for women and marginalised groups relating to equal pay, hiring practices and parental leave**. These reforms closed several long-standing gender gaps in labour market legislation and aligned Uzbekistan's legal framework more closely with international standards. They mark a significant shift in formal labour standards and contribute to reshaping deeply embedded social norms around women's economic roles and are supported by robust accountability mechanisms.