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Rural Tourism Trainings

Pre-and Post-Training Assessment

ALCP | Alliances Caucasus 2

REGIONAL MARKET ALLIANCES IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS

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INTERVENTION OVERVIEW

To strengthen rural livelihoods and create additional income opportunities for farming households, in 2026 ALCP2 promoted the development of environment-based rural tourism in its target municipalities. The programme aimed to help rural inhabitants diversify their income by building tourism businesses around local natural resources, cultural heritage and agricultural value chains. The intervention combined the development of practical Rural Tourism Guidelines with targeted capacity-building trainings to support rural entrepreneurs in identifying and developing tourism opportunities based on local assets.

Rural Tourism Guidelines

The first component of the intervention was the development of the *Farmers' Handbook for Rural Tourism Ventures*, a practical guide for people interested in starting, expanding or improving tourism-related activities. The handbook provides practical tools and recommendations for identifying tourism potential, developing authentic visitor experiences, marketing and branding, digital visibility, customer service and business planning, while promoting the sustainable use of natural and cultural resources. In May-June 2026, two hundred copies were printed and disseminated during training courses and a digital copy was shared through social networks and emails.

Rural Tourism Trainings

Based on the handbook, during May and June 2026, six, two-day, pilot Rural Tourism trainings were delivered in Akhmeta, Oni and Keda, reaching 166 participants1 (128 women and 31 men). The trainings were delivered through the Women's Rooms Union[2]. The gender of the participants depended on their business activities, e.g. Lori producers are mainly men and silk farmers are women, also in the most cases women run rural guesthouses, beauty salons, greenhouses or family farms. The training participants selection process had one main criteria – the interest to start or develop rural tourism venture. The trainings targeted economically active individuals with an entrepreneurial mindset, who were best placed to adopt new practices and translate training into action. The majority of the participants were already involved in rural tourism-related activities, the most common areas were accommodation, food and wine experiences, farm-based activities, outdoor services and cultural or craft-based offers.[3]

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[1] *Out of 166 participants 159 filled in the pre and post questionnaire. This report is based on the answers provided in the questionnaires.*

[2] *Women's Rooms Union (WRU) is a network established in 2021 to strengthen cooperation and link Women's Rooms managers across Georgia, facilitating the exchange of experience and information.*

[3] *Accommodation: guesthouses, family hotels, cottages | Food/wine: marani, degustation, meals, local products | Farm-based: apiary, livestock, farm visits | Outdoor: hiking, camping, guided activities | Culture/crafts: workshops, museums, handicrafts.*

Three pilot municipalities were selected to represent three of the programme's natural resource-based value chains: silk in Akhmeta, Lori in Oni and honey in Keda. This enabled the programme to test the handbook under different tourism market conditions. Keda, in Adjara, benefits from one of Georgia's strongest tourism markets; Akhmeta forms part of Kakheti, where tourism has expanded considerably over the past decade; and Oni, in Racha, has exceptional tourism assets but remains one of Georgia's least visited destinations[4], with significant potential for future growth.



Figure 1: Locations for Rural Tourism Trainings

The training combined sessions with practical site visits, focusing on how to transform local environments, traditions, agricultural activities and natural resources into marketable tourism products and visitor experiences. Participants received practical tools and templates to develop their tourism ideas further and on completion each received a copy of the Farmers' Handbook for Rural Tourism Ventures and a certificate of participation.

Impact Assessment of the intervention

This assessment evaluates the immediate results of the Rural Tourism trainings. It examines participants' baseline knowledge and expectations prior to the training, assesses learning outcomes and participant satisfaction and explores the extent to which the intervention strengthened participants' confidence and motivation to develop rural tourism activities.

