



Country Programme Strategy Georgia

2021 – 2025



www.peopleinneed.cz
www.PIN.ge

Alliance 2015

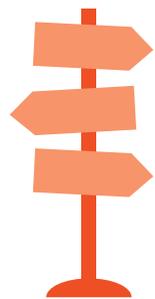
towards the eradication of poverty

1. Strategy Overview

People in Need's mission is to work alongside people and communities in eradicating poverty, injustice, and inequality. While Georgia has experienced rapid economic growth in recent years, too many households experience some form of poverty. Access to decent work, basic services, information, and the enjoyment of rights are not equally distributed through society. The aim of the Georgia Country Programme Strategy 2021 – 2025, summarised right, is to ensure an inclusive recovery to the COVID-19 pandemic and strengthened resilience to future shocks and stresses.

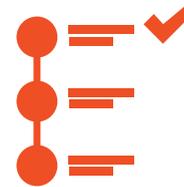
Our approach will broaden to ensure the involvement and participation of the most vulnerable, marginalised, difficult-to-reach and seldom-heard groups, which often remain invisible and experience discrimination due to their sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, physical or mental ability, ethnicity, religion, language, or age.

To turn this strategy into impact, People in Need will make investments that strengthen our culture of learning and accountability, make our programmes more inclusive, improve effectiveness and efficiency, and explore new forms of partnership with the private sector and academia.



MISSION

We believe people should not suffer from poverty, injustice or inequality. We also believe that people who are in need can play an active role in making global development more inclusive and sustainable. Our mission is to support them in such efforts and nourish an environment that enables these changes to happen.



VISION

Our vision is that People in Need Georgia is recognised as an organisation that advocates for and facilitates locally led development, and ensures development gains reach marginalised groups. We strive for long term results by engaging young people and effecting systemic changes through interventions that are inclusive, evidence-based, environmentally & climate sensitive, and promote human rights.

PRIORITIES

- Locally Led Development
- Strong Civil Society and Good Governance
- Social Protection and Inclusion

IMPACT

- People and institutions have increased resilience to shocks and stresses
- Rural and mountainous areas are viable and attractive places to live
- Decent work and social protection lift households out of poverty
- Communities and individuals have a say in the decisions that affect their lives
- Environmental assets are managed sustainably
- Trusted civil society actors are able to represent and advocate their constituents and hold duty bearers to account
- Marginalised groups have the opportunity to fully participate in society

Sectoral Priorities

Impact

PIN Contribution



Locally Led Development

- Rural and mountainous areas are viable and attractive places to live
- Decent work lifts households out of poverty
- People and institutions have increased resilience to shocks and stresses
- Environmental assets are managed sustainably

- Create diverse employment and entrepreneurship opportunities
- Support climate-sensitive agriculture and tourism enterprises with low environmental impact
- Establish and strengthen multi-sector platforms for participatory planning and decision making
- Enhance the accessibility and benefits of goods and basic services for rural livelihoods
- Increase energy security with access to affordable, climate friendly options



Civil Society & Good Governance

- Trusted civil society actors (CSAs) are able to represent and advocate their constituents and hold duty bearers to account
- Communities and individuals have a say in the decisions that affect their lives

- Support a diverse and resilient civil society
- Foster coordination between rights holders and duty bearers
- Enable access to information and advice on rights, opportunities, and media literacy skills



Social Protection & Inclusion

- Marginalised groups have the opportunity to fully participate in society
- Households escape extreme poverty

- Partner with user-led advocacy and action groups
- Promote access to affordable and safe financial services
- Facilitate public/private/civil partnerships to deliver social services
- Advocate for safe work places and equal pay
- Facilitate access to lifelong learning, marketable skills, and financial literacy



Our Approach

PIN wishes to contribute to global efforts to address gender inequalities and social exclusion and in doing so, support human rights and positive processes aimed at the creation of more equal, inclusive and peaceful

communities and societies. All of our programmes and this strategy are informed by an analysis of how they contribute to gender equality and women's empowerment.

