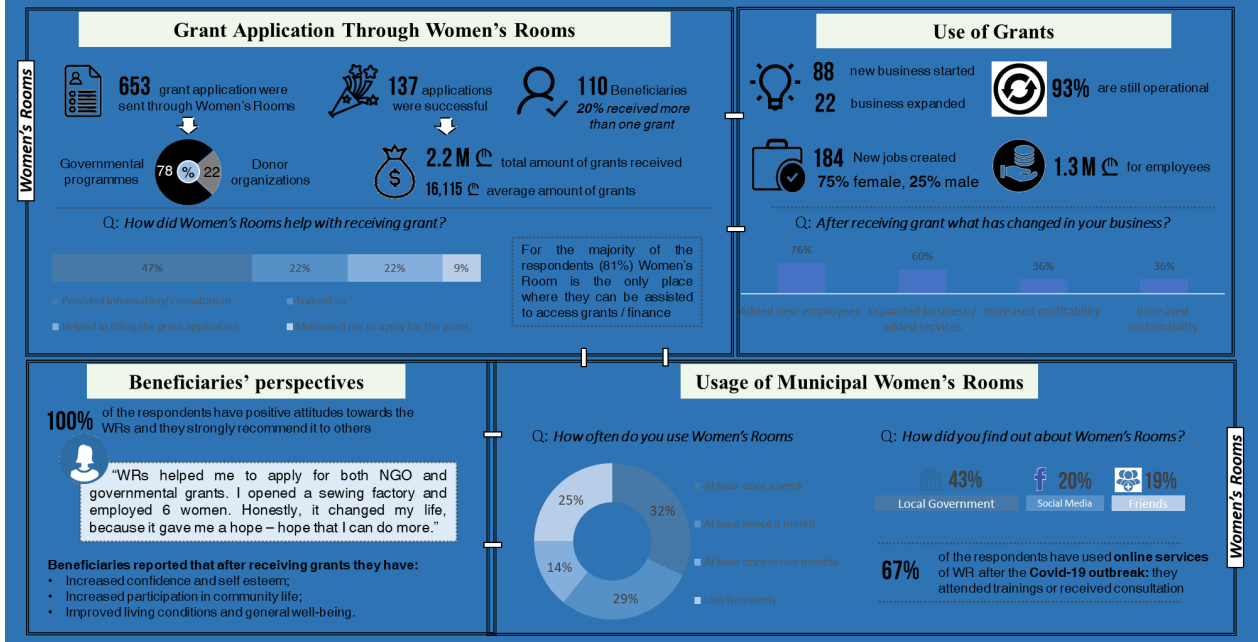



Evaluation of the Impact of Women's Rooms Access to Finance component 2017-2020



Women's Access to Financing Impact Assessment

Marneuli, March 2020

ALCP | Alliances
Caucasus Programme
REGIONAL MARKET ALLIANCES IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS

 Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
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and Cooperation SDC

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EVALUATION OF WOMEN'S ROOMS ACCESS TO FINANCING COMPONENT

INTRODUCTION

In 2012 the Alliances Programme (ALCP) established a model for a new municipal service in Georgia; the Women's Room, to improve the access of rural women to local government and decision-making processes in tandem with the work being done to mainstream national gender policy requirements into local government e.g. attendance at the meetings of the municipality and participation at community meetings.

Over the last nine years, thirty-one Women's Rooms have been established: thirty in Georgia and one in Armenia¹. Initially the rooms were focused on providing simple but very necessary services: consultation, computer, free internet, library, children's corner, space for meetings and trainings and involving more women in local decision-making fora i.e. village meetings. The WR managers encouraged rural women to attend, to vote and initiate new community projects. National results are impressive: the participation of women in community (village) meetings² has risen from 3% in 2012 to around 35% in 2016. The voting priorities have changed to include issues most immediately effecting women's lives. The first and second priority issues voted for at the meetings have become water provision and kindergartens. To date³ 714 women instigated community initiatives have been funded by municipal budgets, including the building of 301 water points and 80 kindergartens with a total value of \$2,062,451 from 2013.

From 2017 one of the main goals of the WRs has been to support rural women in accessing funds for their business ideas. The ALCP facilitated business plan writing and fundraising training for the Women's Rooms managers in 2017 and 2019⁴. The rooms became one of the main sources of information and support for rural women and men looking for funds and applying to Governmental and donor-funded grants programmes. According to data provided by Women's Rooms, since 2017, 112 women and 14 men have been financed through the Women's Rooms: 126 additional jobs were created: 88 projects were funded by the governments' small grants programme (\$402,000), 16 projects – by other donor organizations⁵ (\$67,000) and 13 projects - through networking at two Women's Business Fora (\$248,000). Apart from that, Women's Rooms increased women's participation in Community Meetings and 714 women's initiated projects have been funded through municipal budgets.

The following study aimed to double-check the data provided by the Women's Rooms about government and donor organizations' funding. To validate this data and assess impact, the ALCP needed to collect information directly from those who were financed/obtained funding through the Women's Rooms.

METHODOLOGY

The ALCP conducted thirty-one semi-structured telephone interviews with beneficiaries of Women's Rooms' access to financing components in four regions of Georgia: Kvemo Kartli, Samtskhe-Javakheti, Adjara and Kakheti. The respondents were randomly selected from the ALCP database, which included names and contact

¹ Two more in Armenia to be opened soon

² Community (village) meeting is a form of citizens' participation at local decision making. The meetings are held in all villages of Georgia ones in a year, under the Government's Village Support Programme, where the participants are initiating and voting for the village infrastructure projects to be funded that year from the government. In 2017 the Government stopped this programme and after a two-year gap, still restarted it in 2019.

³ March 2021

⁴ Conducted by the Georgian Institute of Public Affairs (GIPA)

⁵ Including UNDP, EU ENPARD programme and USAID

details of 88 beneficiaries who received grants from 2017 to 2020. In total, 85% of the respondents were women and 15% men.

We analysed quantitative questions in SPSS and qualitative information in Microsoft Excel. Finally, we compared study findings with ALCP monthly data and other programme documents; this triangulation increased the reliability of the findings because the figures from different sources were in line with each other. This enabled us to generalize the findings.

KEY FINDINGS

The study captured the following key findings:

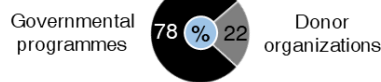
- ❖ Since 2017 to 2020, 653 grant applications⁶ (78% for governmental and 22% donor funds) have been made through Women's Rooms out of which 137 applications (21%) were successful.
- ❖ In total, 110 beneficiaries (94 women and 16 men) received grants. Furthermore, since 2017, 20% of them got more than one grant.
- ❖ The total amount of grants received through the Women's Rooms was 2.2m Gel, which amounts to 20,070 Gel per beneficiary and 16,115 Gel per successful application.
- ❖ For the majority of the respondents (81%) in rural communities the Women's Room is the only place where they can be assisted to access grants/funds.
- ❖ As a result, 88 new businesses started and 22 existing businesses expanded. 93% of these businesses are still operational and 7% were closed mostly due to Covid-19.
- ❖ Women applicants mostly used these grants to open greenhouses, guesthouses, hotels, fruit processing units, sewing workshops or beauty salons, while men opened automobile repair shops and guesthouses.
- ❖ 184 new jobs were created (75% for women and 25% for men). The average salary for employees is 471 Gel and the total amount of salaries amounts to 1.3m Gel.
- ❖ 67% of the respondents have used online services provided by the Women's Rooms after the Covid-19 outbreak: they attended trainings or received consultation;
- ❖ All the respondents (100%) stated that they would recommend the Women's Rooms' services to others.
- ❖ Qualitative data illustrates that economic empowerment positively affected social cohesion and political engagement: beneficiaries reported that after receiving grants they have increased confidence and self-esteem, they are more active and participate more in community life and they have improved their living conditions and general well-being.

⁶ 'Number of applications sent' comes from the ALCP monthly monitoring data.

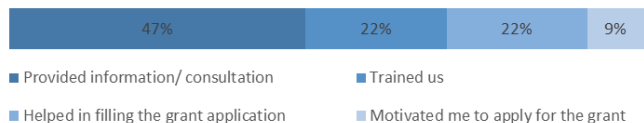
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Women's Rooms

Grant Application Through Women's Rooms

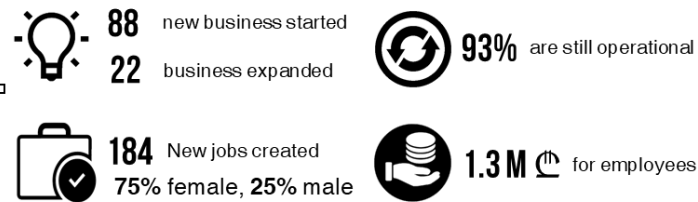


Q: How did Women's Rooms help with receiving grant?

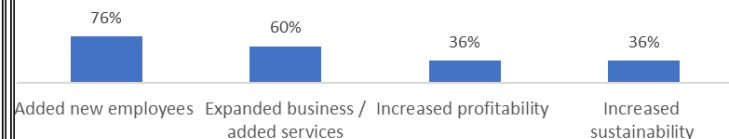


For the majority of the respondents (81%) Women's Room is the only place where they can be assisted to access grants / finance

Use of Grants



Q: After receiving grant what has changed in your business?



Beneficiaries' perspectives

100% of the respondents have positive attitudes towards the WRs and they strongly recommend it to others



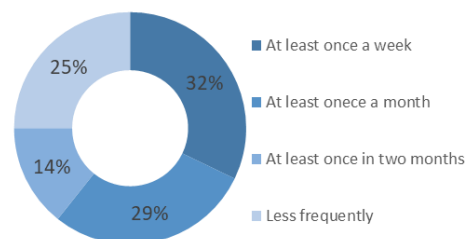
"WRs helped me to apply for both NGO and governmental grants. I opened a sewing factory and employed 6 women. Honestly, it changed my life, because it gave me a hope – hope that I can do more."

Beneficiaries reported that after receiving grants they have:

- Increased confidence and self esteem;
- Increased participation in community life;
- Improved living conditions and general well-being.

Usage of Municipal Women's Rooms

Q: How often do you use Women's Rooms



Q: How did you find out about Women's Rooms?



67% of the respondents have used online services of WR after the Covid-19 outbreak: they attended trainings or received consultation

Women's Rooms