[4] https://api.gnta.ge/storage/files/doc/geo.pdf

METHODS

This assessment is based on two rounds of data collection covering all training participants:

- **Pre-training questionnaires** (159/100% completed) established baseline knowledge of rural tourism, interest in starting a tourism activity, perceptions of local tourism assets, familiarity with practical skills (business planning, marketing, branding, digital tools) and expectations of the training.
- **Post-training questionnaires** (159/96% completed) measured knowledge gained, understanding of the main training topics, most useful content, intention to apply the learning and overall satisfaction.

The questionnaires included both open and closed-ended questions to collect frequency data as well as qualitative information (see Questionnaire in Annex 1).

Overall, this assessment focused on output-level indicators, while a follow-up assessment planned five months after the training will measure outcome-level results: the extent to which participants have applied their knowledge and ideas in practice and the barriers they face in moving from ideas to implementation.

SUMMARY

The baseline picture was one of motivation running ahead of knowledge. 81% of participants had already considered starting a rural tourism activity and most could readily identify their local assets: nature above all, followed by heritage, food and wine. Yet only half rated their knowledge of rural tourism as good and the gaps were concentrated precisely where the training placed its emphasis: marketing, branding, business planning and digital visibility, where a majority reported partial or no knowledge. Overall, participants knew what their area had to offer for tourism, but what they lacked were the tools to turn assets into marketable visitor experiences.

Post-training results show a clear positive shift. The participants rating their knowledge as good or very good rose from 51% to 75%, while basic or no knowledge fell from 32% to 3%. The most telling result was the change in what participants valued: they arrived expecting general knowledge, but left most frequently naming marketing, branding and digital visibility as the most useful content. This indicates that the training made rural tourism concrete rather than abstract: after the training, 88% plan to apply the knowledge in practice, 53% left with a concrete tourism idea: most commonly accommodation, food, wine or farm-based experiences, patterns that mirror each municipality's asset profile. Overall, 99% rated the training very good or good.

These are immediate, output-level results: evidence of learning, relevance, motivation and intent, not yet of changed practice. Many ideas remain early-stage and the five-month follow-up assessment will show how far intention translates into improved services, promotion and new tourism activities and what support participants need to get there.

PRE TRAINING ASSESSMENT

MAIN FINDINGS

Knowledge and understanding of rural tourism before the training

Participants entered the training with mixed starting levels. Half (51%) rated their knowledge of rural tourism as good, 23% as basic, 16% as average and 9% reported no knowledge. Familiarity with the concept followed a similar pattern: 55% said they knew what rural tourism means, while 43% understood it only partly. Rural tourism was therefore a recognizable idea for most participants, but for nearly half it remained vague in practical terms.

Baseline knowledge varied notably by location. Oni reported the strongest starting position (63% good), Keda was split between good (50%) and basic (46%) and Akhmeta was the weakest, with the largest average share (31%) and the only notable group reporting no knowledge at all (20%). A gender gap was also visible: 35% of men rated their knowledge as good, compared to 20% of women: this is relevant given that women made up 82% of participants.

Motivation, by contrast, was uniformly high: 81% had already thought about starting a rural tourism activity, a further 16% were undecided and only 3% had not considered it. The training thus reached a group whose interest ran well ahead of its knowledge: strongly motivated, but needing structured, practical guidance to turn general interest into concrete and realistic tourism ideas.

Overall, the variation in baseline knowledge across locations and gender groups underscored the importance of delivering training that combined foundational concepts with practical, experience-oriented content capable of engaging both newcomers and participants with more advanced knowledge.



