



*Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.*

New opportunities for women in the labour market

According to the indices that measure progress in achieving gender equality, Belarus is among the countries with a low level of discrimination. For example, according to the Gender Development Index of the UNDP Human Development Report, Belarus is in the group of countries with the highest levels of equality in terms of the Human Development Index (HDI) for women and men. According to the Gender Inequality Index, the country ranks 31st in the world, while according to the HDI, it is 53rd. The Social Institutions and Gender Index of the OECD Development Center places Belarus in the group of countries with low levels of discrimination, and the World Economic Forum ranked the state 28th in the world in the ranking of global gender inequality. Nevertheless, the World Bank notes the persistence of disparities in access to opportunities, in particular the growing gender pay gap, the lower benefit education offers women due to a low probability of them getting leadership positions (vertical gender segregation), as well as the humanitarian profile of their education and their subsequent work in the lowest-wage public sectors (horizontal gender segregation). The study of the International Public Association "Gender Perspectives" showed that most urban residents of working age face different forms of discrimination in the labour market, with women facing more than men.

PROJECT NAME

CREATING AN INFRASTRUCTURE OF PROFESSIONAL CARE FOR CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF THREE TO INCREASE WOMEN'S CAPACITY IN THE LABOUR MARKET

PROJECT GOALS

- Increase opportunities for women's earlier return to work from parental leave;
- Reduce poverty among families with children;
- Reduce inequalities in the allocation of time for housekeeping and childcare between men and women;
- Create infrastructure of professional care for children under the age of three.

CURRENT SITUATION

Women do not return to work before the end of parental leave due to various reasons. A recent study showed that the amount of maternity benefit in rural areas and in many small towns is higher than most women's possible earnings, so returning to work before the end of parental leave is not economically viable. But even in the absence of economic reasons, the underdeveloped system of preschool services for young children (under the age of two) becomes a barrier. In 2016, less than 2,000 children under the age of two attended preschool, which is 1.6 percent of children of that age. The overwhelming majority of these children attend groups at nurseries and kindergartens (where most children are older than two), since there are no specialized nurseries in Belarus (there were only two specialized institutions for the whole country in the 2017/2018 academic year). The share of children aged two to three years attending the nurseries is also not high – 57.3 percent in 2016. Thus, the existence of a three-year parental leave means the state does not develop preschool services for children under the age of three, which in turn forces most mothers to use the entire leave, which ultimately contributes to gender inequality.

To change the system requires the development of private kindergartens, nurseries or temporary stay groups. At present, the cost of education in such institutions is too high for most families and is comparable to the cost of hiring a child nurse, but if the government would change the legal framework for the operation of private preschool institutions, private investment in this area could be attractive from both economic and social points of view.

Apart from introducing structural and regulatory changes, there is a promising option of using insights from behavioural economics to address such issue as a pay gap. Behavioural analysis allows to explore non-structural, behavioural and psychosocial barriers to empowering women in economic activities and to develop, very often no cost, behavioural solutions to address them. For instance, gender differences in salary negotiations may contribute to the gender pay gap. Research suggests that, in ambiguous circumstances or when social relationships are at risk, women may be less likely to negotiate. For instance, when employers do not explicitly state that wages are negotiable, men are more likely to negotiate than women and the gender pay gap is likely to be much more pronounced in these roles. However, when employers do mention that salaries are negotiable, the difference can disappear. Behavioural insights are very promising in such areas as encouraging women to pursue careers in high-paid sectors in Belarus (e.g. IT).

The solutions could be:

- Introducing relatable role models in recruitment communication. The UK-based Behavioural Insights Team applied a trial that used relatable role models to encourage pupils from under-represented schools to apply to prestigious universities. Students who received a letter from a relatable role model at their home and school were 17% more likely to apply to a prestigious university.
- Testing whether adapting job adverts to (a) remove the word 'essential' in the criteria list; (b) reduce the number and breadth of essential criteria and to (c) reduce the use of stereotypically masculine words would increase the number of female applicants to technical roles.



WHAT CAN WE DO?

LARGE EMPLOYERS:

- Invest in kindergartens for children under the age of three (for the children of employees of the largest companies in the region);
- Independently or jointly with Employment Assistance Services, introduce a system of vocational training for women returning to work from parental leave, and develop a system of social support and mentoring for such women;
- Introduce a system of material incentives for the early return of the company's female employees from parental leave, for example, in the form of full or partial payment for a private kindergarten for their child;
- Apply behavioural insights for reducing gender bias and pay gap.

THE STATE:

- Based on surveys of young families, select "pilot" areas where the need for preschool services is the greatest, and finance the creation of appropriate kindergartens (alone or through public-private partnership (PPP) projects);
- In collaboration with local employers, modernize Employment Assistance Services and develop, in accordance with the needs of the labour market, specialized vocational training programs for women (it is important to avoid typical "gender traps" when women are offered typical "female" – low-wage – professions, which will not solve the problem of horizontal gender segregation).

COMPANIES PROVIDING EDUCATIONAL SERVICES FOR PRESCHOOL CHILDREN:

- Develop a package of proposals for creating favorable conditions for the development of private kindergartens;
- Take part in PPP projects for the creation of kindergartens for children under the age of three;
- Act as contractors for large employers in the provision of preschool services for children (under the age of three) of employees.



