

SWITZERLAND: VOICES FROM THE FIELD

Ukraine



“We should make the contributions of Roma women visible and ensure that they are recognized as agents of change in their communities.”

– Christyna Bilous

Christyna Bilous is a Roma activist and the leader of a self-help group in Toretsk, eastern Ukraine. She works to combat the bias and negative stereotypes about the Roma which are deeply rooted in Ukrainian society. Stating that “the main goal of my work is to dismantle these stereotypes and combat social exclusion, discrimination, and violence against the Roma.”

Christyna advocates for the inclusion of Roma women and girls in local decision-making processes in order to address the issues which continue to challenge them.

With support from UN Women, Christyna established a self-help group in her community and is able to advocate for the needs of the community with local authorities. One of the fruits of this community engagement and advocacy is the inclusion of Toretsk as one of four cities in Ukraine joining the Safe Cities and Public Spaces for Women and Girls programme.

Georgia



“What else could we do in such a situation? The family will need some source of income when they recover...”

– Naira Paksadze

The global COVID-19 pandemic has spared no corner of the world and in May 2020 **Naira Paksadze** and other women from their southeast Georgia village of Maradisi exemplified the solidarity and community spirit for the greater good that was needed. When a neighbouring family contracted the virus and were hospitalized, Ms. Paksadze and others undertook the task of saving the family’s potato harvest, ensuring there would be some income for the family once they recovered from the virus.

In the rural, mainly agrarian community, Ms. Paksadze is a community worker and has been actively involved in a UN Women regional programme to support women’s economic empowerment in the South Caucasus through income generating and entrepreneurial skills. This programme is funded through the generous contributions of the Government of Switzerland.

Nepal



“Today I have earned respect in my society as a national level cricket player.”

— *Bhagwati Bhattarai-Baral*

After years of overcoming challenges, **Bhagwati Bhattarai-Baral** captained Nepal's National Women's Blind Cricket Team to win the First International Women's Blind Cricket Series held in Pakistan in February 2019. The team's win at the international level has encouraged people in the community to realize that blind players are as capable as anyone else. It has also boosted the team's confidence and ability to persist in the face of ongoing challenges such as limited financial resources and accessing suitable ground and equipment.

“I want to continue playing and lead my team to the World Cup. I also want to support the blind community. I want to bring more women and girls to the game and coach them. With everyone's support, my plans might just work out.”

Tanzania



“I work in advocacy to change perceptions that lead to discrimination against women and [to uplift] women's status in society.”

— *Dr. Mzuri Issa*

Dr. Mzuri Issa, head of the Tanzania Media Women's Association in Zanzibar (TAMWA-Zanzibar) where she uses her journalism skills to inform and advocate to bring change to cultural norms, attitudes and practices that create barriers to women's empowerment – including their access to leadership and decision-making positions.

Through Switzerland's support to UN Women's flagship Women's Leadership and Political Participation programme, “Wanawake Wanaweza” (Women Can), TAMWA-Zanzibar is connecting with male change agents and religious leaders to promote women's leadership. They are also training journalists on gender-sensitive reporting.

Photos: above left: CAB Nepal; above right: UN Women/Hanna Mtango