Figure 2: Understanding and involvement of rural tourism before the training

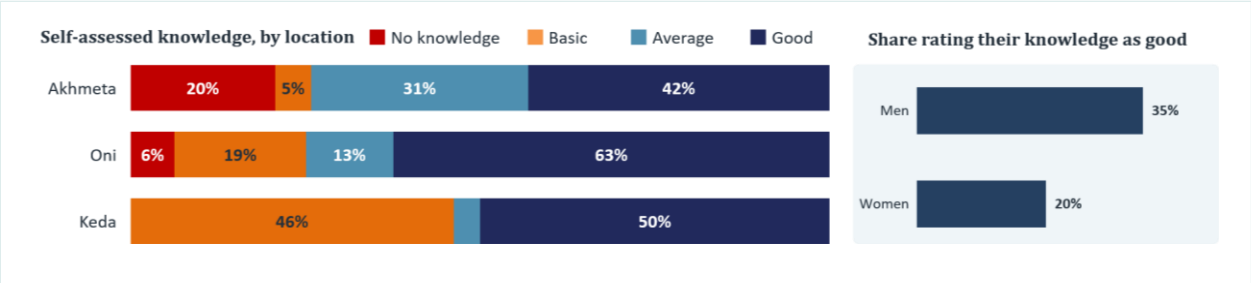


Figure 3: Knowledge and understanding of rural tourism before the training, by location and gender

Participants' Perceptions of Local Tourism Assets

The Participants primarily perceived local tourism potential through the lens of natural assets: two-thirds (67%) highlighted landscapes, mountains, rivers, forests and other environmental features. Cultural and historical heritage (38%) and local food, wine and agricultural products (26%) formed the second and third most common themes, suggesting that participants already recognised tourism as extending beyond scenery, although to a lesser extent.

Perceptions varied across locations. Akhmeta broader understanding of tourism assets, combining nature with cultural identity, wine, gastronomy and local history. Keda balanced natural attractions with heritage, accessibility and traditional food, indicating a stronger awareness of tourism infrastructure and visitor access. In contrast, Oni's responses centred on natural landscapes, mineral waters and wellness potential.

Overall, participants demonstrated a general awareness of the resources available in their communities, but many had difficulty translating their knowledge of local resources into clear tourism ideas. This highlighted the need for training that moved beyond identifying assets towards developing integrated, market-oriented tourism products.

Table 1: Perception of local assets for rural tourism by locations

Themes	Oni (48)	Keda (52)	Akhmeta (59)
Natural landscape, scenery and environmental quality	54%	65%	78%
Cultural / historical heritage, traditions and identity	15%	46%	51%
Local food, wine and agricultural products	13%	23%	39%
Location, accessibility and strategic position	21%	29%	15%
Hospitality, accommodation and tourism services	13%	12%	8%
Peace, safety, resort/health and outdoor recreation	25%	2%	2%
General / unclear tourism-development statements	13%	4%	0%

Baseline knowledge of practical competencies

Baseline confidence varied considerably across the five practical areas covered by the training. Social media use in tourism (36%) and adding a business to Google Maps (32%) were most often reported as fully understood, while branding (19%) and marketing (21%) had the fewest respondents with full knowledge. Partial knowledge was widespread in marketing (58%) and business planning (46%); while branding and Google Maps listing showed the largest shares reporting no knowledge at all (38% each).

Overall, in every area, most respondents reported only partial or no knowledge, indicating substantial room for the training to add value across all five competencies.

