



Concept Environmental and Social Review Summary

Concept Stage

(**ESRS Concept Stage**)

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I. BASIC INFORMATION

A. Basic Operation Data

Operation ID	Product	Operation Acronym	Approval Fiscal Year
P168790	Investment Project Financing (IPF)	Women's Empowerment through GBV Services	2025
Operation Name	Women's Empowerment through GBV Services (WEGS)		
Country/Region Code	Beneficiary country/countries (borrower, recipient)	Region	Practice Area (Lead)
Moldova	Moldova	EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA	Social Sustainability and Inclusion
Borrower(s)	Implementing Agency(ies)	Estimated Appraisal Date	Estimated Board Date
Women's Law Center Moldova	Women's Law Center		15-Aug-2024
Estimated Concept Review Date	Total Project Cost		
15-May-2024	2,754,300.00		

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Proposed Development Objective

The proposed Development Objective is to improve access to integrated services for Gender-based violence (GBV) survivors in select Moldovan communities. This will be done through: (i) piloting a system of holistic assistance that includes economic empowerment for GBV survivors, their families, and Ukrainian refugees in Chisinau municipality and in the North, Center and South regions of Moldova; and (ii) building capacity of national and local stakeholders in GBV case management and community awareness raising.

B. Is the operation being prepared in a Situation of Urgent Need of Assistance or Capacity Constraints, as per Bank IPF Policy, para. 12?

No

C. Summary Description of Proposed Project Activities

[Description imported from the Concept Data Sheet in the Portal providing information about the key aspects and components/sub-components of the project]



The proposed project aims to implement an integrated, survivor-centered approach to supporting GBV survivors, including refugee women. The integrated approach will include economic empowerment of project beneficiaries to support women and their families in GBV response and prevention so that they can restart and sustain their lives free of violence. In Component 1, the project will offer housing assistance to those fleeing their abusers and will provide emergency response, psychosocial counselling, legal aid, social assistance, and the full chain of support (including personal development, professional orientation, and market-demanded vocational skills training and assisted employment or business development training and start-up funding) toward sustainable income generation in wage employment, self-employment, or micro-entrepreneurship. Because the war in Ukraine has substantially increased the vulnerability of women and children fleeing the war zone, refugee women and children who are potential victims of GBV are included among project beneficiaries, with customized support to meet their needs. Component 2 of the project aims to help implement recent legal amendments to strengthen Moldova's institutional mechanism for combating violence against women and domestic violence. This strengthening will occur through (a) capacity building of specialized public institutions and nongovernmental actors; and (b) community awareness raising about the impact of GBV and about available GBV services. The project will operationalize the recent reforms by the Government of Moldova to establish the National Agency for Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence and to ensure its effective functioning. Authorities aim to commence the Agency's activity in January 2024. The project is therefore well timed to contribute to building the long-term capacity of the government to support Moldovan GBV survivors and Ukrainian refugee women and children survivors. Indicators: • Number of GBV survivors accessing an improved system of integrated GBV response services (disaggregated by sex, age, refugee status, education level, rural/urban residence) • Percentage of reported GBV cases that receive at least two multidisciplinary services (i.e., two of the following: shelter, medical services, psychosocial services, legal support, economic empowerment support) • Percentage of survivors reporting increase in income because of project support for at least 12 months • Percentage of training participants from specialized public institutions and nongovernmental actors showing increased levels of knowledge about GBV prevention and response (measure by pre-and post-training surveys) • Number of community members who attend local information sessions about GBV and available GBV services End target data will be disaggregated by sex and age groups, as well as by urban vs. rural residency and national vs. refugee status. Although the domestic legal framework provides for multi-stakeholder responses, the holistic, multidimensional approach is not well developed. The project will showcase the difference that various multi-stakeholder interventions make to the lives of the survivors (i.e., a combination of legal aid, psychosocial assistance, housing, vocational training, and other economic empowerment measures). The project will undertake process evaluations and use resulting lessons to produce GBV Response Guidance Notes, which will be used by interested stakeholders (governmental agencies, CSOs, development agencies) for scaling up and further improvement of GBV services, based on lessons from the proposed project. Project activities will contribute to the implementation of the National Program on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Family Violence for years 2023-2027, namely General Objective 2. (Protection Pillar): Strengthening the protection and assistance mechanism for victims of violence against women and family violence through a multidimensional approach, according to the provisions of the Istanbul Convention.