SOCIAL IMPACT AREA

NATIONAL ACCELERATORS

SDGs



Gender Equality



Future Generation
Orientation



(via increasing the employment rate of women and reducing the loss of their skills)



(via providing quality preschool services for children under the age of three)



(via reducing the inequality of distribution of time within the family, reducing the loss of women's skills during parental leave, and reducing discrimination in the labour market due to the high duration of this leave)



(via increasing opportunities for women's earlier return to work from parental leave)



(via reducing the gender pay gap by reducing the loss of women's skills)

EXPECTED RESULTS



INVESTORS

would generate profit from the provision of paid preschool services (the state will save on the provision of maternity benefits)



EMPLOYERS

would reduce the cost of female employees' reintegration after a long period of parental leave and will ensure loyalty on the part of employees and/or residents of the territories where they are the largest employers



WOMEN

would be able to upgrade their skills, to acquire entrepreneurial skills, to return earlier from parental leave, to reduce the loss of skills and, accordingly, to increase remuneration, and to ensure more equitable distribution of time within the family



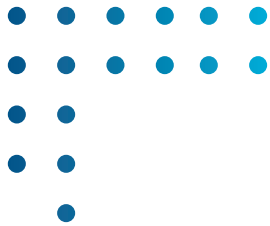
LOCAL AUTHORITIES

would get improved living standards (reduced poverty, increased women's economic activity) and increased attractiveness of the region for the most active young families

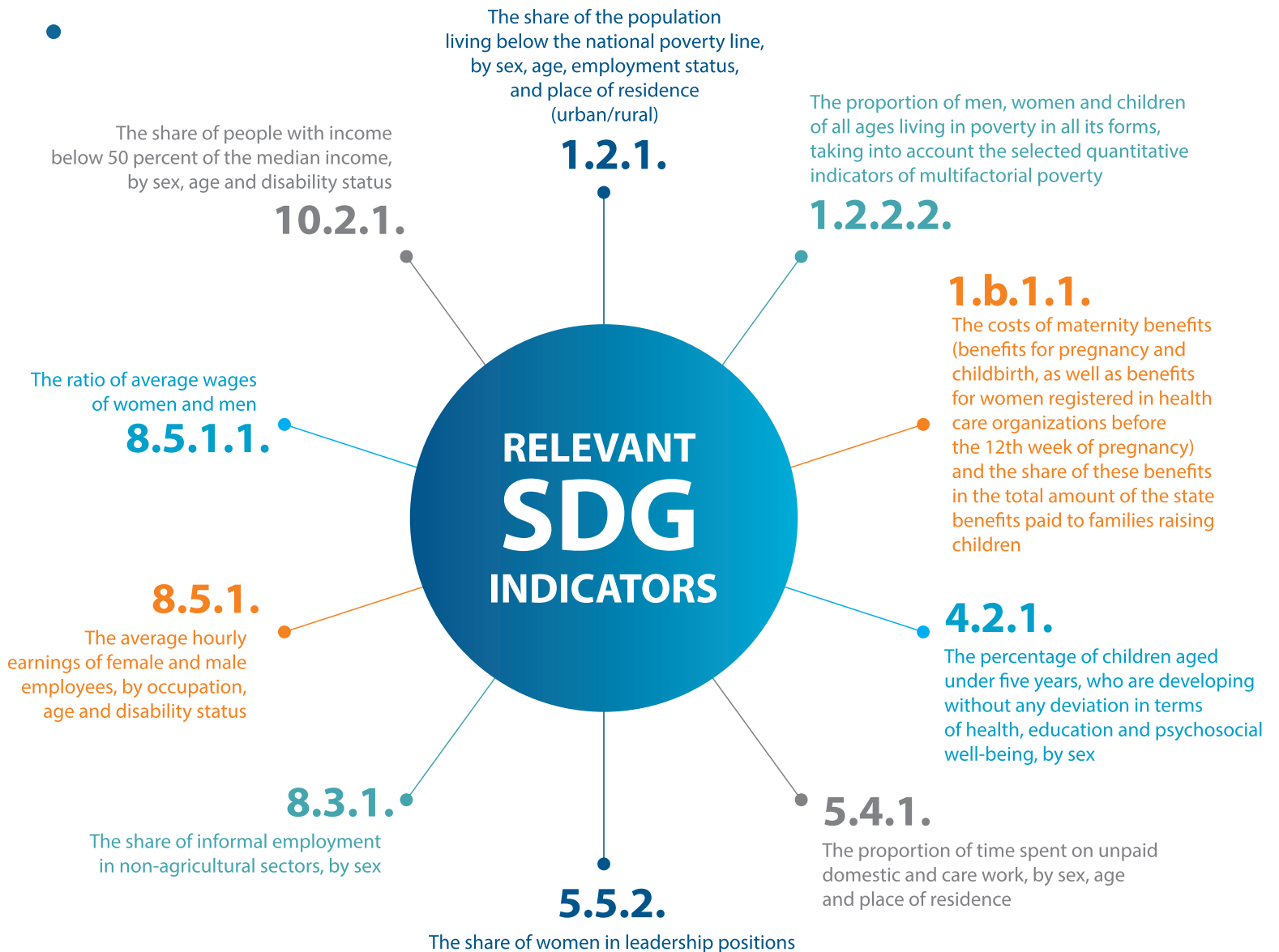


CHILDREN

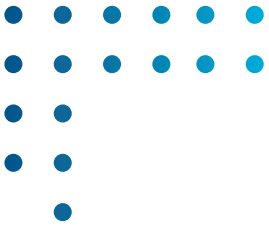
would have better access to quality preschool education



SDG INDICATORS RELEVANT TO THE PROJECT



*National indicator does not imply this degree of disaggregation, but it is required for proper social impact measurement.



POTENTIAL INVESTORS