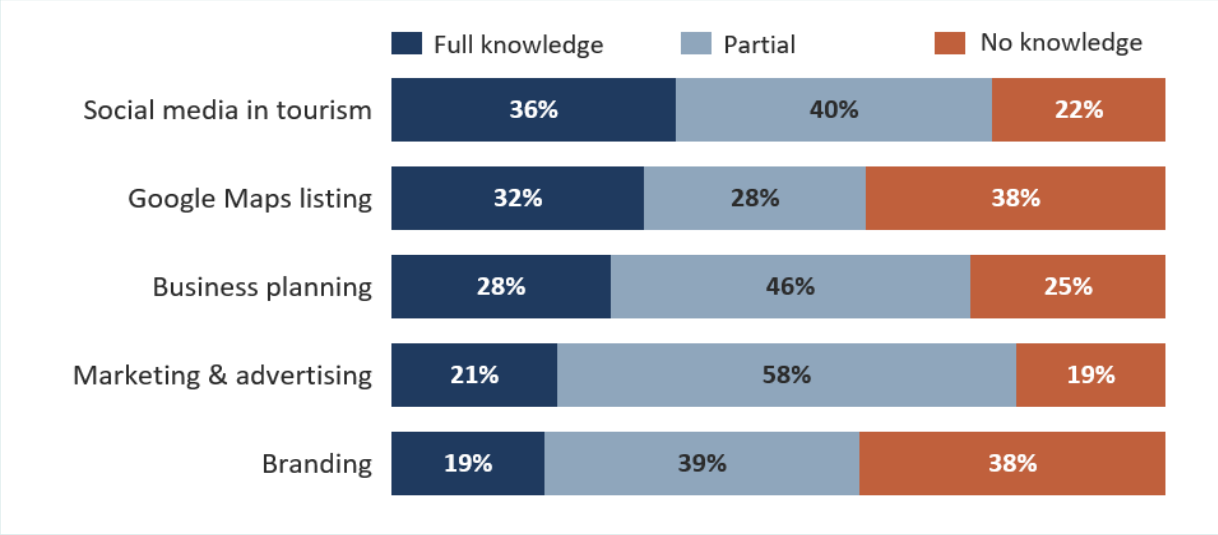


Figure 4: Self-assessed knowledge of five practical competencies

Training Expectations

Participants entered the training with a clear learning expectation: 134 of 159 respondents (84%) referred to gaining knowledge, new information or a deeper understanding of rural tourism. Some participants, however, went beyond general learning: 34% mentioned support for developing an existing or planned activity, including family hotels, cottages and rural tourism services and 31% expected practical skills, guidance and tools they could apply in their own work.

Taken together, participants wanted both knowledge and practical help with their own tourism activities and these expectations were broadly similar across the three locations and across men and women.

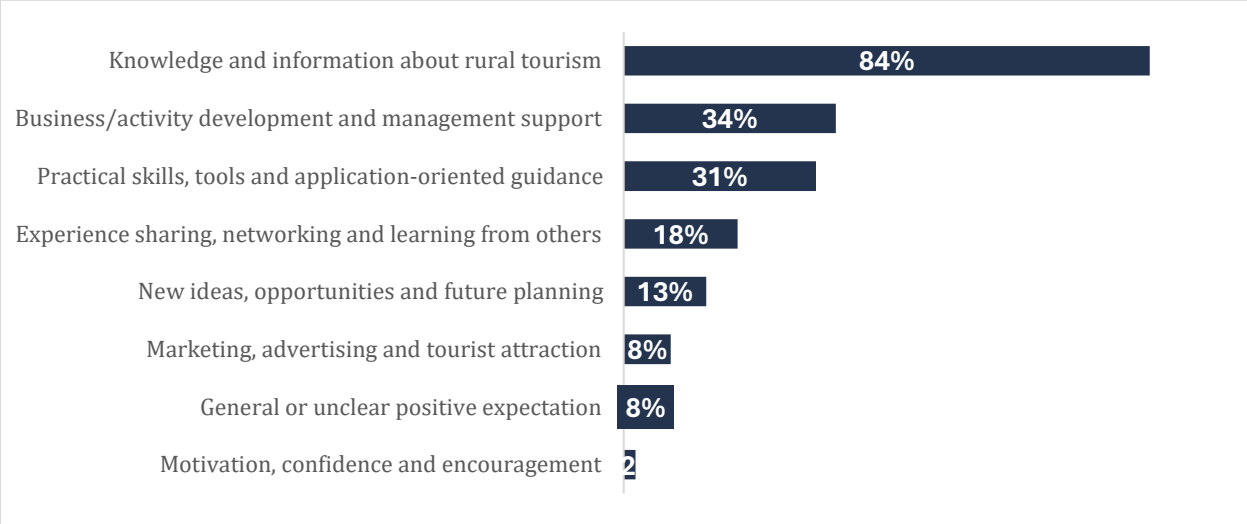


Figure 5: What participants expected from the training

POST TRAINING ASSESSMENT

MAIN FINDINGS

Change in self-assessed knowledge and comprehension

Self-assessed knowledge of rural tourism improved substantially at group level. The share of respondents rating their knowledge as good or very good rose from 51% before the training to 75% after it, while the share reporting basic or no knowledge fell from 32% to 3%.