D. Environmental and Social Overview

D.1 Overview of Environmental and Social Project Settings

[Description of key features relevant to the operation's environmental and social risks and opportunities (e.g., whether the project is nationwide or regional in scope, urban/rural, in an FCV context, presence of Indigenous Peoples or other minorities, involves associated facilities, high-biodiversity settings, etc.) – Max. character limit 2,000]



Project activities will take place within target rayons comprising Chisinau municipality and Region Center (Causeni and Stefan Voda); Region South (Comrat) Region North: (Donduseni, Ocnita, Edinet and Briceni). Rayons outside Chisinau include rural areas that have been selected based on representation of specific economic and governance struggles experienced by survivors and families, such as access to information, lack of current resources and services, impaired livelihoods and lack of employment. Project activities comprise validating a model of wholistic and tailored financial and non-financial support for survivors of Gender Based Violence (GBV) and Domestic Violence (DV), as well as delivering a capacity building program for local institutions, and a public awareness and behavioral change campaign. Physical and psychological violence is a widespread phenomenon in Moldova, where a majority of women are survivors of violence perpetrated by intimate partners. Violence against women is rooted in cultural norms and entrenched behaviors. Specifically affected are the women with multiple vulnerabilities, such as elderly, those with physical or mental disabilities, LGBTI, migrant and refugee women, asylum-seeking or those without residence permits, rural women and members of cultural minorities, female commercial sex workers, women with addictions. The influx of Ukrainian refugees to Moldova since the start of the Russian invasion in February 2022, has resulted in additional strain on resources and increased risk of GBV incidents. About 90 percent of refugees who have fled to Moldova from Ukraine since February 2022 are women (the rest mostly children) and are extremely vulnerable to exploitation and exclusion from access to resources and services in already poor and underserved host communities. They also are vulnerable to trafficking and other situations where they are at risk of GBV. The project does not have anticipated environmental impacts.

D.2 Overview of Borrower's Institutional Capacity for Managing Environmental and Social Risks and Impacts

[Description of Borrower's capacity (i.e., prior performance under the Safeguard Policies or ESF, experience applying E&S policies of IFIs, Environmental and social unit/staff already in place) and willingness to manage risks and impacts and of provisions planned or required to have capabilities in place, along with the needs for enhanced support to the Borrower – Max. character limit 2,000]

The grant recipient and proposed implementing agency is the Women's Law Center (WLC). WLC has experience working closely with the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection (MSLP), which has been designated as the coordinating body responsible for implementing the National Program on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Family Violence for years 2023-2027. WLC has demonstrated its fitness for purpose in (i) leading the country's legislative efforts against DV&GBV, (ii) providing a range of services to DV and GBV survivors, including Ukrainian refugees in a few locations since the war with Russia started in March 2022, and (iii) implementing on behalf of MLSP a pilot that economically empowered survivors of DV in Chisinau in 2021-2022. They have not previously implemented World Bank projects. Assigned project staff within WLC will be responsible for preparing ESF documentation, and for complying with ESF and ESCP requirements during implementation. WLC's existing staff includes legal and GBV experts with extensive experience working with survivors of GBV, engaging with stakeholders and addressing intersectional needs of various vulnerable groups including elderly, refugees, LGBTQ and people with disabilities. The project is also designed to build capacity of other local implementing partners including the National Agency for Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence within the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection. WLC will select and oversee activities of local implementing partners in the regions to enable DV and GBV survivors to benefit from the full package of services as close to their home as possible. In selecting partners, WLC will focus on existing local organizations with experience in providing services to women and children. Ideally, these organizations would be located in larger settlements with available housing and employment opportunities.