2. Vision and Priorities

This Country Programme Strategy lays out People in Need's priorities and goals in Georgia for the 2021-2025 period. This document was prepared during 2020, as the world faces the COVID-19 pandemic. The strategy draws upon the experience of colleagues and counterparts in country and expertise from headquarters, in depth research and consultations with policy makers. The future is uncertain, but this strategy will help guide our actions in order to best serve the needs of the Georgian communities and institutions we work alongside.

People in Need Worldwide

We support the fight against poverty and lack of education; promote local development, civil society and the principles of good governance. We assist people in exercising their freedom and fighting discrimination. We enforce the principle of human rights and liberties and support environmental approaches. At the same time, we constructively take part in the development of the Czech Republic, the changing Europe and implement the idea of human solidarity and co-responsibility at a universal level.



PIN Georgia Vision

Our vision is that People in Need Georgia is recognised as an organisation that advocates for and facilitates locally led development, and ensures development gains reach marginalised groups.

We strive for long term results by engaging young people and effecting systemic changes through interventions that are inclusive, evidence-based, environmentally & climate sensitive, and promote human rights.

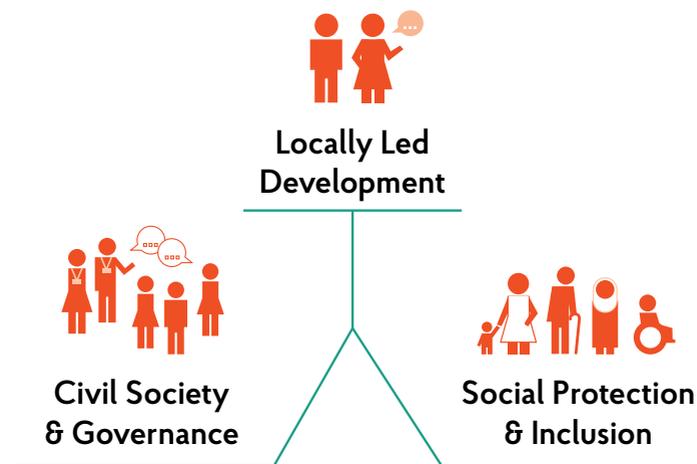
In order to reach the ambitious goals outlined in the following sections, our actions will be based on the following principles:

- 1** PIN understands that lasting changes are built upon resilient systems and will analyse the most effective intervention points.
- 2** PIN believes that sustainable local development requires the engagement of strong Public, Private and Civil Society sectors, and PIN will work to strengthen actors and partnerships in each.
- 3** PIN will facilitate platforms and skills transfer for communities to define and advocate for their own local development priorities.
- 4** PIN will forge linkages between different stakeholders and sectors to support integrated development.
- 5** PIN will be an influencer, advocating for policy changes at the national level and supporting Georgian civil society in their own campaigns.
- 6** PIN will design interventions that are more inclusive and accessible to different sections of society, with local ownership as the end result.

3. Our work in Georgia

People in Need has been a growing presence in Georgia since 2005. During this time, we have built a strong reputation for programmes embedded in the communities they aim to support. We also work with institutions to make systemic changes and influence policy across different sectors. PIN has supported the inclusion of young people with disabilities in education and employment, successfully lobbied for improved IDP assistance, and led evidence-based advocacy campaigns on access to safe credit and ensuring labour rights. As of 2021, we have staff based in Chinti, Gori, Kutaisi, Tbilisi, Tskaltubo, and Zugdidi. Through nationwide projects and our partners, we work across all regions of Georgia and have gained strong experience in remote and high mountainous areas underserved by other actors.

PIN has expertise in three key sectors: locally led development; civil society and good governance; and social protection and inclusion. All three intersect and are required for resilient communities and therefore usually integrated in PIN programme design.



Locally Led Development

PIN works as a facilitator in locally driven socio-economic development, empowering communities to identify their assets and needs, establish partnerships, set goals and access the resources to achieve them.

During the last strategic period, PIN established three Local Action Groups (LAGs) in Georgia: Kazbegi, Tskaltubo, and the Aragvi Protected Landscape. The last is the first Georgian LAG established outside of the European Union ENPARD programme. It is also the first with borders representing community identities, not municipal boundaries, in keeping with the LEADER model. We will continue to work with these LAGs and the Georgian Association of Local Action Groups (GALAG) beyond the lifetime of single projects, and further expand our work in locally led development.

Socio-economic development also requires people can enjoy their right to information. PIN has supported CSAs to act as Info Desks on the EU Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement in their communities; LAGs to provide advice on indebtedness; and supported online portals and apps that provide information on topics ranging from Sanitary and Phyto-Sanitary regulations, apiary, agricultural extension services, and labour rights.

For more than ten years, PIN has employed its One World in Schools (OWIS) approach to education using documentaries to introduce discussion of global and local issues. In Georgia, OWIS provides information on human rights, environmental issues, and builds media and information literacy. The methodology is constantly evolving and now includes youth-led community initiatives, mock elections, and the opportunity to collaborate with OWIS participants in other countries.

Civil Society and Good Governance

PIN recognises the critical role local civil society actors (CSAs) and independent media play in communities and resilient democracies. PIN supports a broad range of grassroots initiatives, emerging CSOs, and established NGOs that focus on broadening access to social services and economic opportunities, delivering aid during crises, holding duty bearers to account, and local independent journalism.

PIN believes that genuine civil society actors are driven by their mission and values, engaged with and accountable to their constituents, actively involved in advocacy and policy dialogue and focused on bringing about real change. In supporting these actors, we do not envision a uniform trajectory of grassroots initiatives developing into grants-based NGOs, but enable them to choose their own development paths. We provide both technical and financial support to CSAs to continue their important work, and to assume ownership of joint programmes when PIN exits. We also support the role of CSAs as advocates, so that the voices of marginalised groups are heard by those in decision making roles. Our aim is to develop a network of like-minded actors who are at the same time diverse in their organisational forms, thematic and geographic areas of focus, membership, culture and language.

Social Inclusion and Protection

PIN contributes to multi-dimensional poverty reduction by addressing the three key areas of education, health, and standard of living. Increasingly, our interventions are delivered through local partners with PIN providing the skills and resources required to establish lasting services.

PIN programmes provide inclusive livelihood support to women, men, and youth including labour market analysis, targeted vocational education and training, employment and entrepreneurship skills, access to investment and safe credit, and market systems development.

PIN facilitates partnerships between civil society, local authorities, and the private sector that provide sustainable social services to underserved communities. Following handover to the partners, these services continue to support elderly people in their homes, provide childcare in rural areas, and deliver therapies for children with disabilities.

Stakeholders

PIN understands that cooperation and partnership strengthen our work and increases the sustainability of our actions. We maintain strong relations with the local authorities in all regions we work, and through the Local Action Groups this partnership between public, private, and civil sectors has been formalised. At the national level PIN has working relationships with the Ministries of Environmental Protection and Agriculture; Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs; Regional Development and Infrastructure; Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development; and close engagement with affiliated agencies relevant to our activities. PIN aims to further strengthen these relationships and become recognised as a key development partner for Georgia.

PIN plays an active role in the national Disaster Management Country Team, and coordinates closely with international and national NGOs that work in our key sectors. These strategic relationships are further described in the Partnership section below.

Our work is made possible through long term relationships with key donors including the European Union, Czech Development Agency, USAID, the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs, SlovakAid, and UNDP. In order to implement the 2021-2025 strategy, PIN will continue to explore new partnerships with bilateral and multi-lateral donors with aligned goals and values.

Photo © Ramaz Chichinadze



4. Programme Priorities 2021 – 2025

Georgia has experienced an impressive macro-economic recovery following the shocks of the 2008 conflict and global economic crisis. However, despite impressive macro-economic indicators, absolute poverty rates remain above 20% in Georgia and there is high inequality. The economic and policy changes that followed the Rose Revolution focused on reducing trade barriers; eroding workers' rights; financial and credit deregulation; removing occupational safety, health, and environmental safeguards; and privatising public services and assets. The Association Agreement with the EU has contributed to people-centred improvements to legislation; however, many years are required to reach full compliance with European standards. The accompanying Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area agreement (DCFTA) provides opportunities for Georgian companies to access the enormous EU market in several sectors, although many businesses struggle to meet the stringent regulations for export.



Photo © Petr Stefan

The official average salary was 398 USD in 2019, yet the majority of households' monthly income was less than half this amount.¹ These figures do not consider the large proportion of people engaged in the informal economy, nor the incomes of smallholder or subsistence farmers. More than half of the workforce is engaged in agriculture, yet this sector which is so important for Georgia contributes only 7% to the economy. Women farmers are vital to the rural economy, yet their contribution is often undervalued. Women rarely have legal rights to the land they rely on for their livelihoods, reducing financial security and limiting access to credit to invest in their businesses.

The Government's *Agriculture and Rural Development Strategy 2021 – 2027* places a new focus on sustainable forestry, bottom up development, and stronger extensions services. However, much work remains to make agriculture a viable livelihood for smallholders.

Tourism has become an increasingly important contributor to the economy. International visitors increased from 5.2 million annually when the previous Country Programme Strategy was developed in 2015 to over 9 million in 2019.² It is too soon to assess the long term impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on this sector but the immediate effects have included job losses, business closures, and debt defaults. The digital and outsourcing sectors proved more resistant to this shock. With an educated workforce, fast and affordable internet connections, and relatively low personnel costs Georgia has become an increasingly attractive destination for international companies alongside a growing digital start-up culture.

Georgia has significant natural assets, including minerals, forestry, and hydropower opportunities. There are competing interests and occasional conflict between local communities who rely on harvesting fuelwood or are at risk of displacement and the authorities who need to sustainably manage these valuable assets. For both environmental and energy security reasons, Georgia is seeking to increase renewable energy generation. The country is a low emitter of greenhouse gases since rapid deindustrialisation that followed the end of the Soviet Union. However, it is highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change with projected water shortages in the East of the country and more intense rains and associated natural hazards in the West. As incomes and energy demands increase, it is necessary to find affordable, sustainable and climate-friendly options for households. Recent changes in the Forestry Code will enforce a transition away from illegal fuelwood collection, creating a challenge for households already facing energy poverty.

1 GEOSTAT.ge

2 Georgian National Tourism Administration data; <https://gnta.ge/>

There are significant urban/rural differences in access to income, healthcare, lifelong education, and cultural activities. This drives outmigration, and further perpetuates the situation as remote areas receive less investment. High mountainous areas face particular challenges through topography and seasonal access, and attracting skilled education and medical staff. The capital Tbilisi accommodates approximately 40% of the total population. As the economic powerhouse of the country, it is the destination of much rural outmigration. Rural and foreign migrants are especially vulnerable to exploitation, and workplace accidents and poor working conditions are widespread.

In recent years, there have been positive changes to the Labour Code, food safety standards, and environmental protections alongside electoral reform. The shift towards proportional representation in parliament and the slow introduction of gender quotas should contribute to a more pluralistic and representative Government in the medium term. However, women, youth, and ethnic minorities remain under-represented in decision making processes at the local and national levels. *The Decentralisation Strategy 2020 – 2025* envisages a significant transfer of State financial resources and decision making to local self-governments. This also provides an opportunity for Local Action Groups and other bottom up participatory planning fora to influence resource allocation and priority setting.

As in many countries, political discourse has become increasingly polarised and minority groups are both the target and subject of hate speech and disinformation campaigns. Georgia has the strongest legislative framework in the region for countering discrimination, but its implementation and public and media discourse lag behind.

Despite the above challenges and closing or changing space for civil society, citizen-driven activism, advocacy and change in Georgia is growing. Surveys show low trust in NGOs as a sector, despite their vital role in a thriving democracy. International support to civil society actors should respect their diversity of form and function, and understand that legitimacy comes from accountability to their constituents, not their donors.

Georgia remains a key partner of the European Union and the United States, and financial support and aid is increasingly being provided in the form of direct budgetary assistance. The priorities of the EU Eastern Partnership strategy beyond 2020 aim to strengthen resilience through a partnership that creates, protects, greens, connects, and empowers. The USAID *Country Development Cooperation Strategy 2020 – 2025* also focuses on building self-reliance, in particular strengthening resilience to external malign influence, promoting citizen responsive governance, and creating inclusive high-value employment opportunities in traditionally low paid sectors of tourism and agriculture.

The novel Corona virus that struck Georgia during the development of this strategy has highlighted and reinforced many existing inequalities, and the impacts of the

epidemic will be felt for several years. At the time of drafting this document, Georgians are experiencing challenges in public health, access to education, and loss of income. In all these areas, poorer rural households, minority ethnic communities, women, and LGBTQI groups have been disproportionately affected. PIN immediately responded to this crisis with support to vulnerable individuals and affected MSMEs, and distributing grants to civil society actors providing services to marginalised groups. PIN will continue to support these groups in the ongoing response and ensure they have a voice in an inclusive recovery.



Photo ENPARD Communication Unit

Future Directions

In 2021 – 2025 PIN will continue to work according to its mandate in the following priority sectors. We will continue to move from an approach of direct implementation to facilitation, partnership, and systems strengthening in all sectors.

Locally Led Development

PIN believes communities are best placed to know their needs, and that effective sustainable development is based upon local knowledge and potential. PIN will support enterprises that provide decent jobs and consider environmental impacts. While understanding the importance of community food security and local multiplier effect in rural economies, we will also support integration into broader market systems, in particular the opportunities afforded by increasing tourism and trade agreements with the EU and USA.

Sustainable development also requires effective management of natural resources and energy consumption. PIN will further investigate the energy poverty/climate change nexus to help communities meet their current needs while mitigating and adapting to the effects of climate change. Changes in energy sources must be complemented by more energy efficient homes and businesses.

Our future programmes will contribute to the following goals:

- Rural and mountainous areas are viable and attractive places to live
- Decent work lifts households out of poverty
- People and institutions have increased resilience to shocks and stresses
- Environmental assets are managed sustainably

Activities in this Strategic Period

- Create diverse employment and entrepreneurship opportunities
- Support climate-sensitive agriculture and tourism enterprises with low environmental impact
- Establish and strengthen multi-sector platforms for participatory planning and decision making, including Local Action Groups
- Enhance the accessibility and benefits of goods and basic services for rural livelihoods



Civil Society and Good Governance

A strong civil society, access to information and accountable governance are all essential for people-centred sustainable development. We work with and build the capacity of civil society partners in all our programmes, as both an effective operating modality and as an end in itself. We will promote engagement in participatory decision making and advocacy for local development. By broadening the definition of civil society, we are open to working with NGOs, associations, grassroots civic initiatives, social movements, independent trade unions, and others who are:

- seeking to mobilize people in their community to influence real positive change,
- raising important issues that may not yet be widely understood or discussed in the society and seeking solutions,
- ready to invest their time and energy in the development of their initiatives, organisations or campaigns,

Specific areas of support include alternative fundraising, mobilization of volunteers, resources, effective, transparent and accountable ways to self-organize and manage resources, making plans and making them happen, developing a learning culture, internal accountability and building trust with wider community, harnessing creativity, art, technology and data for change, researching, framing and communicating issues, assessing power dynamics, building alliances, deciding on what position to take in dealing with public authorities, local businesses and others who could help or hinder their efforts.

PIN will continue these forms of support in order to achieve the following goals:

- Trusted civil society actors (CSAs) are able to represent and advocate for their constituents and hold duty bearers to account
- People are informed active citizens that have a say in the decisions that affect their lives

Activities in this Strategic Period

- Provide technical and material resources for CSAs to follow their own development paths and better serve their communities
- Fostering coordination between rights holders and duty bearers
- Support access to information on legal rights, employment opportunities, and social assistance
- Strengthen media and information literacy and support access to independent media and analysis

Social Protection and Inclusion

PIN understands social protection as a set of grassroots and policy level initiatives providing social assistance which aims to prevent and eliminate extreme poverty, exclusion and discrimination. PIN will bring additional experience from the transformation of Czech social protection systems and adapt useful learning to the Georgian context. Although access to services and safety nets is lower in rural areas, we will continue to analyse the issue of urban poverty, in particular in relation to labour rights and women's economic empowerment. Social inclusion will be considered in all our programmes to contribute to the following goals:

- Marginalised groups have the opportunity to fully participate in society
- Households escape extreme poverty

Activities in this Strategic Period

- Partnering with user-led advocacy and action groups
- Promote safe work places and equal pay
- Facilitate public/private/civil partnerships to deliver social services
- Reduce energy poverty with affordable, climate friendly options
- Promoting access to affordable and safe financial services



Photo © Ramaz Chichinadze

5. Crosscutting Issues



We will develop a Gender and Inclusion Action Plan to monitor and measure achievements on GESI implementation

Gender Equality and Social Inclusion

In line with PIN's global policy on GESI, all PIN internal and programme operations are based on a participatory analysis to promote equitable access and utilisation of services and assets. We ensure all population groups are equally and meaningfully involved in this process, to identify who will use them and what are their needs in order to access and utilize them as intended. PIN will work to develop productive partnerships with local actors that have sensitivity and a vision towards, are responsible for, or are able to have a significant impact upon social inclusion, non-discrimination and gender equality.



We design, implement and evaluate projects in strong cooperation with local partners

Partnership

Partnership and cooperation will be the foundation of our work in Georgia. While further strengthening our relations with State agencies, local authorities, and civil society actors we will also establish new cooperation with market actors, unions, and financial institutions. Services and infrastructure created during PIN projects are transferred to local ownership, together with funding plans to ensure sustainability.

PIN has tools and guiding principles for our partnerships, and these will be used when identifying, assessing, and cooperating with like-minded actors. This will include a due diligence assessment before cooperation with the private sector. We believe diversity is a strength, and will continue to work alongside a range of different organisations, agencies, enterprises, and coalitions. In particular, PIN Georgia will continue to engage with private sector actors in agriculture, tourism, and digital industries through a market systems development and job creation approach.



Our projects are designed in accordance with our Environmental Impact Checklist

Environmental Sustainability and Climate Change

Climate change is the greatest challenge for the 21st century, and our development projects will contribute to mitigation and adaptation efforts. In line with PIN's new global environmental policy and screening tool, we will conduct regular environmental audits of our activities to minimise the environmental and carbon footprint of our programmes.

PIN internal operations are conducted in line with our Green Country Programme Handbook, reducing our energy consumption and basing procurement on the principles of sustainable consumption and production.



Our projects analyse risks and include actions to strengthen resilience

Resilience

Development gains are often lost to foreseeable shocks and stresses. PIN programmes aim to build the resilience of households, communities, and systems so they can withstand such shocks. Project activities are designed based on an analysis of different risks and possible mitigation measures. PIN will promote the use of agricultural insurance and other risk transfer instruments; encourage livelihood diversification; climate sensitive agriculture; and systems strengthening.

6. Investments for Impact

PIN Georgia is committed to delivering high quality programmes; continuous reflection, learning and development; strengthening expertise and the sustainability of our actions. We will invest time and resources into learning, innovation, partnerships, and our team to increase the impact of our work.

PIN's staff are our greatest asset, and we are committed to providing equal opportunities to all employees to further develop, regardless of their disability status, ethnicity, gender identity, religion, sexual orientation, or age. PIN procedures aim to ensure fairness in all stages of employment, including the selection procedure, internal promotions, and salaries.



Photo © Tedo Gubeladze



LEARNING

- Enhance our expertise in risk analysis and measuring resilience-related changes
- Build our capacity to generate evidence and influence policy

- Establish strategic partnerships for enhancing the quality, scale and impact of our programmes
- Facilitate networks between EU market actors and Georgian producers
- Identify and collaborate with non-traditional development partners



PARTNERSHIPS



INNOVATION

- Design and pilot new impact investment approaches
- Strengthen our expertise and use of behavioural change approaches

- Diversify our team to better represent the communities we work with
- Build further expertise in our priority sectors
- Provide flexible working arrangements for staff with care responsibilities and/or different abilities



PEOPLE