Comprehension of the training content was high across all five topics and materials were accessible for participants. Full understanding was most common for the essence of rural tourism (86%), safety issues (85%) and development of tourism ideas (83%), with social media (75%) and marketing/branding (69%) close behind but showing larger shares of partial understanding. Only one respondent per topic reported not understanding the content at all.

A key finding is the change in participants' perceptions of useful learning. While initial expectations focused mainly on gaining general knowledge of rural tourism, post-training feedback showed stronger appreciation for practical topics, with marketing, branding and digital visibility identified as the most useful areas.

Finally, intent to apply the learning was near universal: 88% plan to use the knowledge in practice, 12% partially and no respondent said they did not plan to use it. This suggests that the training was perceived as relevant and applicable to participants' activities and provides evidence of achievement of the activity and output-level objectives in all three municipalities.

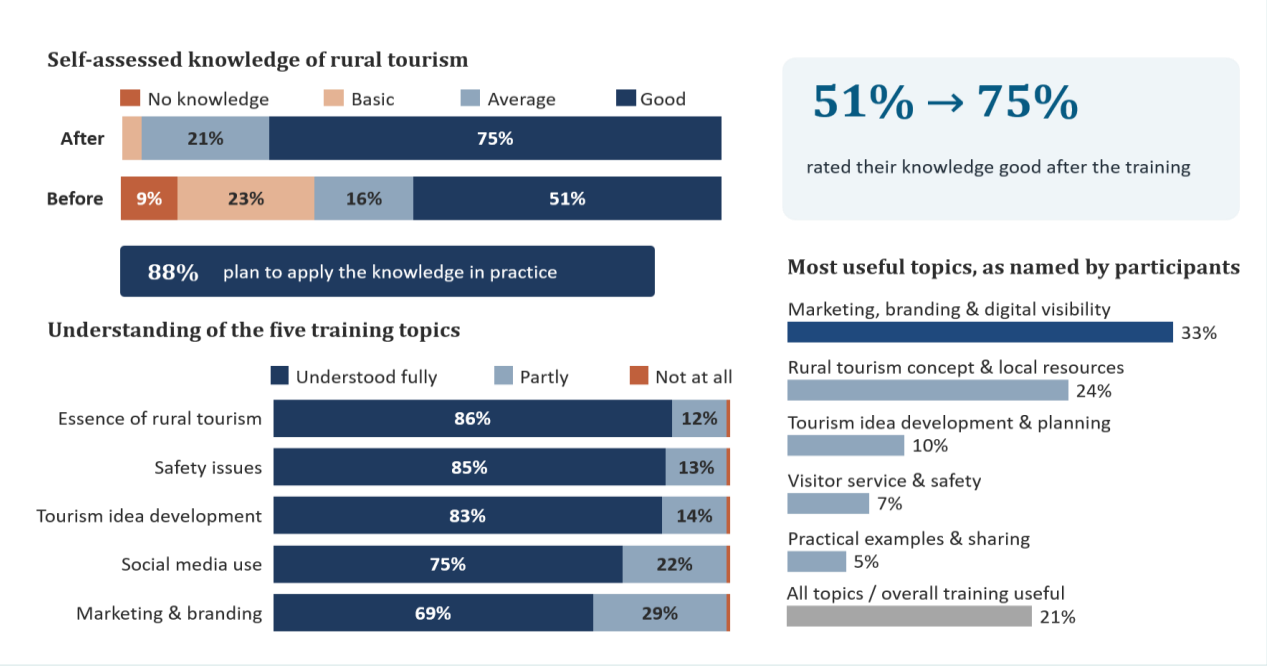


Figure 6: Post-training results: knowledge, comprehension and intent to apply

Development of concrete rural tourism ideas

The training left every respondent with either a defined idea or an idea under active consideration. In response to the question “After the training, do you have a concrete idea in rural tourism?”, 81 respondents (53%) reported having a concrete idea, while the remaining 47% indicated that they were still considering an idea. No respondent selected ‘No’. Of those with a concrete idea, 70 described it in writing: 28 in Akhmeta, 22 in Keda and 20 in Oni.

Among the written ideas, accommodation was the most frequently mentioned direction (17 responses), covering guesthouses, family hotels and cottages. Food and wine followed closely: nine ideas concerned wine, Marani or tasting experiences and another nine local food, cuisine or household products. Smaller numbers described more specialised activities: agro and farm-based tourism (6), outdoor adventures (4), culture and handicrafts (2), digital visibility (2) and 21 ideas remained too broad to classify.

The regional pattern mirrors the baseline profiles of the three municipalities. Akhmeta produced the most ideas and the most concrete ones, concentrated in accommodation (10) and wine/Marani business (5); Keda's ideas leaned toward local food and household products alongside accommodation, though many remained early-stage; and Oni combined accommodation, farm-based and outdoor adventure related ideas.

Taken together, the findings show many participants beginning to connect local assets (family property, traditions, household production and natural surroundings) with practical tourism opportunities.