II. SCREENING OF POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL RISKS AND IMPACTS



A. Environmental and Social Risk Classification (ESRC)

Moderate

A.1 Environmental Risk Rating

Low

[Summary of key factors contributing to risk rating, in accordance with the ES Directive and the Technical Note on Screening and Risk Classification under the ESF – Max. character limit 2,000]

Project environmental risks and impacts are classified as low. Project activities pose negligible or no risk of harm to the environment. They will not require land acquisition or civil works and are not anticipated to have impacts on environmental values. Procurement of minor amounts of goods, supplies and transport services will come from readily available sources, does not involve primary supply risk, and will not pose strains on resources or generate significant amounts of waste.

A.2 Social Risk Rating

Moderate

[Summary of key factors contributing to risk rating, in accordance with the ES Directive and the Technical Note on Screening and Risk Classification under the ESF – Max. character limit 2,000]

Project social risks and impacts are classified as moderate. The project entails provision of services and small amounts of financial and non-financial assistance to survivors of DV and GBV . These assistance packages will utilize existing housing facilities, goods, materials and services which are unlikely to result in substantial adverse impacts that would require special mitigation measures beyond application of good international practice by experienced counterparts. The main social risks are associated with potential for the process of selection of survivors for livelihood support to exclude those most in need or for other project activities not reaching the most vulnerable groups or individuals (including refugees and minority communities such as Roma and Gagauz). Since the project benefits only support a limited number of persons there is a risk that expectations are not met and that groups or individuals that are seen to be prioritized over others are subject to additional discrimination without a strong stakeholder engagement strategy and communications campaign and clear eligibility criteria. The social risks will only materialize if project activities are poorly implemented (e.g. if there is a lack of the capacity to address the needs of the targeted vulnerable groups; or if communication campaigns and activities are not delivered to the targeted groups in a culturally appropriate manner). There is also potential for activities to cause harm to survivors; a preliminary social assessment identified some risks relating to stigma, discrimination and retaliation towards survivors and their families. Measures will be put in place to mitigate risks for safety and confidentiality of survivor and their families, child protection (all those under 18), and to ensure services are provided without discrimination on the bases of ethnicity, religion, gender or sexual orientation, disability or other factors.

[Summary of key factors contributing to risk rating. This attribute is only for the internal version of the download document and not a part of the disclosable version – Max. character limit 2,000]

B. Relevance of Standards and Policies at Concept Stage

B.1 Relevance of Environmental and Social Standards

ESS1 - Assessment and Management of Environmental and Social Risks and Impacts

Relevant

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[Optional Explanation - Max. character limit 1,000]

Project activities engage vulnerable groups and individuals to provide emergency and livelihood support in the form of goods, services and conditional cash transfers. Project social risks have been considered during preliminary social assessment in 2018 comprising in-country research and focus groups with 80 women aged 18-67 from urban and rural settlements to better understand the constraints on help-seeking by survivors. Additional research and assessments by civil society (including WLC) about Moldova's legal framework for GBV and current capacity constraints, including for specific groups such as Ukrainian refugees. Mitigation measures have been incorporated into project design. On this basis, additional social assessment is not considered necessary. Participatory design activities to tailor communications and awareness campaign for the specific needs of vulnerable and minority groups will continue and will be monitored through the SEP.

ESS10 - Stakeholder Engagement and Information Disclosure

Relevant

[Optional Explanation - Max. character limit 1,000]

Women's Law Center will prepare a SEP informed by stakeholder engagement conducted to date including the preliminary social assessment, and containing a program of activities aimed at ensuring that communications and activities are tailored to the cultural needs of at-risk communities, that vulnerable groups and individuals and those with specific needs are informed about the project activities and are able to provide their feedback. The SEP will be used to monitor the effectiveness of project participatory planning activities, and promote inclusion, transparency and equitable access to project benefits for those most in need. The SEP will include a project-level GM to serve as a channel for project beneficiaries, those at risk, and others in their communities to raise concerns about access to the project or about the provision of its services. The SEP will be disclosed and consulted on prior to project approval and will be updated, as necessary, throughout the project cycle.

