

WOMEN'S ROOMS UNION ONLINE SURVEY



ქალების ოთახების კავშირგაბმულობის
WOMEN'S ROOMS UNION

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INTRODUCTION

Since 2012, the Alliances Caucasus Programme (ALCP) has been facilitating the establishment and development of Women's Rooms¹, grassroots municipal centres designed to improve women's (and men's) access to information, training, and public resources. Initially piloted in three municipalities, the model proved successful and was gradually scaled up, reaching thirty-three municipalities by 2025. Twenty eight of these are currently fully operational.

Since their establishment, Women's Rooms (WR's) have remained a significant hub for women's economic empowerment, civic participation, and access to local and national governmental services. From 2022 alone, the Women's Rooms has recorded over 28,000 visitors, with women making up approximately 74% and ethnic minorities 12%. In addition, from 2022, in WR's across the country, 321 training sessions were conducted with over 6,100 participants, alongside 759 meetings engaging nearly 12,000 people, out of whom women comprised 84% and ethnic minorities 17%, reflecting the inclusiveness and accessibility of the initiative. Additionally, 142 small scale rural entrepreneurs accessed funding through the Women's Rooms network in this period creating eighty-five new jobs, out of whom fifty-five are women and four ethnic minorities (two Armenians and two Azerbaijanis), reinforcing its role as a vital platform for advancing economic opportunities and providing financial support in rural communities.

In the current phase of the programme (ALCP2 2022-2027), efforts have focused on supporting this network through the Women's Rooms Union (WRU), an NGO body comprised of the municipal Women's Rooms managers and formally established by them, in October 2021. With continued support from the ALCP2, including funding, technical assistance, and strategic guidance, the Union now plays a key role in strengthening Women's Rooms across Georgia by coordinating capacity-building initiatives, advocating for their interests, and facilitating access to funding.

The programme which is mainstreaming climate adaptation and environmental sustainability has continued to facilitate and track through the WRU, the access to financing component, for micro and small rural entrepreneurs, whose enterprises are nearly all natural resource based or linked to rural tourism markets. The programme also continues to utilize the rooms as rural hubs, to reach rural people with sustainable natural resource related training and information related to programme components, such as silk worm rearing trainings, sustainable picking guidelines for wild botanicals or rural tourism initiatives. The financing component itself is based on founding rationale of WR's, that of helping people link up to and access publicly existing grants or forms of financing be they governmental, civil or private. In terms of their operation, WR's have received no further programmatic support to keep them open since the original co-financing with the local government in question. Co funding paid to renovate the space and provide some furniture and a computer, local governments undertook to pay salaries and room upkeep from the beginning. The programme cofinancing per room has averaged about 8000USD.

In 2024 the ALCP2 conducted an impact assessment of the *Women's Rooms Access to Finance Component* and illustrated that the Women's Rooms significantly improved rural inhabitants' access to funding by providing vital information, motivation, and practical support throughout the grant application process. In June 2025, a *Women's Rooms Access to Finance Mini-Survey* further

¹ In 2023, the Parliament of Georgia recommended that local self-governments rename Women's Rooms to *Spaces for Gender Equality and Women's Economic Empowerment*. However, these recommendations have not yet been adopted at the local level and the spaces continue to be referred to as Women's Rooms.

confirmed that the spaces provide highly valued support to rural entrepreneurs, leading to tangible economic gains and fostering personal empowerment and increased sense of wellbeing.

In June 2025, the ALCP2, in collaboration with the Women’s Rooms Union, conducted this online survey of Women’s Rooms Managers to examine the status of their activities and development in the context of the country’s current challenging political environment. The assessment also evaluated the extent to which Women’s Rooms are engaged in promoting climate-smart practices through the government’s Green Calendar and are organizing environmental or natural resource-related events.

METHODOLOGY

The Women’s Rooms Union developed an online questionnaire using Google Forms and distributed it to managers of twenty eight operational² Women’s Rooms and their twenty nine managers.³ A total of twenty one⁴ (72%) questionnaires were completed, representing WR Managers in seven regions of Georgia.



Figure 1: Survey responses per regions

The quantitative responses were analyzed in SPSS and qualitative data were thematically analyzed in Excel

CURRENT STATUS OF WOMEN’S ROOMS

The survey indicated that most of the Women’s Rooms remain resilient despite ongoing political challenges, continuing to operate amid difficulties created by new legislation that complicates cooperation with NGOs and donors. Of the thirty-three Women’s Rooms established in Georgia between 2012 and 2025 twenty-eight remain fully operational, two partially operational and three non-operational. The Women’s Rooms in Kobuleti, Akhaltsikhe, and Rustavi are no longer functioning due to local government decisions to close them, while in Tetrtskaro and Dedoplistskaro, the managers remain in post, but the spaces are no longer dedicated to Women’s Rooms activities, hindering their operations (*See Annex 2 for the Women’s Rooms Map*).

All the respondents reported that the community holds a positive attitude towards the Women’s Rooms, regularly using their services and actively participating in programmes, with beneficiaries appreciating the support.

According to respondents, Women’s Rooms are primarily providing information, consultation and practical support services that enhance women’s access to economic opportunities, civic participation, social protection and local resources (*Please, see Figure 2 below*)

² Please see Annex 2 for a map of WR’s and their operational status.

³ Keda Women’s Rooms have two managers.

⁴ Eight Women’s Rooms managers did not participate in the survey because they were on holiday leave.

Access & Information

- Access to municipal services and information
- Organisation of informational meetings and public awareness sessions
- Promotion and visibility of local women leaders

Business & Employment Support

- Assistance with grant applications
- Job-seeking assistance
- Support in identifying funding opportunities for starting businesses

Learning & Development

- Delivery of training sessions and workshops
- Individual consultations on various issues

Community Participation

- Encouragement of women's participation in village meetings
- Facilitation of participation in exhibitions and festivals

Care & Protection

- Provision of a child-friendly space (children's corner)
- Support for victims of domestic violence

Figure 2: Services currently being provided by the Women's Rooms

MAIN FINDINGS

The survey revealed that despite the challenging political environment, most Women's Rooms continue to collaborate with NGOs and donor organizations, with only two out of twenty one respondents reporting no cooperation with civil society groups. Additionally, the Women's Rooms Union actively encourages partnerships with VET colleges and the private sector; as a result, thirteen Women's Rooms managers reported cooperation with private businesses, and nine with VET institutions.

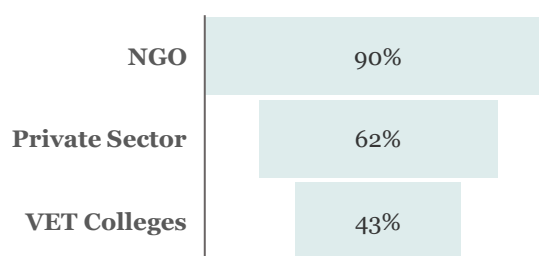


Figure 3: Level of engagement with different stakeholder groups

To help local inhabitants with skills development is a crucial part of the Women's Rooms' work. Those who do not collaborate with VET colleges reported either that there is no VET college in their municipality or that the college is not interested in collaboration.



'We actively collaborate with the Black Sea vocational college in our municipality. We always recommend the college to those interested in studying, which later helps them with employment. In addition, the college lecturers and instructors assist us in conducting training seminars and providing training to our beneficiaries.'

Manager of Telavi WR



WOMEN’S ROOMS: CHANGES AND CHALLENGES

On the question ‘What has changed in your work during the last year?’, only one out of twenty one respondents indicated experiencing difficulties in her work, eleven reported no change, and nine stated that it has been improved because the number of women entrepreneurs increased, meetings and trainings became more active. Nineteen out of twenty one believe that the Women’s Rooms receive sufficient support from their supervisors and municipality mayor.

Overall, Women’s Rooms managers reported no major changes in their work over the past year and noted receiving necessary support from local municipality management and heads. The primary challenge identified was the absence of a dedicated gender budget for the Women’s Rooms, only Women’s Rooms from Ajara region indicated that they have a special budget for the Women’s Rooms’ activities. However, when asked directly about the impact of new legislative challenges and the political situation, half of the managers did report increased challenges in accessing donor funding and collaborating with NGOs; although 90% continue to work with NGOs, the data indicates a decline in the quality and intensity of these partnerships.

To make Women’s Rooms more effective, managers emphasized the need for increased funding and dedicated budgets, more relevant training and awareness-raising programmes, additional human resources with specialized staff such as lawyers and psychologists, stronger collaboration with NGOs, and enhanced institutional support, including the granting of legal status and support from local authorities (See Figure 4)⁵.

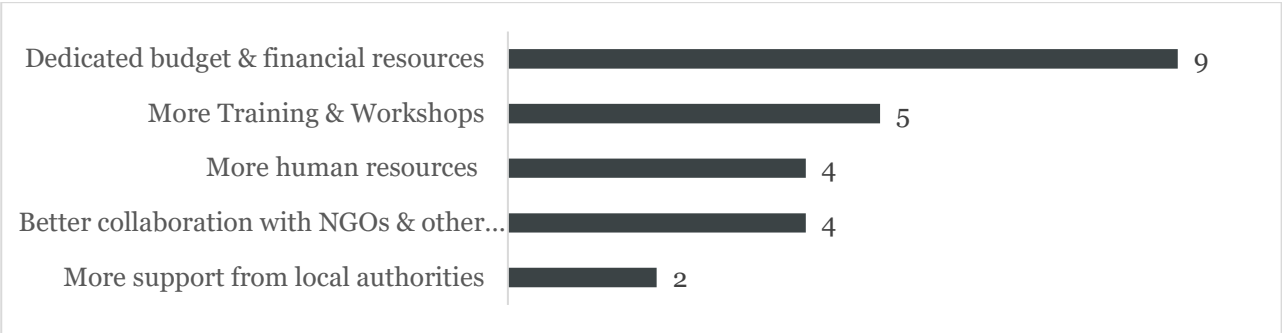


Figure 4: Manager Perceptions of how to Enhance the Effectiveness of the Women’s Rooms

Managers are motivated to expand their knowledge and skills to improve their effectiveness. They expressed interest in a wide range of trainings, including strategic planning, business planning, grant writing, gender budgeting, legal and legislative updates, leadership and management skills, child and women’s rights, and methods to support domestic violence survivors, as well as opportunities to share experiences and strengthen community engagement.

⁵ Legal status, the need for a dedicated budget and support were items in the formalized recommendations presented to parliament and which were sent to local governments by the Parliamentary Gender Equality Committee in 2023.

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Demand for the services, programmes, and grant opportunities offered by the Women's Room has been increasing year after year, which adds even more responsibility to our work. However, recently there have been notable changes in cooperation with the non-governmental sector — there has been a significant decline in grant programmes, trainings, meetings and other projects, which used to be an important source of support for both our activities and our beneficiaries.

Manager of Keda WR

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WOMEN'S ROOMS PUBLIC IMAGE

Despite the challenges, twenty out of twenty-one managers said that locals show a very positive attitude regarding the Women's Rooms, as they are easy to access and offer various need-oriented services. Respondents overwhelmingly agreed that the Women's Room did not exist in their municipality, that no other service or institution could fully replace its multifunctional role and personalized support for women; while some mentioned existing gender equality departments or municipal staff, these were seen as insufficient to provide the comprehensive, accessible and community-trusted services that the Women's Room currently offers

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The public's attitude is very positive—they actively participate in all events announced by the Women's Room. Grant programmes, especially those focused on women's and families' economic empowerment, are particularly well-received.

Manager of Zestaponi WR

The Women's Room service is accessible to all citizens. I also perform the additional role of interpreter, which is very much needed in my municipality inhabited by ethnic minorities. The room visitors do not face language barriers -they receive information in their preferred language (Azerbaijani).

Manager of Marneuli WR

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The Women’s Room is a necessary space that increases motivation and interest among the population. It allows us to host meetings, consultations, and other activities in a comfortable, dedicated environment - something that’s hard to achieve in shared space with other public servants.

Manager of Akhmeta WR

If the Women’s Room didn’t exist it would be much harder for local women to access support and meet their needs.

I can’t name a specific person who could fulfill this role in my municipality, probably only someone who truly cares about empowering other women.

Manager of Gurjaani WR

WR’S ROLE IN ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Women’s Rooms demonstrate strong environmental awareness and actively contribute to climate change mitigation: seventeen out of twenty one reported using Green Calendars and organizing activities such as cleaning days, tree planting events, environmental awareness campaigns and eco-clubs for children. Over the past year, environmental protection events organized by Women’s Rooms attracted an average of around 190 participants each, reaching an estimated total of 3,230 beneficiaries (around 73% women and 11% ethnic minorities) across the seventeen active Women’s Rooms.

About half of the managers (12) reported supporting local business beneficiaries involved in agro- and eco-tourism, as well as natural resource-based product creation, by organizing participation in exhibitions and sales, providing training, and assisting with grant applications.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the Women’s Rooms have proven to be resilient, vital community hubs that significantly enhance women’s access to information, economic opportunities and social support across Georgia. Despite political and legislative challenges affecting funding and partnerships with NGO’s, they continue to deliver a wide range of services and actively contribute to climate-smart initiatives as well. The survey confirmed that Women’s Rooms have indispensable role in promoting gender equality and sustainable development at the municipal level. The survey also highlighted that, as ever, the Women’s Rooms are providing the most effective and committed services are those with strong support from their local government structures. Their success depends on the dedication and enthusiasm of their managers and staff, who act as catalysts for community engagement, empowerment, and continuity of services. Ensuring institutional backing, alongside motivated personnel, remains essential for sustaining and expanding the impact of Women’s Rooms across Georgia. In terms of climate related programmatic objectives the significant use of the governments Green Calendar that has emerged from this survey provides a useful entry point for further leverage.

ANNEX 1

Questionnaire for the Women's rooms Managers

Region, Municipality:	
Name, Surname, and Age of Manager(s):	
Job Title of Manager(s):	
Date of Opening of the Women's Room:	
Date of Your Appointment as Manager of the Women's Room:	

1. Is there a functioning Women's Room in your municipality?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

If not functioning, please tell us about the reason:

2. What services do you provide for your visitors? (Check all that apply):

- ☐ Consultation
☐ Children's corner
☐ Access to other municipal services
☐ Support for victims of violence
☐ Support for job seekers
☐ Informational meetings
☐ Training
☐ Strengthening entrepreneurial skills
☐ Economic empowerment of women
☐ Promotion of women leaders
☐ Fundraising for starting a business
☐ Increasing access to governmental grants (filling out applications, writing business plans, connecting with state agencies)
☐ Participation in exhibitions and festivals
☐ Encouraging participation in village meetings
☐ Other (please specify): -----

3. Do you collaborate with non-governmental organizations?

- ☐ Yes (please name specific organizations)
☐ No (please state the reason)

4. Do you collaborate with vocational colleges?

- ☐ Yes (please name specific organizations)
☐ No (please state the reason)

5. Do you collaborate with representatives of the private sector?

- ☐ Yes (please provide specific examples)
☐ No (please state the reason)

6. What has changed in your work over the past year?

7. What impact have recent legislative and policy changes had on your work? (referring to changes related to gender equality and access to grants)

8. Do you believe you have sufficient support from your supervisors, and how is this support expressed?

9. What is the local's attitude toward your Women's Room, and how is this demonstrated?

10. What is needed to make the work of your Women's Room more effective?

11. What kind of knowledge do you need to make your work more effective? Please specify what kind of training you would like to receive and why.

12. If there were no Women's Room in your municipality, what would change? Who would carry out the functions you currently perform?

13. Does your municipality have a so-called "Green Calendar", i.e., do you celebrate international environmental days, other environmental protection activities?

☐ Yes

☐ No

14. Does your Women's Room participate in environmental activities organized by the municipality (e.g., cleanup campaigns, tree planting events, celebration of international environmental days, etc.)?

Annex 2

Current Status of Women’s Rooms