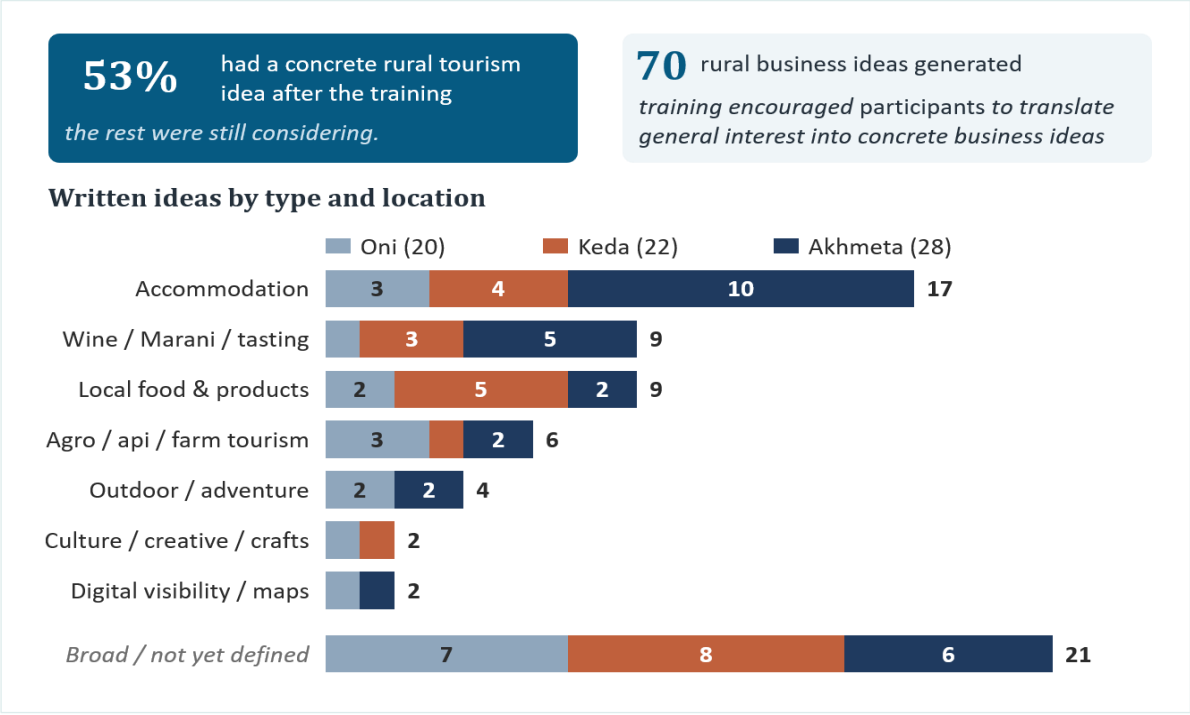


Figure 7: What participants proposed - written ideas by type and location

Overall assessment of the training

Overall assessments of the training were exceptionally positive in all three municipalities. Ninety-nine percent of respondents assessed the training as very good or good. The open comments reinforce the highly positive quantitative ratings by providing insight into what participants valued most. Respondents frequently highlighted the practical relevance of the content, opportunities for experience-sharing and networking and the quality of facilitation, while suggestions for improvement mainly focused on extending the training and including more hands-on, topic-specific activities.

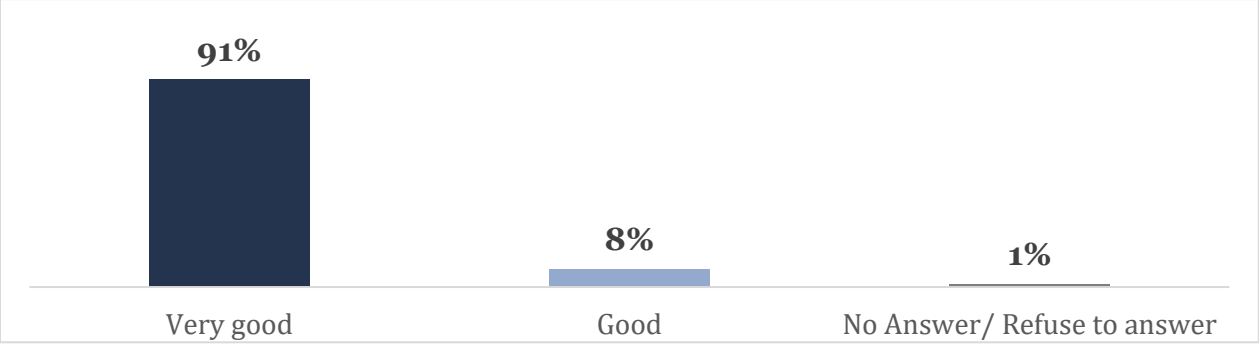


Figure 8: Overall assessment of the training

Trainer/ Facilitators Perspectives

The Rural Tourism Development trainings in Keda, Akhmeta and Oni were characterized by high participant motivation, active engagement and a strong willingness to share experiences. The interactive format, practical examples and exercises encouraged discussion and helped participants connect the training content with their own businesses and local contexts.

A particularly strong interest was observed in identifying local tourism resources. Through practical examples and case studies, participants began to recognise how natural resources, traditional knowledge, agricultural activities, culinary experiences and family-based activities could be developed into tourism products. This helped many participants move from seeing these resources as part of everyday life to recognising their potential as tourism experiences.

Marketing, branding and digital visibility were also among the most engaging topics. Participants showed particular interest in developing a visual identity for their businesses, understanding the role of quality photo and video content and improving their online presence. Practical work on branding and Google Maps was especially well received, as participants could immediately apply the learning to their own activities.

The practical, hands-on approach was one of the main strengths of the training. At the same time, participants had different levels of experience and digital skills, requiring flexibility in delivery and additional individual guidance where needed. The trainers also observed that real examples and peer exchange were particularly effective in helping participants understand how local resources could be transformed into marketable tourism experiences.

Overall, the trainings demonstrated strong interest in rural tourism development and confirmed the relevance of practical, experience-oriented support. Participants showed increased confidence in exploring tourism opportunities and a clear interest in applying the knowledge to their own activities.