ESS2 - Labor and Working Conditions

Relevant

[Optional Explanation - Max. character limit 1,000]

The project will involve a small number of highly trained staff and consultants working for WLC, and other non-government organizations contracted by WLC, for provision of GBV services, engagement and training purposes. WLC staff will also collaborate with local government officials and public servants who will be governed by the terms of their existing contractual conditions. WLC will prepare a project level LMP building on its existing Code of Ethics and other HR policies applicable to their staff. Given the sensitive nature of the work activities and the direct interactions with vulnerable stakeholders including children, the LMP will describe: adequate training programs and vetting of staff who will be working in direct contact with survivors of abuse, appropriate SEA/SH Code of Conduct, and other policies to ensure confidentiality and safety, and prevent mistreatment or discrimination being caused or exacerbated by the range of stakeholders working on the project activities.

ESS3 - Resource Efficiency and Pollution Prevention and Management

Not Currently Relevant

[Optional Explanation - Max. character limit 1,000]

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This standard is not relevant. Activities proposed under the project will not pose risks associated with resource efficiency or pollution.

ESS4 - Community Health and Safety

Relevant

[Optional Explanation - Max. character limit 1,000]

Activities proposed under the project may pose risk to the health and safety of vulnerable GBV survivors and their families relating to stigma, discrimination and retaliation towards survivors and their families if the project fails to provide survivor-centric assistance. Confidentiality of Information about survivors and security measures described in the project Operations Manual. Alternative third-party sources of service will also be described in the project Grievance Mechanism and include recourse to alternative GBV service providers and referrals where survivors decline police intervention or are in a state of crisis and require emotional support and psychological counselling. Quality management checks will be undertaken on the provision of goods and services to survivors including grants for housing rental. Such facilities will adhere to national building codes. Screening criteria and monitoring procedures will be included in the Project Operations Manual.

ESS5 - Land Acquisition, Restrictions on Land Use and Involuntary Resettlement

Not Currently Relevant

[Optional Explanation - Max. character limit 1,000]

This standard is not relevant. There is no land acquisition under the project.

ESS6 - Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Management of Living Natural Resources

Not Currently Relevant

[Optional Explanation - Max. character limit 1,000]

This standard is not relevant. Activities proposed under the project will not pose risks to protected areas, natural habitats or involve primary production of natural resources.

ESS7 - Indigenous Peoples/Sub-Saharan African Historically Underserved Traditional Local Communities

Not Currently Relevant

[Optional Explanation - Max. character limit 1,000]

This standard is not relevant. No indigenous peoples reside in the territory of Moldova.

ESS8 - Cultural Heritage

Not Currently Relevant

[Optional Explanation - Max. character limit 1,000]

This standard is not relevant. Activities proposed under the project will not pose risks to tangible or intangible cultural heritage.

ESS9 - Financial Intermediaries

Not Currently Relevant

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[Optional Explanation - Max. character limit 1,000]

This standard is not relevant. Activities proposed under the project will not involve financial intermediation.

B.2 Legal Operational Policies that Apply

OP 7.50 Operations on International Waterways

No

OP 7.60 Operations in Disputed Areas

No

B.3 Other Salient Features

Use of Borrower Framework

No

[Optional explanation – Max. character limit 1,000]

The project will not rely on Borrower Frameworks. The project will contribute to the implementation of the Law No. 45 on Prevention and Combating of Domestic Violence (2007) and the National Strategy on prevention and combating violence against women and domestic violence for 2018-2023. A Women’s Law Center review pointed to gaps and shortcomings of the strategy, in terms of implementation and outcomes, particularly with regard to survivor-centric approaches and responding to needs as expressed by survivors and their families, including for economic empowerment and independence. The project is designed to contribute to filling such gaps in implementation. The project will set its own conditions for protecting children under the age of 18, consistent with World Bank GBV guidance, as the age of consent in Moldova’s law is 16.

Use of Common Approach

No

[Optional Explanation including list of possible financing partners – Max. character limit 1,000]

The project will receive funding from the Japan Social Development Fund, and the ESF will be applied.

B.4 Summary of Assessment of Environmental and Social Risks and Impacts

[Description provided will not be disclosed but will flow as a one time flow to the Concept Stage PID – Max. character limit 5,000]

Project activities will take place within target rayons comprising urban and rural areas within Chisinau municipality and 3 regions. These regions have been selected based on representation of specific economic and governance struggles experienced by survivors and families, such as access to information, lack of current resources and services, impaired livelihoods and lack of employment.

Project environmental risks and impacts are classified as low. Project activities pose negligible or no risk of harm to the environment. They will not entail civil works or require land acquisition and are not anticipated to have impacts on

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environmental values. Procurement of minor amounts of goods, supplies and transport services will come from readily available sources, does not involve primary supply risk, and will not pose strains on resources or generate significant amounts of waste.

Project social risks and impacts are classified as moderate. The project entails provision of assistance packages to GBV survivors comprising small amounts of financial and non-financial services. Assistance packages will utilize existing housing facilities, goods, materials and services which are unlikely to result in substantial adverse impacts that would require special mitigation measures beyond application of good international practice by experienced counterparts. The main social risks are associated with potential for the process of selection of survivors for livelihood support to exclude those most in need or for other project activities not reaching the most vulnerable groups or individuals (including refugees and minority communities such as Roma and Gagauz). Since the project benefits only support a limited number of persons there is a risk that expectations are not met and that groups or individuals that are seen to be prioritized over others are subject to additional discrimination without a strong stakeholder engagement strategy and communications campaign and clear eligibility criteria. The social risks will only materialize if project activities are poorly implemented (e.g. if there is a lack of the capacity to address the needs of the targeted vulnerable groups; or if communication campaigns and activities are not delivered to the targeted groups in a culturally appropriate manner). The eligibility criteria will be finalized in consultation with the bank and already include multiple dimensions of vulnerability such as health, economic status, family situation and stability, and a public communication and awareness campaign that will be supported under the project. There is also potential for activities to cause harm to survivors; a preliminary social assessment identified some risks relating to stigma, discrimination and retaliation towards survivors and their families. Measures will be put in place to mitigate risks for safety and confidentiality of survivor and their families and for child protection, and to ensure services are provided without discrimination on the bases of ethnicity, religion, gender or sexual orientation, disability or other factors.

Women's Law Center will prepare a Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) informed by stakeholder engagement conducted to date including the preliminary social assessment, and containing a program of activities aimed at ensuring that communications and activities are tailored to the cultural needs of at-risk communities, and that vulnerable groups and individuals are informed about the project activities and are able to provide their feedback. The SEP will be used to monitor the effectiveness of project participatory planning activities, and promote inclusion, transparency and equitable access to project benefits for those most in need. The SEP will include a project-level GM to serve as a channel for project beneficiaries, those at risk, and others in their communities to raise concerns about access to the project or about the provision of its services. The SEP will be prepared, disclosed and consulted on prior to project appraisal, and will be updated, as necessary, throughout the project cycle.

The project will involve a small number of highly trained staff and consultants working for WLC, and other non-government organizations contracted by WLC, for provision of GBV services, for engagement and training purposes. Given the sensitive nature of the work activities and the direct interactions with vulnerable stakeholders including children, WLC will prepare project-level labor management procedures that will describe: adequate training programs and vetting of staff, and appropriate SEA/SH Code of Conduct and other policies to ensure confidentiality and safety, and prevent mistreatment or discrimination being caused or exacerbated by project workers and actors. A summary of the project's environmental and social requirements will be documented in the Environmental and Social Commitment Plan (ESCP) to be prepared before appraisal



C. Overview of Required Environmental and Social Risk Management Activities

C.1 What Borrower environmental and social analyses, instruments, plans and/or frameworks are planned or required by Appraisal?

[Description of expectations in terms of documents to be prepared to assess and manage the project’s environmental and social risks and by when (i.e., prior to Effectiveness, or during implementation), highlighted features of ESA documents, other project documents where environmental and social measures are to be included, and the related due diligence process planned to be carried out by the World Bank, including sources of information for the due diligence - Max. character limit 3,000]

- Stakeholder Engagement Plan prior to appraisal
- Environmental and Social Commitment Plan prior to appraisal
- Labor Management Procedures prior to appraisal

III. CONTACT POINT

Contact Point

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IV. FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT

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V. APPROVAL

Task Team Leader(s): Jennifer Solotaroff

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