Study Tour: Importance and Impact

The Study Tour complemented the training by connecting the topics discussed in the sessions with a real rural tourism business. Participants learned directly from the host about the development of the business, the use of local resources, challenges encountered and approaches to creating a viable tourism product.

The visit generated active discussion and allowed participants to compare the example they observed with their own ideas and circumstances. For many, seeing a functioning rural tourism business in practice helped make the training content more concrete and provided inspiration for developing or starting their own tourism activities.

The Study Tour therefore strengthened the practical and experiential dimension of the training, giving participants concrete examples that could be adapted to their own local resources and tourism initiatives.

CONCLUSION

The pilot rural tourism training demonstrates that a short, practical training package supported by the Farmers' Handbook, local examples and site-based learning can help rural entrepreneurs and aspiring participants move from broad interest in tourism towards more practical and action-oriented thinking. Across Akhmeta, Keda and Oni, participants increasingly connected their local environments, traditions, agricultural activities and household resources with possible tourism products. The particularly strong interest in marketing, branding and digital visibility also highlights the importance of helping rural tourism businesses become easier for visitors to find and trust. The most importantly, the participants generated new business ideas and refined their vision of rural tourism.

The pilot also validated training delivery model. The same package worked across three very different tourism markets and the Women's Rooms Union proved an effective channel for reaching economically active rural women — the group for whom the gap between motivation and confidence was widest at baseline and for whom the training therefore had most to offer.

What this assessment cannot yet demonstrate is behavioural change. Nevertheless, these results provide a promising foundation for achieving future outcome- and impact-level objectives: participants showed near-universal intent to apply the learning, more than half had developed a defined tourism idea, while some ideas remained at an early stage. The five-month follow-up assessment will determine the extent to which these intentions translate into practical actions and how participants navigate the real-life challenges of rural entrepreneurship.

ANNEX 1:
PRE AND POST-TRAINING QUESTIONNAIRES

I. Pre-Training Questionnaire

Participant name and surname: _____ Date:_____

Gender
☐ Female
☐ Male

Main activity/status
☐ Employed
☐ Entrepreneur / owner of a business
☐ Self-employed
☐ Student
☐ Unemployed

1. How would you assess your knowledge of rural tourism?

☐ I have no knowledge
☐ Basic
☐ Average
☐ Good

2. Do you know what rural tourism means?

☐ Yes
☐ Partly
☐ No

3. Have you considered starting an activity in rural tourism?

☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ I have not decided yet

4. In your opinion, what could be the main uniqueness of your village/location?

5. Do you know how to:

Topic	Yes	Partly	No
Prepare a business plan	☐	☐	☐
Use marketing and advertising	☐	☐	☐
Develop branding	☐	☐	☐
Add a business/object to Google Maps	☐	☐	☐
Use social media in tourism	☐	☐	☐

6. What do you expect from the training?

1. Post-Training Questionnaire

Participant name and surname: _____ Date: _____

1. How would you assess your knowledge of rural tourism now?

☐ Basic
☐ Average
☐ Good
☐ Very good

2. After the training, how well did you understand:

Topic	Fully	Partly	Did not understand
The essence of rural tourism	☐	☐	☐
Development of tourism ideas	☐	☐	☐
Marketing and branding	☐	☐	☐
Use of social media	☐	☐	☐
Safety issues	☐	☐	☐

3. What was the most useful topic for you?

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4. Do you plan to apply the knowledge gained from the training in practice?

☐ Yes
☐ Partly
☐ No

5. After the training, do you have a concrete idea in rural tourism?

☐ Yes
☐ I am still thinking about it
☐ No

If yes, please briefly describe your idea:

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6. How would you assess the training overall?

☐ Very good
☐ Good
☐ Average
☐ Needs improvement

7. Your recommendation or comment: