CAPACITY AND NEEDS ASSESSMENT OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS WORKING ON GENDER EQUALITY IN GEORGIA

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UN WOMEN
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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CEDAW	United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CRRC	Caucasus Research Resource Center
CSO	Civil society organization
EU	European Union
GEL	Georgian lari
Geostat	National Statistics Office of Georgia
GREVIO	Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence
IDP	Internally displaced person
Istanbul Convention	Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence
LGBTQI+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OSCE/ODIHR	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this study is to explore the capabilities and needs of civil society organizations (CSOs) working on gender equality and the protection of women's rights in Georgia. The study consists of four major components: (1) a desk review, which includes an analysis of gender equality and women's rights policies and progress achieved, along with a historical overview of the development of civil society organizations working on gender equality and the protection of women's rights, as well as a review of the current state of affairs; (2) mapping of the organizations working on gender equality and the protection of women's rights in Georgia; (3) a qualitative study, which includes in-depth interviews and focus groups with United Nations agencies operating in Georgia, other international and local donor organizations, and local CSOs; and (4) a quantitative study, under which an online survey was conducted with 58 CSOs working on gender equality and the protection of women's rights.

The mapping of CSOs focusing on gender equality and women's rights conducted as part of this study revealed 119 organizations that carried out at least one project in 2021–2023. More than a third of these organizations work throughout Georgia. The regions with the most organizations implementing projects are Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti and Kvemo Kartli, whereas Mtskheta-Mtianeti and Racha-Lechkhumi have the fewest. The majority of the organizations address gender issues and education, including informal education. Aside from women and girls, many organizations work with young people. The majority of the organizations identified through the mapping are small, with no more than 10 employees.

The quantitative and qualitative studies led to the following major findings:

Organizational capabilities

- The majority of the CSOs in the study (77 per cent) assess their organization's management and governance capabilities positively. However, international and donor organizations point out institutional

development flaws and believe that the operation of these organizations is often reliant on the activism of one or more employees. If these employees leave, the organization risks dissolution. Notably, in approximately 35 per cent of the surveyed CSOs, the **organization's head** has remained unchanged since its founding, while in 11 per cent, the same individual has led the organization for more than five years.

- The majority of CSOs (70 per cent) that participated in the quantitative study reported that **fundraising** is one of the challenges their organization faces. Almost half of the organizations (48 per cent) have an employee whose job description includes fundraising. At the same time, the majority of organizations (63 per cent) want to improve the capabilities of their employees in this responsibility.

- Full **reliance on donors** and a lack of alternative funding sources (for example, income from their own economic activities or membership fees) pose challenges for CSOs, as does meeting complex grant-winning criteria, which is especially difficult for newly established organizations and those operating outside of Tbilisi.

- CSOs struggle to develop and implement **medium- and long-term strategies**, since they often have to adjust to donor requirements and priorities.

- Finding and retaining qualified **human resources** is challenging, which could be due to a lack of financial sustainability, the fact that employees frequently work overtime (35 per cent) and the fact that many organizations are unable to provide health insurance (85 per cent) or paid maternity leave (52 per cent).

- The most **sought-after skills** for staff members include proficiency in English, the ability to write project proposals, general document handling-knowledge and digital skills. The human resource issues faced by organizations of disabled women are twice

as acute compared to other organizations. There are very few disabled women activists who speak English and are able to participate in international conferences and dialogues.

- Only 39 per cent of surveyed organizations have a staff member whose job description includes monitoring and evaluation. Donors, on the other hand, believe that, even in CSOs with dedicated specialists, monitoring and evaluation are of poor quality. Not only is the lack of appropriate skills among personnel challenging, but so is the recognition of the significance of **monitoring and evaluation**. Organizations frequently do not understand how these data may be used, how decisions can be made based on this information or how operations can be improved, expanded or changed.

Advocacy and communication

- More than a fifth of CSOs (22 per cent) name **effective communication with government agencies** as one of their challenges and would like to improve the capabilities of their personnel in that area.

- **Civil society collaboration with government agencies** worsened dramatically following the initiation of the law on the transparency of foreign influence. According to organization representatives, this process further constrained their involvement in policymaking and decision-making.

- Despite the fact that the majority of surveyed organizations (65 per cent) indicate belonging to a coalition, platform or network of civil society organizations, representatives of international organizations highlight a **lack of coordination** among CSOs. They believe that organizations do not frequently communicate information with one another, that resources are not effectively allocated and that there may be instances of duplicated efforts when addressing different issues.

- CSOs operating in the regions often communicate directly with the public through training sessions, information-sharing and local activities. However, representatives of international organizations argue that in order for organizations to succeed, greater effort should be made to **engage with the public through the mainstream media.**

Research and analysis

- The majority of CSOs would like to improve their proficiency in various areas, including report writing based on research findings (65 per cent), data analysis (65 per cent), data collection using qualitative research methods (65 per cent), proficiency in data analysis software (57 per cent) and quantitative research methods (54 per cent).

- From the donors' perspective, CSOs, especially those in the regions, encounter challenges not only in conducting research but also in **accessing free and public data.** These data are crucial for crafting project proposals and planning the organization's activities.

Gender equality and women's empowerment policies, international approaches and mechanisms

- According to international and local organization representatives who participated in the study, CSOs have extensive knowledge and competence on the subject.

- CSOs argue that organizations in Tbilisi have greater access to resources and are more knowledgeable about gender equality and women's empowerment policies, international approaches and mechanisms than organizations outside of Tbilisi.

RECOMMENDATIONS

According to the study's findings, the following activities are recommended:

- **Develop and/or identify alternate sources of financing,** such as funds from CSOs' own economic activity, individual donations, membership fees and so on, as both local and international organizations emphasize that CSOs' dependence on donors undermines their long-term sustainability.

- **Promote organizational development grant opportunities in order to support CSOs' sustainability.**

These grants would enable organizations to retain their employees and offices, purchase or upgrade necessary inventory and address key issues. At the same time, it is essential to include benefits and suitable compensation rates in the project budgetary requirements.

- **Strengthen communication between donors and CSOs,** and encourage donors to consider local organizations' ideas and capacities when establishing priority areas for funding. This approach ensures that local organizations can consistently and sustainably address issues important to beneficiaries.

- **Develop CSO networks and coalitions,** or assist and strengthen existing ones, to help consolidate CSO activities for problem resolution, effective advocacy and information exchange on areas of activity and specific initiatives.

- **Raise CSOs' qualifications in advocacy and effective communication with government agencies,** as well as raise awareness among government representatives about the role and function of non-governmental organizations, to improve CSO engagement in policy development and decision-making

processes. International organizations can play a leading role in supporting a project by establishing dialogue platforms between the governmental and non-governmental sectors. This issue has been especially relevant since the law on the transparency of foreign influence was proposed, and it is critical to re-establish and maintain beneficial cooperation in a timely manner.

- **Raise CSO staff qualifications in research methods, data analysis, and monitoring and evaluation** so that they may collect data or use existing data and studies to write project proposals and reports, as well as organize their own activities and advocacy efforts.

- **Place emphasis on empowering disabled women's organizations and activists,** as well as their equal and full participation in the activities of gender equality groups at both the non-governmental and governmental levels.

- **Improve the knowledge of organizations working in the regions** on gender equality, women's empowerment policies, and international approaches and mechanisms.

1. INTRODUCTION

UN Women, in collaboration with the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation in Georgia, is currently implementing the "Women's Leadership for Democracy in Georgia" project. The project's purpose is to promote the full and equal participation of women and girls in decision-making. Under the project, UN Women collaborates with civil society organizations (CSOs) to develop their monitoring and advocacy capacity for women's full and equal involvement in political life and decision-making.

To assist civil society organizations, CRRC-Georgia performed a capacity and needs assessment of organizations working on gender equality and the protection of women's rights at the request of UN Women.

The study's purpose is to explore the capabilities of CSOs working on gender equality and the protection of women's rights, identify their strengths and weaknesses, and make evidence-based recommendations for their future development. Notably, to define 'CSOs', the report follows the OECD Development Assistance Committee definition, which states that a CSO includes all "non-market and non-state organizations outside of the

family in which people organize themselves to pursue shared interests in the public domain". Examples include community-based organizations and associations, labour unions, cooperatives, professional associations, chambers of commerce, independent research institutes, not-for-profit media and so on.

The study focused on the following areas: (1) organizational capabilities; (2) advocacy and communication; (3) research methods, data collection and analysis; and (4) gender equality and women's development policies, international approaches and mechanisms.

This report begins with a detailed discussion of the methodology. Following that, the study findings are presented. The primary findings of the study are organized thematically into sections covering the following topics: assessment of organizational capabilities; advocacy and communication; research and analysis; and gender equality and women's empowerment policies, international approaches and mechanisms. A list of organizations that participated in the qualitative and quantitative components of this study is provided in the annex.

2. METHODOLOGY

The research design of the study consisted of four components: (1) a desk review; (2) a mapping of the organizations working on gender equality and the protection of women's rights; (3) in-depth interviews and focus groups; (4) and an online survey.

2.1 DESK REVIEW

The desk review aimed to summarize the existing policy of gender equality and the protection of women's rights in Georgia and the level of progress achieved thus far. In parallel, the review also sought to assess the history and existing situation of CSOs working on gender equality and the protection of women's rights.

The desk review analysed several sources, including international and national reports as well as academic studies on gender equality, vulnerable groups and the circumstances faced by civil society in Georgia.

2.2 MAPPING OF ORGANIZATIONS WORKING ON GENDER EQUALITY AND THE PROTECTION OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS

The mapping of organizations was conducted to identify CSOs that work on gender equality and the protection of women's rights. The mapping revealed registered organizations that work at the national as well as municipal levels and that have been active within the past three years (2021–2023). Organizations with no activities after 2020 were not included in the list.

Organizations were categorized, and information about them was collected in three ways:

➤ Review of the CSO database on the website cso-georgia.org, where 203 organizations indicate that they are working on gender issues. CRRC-Georgia contacted all of them and collected information about the organizations based on the mapping criteria.

➤ Search of articles/posts in online media and social networks.

➤ Interviews with representatives of the identified non-governmental organizations working on gender equality and the protection of women's rights.

Overall, 119 organizations were identified as a result of the mapping of CSOs working on gender issues and the protection of women's rights. The mapping collected the following information about the organizations: the type of organization, the number of permanent staff, the municipalities where the organization conducts activities, the organization's target groups and the organization's field(s) of activity.

2.3 QUALITATIVE STUDY

As part of the qualitative component of the study, 10 in-depth interviews and five focus groups were conducted.

In-depth interviews were held with representatives of United Nations development agencies operating in Georgia and other international and local donor organizations that closely cooperate with local CSOs. The interviews intended to study their experience and perspectives on the capacity of organizations working on gender issues and the protection of women's rights as well as the challenges that these organizations are facing.

Focus group discussions were conducted with representatives of local non-governmental organizations, with the aim of studying the capacity and needs of the organizations in depth. Representatives of non-governmental organizations working in Tbilisi and in the regions participated in the focus group discussions.

Detailed information about the in-depth interviews and focus groups is provided in Tables 1, 2 and 3 of the annex.

2.4 QUANTITATIVE STUDY

The quantitative component of the study included an online survey that aimed to explore the capacity and

needs of the organizations. The online survey was based on a questionnaire, which was based on the qualitative study results. Before the main fieldwork, a pilot survey was held with four organizations. The questionnaire was updated as a result of the pilot study results.

The link to the online survey was sent to all 119 identified organizations; of them, 58 CSOs participated in the survey. The online survey was conducted between 16 October and 1 November 2023.

Table 4 of the annex provides the list of organizations that participated in the online survey.

The small number of organizations that completed the questionnaire did not allow for generalization of the survey results on CSOs, taking into consideration that not all organizations working on gender equality and the protection of women's rights could have been identified and contacted. However, the number of surveyed organizations was sufficient to enable the researchers to draw a general picture, including identifying the main challenges, the capacity of organizations and the primary trends.

2.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study has certain limitations that should be considered when interpreting the results:

- Absence of a unified list of all civil society organizations – There is limited information on the CSOs actively working on gender equality and the protection of women's rights. Therefore, despite multiple attempts, there is a risk that some organizations could not be identified by the study and thus were not contacted.

- Lack of CSO needs and performance assessments and studies on the subject – One of the challenges identified during the study was the lack of prior studies and assessments on the situation and activities of organizations working on gender equality and the protection of women's rights.

- Lack of an impartial perspective – The data are based on self-assessment of the CSOs, which creates the risk that the data could contain biased assessments.

3. LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK ON GENDER EQUALITY AND THE PROTECTION OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN GEORGIA

Since gaining independence, Georgia has taken a number of important steps towards gender equality and women's empowerment.

Georgia ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1994.[1] By ratifying the convention, Georgia became accountable to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. In 2004, the Gender Equality Council of the Parliament of Georgia was established, and in 2006, the Parliament adopted the State Concept on Gender Equality,[2] which was updated in 2022. Also in 2006, the Law on Combating Human Trafficking and the Law on Violence against Women and/or Elimination of Domestic Violence, Protection and Support of Victims of Violence were both adopted.[3] In 2010, the Law on Gender Equality was adopted in Georgia,[4] and in 2011, on the basis of UN Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security, the first national action plan was approved.[5] In 2012, on the basis of amendments to the Criminal Code of Georgia, domestic violence was recognized as a criminal law offence.[6] Moreover, in 2014, the Parliament of Georgia adopted the country's first Law on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination.[7]

Importantly, in 2017, the Government of Georgia ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention),[8] which was a step forward towards the improvement of legislative framework on violence against women issues. The same year saw the creation of the Inter-Agency Commission on Gender Equality, Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, tasked with implementing and coordinating the national action plan on gender equality and women's empowerment.[9] In 2019, the Parliament of Georgia adopted the Law on Sexual Harassment and made respective amendments to both the Labour Code

of Georgia[10] and the Code of Administrative Offences of Georgia.[11] Moreover, in 2020, the Parliament of Georgia adopted amendments to the Election Code of Georgia,[12] according to which the political parties are required to have a woman as every fourth candidate in the proportional list presented to the Central Election Commission.

In Georgia, institutional mechanisms supporting women's empowerment operate across various branches and levels. In the legislative branch, there is the Gender Equality Council of the Parliament; in the executive branch, the Inter-Agency Commission on Gender Equality, Violence against Women and Domestic Violence; at the local level, the municipal gender equality councils; and at the national level, the Ombudsman's Office.[13]

Despite the progress achieved, existing data indicate that there are a number of challenges to gender equality in the country.[14] Notably, according to the 2023 Global Gender Gap Report of the World Economic Forum,[15] Georgia has a score of 0.708 in the Gender Gap Index, ranking 76th out of 146 countries.[16] However, in 2022, Georgia ranked 55th out of 146 countries, with a score of 0.731.[17] Importantly, in 2023, significant deterioration was indicated in the following sub-indices: health (in 2022, ranking 37th with a score of 0.978; in 2023, ranking 56th with a score of 0.974) and political empowerment (in 2022, ranking 57th with a score of 0.248; in 2023, ranking 91st with a score of 0.163).

According to the 2022 'Report of the Public Defender of Georgia on the Situation of Protection of Human Rights and Freedoms in Georgia',[18] violence against women remains a significant challenge. In November 2022, the Council of Europe Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO) published an assessment report,[19] which stated that GREVIO welcomes the efforts of the Government

of Georgia to strengthen women's rights by adopting new legislation and pursuing new policies; however, there are issues that remain problematic. In particular, GREVIO indicates the need to increase funding in order to sufficiently support the response to cases of violence against women. Moreover, the report also claims that there is a lack of comprehensive medical assistance for victims of rape and violence, as well as a lack of shelters for victims of domestic violence. At the same time, based on the recommendations outlined in the report, it is necessary to provide respective training to law enforcement body representatives on these issues. In order to support the prevention of violence against women and increase the effectiveness of combating the issue, the report recommends greater involvement of non-governmental organizations at all levels of preparation, coordination and implementation of respective laws, public policy and programmes. It is also recommended to support the expansion of specialized services provided and managed by non-governmental organizations.

Despite the level of progress achieved in the fight against violence against women, Georgia still faces significant challenges with regard to the equality of LGBTQI+ groups. In 2000, Georgia adopted a new Criminal Code that no longer includes an article recognizing homosexuality as a crime.[20] However, events related to Pride Week in recent years indicate the spread of homophobia and transphobia in Georgia.[21] In July 2023, before the start of Pride Week, the Georgian Orthodox Church demanded a law on the prohibition of queer propaganda.[22] Several days later, representatives of far-right groups stormed an event organized within Pride Week.[23]

Thus, it is important to strengthen the work on gender equality and the protection of the rights of women and LGBTQI+ groups, particularly through the crucial role of civil society organizations.

As for legislation regulating the work of non-governmental organizations, the main legislative acts regulating the registration and work procedures of NGOs are the Civil Code of Georgia and the Law of Georgia on Entrepreneurs.[24] Registration of public organizations is dictated by the Civil Code of Georgia, the Law of Georgia on Entrepreneurs, and the Order of the Minister of Justice on adopting the instruction of registration procedures of for-profit and non-profit entities.[25] According to the 2023 report of the CSO Meter,[26] the legislation component in Georgia is assessed at 5.2 points out of the maximum 7 points. Nonetheless, overall, Georgia has one of the most flexible legislative frameworks for the operation of civil society organizations.[27] Registration can be completed in one day, costs are minimal, the list of documents to be submitted is brief, and the law provides CSOs with sufficient flexibility to determine their structure.[28]

In light of this more or less favourable situation, the Georgian Parliament supported the first hearing of the draft law on the transparency of foreign influence in 2023, which required individuals, CSOs and media outlets that received more than 20 per cent of their funding from abroad to register as "agents of foreign influence". However, due to large-scale public protests and harsh criticism from the international community, the Parliament abandoned the draft law during its second hearing.

The initiative was viewed by partners as an enormous setback to Georgia's democratic aspirations, since, if enacted, it would have had a devastating impact on the groups and individuals who actively work to safeguard human rights and democracy in the country. Despite the withdrawal of the draft law, these events heightened political polarization (between the ruling majority and opposition parties) and greatly harmed the dialogue between the legislative body and civil society actors, including women's rights advocates. Many public organizations working on women's issues and gender equality boycotted the activities of the Parliament's Gender Equality Council, refused to attend joint events and called for the resignation of the Council's chairman.

4. HISTORY OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF CSOS WORKING ON THE PROTECTION OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND AN OVERVIEW OF THE CURRENT SITUATION

In 1991, after Georgia gained independence, non-governmental organizations started to emerge in the country. They were mostly dependent on funding from western sources.[29] After the Fourth World Conference on Women (the Beijing Conference) and the start of UNDP's women's development project in 1997,[30] non-governmental organizations with the main focus of protecting women's rights started operating in Georgia. Interestingly, according to the primary state report submitted to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in 1998, the majority of women's non-governmental organizations at that time were involved in charity, cultural and educational activities; however, there were no exclusively feminist organizations. Rather, there was still a certain resistance to self-identifying as a 'feminist' among organizations, despite having a clearly feminist agenda.[31]

In that period, international donor organizations made several attempts to consolidate women's non-governmental organizations. In 2000, with the support of OSCE/ODIHR, the Women's NGO Coalition of Georgia was established. Moreover, in 2002, with the support of UNIFEM's regional project "Women for Conflict Prevention and Peace-building in the South Caucasus", the women's network "Women's Unity for Peace" was created. Despite the progress achieved, women's movements could not manage to consolidate effectively. One of the reasons, according to experts, was that the consolidation attempt took an incorrect approach, coming from donors in a top-down model. Such an approach, in this case, proved harmful, as local actors adapted to the requirements of international donor organizations instead of identifying existing challenges and needs around them, at the local level, and responding to them.[32]

Frequent legislative changes, a lack of consistent support and scarce resources had a negative impact on the development of women's non-governmental organizations in Georgia. Despite the barriers, women's movements achieved progress in raising awareness on human trafficking, domestic violence and gender equality issues. However, the organizations had to fight to be heard in political processes. The lack of cooperation between women's movements and government agencies hindered the progress of gender equality.[33]

Since the 2000s, there is little information about the development of women's non-governmental organizations. From the 2000s, however, specialization based on specific areas can be noticed in the work of these organizations. If organizations worked on a variety of issues before, they later specialized in those particular areas.[34]

In addition, the prominence of feminist messaging is now noticeable. If being identified as a feminist was problematic in organizations before, today this issue is no longer a challenge; in fact, there are a number of organizations that are openly feminist organizations and share an ideological platform. Despite this, there are still certain differences in this dynamic among organizations working in Tbilisi and in other cities and regions of Georgia. There is now a strong link between organizations and their target audiences. In contrast, prior to 2010, women's organizations that were not service providers but that worked more on advocacy did not have a strong connection with their target audience (women and girls); however, after 2010, this approach changed and positive trends appeared. Another positive change is how actively the organizations function today, including by being involved in strategic litigation and by establishing precedential court cases that attempt to address existing legislative foundations while eliminating legislative shortcoming.[35]

In the 2020 study 'Research Report on the Needs As-

sessment of Women with Disabilities for the Future Empowerment of Women',[36] there is a focus on the capabilities of organizations for women with disabilities. As the report explains, organizations for women with disabilities make an insignificant impact when it comes to lobbying the issues relevant for this group. The lack of access to funds and difficulties related to the assumption of individual responsibilities by women with disabilities working in those organizations are identified challenges.

A 2023 study on the social impact of community groups and projects confirms that community organizations are facing numerous challenges; however, even with minimal financial and human resources they manage to play an important role in their communities, increasing the quality of life and supporting its development.[37] According to the report, mostly women are involved in community organizations, which support their engagement in public life, self-realization, and socialization. As for challenges, they are related more to the issue of raising funds and a lack of human capital, as well as less

trust from society. The latter is a particular problem for ethnic minority community groups, which have to overcome many more difficulties due to established stereotypes and prejudice.

According to the 2021 Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index,[38] CSOs in Georgia are facing significant financial challenges. They have limited access to long-term funding, and they also depend on foreign donors. Advocacy efforts of CSOs are still active, but cooperation with the Government on sensitive issues remains problematic. At the same time, based on the same report, the existing infrastructure of CSOs is insufficient in addressing the diverse needs of society. Moreover, public trust towards CSOs has decreased. Despite the challenges, civil society organizations play a crucial role in Georgia's social and political arena; they advocate for a variety of relevant issues and maintain relations between communities, government and business. Therefore, they play an important role participating in gender equality and protecting the rights of women and the LGBTQI+ community.

5. RESULTS OF THE MAPPING OF ORGANIZATIONS WORKING ON GENDER EQUALITY AND THE PROTECTION OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS

The precise number of CSOs functioning in Georgia is unknown. As a result, the number of non-governmental groups focusing on gender equality and women's rights is also approximate. The Civil Society Institute (CSI) estimates that Georgia has about 1,200 civil society and community organizations.[39] Of those organizations, 203 claim to address gender equality issues.

The study identified 119 organizations focusing on gender equality and women's rights, all of which imple-

mented at least one project in the 2021–2023 period. The organizations identified by the mapping are registered as non-commercial (non-profit) legal entities, which is a common type of non-profit organization in Georgia. Approximately a third of the organizations (38) report working throughout Georgia (Figure 5.1). When it comes to regional distribution, the most organizations implement projects in Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti (22), followed by Kvemo Kartli (18), while the smallest number of organizations operate in Mtskheta-Mtianeti (3) and Racha-Lechkhumi (2).

FIGURE N 5.1:
Operation area(s) of the surveyed organizations (number; multiple responses)
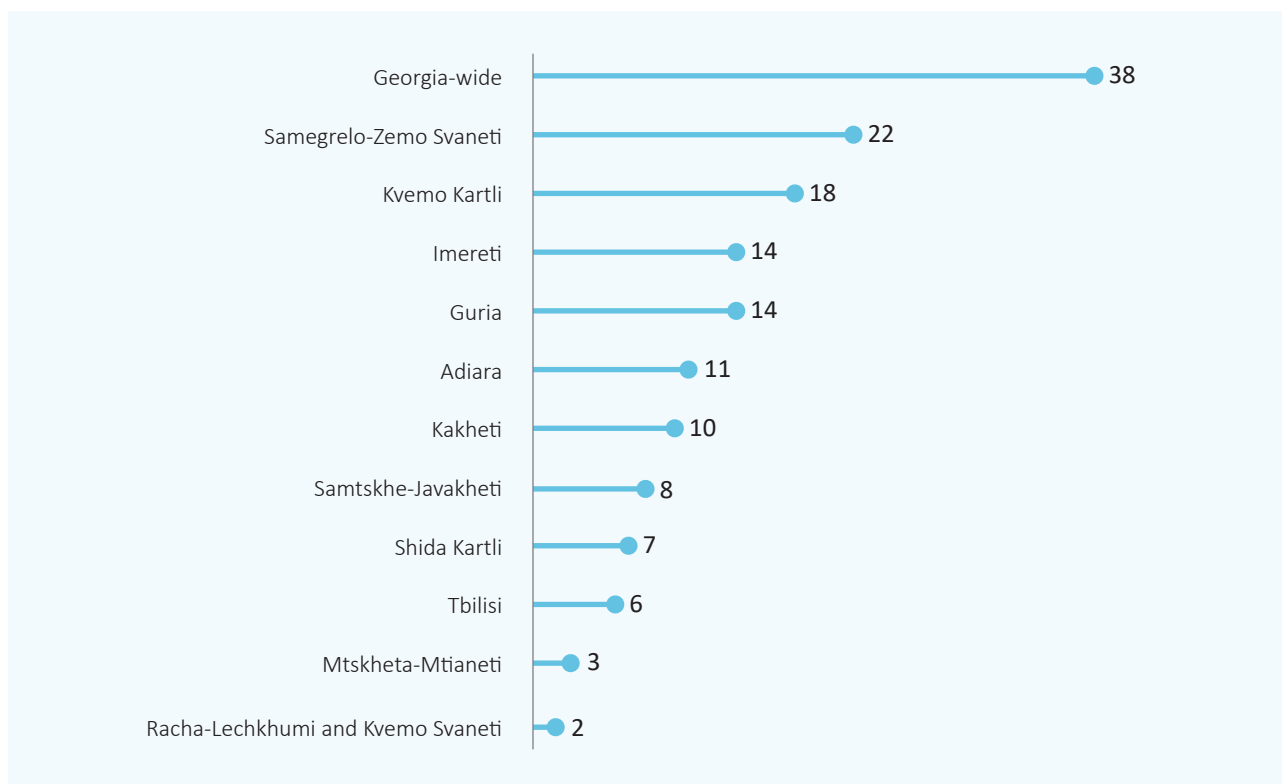
In terms of the main fields of activity for the CSOs, a large share of them work on gender equality issues (67 organizations), education, including informal education (51 organizations), human rights protection (43 organizations), violence against women (21 organizations), local self-governance (20 organizations), ecology (19 organizations), youth issues (19 organizations), communi-

ty development (17 organizations), women's economic empowerment (15 organizations) and the promotion of political and civic activism (13 organizations). In terms of their target beneficiaries, in addition to women and girls, many CSOs focus on young people (58 organizations), individuals with special needs (28 organizations) and ethnic minorities (25 organizations) (Figure 5.2).

FIGURE N 5.2:
Target groups of the surveyed organizations (number; multiple responses)
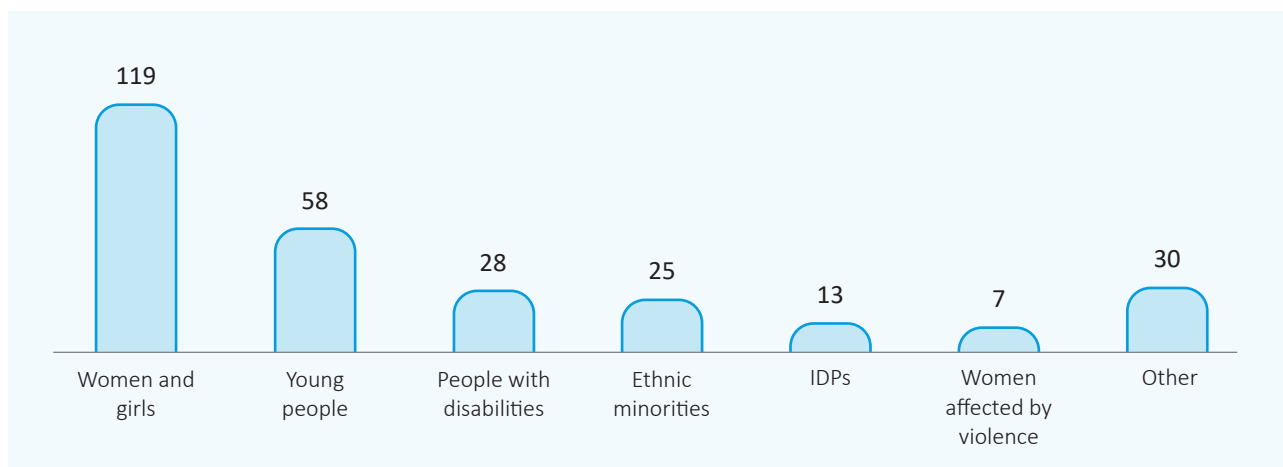
More than half of the CSOs interviewed for the mapping (62 organizations) had one to five employees (Figure 5.3). About a fifth of them (25 organizations) employ six to 10 people. The number of organizations with

between 10 and 15 employees (eight organizations) or more than 15 employees (14 organizations) is minimal. A small proportion of CSOs (six organizations) have no permanent staff.

FIGURE N 5.3:
Number of permanent staff members
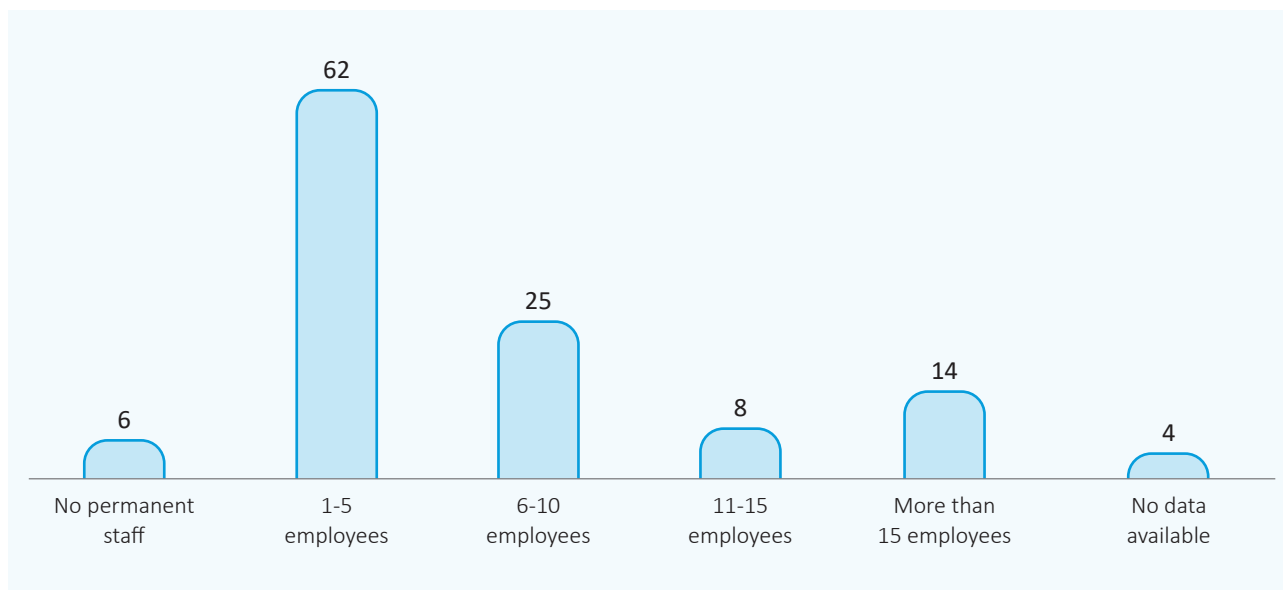
6. STUDY RESULTS

6.1 PROFILE OF THE ORGANIZATIONS PARTICIPATING IN THE QUANTITATIVE SURVEY

Overall, 58 organizations established between 1997 and 2021 took part in the quantitative survey. The majority of them were registered either in Tbilisi (26 per cent) or in another Georgian city (62 per cent), with only 12 per cent registered in a village. Importantly, the vast majority of the surveyed organizations (83 per cent) implemented at least one project in 2023. Only four organizations had no initiatives from 2021 to 2023. Two of them cited a lack of funding as a contributing factor. In the case of the other two organizations, the underlying issue was that the majority of personnel left or that the organization decided to terminate its operations.

In the past three years (2021–2023), half of the surveyed organizations (50 per cent) operated at the municipal or settlement level, 30 per cent at the regional level, and 19 per cent at the national level. Only one organization carried out projects at the international level during that period.

In terms of regional distribution, approximately a quarter of CSOs operate in Kvemo Kartli, Kakheti and Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti (Figure 6.1). Racha-Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti as well as Mtskheta-Mtianeti are the regions with the fewest organizations conducting projects. Importantly, in 2021–2023, only 20 per cent of the surveyed CSOs carried out a project near the administrative boundary line with the occupied territories.

FIGURE N 6.1:
Please indicate in which region(s) of Georgia did your organization implement projects in the past three years (2021–2023). (%; multiple responses)

Region	%
Kvemo Kartli	26
Kakheti	26
Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti	26
Samtskhe-Javakheti	24
Imereti	24
Guria	22
Tbilisi	21
Shida Kartli	17
Adiara	17
Racha-Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti	10
Mtskheta-Mtianeti	10
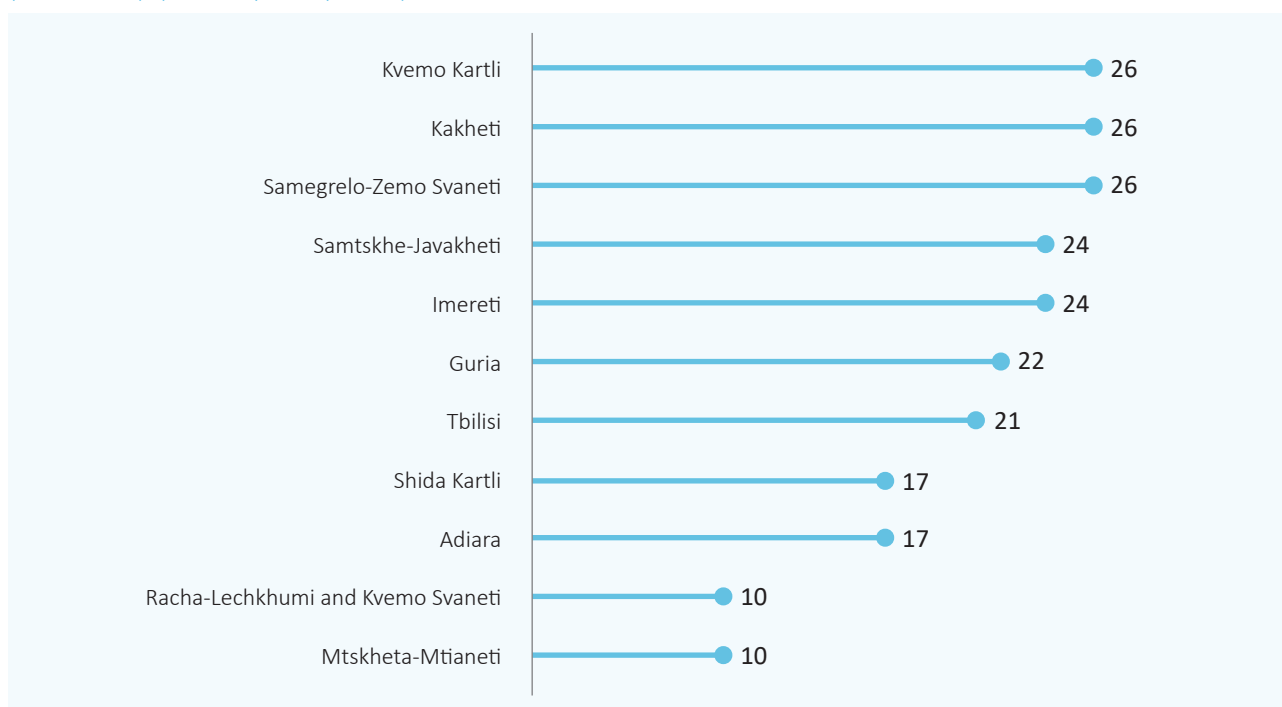
Young adults between the ages of 18 and 32 and women residing in rural areas are the target audience for the majority of the surveyed CSOs (Figure 6.2). Furthermore, just fewer than half of the polled organizations work with youth under the age of 18, members of eth-

nic minorities and individuals with disabilities. There are not many organizations that work with the LGBTQI+ community, the senior population, migrants or internally displaced people (IDPs) from Georgia's occupied territories.

Who or which groups does your organization mostly work with? (%; multiple responses)

Group	Value
Women and girls	100
Young people (ages 18-32)	76
Women residing in rural areas	74
Children (under age 18)	48
Ethnic minorities	46
People with disabilities	44
IDPS	28
Senior population	24
Migrants	17
LGBTQH community representatives	11
Other	10
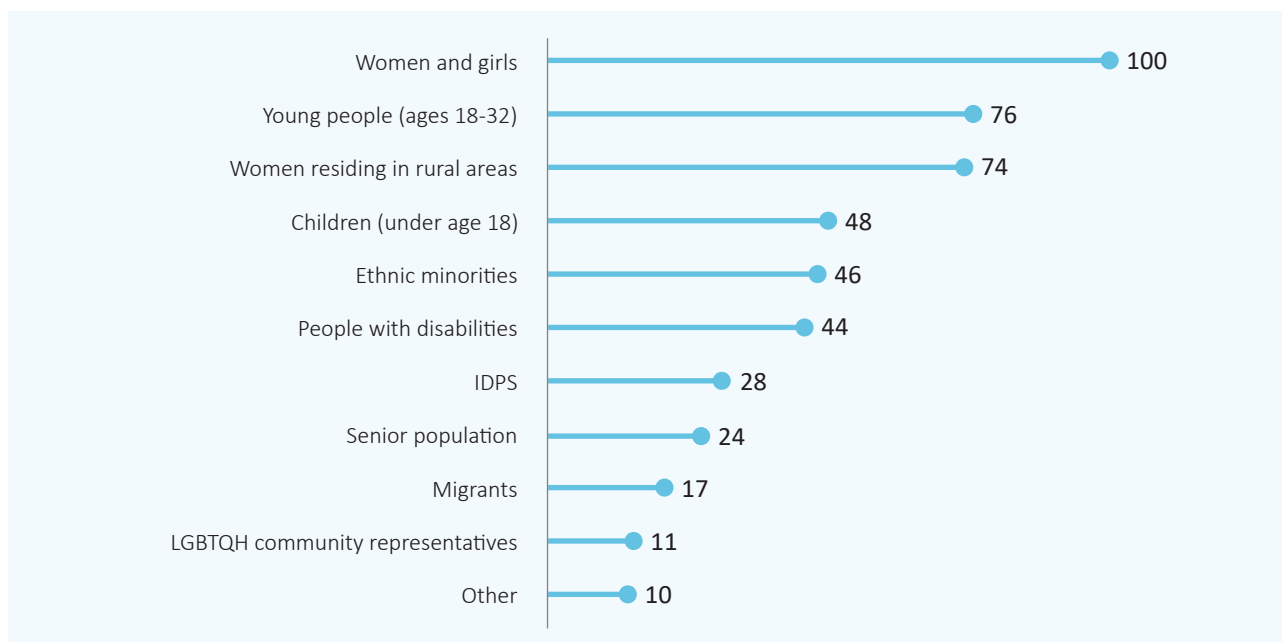
In terms of the number of beneficiaries, 30 per cent of the organizations had up to 100 direct beneficiaries in the past three years (2021–2023), 32 per cent had up to 500, 19 per cent had up to 1,000, and 19 per cent had more than a thousand direct beneficiaries.

The majority of CSOs polled (78 per cent) say that they want to widen their target audiences. Sixty per cent of organizations that do not currently work with people aged 18–32 want to cover this age group in the future. Fifty-four per cent of CSOs that do not focus on women living in rural areas want to work with this group of people. Forty-eight per cent want to work with people with disabilities, 43 per cent want to work with children, 39 per cent with IDPs, 35 per cent with migrants, 34 per cent with the elderly, 32 per cent with ethnic minorities, and 13 per cent with LGBTQI+ community members.

The majority of the surveyed organizations work in the areas addressing formal and informal education, combating violence against women and supporting women's economic empowerment (Figure 6.3).

FIGURE N 6.3:

What are the main spheres of activity for your organization? (%; multiple responses)

Sphere	Value
Education/informal education	85
Combating violence against women	74
Women's economic empowerment	70
Supporting women's political and civic activities	48
Ecology	39
Development of agriculture	30
Health care	26
Good governance	24
Supporting peace and security	20
Other	17
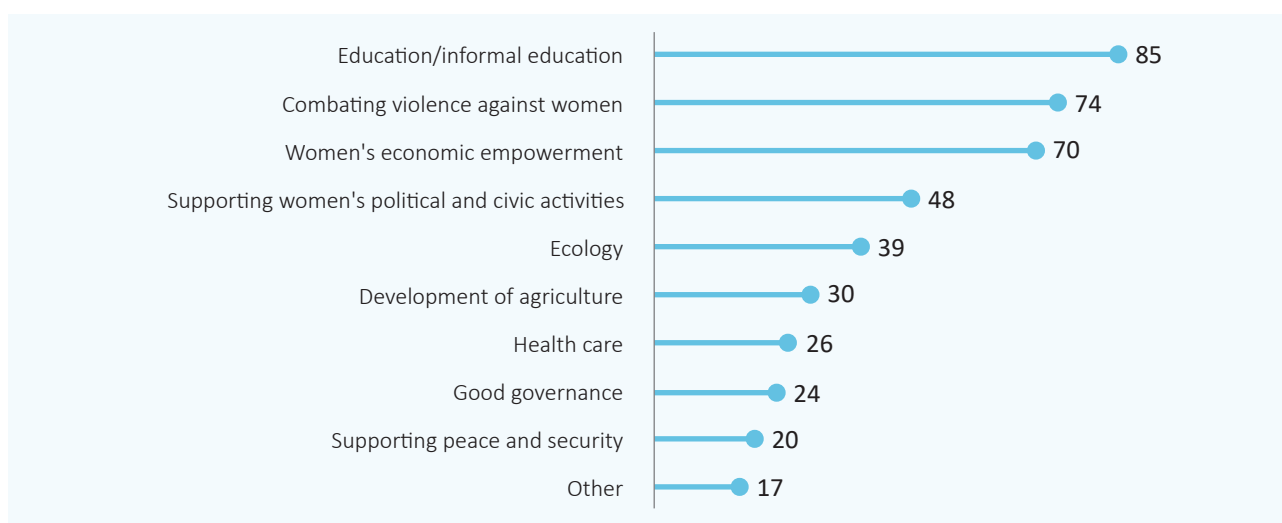
The majority of the surveyed organizations (93 per cent) are engaged in activities that raise public awareness; 76 per cent are activities related to advocacy or lobbying; 69 per cent offer training courses to beneficiaries; 28 per cent provide legal consultation or aid to beneficiaries; 22 per cent award grants; and 13 per cent provide healthcare services.

For 30 per cent of the CSOs, their leading activity is advocacy and lobbying, while for 20 per cent, it is the provision of services. Fifty per cent of the organizations say that they provide both advocacy/lobbying and service provision activities.

On the question of what the financial turnout for each organization was in 2022, 11 per cent of organizations refrained from answering; 7 per cent (four organizations) reported having no financial turnout in 2022; 13 per cent had up to GEL 10,000 of turnout; 33 per cent had a financial turnout between GEL 10,000 and GEL 50,000; 6 per cent had between GEL 50,000 and GEL 100,000; and 30 per cent had a financial turnout of more than GEL 100,000.

6.2 ASSESSMENT OF ORGANIZATIONAL CAPABILITIES

- The two main concerns for organizations are financial capacity and sustainability. Organizations rely primarily on international donor funds and thus lack diversity in their funding sources.

- Organizations are unable to set long-term goals and carry out actions that are consistent with their vision due to a lack of financial sustainability. As a result, they have to adapt to the needs and priorities of donor organizations.

- The lack of financial viability causes human resources drain in companies, particularly in the re-

gions. Organizations frequently struggle to attract and retain employees who have the qualifications necessary. Furthermore, due to a lack of human resources, one person is frequently asked to work on a variety of tasks at the same time while also fulfilling numerous duties. In addition, organization representatives often highlight the disparity between job duties and compensation, as well as the absence of other employment benefits.

- In the quantitative survey, one third of organizations expressed a desire to enhance their monitoring and evaluation capabilities. Representatives from international organizations also discussed this necessity. They argue that the lack of qualified persons addressing monitoring and evaluation in organizations is a problem, as is the lack of understanding for its necessity.

The organizational capacity assessment of the CSOs was based on an analysis of the management and governance of the organizations, their financial capabilities, human resources, monitoring and evaluation skills, and other mechanisms.

6.2.1 MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

A large majority of women's organizations participating in the survey positively assess the capacity of their organization in terms of the organization's management and governance (78 per cent), as well as the structure and operations system of the organization (64 per cent). At the same time, the majority of organizations positively assess their employees' skills in project management (80 per cent), financial management (79 per cent) and project reporting (78 per cent) (Figure 6.4). The number of organizations that assess the above-mentioned skills as satisfactory or bad is small. Notably, 37 per cent of the CSOs named project management as their strong suit, while 24 per cent named financial management.

How would you assess the skills of your organization's employees in the following areas? (%)

	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Bad	Do not have those skills at all
Project management	28	52	20		
Financial management	35	44	17	2	2
Project reporting	35	54	20	2	

Legend: ● Very good ○ Good ○ Satisfactory ○ Bad ○ Do not have those skills at all
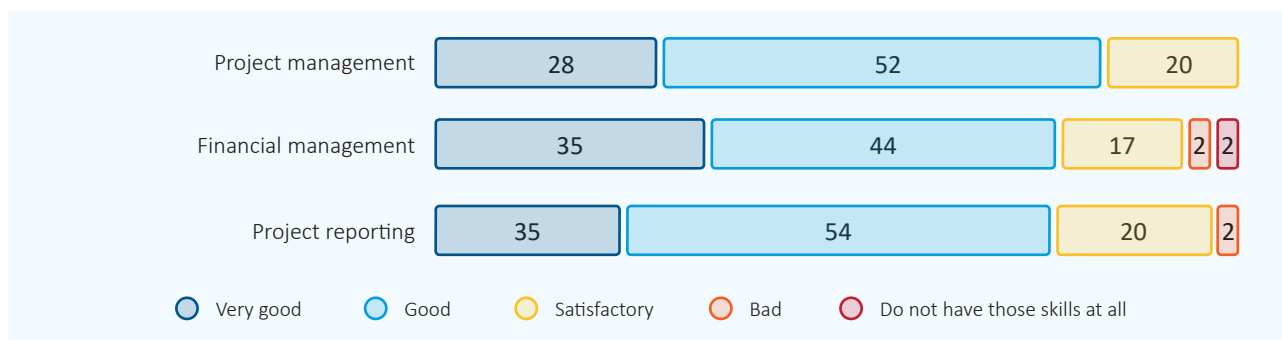
Similar to the CSOs participating in the survey, representatives of women's organizations placed less emphasis on organizational needs in terms of management. They only highlighted that often the organization heads have to write project proposals themselves, which usually requires specific knowledge and additional time. Hence, they would like to train their employees in proposal writing as well as project management.

The majority of the surveyed organizations have a managing board (78 per cent), an official action plan or written strategy of organizational development (72 per cent), a clearly defined organizational structure with a job description for every employee (67 per cent), and guidelines and instruments supporting project development (72 per cent) (Figure 6.5). Moreover, 59 per cent of the surveyed CSOs prepare an annual financial report, and 48 per cent prepare an annual activity report. Additionally, 48 per cent have a mechanism to monitor their supplies or inventory, and 31 per cent have guidelines or standard operating procedures.

FIGURE N 6.5:
Does your organization have the following? (%)

	Yes	No
A governing board	78	22
An official/written strategy or action plan	72	28
Guiding principles and instruments to support project development	72	28
A clearly defined organizational structure with a job description for every employee	67	33
An annual financial report	59	41
A mechanism for storage/inventory monitoring	48	52
An annual activity report	48	52
Standard operating procedures	31	69

Legend: ○ Yes ○ No

Despite the high self-assessment of the CSOs, when discussing the organizational capabilities of women's organizations, representatives of international organizations highlighted a lack of internal institutional development, including a lack of internal institutional structure and resources. They spoke about a lack of management skills in women's organizations, which includes management of both the organization itself and separate projects. According to them, organizations often struggle to develop detailed plans, budgets or project proposals. On the project implementation and finalization level, they find it hard to provide reports that meet the donor requirements, especially in terms of providing information relevant to the outcome evaluation indicators and in terms of analytical reporting.

Often, the activity of only several employees defines the effectiveness of a CSO; this is considered an institutional weakness of organizations, because if these staff members leave, then the organization may face the risk of ceasing operations. A fifth (20 per cent) of the surveyed organizations indicated that the appointment of the organization's head is permanent. At the same time, when asked when was the last time the organization's head changed, 35 per cent of the organizations answered that the head had never changed. According to 11 per cent, the organization's head has not changed for more than five years. Some of the representatives of international organizations noted that a large share of non-governmental organizations are a 'one-woman show'—that is, organizations centred around one person. Often, this person is the founder of the organization, and due to the aforementioned institutional weakness, it is not clear whether the organization will manage to continue functioning if/when this specific person leaves and is no longer involved in its activities.

6.2.2 FUNDRAISING AND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Financial capabilities and sustainability were named as two of the most important problems, both by women's organizations and by international organizations.

When discussing financial capabilities, the majority of the surveyed organizations (70 per cent) say that their main challenge is fundraising. At the same time, 63 per cent of organizations would like to increase their employees' capacity to fundraise. Generally, CSOs do not evaluate the fundraising and sustainability of their organization very positively. Almost half of the surveyed CSOs (48 per cent) report that the capacity of their organization to fundraise is satisfactory; 33 per cent assess their capacity positively, while 19 per cent assess it negatively.

Notably, sources of CSO funding are not diverse, with CSOs mostly dependent on donors. The majority of the organizations participating in the online survey received funding from international development agencies and donor organizations, including UN agencies operating in Georgia, in the past three years (2021–2023). Moreover, this is the main source of funding for the surveyed organizations. Furthermore, more than half of the organizations (52 per cent) have received funding from local civil society organizations (Figure 6.6). The number of those that have raised funds through their own economic activities and/or through donations from individuals, the State, membership fees, crowdfunding, community funds or businesses is relatively small. At the same time, the number of sources and donors through which the organizations were funded in the past three years (2021–2023) is not diverse. In 2021–2023, the surveyed organizations received funding from a minimum of one and a maximum of 19 donors, with four sources on average. Additionally, 22 per cent of the surveyed organizations claim to have received funding from UN Women.

Grants from international donor organizations
(apart from the UN agencies operating in Georgia) — 59

Grants issued by local CSOs — 52

Grants received from UN agencies operating in Georgia — 41

Income from own economic activities — 19

Donations from individuals — 17

State funding — 9

Membership fees — 9

Crowdfunding — 7

Community fund — 6

Funding received from business — 6

Other — 4
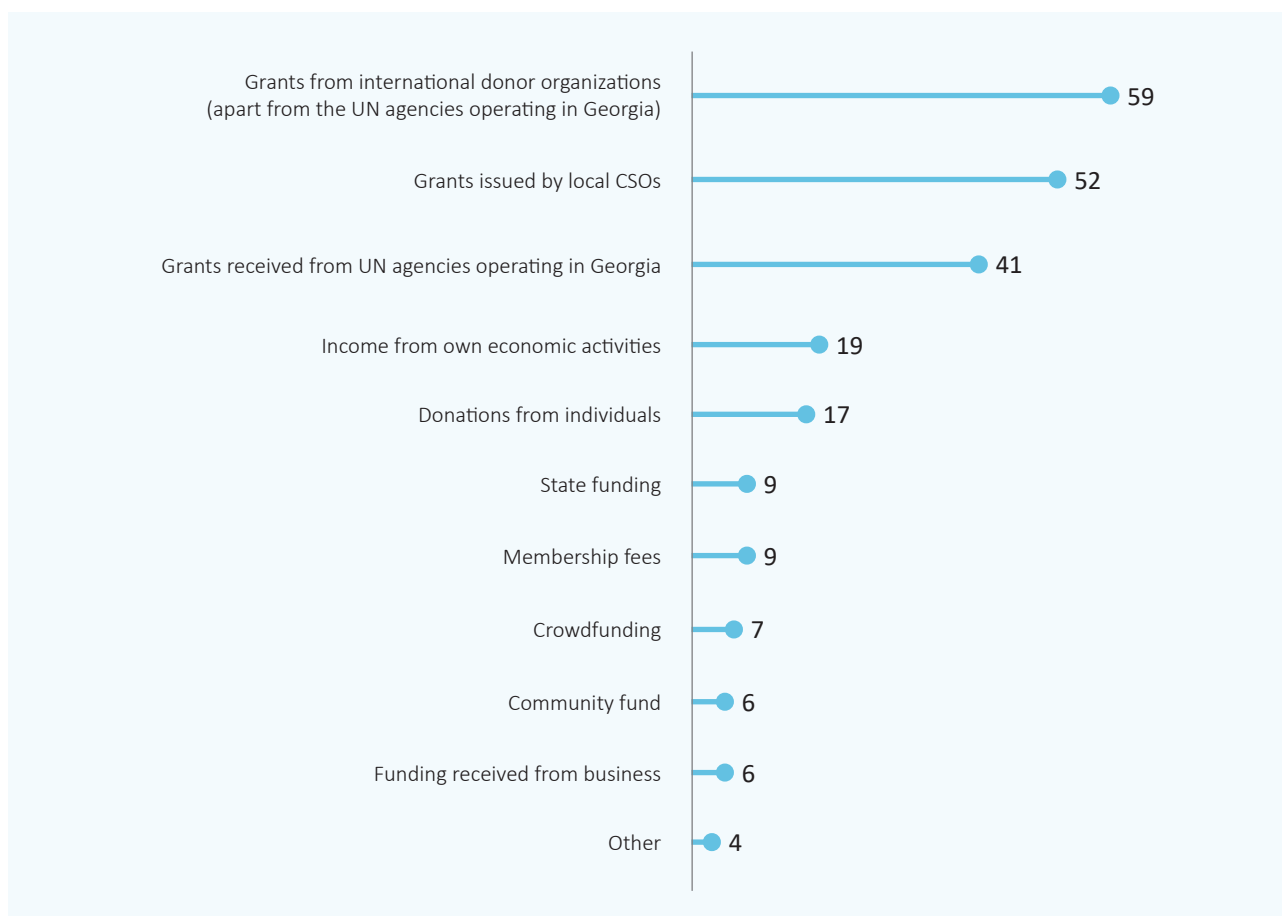
Representatives of international organizations noted unanimously that full dependence on donors and a lack of alternative sources of funding is a significant challenge for women's organizations and for the development of civil society in general. It is directly reflected on the sustainability of CSOs. As an international organization representative stated: "If funding stops, they will stop functioning."

According to another representative of an international organization, during the 30 years of existence of civil society in Georgia, with a few exceptions, organizations have not managed to create other sources of funding, such as social enterprises, membership fees or raising money through charity. Therefore, not only the implementation of specific projects but also the payments for an office's rent, utility fees or staff salaries depend on donor funding.

"Many organizations shut down because of [a lack of funding]. Currently, the [long-term] existence of even organizations that have been operating in Georgia for 20–25 years is not certain… There is no institutional mechanism, [and] there are very few budget lines at the regional level in order for civil society organizations or initiative groups to manage to get funding from the local [government] budget." —Representative of an international organization

Representatives of CSOs from the regions also particularly highlighted the importance of involving local self-governance units in financial support for organizations and the distribution of resources.

Moreover, financial resources coming from international development agencies and donor organizations are mostly short-term grants, which force CSOs to partici-

pate in new funding competitions frequently. Preparation of each new grant proposal usually requires a large amount of resources, and this is a sizeable challenge particularly for organizations operating outside of the capital. Representatives of organizations for disabled women especially highlighted this problem. One representative claimed that for them, "fundraising was a very large challenge due to the lack of experience in writing high-budget project [proposals] that could attract the EU, USAID, UN and other such donors". At the same time, according to regional organizations, with short-term projects it is harder to achieve the set goals and to involve the public in it.

Notably, more than half of the surveyed CSOs (52 per cent) do not have an employee who, based on their job description, is responsible for fundraising. A small share of organizations assess their organization's employees' skills in fundraising positively, the majority's assessment is satisfactory, and 17 per cent provide a negative assessment of staff skills in that area (Figure 6.7). As for the preparation of a project proposal, 13 per cent of the CSOs say that their employees have developed those skills very well, 41 per cent assess those skills well, and another 41 per cent assess them satisfactorily. Only 6 per cent say that their employees have not developed these skills well.

FIGURE N 6.7:
How would you assess the skills of your organization's employees in the following areas? (%)

	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Bad	Do not have those skills at all
Fundraising	2	15	65	17	2
Project proposal writing	13	41	41	6	
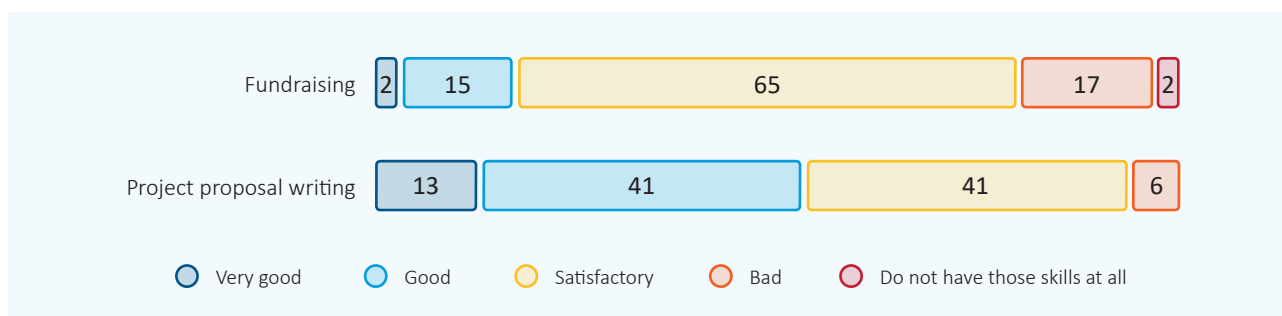
On the other hand, grant competition requirements do not enable the organizations to purchase or update their technical equipment or cover office costs. Often, a budget proposal should cover only project activities, which has negative repercussions for the sustainability of their organizations. Overall, 72 per cent of the surveyed organizations have an office (Figure 6.8). However, 31 per cent explain that they do not have

computers for all staff members. Of those who do have computers (69 per cent), 26 per cent consider the owned equipment outdated and requiring replacement. Fifteen per cent of organizations have no printer, copy machine or other necessary technical equipment. Of those who do have this equipment (85 per cent), 22 per cent said that it needs to be replaced.

FIGURE N 6.8:
Does your organization have the following? (%)

	Yes	Yes, but it requires renovation/ replacement	No
An office	72		28
Enough computers for all employees	43	26	31
A printer, copy machine and other necessary technical equipment sentatives note that it would	63	22	15
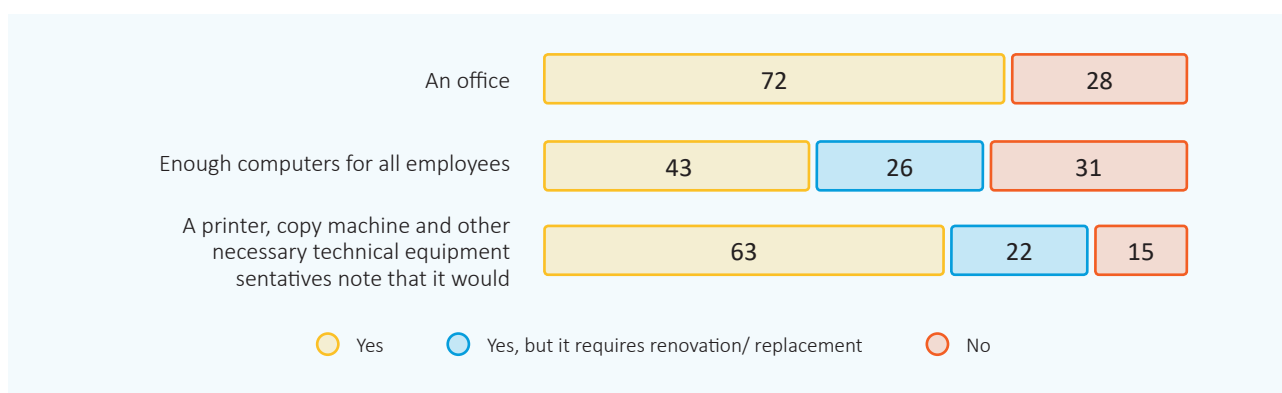
The CSO representatives note that it would be better if donors issued organizational development grants, or 'core grants', that would enable them to prioritize their needs. Without that, CSOs have to follow the donor's agenda. Often, while announcing grant calls, donors follow their long-term strategy, which does not fully or accurately reflect the local context.

"Often, [donors] set the priorities for us, when it should be the other way round. Needs should be coming from below, especially with regional organizations. Here, we have a lady who is knowledgeable, has qualifications and knows what the problems are in the regions. Such people should be defining the grant directions and regional needs and not vice versa." —Regional women's organization representative

According to international organization representatives, financial dependence on donors also means that organizations are fully focused on project implementation and cannot manage to develop medium- or long-term strategies and act on their own vision. "They have no opportunity or luxury to conduct the activities that would be fully based on their visions because donors have their own priorities, and organizations often have to fully adjust to the donor priorities because they have no other sources of funding in Georgia," according to an international organization representative.

Not only are strong organizations with a long history facing this problem, but so are small and relatively new organizations. In the event that funding ceases, organizations cannot 'survive' for the several months until they receive their next source of funding. According to the respondents, donors are also to blame, as the funding that they provide does not fully envisage the opportunity for organizations to earmark a certain amount as savings. They either have to spend the received grant fully or return the unspent amount. The budgets of many projects do not and cannot include costs beyond the actual project activities that the organization needs to incur in order to operate and become more sustainable. Representatives of women's organizations from the regions point out that in the regions, particularly in villages, organizations need a lot of support and empowerment, noting the need for "more investment", "more opportunities" and the "creation of such grant schemes

in which they will be compatible". Therefore, donors should set it as their priority to empower regional organizations and reflect that in their grant calls. According to one of the organization representatives: "We should not expect [regional CSOs] to compete with well-established, sustainable and strong organizations." Even the three years of experience indicated in the grant calls is a significant barrier for young organizations competing to win the grant and develop further.

When discussing challenges, organizations from the regions also highlighted the issue of accessing information about grant opportunities. They view the issue as an essential problem for regional organizations and would like to have a platform—for example, a website—that would collect information about respective grant competitions.

"In many cases, if they have no professional connections, if they do not accidentally come across [the grant call] on jobs.ge, then these organizations do not receive information about interesting projects, that they have recourses to implement, and these regional organizations, whether in Kakheti or Imereti, can carry them out better than any other organization from Tbilisi." —Regional women's organization representative

International organization representatives indicated certain inequalities in terms of access to financial resources between old and newly established organizations, on the one hand, and organizations from Tbilisi and from the regions, on the other. To receive funding from certain donors, it is necessary to comply with and address a great deal of criteria—for example, a minimum of five years of experience and the presence of an internal institutional structure and systems. A significant portion of organizations cannot meet these requirements. Therefore, they have even more limited access to financial resources.

"If I am not strong, I cannot get funding. And if I do not get funding, I cannot get strong. There are several non-governmental organizations—relatively stronger—that often receive funding from international organizations. And there are organizations that have absolutely no access to that." —International organization representative.

As for regional inequality, when organizations from Tbilisi write project proposals to receive large grants, they do not consult with organizations from the regions about their needs and problems. They contact regional organizations only at a later stage and then include them in the project. For this reason, the budget is distributed in such a way that Tbilisi-based organizations receive at least two thirds of the funding while the rest could be distributed among several other organizations. "This is an absolutely hierarchical attitude, which unfortunately manifests as financial inequality," one respondent noted. Regional and relatively small organizations often have no qualified personnel and no financial resources to hire someone to help with the preparation of proposals and the search for grant opportunities.

International organization representatives noted that apart from financial resources, it is challenging for organizations to manage their finances, to fully utilize a grant and to conduct financial accounting. They are not always capable of using the template for financial accounting that is provided to them and required by the donor organization. A portion of the organizations have introduced financial protocols but cannot utilize them fully.

6.2.3 HUMAN RESOURCES

Along with financial sustainability, the largest challenge for CSOs is human resources. Organizations, particularly those in the regions, do not have—or find it difficult to maintain—employees with proper qualifications. The problem is mostly related to experience and competence in project proposal writing and gender equality issues. Large-scale attrition of staff usually requires teaching and preparation of new personnel, which is a significant challenge for organizations. One of the organization heads noted: "I would greatly like to have a good team, to have discussions and debates about topics within this team. We do not have [such a] process. Something is thought up in one person's mind, and we are writing that in the proposal. Sometimes the project wins and sometimes not."

A large share of organizations participating in the study are small-sized organization. On average, the surveyed CSOs employ five people full-time and four people part-time. Twenty-six per cent of the surveyed organizations do not have a full-time employee, and 24 per cent do not have a part-time employee (Figure 6.9). Sixty-nine per cent of the organizations do not have interns, only 20 per cent have one intern, and 11 per cent have two to five interns.

Please indicate how many people are currently employed in your organization full-time and part-time or on a consultancy basis. (%)

	1-5 employees	6-10 employees	10 More than 10 employees	No employees
Full-time	54	6	15	26
Part-time/on a consultancy basis	54	17	6	24
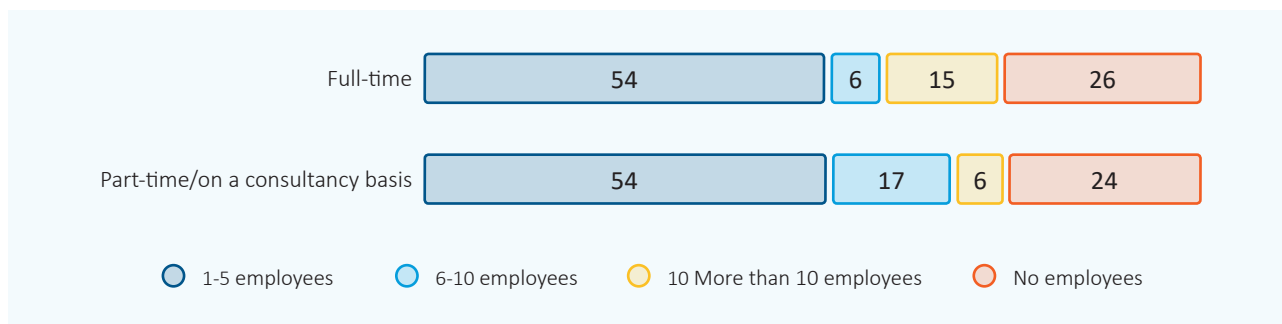
As for the number of volunteers, the surveyed organizations have on average six volunteers. Thirty per cent of organizations have no volunteers, 56 per cent have up to 10 volunteers, and 15 per cent have more than 10 volunteers.

Notably, women are quite well represented among the staff of CSOs focusing on women's issues. On average, these organizations employ six women full- or part-time or as interns. The majority of organizations (61 per cent) employ up to five women, 21 per cent have up to 10 women, and 19 per cent have more than 10 women employees. Only 11 per cent of the surveyed organizations have either one employee with disabilities (in two organizations) or two employees with disabilities (in four organizations), and 28 per cent employ ethnic minorities.

A large part of the CSOs (52 per cent) assess their capability in terms of human resources positively, 35 per cent as satisfactory, and 13 per cent as poor. At the same time, the majority of the surveyed organizations (69 per cent) believe that human resources management is executed well in their organization.

According to representatives of women's organizations and international organizations, due to the lack of human resources, often one person has to multitask and fulfil several responsibilities at the same time, which results in overtime work, such as working on weekends. High workloads, especially due to the specificity of work topics, causes employee burnout. Many organizations cannot attract and keep "knowledgeable and compatible" employees. They cannot have a highly qualified manager, accountant, assistant or other employees at the same time, and often these responsibilities lie with

one person. "It is impossible for one person to debate in the Parliament, debate on television, write a good project proposal, implement a good project, and then wrap it up with a good monitoring report at the same time," an international organization representative noted.

In addition, representatives of CSOs speak about a significant mismatch of completed work and remuneration for it, and in many cases a lack of other benefits. One of the international organization representatives highlighted the difficulty of creating decent and dignified working conditions for employees due to limited financial resources, which hinders the strengthening of the organization. "If I cannot provide health insurance and maternity leave to my employees, then what women's right can I protect, right?" She added that nowadays in Georgia, there are organizations working on gender equality and the protection of women's rights that do not provide their female employees with maternity leave or health insurance, nor support in terms of reproductive health.

This finding from the qualitative component of the study is confirmed by the quantitative data collected. More than one challenge was identified concerning the working conditions of full-time workers. In particular, only 15 per cent of those organizations that have full-time employees (74 per cent) say that their employees have health insurance covered by the organization. In more than half of the organizations (52 per cent), employees do not use paid maternity leave even for three months, and in 35 per cent of cases, employees work for more than 40 hours a week. At the same time, it is noteworthy that in 98 per cent of organizations, employees have a flexible work schedule.

The disconnect between the completed work and the remuneration received for it, which is mostly due to the lack of financial sustainability in the organizations, was named as one of the main reasons for the loss of staff. Women's organization representatives from the regions shared their concerns regarding the unfair distribution of salaries and the attitude of the donors towards organizations operating outside of Tbilisi. "It is somehow considered normal that an employee might have a salary of GEL 180 in a project, and this is considered normal, based on distribution. It is very hard to bring in qualified staff with this remuneration, and the entire field is left with hopes for activism," as a representative of a women's organization from outside of Tbilisi noted.

Knowledge of English in organizations is additionally problematic, as well as experience in writing project proposals, working with documents and having technical skills. This problem is particularly acute among CSOs operating in the regions. Notably, 45 per cent of organizations participating in the online survey positively assess the English proficiency of their employees, 24 per cent think it is satisfactory, and 24 per cent say it is poor. According to 7 per cent of the organizations, their employees do not know English at all. As for proficiency in computer software, the majority (79 per cent) assess the knowledge of their staff positively, while 20 per cent believe that their knowledge is satisfactory.

Challenges related to low levels of English proficiency were highlighted by international organization representatives as well. According to them, this language barrier is a primary reason why CSOs cannot manage to search for information about grant competitions and other opportunities, or prepare project proposals. This difficulty is particularly relevant for small local organizations.

Representatives of women's organizations said that their lack of employees proficient in English limits their opportunities to participate in high-level meetings. Moreover, in terms of professional development, they have fewer opportunities to visit other countries where they could learn best practices and raise their expertise in order to implement stronger advocacy campaigns. A representative of an organization serving disabled women noted that these problems are twice as acute for them:

"The country has 44,000 disabled women over [the age of] 13, and you cannot count more than 10 activist women who can speak English, and there are only three disabled women who have participated in international conferences abroad."

6.2.4 MONITORING AND EVALUATION

About a third (28 per cent) of the organizations participating in the online survey would like to raise their qualifications for monitoring and evaluation. International organization representatives raise this need as well. According to them, the lack of qualified personnel working in this direction in organizations is problematic, as is the lack of understanding of the importance of monitoring and evaluation.

According to the majority (80 per cent) of the CSOs participating in the survey, organizations perform the monitoring and evaluation of their projects. However, at the same time, only 39 per cent have an employee responsible for monitoring and evaluation. Additionally, 43 per cent of organizations assess the monitoring and evaluation skills of their employees positively, 54 per cent as satisfactory, and 4 per cent as poor. Notably, 28 per cent of organizations would like to improve their staff's qualifications in this direction.

Women's organizations from both Tbilisi and the regions spoke less about monitoring and evaluation. A representative of one of the organizations from a region noted that some grant calls are so complicated that local organizations find it difficult to complete them: "To develop its log frame, a non-governmental organization will probably need at least two and even three years of experience in writing project proposals actively, [just] to understand the log frame. A log frame for some of the projects is extremely difficult." This demonstrates that the capacity for monitoring and evaluation among women's organizations, particularly among organizations from the regions, is not sufficiently developed.

The monitoring and evaluation component was named by international organizations as one of the more significant challenges for women's organizations. According to them, many CSOs have no respective staff for this component; thus, monitoring and evaluation is

not done at the level nor with the quality required by donors. Organizations find it challenging to first define monitoring and evaluation indicators correctly from a project's initiation and then to collect the respective information later. Hence, some donors include the costs of hiring a monitoring and evaluation specialist in their project budget, while others offer training and consultancy in that area to organizations.

According to respondents, in terms of monitoring, the lack of these skills among the staff of women's organizations is challenging, while understanding of the necessity and importance of high-quality data is also limited. Organizations additionally often have not fully realized how they can use these data to make decisions accordingly, improve their activities or change them.

6.3 ADVOCACY AND COMMUNICATION

- Full participation in decision-making at both the national and local levels remains a challenge for women's organizations, especially after the initiation of the draft law on the transparency of foreign influence in March 2023.

- The majority of surveyed CSOs are formal members of a coalition, platform or network, yet there is a lack of actual coordination across organizations, as well as duplication of efforts on a number of issues.

- The disparity in attitudes between CSOs functioning in Tbilisi and the regions is a significant challenge. Organizations working outside of the capital are less informed and thus less involved in national-level advocacy efforts.

- The majority of CSOs communicate directly with beneficiaries through training sessions and meetings. Both women's organizations and donors agree that women's organizations need to improve their media and strategic communication skills.

This section on advocacy and communication addresses the views and experience of women's organizations and international organization representatives in CSOs' involvement in decision-making, cooperation with other organizations and communication with the public.

6.3.1 INVOLVEMENT IN DECISION-MAKING

The organizations' self-assessment of the involvement of CSOs in decision-making processes differs from the reality; the involvement of women's organizations in decision-making processes is quite low, especially since the events that followed the initiation of the law on the transparency of foreign influence in March 2023.

Generally, a large majority of organizations participating in the online survey (70 per cent) assess the organization's skills in advocacy and communication well. As for cooperation skills with the central and local governments when advocating for important issues, more than half of the organizations (56 per cent) assess their own skills positively, 41 per cent as satisfactory, and only 4 per cent as poor. Despite the majority's positive self-assessment, 22 per cent of respondents considered communication with the central and local governments as one of the challenges they face, and 24 per cent would like to improve the qualifications of their organization's staff in this area.

International organization representatives believe that there is a large gap among women's organizations in terms of knowledge and skills in advocacy. There are experienced organizations that know which issues they should take into consideration when making an advocacy plan and leading this process. However, many organizations lack this knowledge and skill.

Notably, representatives of CSOs from the regions claim that advocacy results do not always depend on their action and efforts. In order to resolve problematic issues and improve the rights and opportunities of specific groups, it is necessary to cooperate with the central and local governments. Nonetheless, in order to make changes, it is also important for government agencies themselves to show readiness, courage and will. In this regard, the CSO representatives highlighted the problem of the lack of awareness of NGOs' roles and functions, as, according to them, public officials often do not realize that the non-governmental sector "is an aide and not an enemy". Considering this, public officials in the muni-

cipalities often avoid meetings because they are afraid of being seen as "overly defensive" if they do not have answers to certain problems. In such situations, non-governmental organizations then have to explain that the goal of CSOs' constructive criticism is to identify existing problems and establish ways to resolve them, not to provoke any hostile activities.

Moreover, based on the assessment of women's organization representatives, the local governments, which are a frequent target of advocacy and an important partner for implementing activities for regional organizations due to decentralization challenges existing in the country, struggle to act independently. They follow the course of the central government, including when it comes to their attitude towards and cooperation with non-governmental organizations.

Overall, despite certain positive experiences of involvement in the decision-making process, representatives of women's organizations claim that they manage government cooperation either minimally or not at all. Women's organizations from the regions that have had a more positive experience cooperating with the municipalities and have had more support from them claim that the local government is getting involved in the projects of those organizations, especially when the local government has a good opportunity to portray itself well. Some believe that the local government rarely considers CSOs' views, particularly during local budget discussion processes, and only does so when their perspectives on specific issues align. Some believe that "if you are not confrontational, you can achieve certain things; much more can be achieved through negotiations, certain concessions, and compromises".

Representatives of women's organizations with negative experiences of cooperation with the central government say that state agency representatives do not feel accountable towards civil society organizations and, despite the fact that they have invested a great deal of intellectual work in the process of developing strategic documents and action plans, CSOs' positions on key issues are not taken into consideration. In certain cases, legislative initiatives are not shared with the civil sector in advance, or they have such a short consulta-

tion window that organizations have no time to "make qualitative, content-specific interventions and certain contributions," one CSO representative noted. The difficulties of working with state agencies are particularly hard for organizations working on LGBTQI+ issues. Due to their infrequent involvement in discussions and working processes, they struggle to participate in the decision-making process, and their recommendations often go unconsidered.

At the same time, according to respondents, sometimes the meetings have no discussion format at all, and civil society representatives have no opportunity to express themselves. Additionally, government agencies do not take into consideration the feedback that CSOs provide on specific documents. This is why representatives of civil society organizations often do not attend such meetings at all and have no expectation that government representatives will take their expressed views into account. Hence, they resort to alternative means and try to exert certain influence on government decisions through activism, public statements and communication with embassies.

International organization representatives also spoke of similar trends and noted that despite certain precedents and positive experiences of cooperation, significant shortcomings and difficulties have been noticeable recently. "Currently, we see that the space [of cooperation] is getting narrower and narrower, and many windows for cooperation are closed," according to a representative of an international organization.

Impact of the initiation of the law on the transparency of foreign influence on cooperation of women's organizations with government agencies

The quantitative study paid significant attention to exploring the issue of communication with the central and local governments and the involvement of organizations in the decision-making process before and after the initiation of the law on the transparency of foreign influence. It appears that after the initiation of the draft law, cooperation with both the central and local governments decreased (Figure 6.10).

What type of cooperation did you have with the following actors in the past three years (2021–2023)? (%)

Legend: ● Are partners ● Exchange information ● Do not cooperate ● Prefer not to answer

	Are partners	Exchange information	Do not cooperate	Prefer not to answer
Central government before the initiation of the law on the transparency of foreign influence	11	31	41	17
Central government after the initiation of the law on the transparency of foreign influence	4	26	56	15
Local government bodies before the initiation of the law on the transparency of foreign influence	28	50	9	13
Local government bodies after the initiation of the law on the transparency of foreign influence	17	44	22	17

Forty-three per cent of the surveyed organizations say that before the initiation of the draft law, the central government invited them to respective meetings and events. Half as many (22 per cent) say the same after the initiation of the draft law. At the same time, according to 57 per cent of the surveyed organizations, before the initiation of the law on the transparency of foreign influence, local government representatives invited them to meetings and events, while after the initiation, this number decreased to 46 per cent.

Importantly, 65 per cent of the surveyed organizations believe that after the initiation of the law on foreign transparency, public attitude towards them has not changed (Figure 6.11). According to 19 per cent, however, public attitude has deteriorated. Twenty-four per cent of organizations say that the attitude of the central government towards them has become more negative since the initiation of the draft law, and 31 per cent claim the same about the attitude change from the local government bodies towards them. At the same time, the majority of organizations (69 per cent) report that the attitudes of beneficiaries towards them have not changed; 35 per cent say the same about the attitudes of law enforcement bodies.

FIGURE N 6.11:

Has the attitude of the following entities changed towards your organization since the initiation of the law on the transparency of foreign influence? (%)

	Became more positive	Became more negative	Did not change	Had no point of contact	Prefer not to answer
Donor organizations	19	2	72		7
Beneficiaries	13	7	69		11
The public	9	19	65		7
The central government	2	24	26	37	11
Local government bodies	2	31	46	11	9
Law enforcement bodies	2	7	35	44	11

Legend: ● Became more positive ● Became more negative ● Did not change ● Had no point of contact ● Prefer not to answer
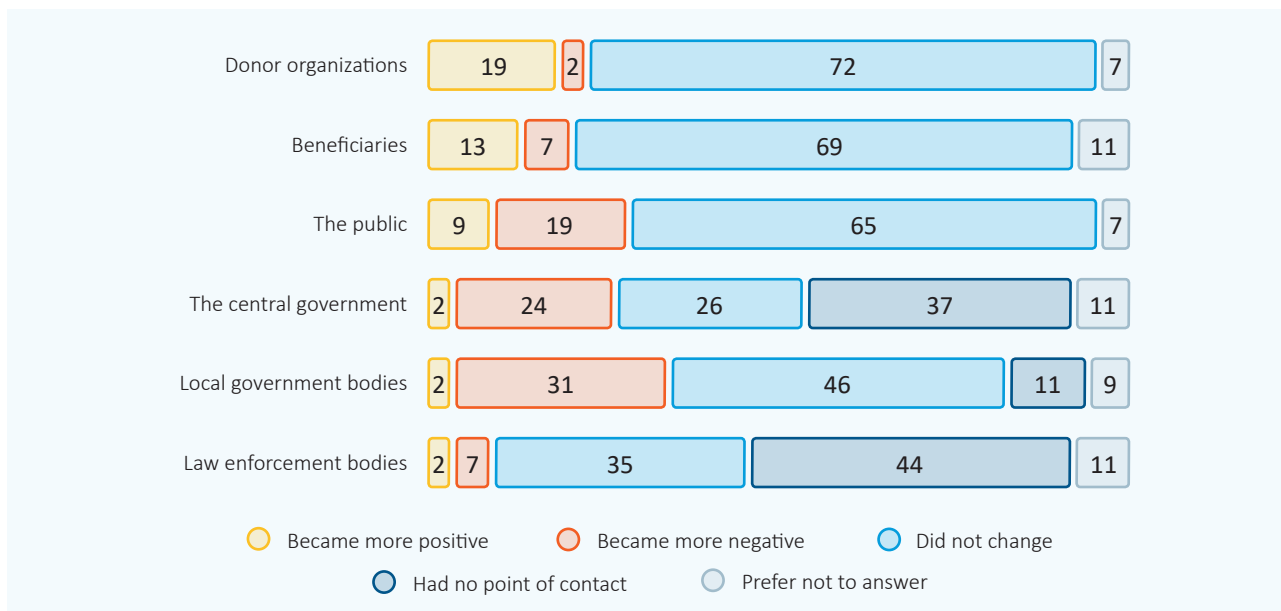
After the initiation of the draft law, a fifth of the surveyed organizations (21 per cent) assess the security of the organization and its members as less protected, 39 per cent as somewhat protected, and 35 per cent as protected.

CSO representatives also speak about the negative impact of the initiation of the draft law on foreign transparency in focus group discussions. According to them, after the March 2023 events, spaces for cooperation and communication with both the central and local governments have reduced and become more limited. Moreover, the organizations participating in the study claim that after these processes, they feel a more hostile attitude from government agencies towards them. In certain cases, non-governmental organization representatives are under significant pressure.

According to the CSOs operating outside of Tbilisi, the hostile attitude of the local government is sometimes reflected in their attempts to hinder certain activities of the organizations.

"Now, it may not be the case that someone is coming directly to you and throwing an egg at you or storming into your meeting, but no one knows how [the hostility will manifest]. And in our case, I can already share several examples of the local government trying to exert certain influence indirectly, not threatening you physically but having a certain influence on your relatives and loved ones; so, there is pressure in this regard." —Representative of a regional women's organization

International organization representatives speak about the same difficulties and believe that in this situation, government agencies should take action to restore "the broken bridge". On the one hand, it is important for government agencies to highlight the contributions of civil society, and on the other hand, it is necessary for civil society organizations to be ready to restore cooperation, in a manner favourable to all sides. Representatives of international organizations see their role in creating platforms for dialogue between the government and the non-governmental sector and supporting this process. Respondents noted that civil society representatives have the same expectations from them: that international organizations should be facilitators in cooperation processes.

6.3.2 COOPERATION WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

The participants of the survey confirmed the importance of cooperating with other CSOs when it comes to issues of partnership with government agencies and advocating for issues of importance. However, it is worth noting that joining forces is not always possible.

Sixty-five per cent of the surveyed organizations say that they are members of a coalition, platform or network of CSOs. Seventy-four per cent say that they have had at least one meeting within the framework of a coalition, platform or network.

As for different forms of cooperation, 52 per cent of CSOs say that they are partners with international organizations working on gender equality issues, 63 per cent say that they are partners with local organizations working on gender equality issues, and 57 per cent say that they are partners with NGOs working on other issues (Figure 6.12). Forty-six per cent of CSOs report that their cooperation with universities and research organizations consists solely of information exchange. Thirty-three per cent of the surveyed organizations exchange information with the private sector, while another 33 per cent do not cooperate with the private sector at all. It is worth noting that 43 per cent of the organizations would like to improve their competence in effective communication with donor organizations.

What type of cooperation did you have with the following actors in the past three years (2021–2023)? (%)

	Are partners	Exchange information	Do not cooperate	Prefer not to answer
Local organizations working on gender equality	63	30	4	4
Non-governmental organizations working on other issues	57	33	6	4
International organizations working on gender equality	52	31	9	7
Private sector	26	33	33	7
Universities and research organizations	24	46	22	7
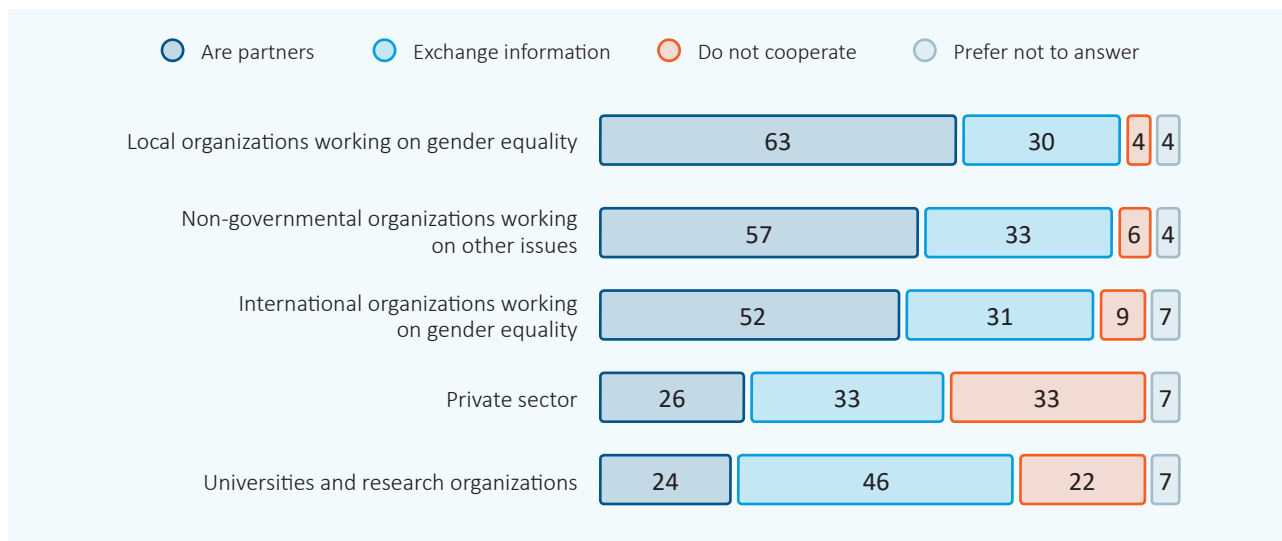
The representatives of women's organizations stressed the need to create and strengthen coalitions and networks in order to increase CSO involvement in decision-making processes, to assist one another and to solve problems. According to them, partnership and support are stronger in the regions. Regional CSOs have small networks founded on the basis of geography or cooperation within a certain project. They use such relationships in their work on different projects and in general to exchange information and experience with one another. According to CSOs, cooperation with other organizations becomes particularly important when short on money.

According to the representatives of CSOs and international organizations based in Tbilisi, there are no large networks of women's organizations working on gender equality issues that are engaged in strong cooperation with one another. Furthermore, the organizations often lack information on one another's work. This causes a lack of solidarity and a doubling of efforts. Another challenge is competition for grants and funds, as well as for working on specific topics and receiving credit for success.

A different opinion was voiced by a representative of an organization serving disabled women, who stressed that for them, the challenge was being involved in inclusive projects where they would be equal partners with women's rights organizations and not considered only as beneficiaries. According to her, the organizations working on disabled women's issues are not invited to high-level meetings on gender equality matters, as they are remembered only in the context of issues affecting disabled persons.

The representatives of women's organizations and international organizations have also spoken about a certain hierarchy and inequality between Tbilisi-based and regional organizations. According to them, the organizations from Tbilisi are reluctant to include regional organizations in their work when identifying problems and developing advocacy strategies at the national level. This happens when, often, regional organizations may be more knowledgeable about local issues. Regrettably, the process only invites such organizations to participate during implementation phases. Regional organizations have less access to donors and fewer opportunities to voice their problems and challenges. Regional organizations are also often dissatisfied with the little access they have to particular information. For example, often regional CSOs would like to be part of joint statements made separately by civil sector representatives, but as they do not receive information about such initiatives in a timely manner, they are denied the opportunity. As an international organization representative explained, the discussions around the so-called 'foreign agents' law accurately demonstrated the significance of having regional organizations involved in the process. Without the support of the regions, Tbilisi-based organizations

would not have achieved much of an impact. Therefore, regional organizations say that it is necessary for international development agencies and donor organizations to choose more diverse partners in Georgia and give greater support to regional and local organizations. It is also important that a platform for regular meetings be created where organizations can meet one another at least once a year and share their ideas, experiences and problems. This would make the network more connected.

Representatives of international organizations say that there are certain platforms and communication formats that are sometimes created by donor organizations and sometimes by women's organizations themselves. For example, UN Women has thematic groups that attempt certain coordination efforts. However, as an international organization representative says, local NGOs are not keen to share information with one another. There are other groups as well, such as informal chat groups like the November 25 Group, where some information is shared. However, just sharing information is often not enough, and it is important to have a discussion where each side has an opportunity to express a critical opinion and reach some consensus.
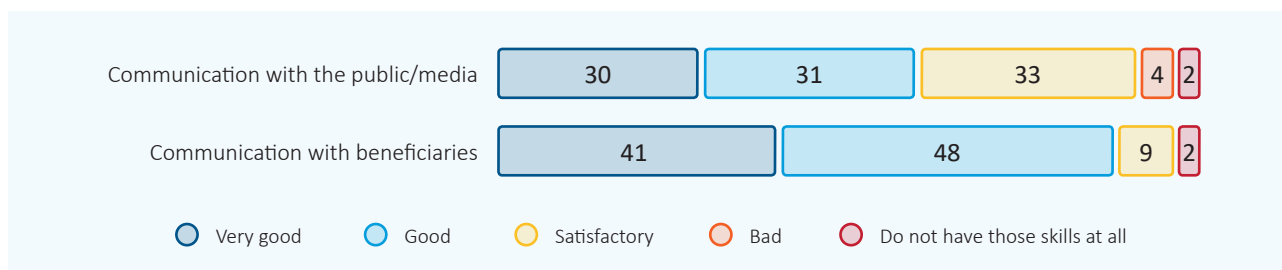
Another problem is a lack of coordination and a certain divide between the 'new' and 'old' generation of women's organizations. International organization representatives think that disagreements between these groups are linked to certain beliefs and biases on both sides. The 'old generation' of organizations believes that they have an advantage, since they have been working on women's issues for a long time and deserve credit for certain achievements. In contrast, the 'new generation' of organizations does not necessarily agree with this and believe that they have a more modern and practical vision on the topic. "This divide often serves as a barrier to coordinated and united efforts when advocating for common topics. That is why I think that more dialogue and coordination among CSOs and women's organizations is vital," as a representative of an international organization explained.

6.3.3 COMMUNICATION WITH THE PUBLIC

The majority of organizations that took part in the quantitative research component positively assess their ability to communicate with the public. Sixty-seven per cent of the organizations say that they have an employee responsible for communications. Forty-eight per cent of the organizations have an official written strategy for communication and information dissemination. The majority thinks that the competence of their employees in communicating with the public and the media is very good or good, and 33 per cent think it is satisfactory (Figure 6.13). A large majority also positively assesses the skills of their employees in communicating with beneficiaries.

FIGURE N 6.13:
How would you assess the skills of your organization's employees in the following areas? (%)

	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Bad	Do not have those skills at all
Communication with the public/media	30	31	33	4	2
Communication with beneficiaries	41	48	9		2

More than half (54 per cent) of the surveyed CSOs have their own website. Nearly all of the organizations have a presence on social networks. Ninety-four per cent have a Facebook page, 37 per cent have an Instagram page, 33 per cent have a YouTube channel, 19 per cent have a LinkedIn page, 17 per cent have a TikTok page, and 11 per cent have a Twitter/X account. Of those with Face-book pages, 33 per cent use it daily for communicating with the public, and 27 per cent use it several times a week (Figure 6.14). As for Instagram, the second most popular social network among the surveyed organizations, only 5 per cent use it daily, while 40 per cent use it several times per week.

	Every day	Several times a week but not every day	At least once a week	At least once a month	Less often than once a month
Facebook	33	27	18	12	10
Instagram	5	40	15	15	25
YouTube	22	39		6	33
LinkedIn		10	10	20	60
TikTok	11	33	11	22	22
Twitter/X			20	40	40

- ○ Every day
- ○ Several times a week but not every day
- ○ At least once a week
- ○ I At least once a month
- ○ Less often than once a month
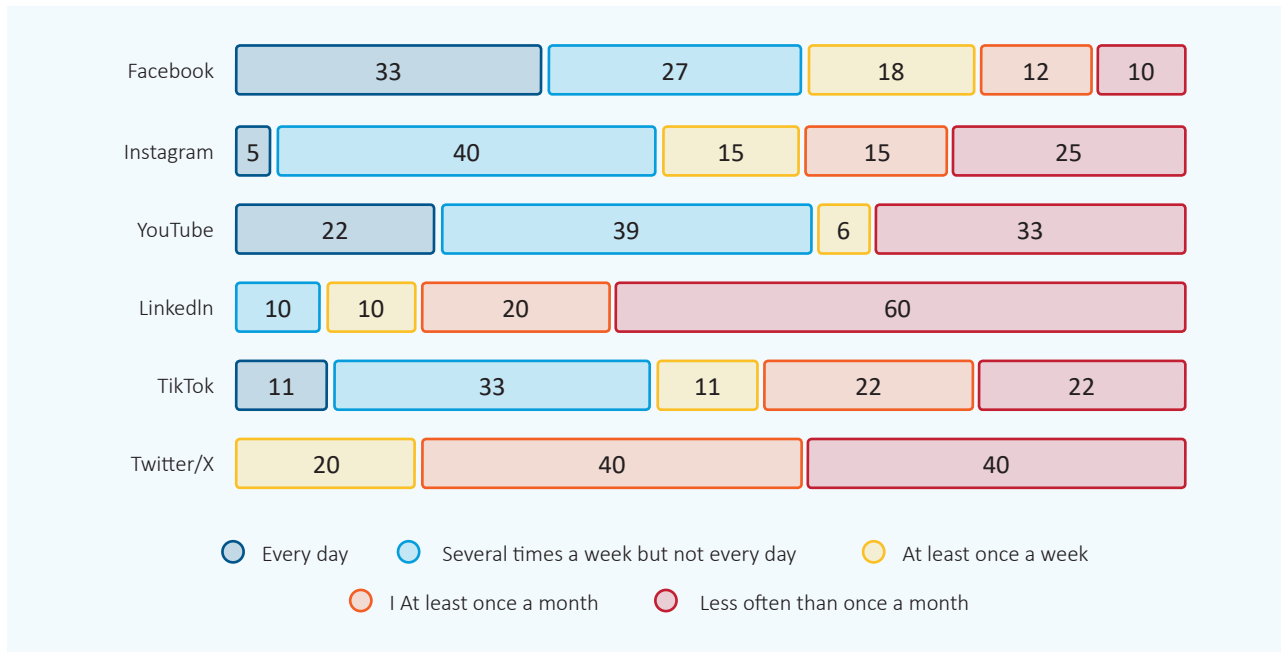
Fifty-two per cent of the organizations say that they are partners with a local or regional media channel; 30 per cent exchange information with one; and 7 per cent do not cooperate with one. Only 13 per cent of the surveyed organizations say that they cooperate with media based in the capital. Forty-three per cent say that they exchange information with them, and 35 per cent do not cooperate with them.

The representatives of regional organizations stress their knowledge of women's needs at the local level. In this regard, they have an advantage because they have more access to the local population and local matters. They also share common experiences and backgrounds. The representatives of some organizations mentioned that they work closely with local media in their region, which helps them spread information. It is more difficult for Tbilisi-based women's organizations in terms of cooperating with the media. They spoke of a lack of education in the media. On the one hand, it is a challenge for them to convince media representatives to cover issues of gender equality and women's rights. On the other hand, there is a need to raise awareness among journalists in this field.

Some representatives of women's organizations mentioned that there is a need to deepen their knowledge of strategic communications and public communications in general. They would also like to learn about new feminist approaches. Some representatives of regional organizations also added that for them, it was important to gain more knowledge about community mobilization methods.

"I would love to learn about new approaches and to attend training about how to get women out of their homes—the women who look at us through their windows when we go to them and refuse to engage in communication. I would want to learn how to influence their behaviour, especially the behaviour of their men, who block them from going out into society." —Representative of a women's organization

According to the representatives of international organizations, women's organizations should pay more attention to public communications, as they often fail to effectively deliver their message to the public. They sincerely and publicly broadcast the problems, needs and hurdles facing women's empowerment, but with little result.

Some respondents think that women's organizations should improve strategic communications and not only care about positive 'PR'. It is important to understand

the language used by organization representatives to talk with the public, whether it is with the local community, at a training session or through the media.

As for relations with the media, representatives of international organizations think that cooperation with the media is crucial for the success of organizations because, in modern-day Georgia, the media has a large degree of influence over people and can be a "powerful ally". For this reason, it is important that organizations overcome the differences existing between the media and women's organizations. The problem, though, as some respondents put it, is that the "popular language today is overwhelmingly that of hate towards women". Major television and print publications are not feminist-minded entities and do not support women. Therefore, it is particularly tricky for women's organizations to choose effective means of communication and messaging. In the opinion of international organization representatives, communicating with the media is often a challenge for women's organizations. There are people in these organizations who know how to speak with the media. However, the majority does not know how to give interviews, how to build relations with the media or how to choose the messages they want to broadcast to the public via the media.

Besides relations with the media, respondents from women's organizations also emphasized other challenges related to other types of communication skills and opportunities, including data visualization and how to share their work results via social media. CSOs are very different in this regard as well. There are those that do
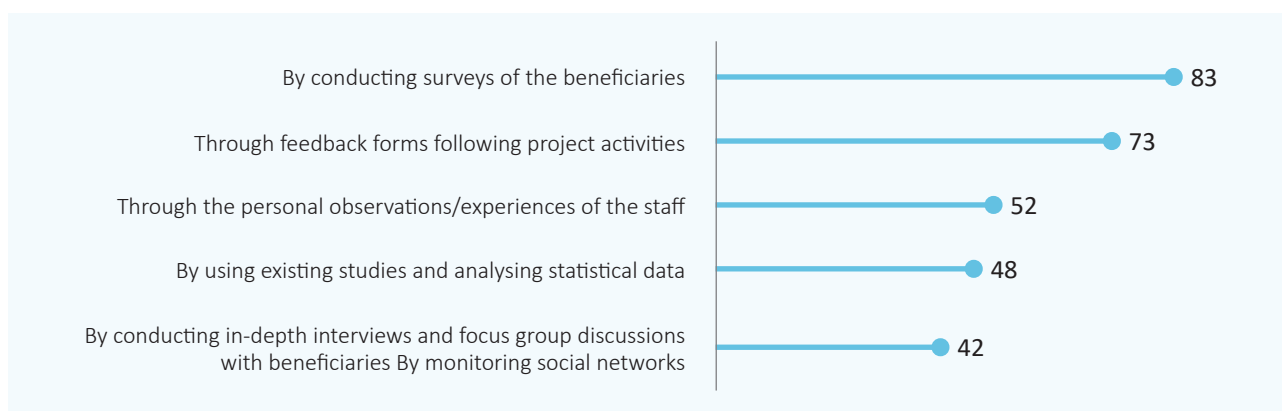
important work but fail to show it, thus failing to gain public trust and support among donor organizations (which is vital for securing funding).

6.4. RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS

- The majority (96 per cent) of CSOs collect information about beneficiaries' needs using a variety of methods. However, the vast majority of them still feel they need to improve their knowledge of research methods, data analysis and the use of research data.

- International organizations believe that it is still difficult for CSOs to undertake quality research or interpret the findings of existing research and use them in advocacy and the planning of future projects.

More than half (58 per cent) of the organizations that took part in the quantitative research component positively assess their abilities to conduct research and analyse results. The vast majority of the organizations (96 per cent) say that they gather information about the needs of their beneficiaries. As for the methods of collecting data, the majority of organizations say that they conduct surveys of the beneficiaries, collect feedback about the different activities they conduct, use the personal observations and experiences of their staff, and analyse existing research and statistics that are available (Figure 6.15).

FIGURE N 6.15:
How do you gather information about the needs of beneficiaries? (%; multiple responses)

By conducting surveys of the beneficiaries	83
Through feedback forms following project activities	73
Through the personal observations/experiences of the staff	52
By using existing studies and analysing statistical data	48
By conducting in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with beneficiaries By monitoring social networks	42

The majority of organizations that took part in the research claim to have experience collecting and analysing data using quantitative research methods (Figure 6.16). The majority has experience obtaining and analysing data from central or local government agencies. At the same time, the majority also has experience collecting and analysing data using qualitative research methods, as well as finding and analysing qualitative research reports and obtaining such reports from Geostat. Half of the surveyed organizations have hired a research company or a researcher to conduct qualitative or quantitative research. Forty-six per cent of the surveyed organizations report having trained their employees to collect and analyse data.

FIGURE N 6.16:
Does your organization have experience in the following data collection and research methods? (%; multiple responses)

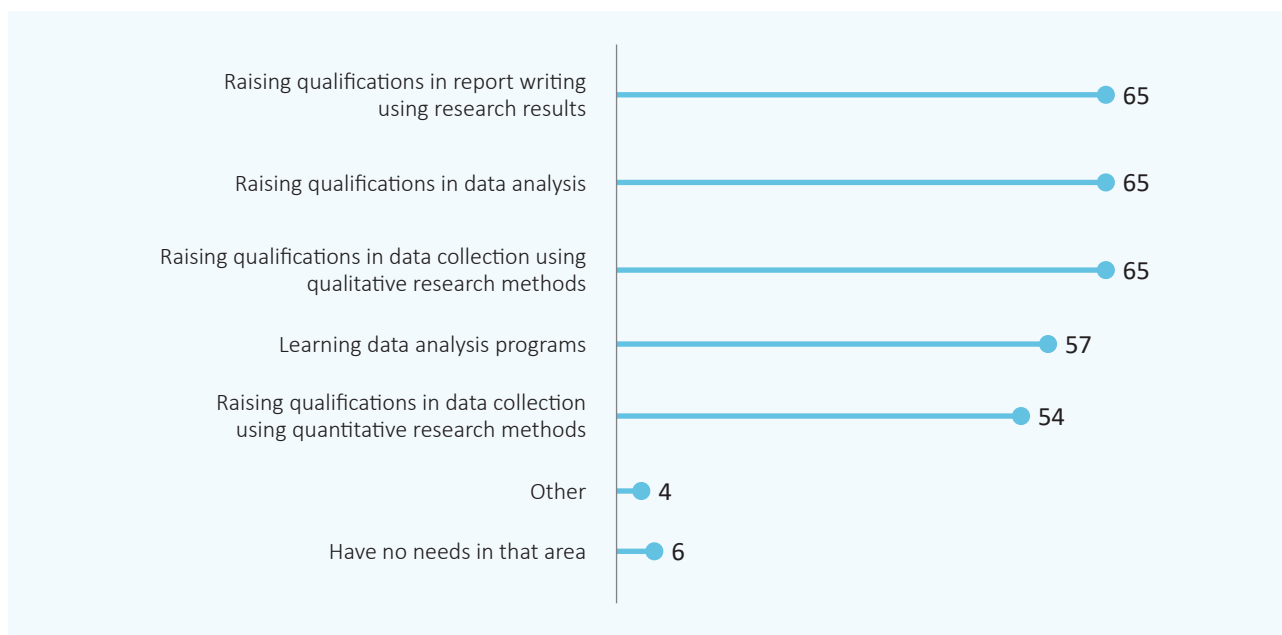|	
Collecting data through quantitative research methods	83
Conducting quantitative research analvsis	83
Requesting or finding data from central or local government bodies and analysing it	76
Finding and analysing qualitative studies/re ports	69
Collecting data through qualitative research methods	69
Conducting qualitative research analysis	67
Requesting or finding Geostat data and analysing it	67
Hiring a research company or a researcher to conduct a qualitative or quantitative study	50
Training organization staff in data collection and analysis	46

Half (50 per cent) of the surveyed CSOs say that they conduct research frequently and analyse existing research data when preparing project proposals or implementing projects. Forty-one per cent use similar approaches less frequently. Forty-eight per cent say that the research results often influence decision-making process within CSOs; 41 per cent say that this happens sometimes; and one organization says this has not occurred. Despite the positive self-assessment of women's organization representatives, the surveyed respondents of international organizations note that conducting quality research and using its results is still a problem for women's organizations. There are cases when organizations find it hard to differentiate research methods, do a proper analysis and draw conclusions. Besides the lack of deep and qualified research, the challenge for CSOs is also in realizing why research and data-based planning and decision-making are so important.

It is also worth noting that the majority of surveyed women's organizations would like to increase their competence in preparing reports using research results, in analysing data, in collecting data using qualitative research methods, in learning data analysis software and in using quantitative research methods (Figure 6.17). The fact that women's organizations require certain training in order to learn research specifics, methods and data analysis is also supported by the qualitative research. Even organizations that claim to have experience in collecting data and conducting research have acknowledged the need for additional training and knowledge.

Raising qualifications in report writing using research results	65
Raising qualifications in data analysis	65
Raising qualifications in data collection using qualitative research methods	65
Learning data analysis programs	57
Raising qualifications in data collection using quantitative research methods	54
Other	4
Have no needs in that area	6

The representatives of some CSOs spoke of the need to learn about such specific tools as gender audits and gender impact assessments. Awareness of the mentioned methods often happens at the central government level; however, they are not well known to the representatives of the civil sector and local government. Therefore, the latter need to be trained and taught about these tools so that they do a better job of providing legal expertise and advocacy.

During discussions, the representatives of women's organizations stressed numerous times that research and access to open data are crucial. For regional organizations, even the ability to access existing research is a problem. They also find it difficult to conduct research with currently available resources. However, the availability and accessibility of other open research pose a significant challenge. Having access to existing research would be a significant support for regional organizations in terms of identifying specific problems in particular fields and planning projects.

"When a donor organization contemplates this or that issue or considers announcing a grant in this or that region, it would be very good to also make corresponding research available for interested parties. Such research, no matter who it was conducted by, would be very important for NGOs as a guideline and supporting tool."
—Representative of a regional women's organization

A representative of an organization for disabled women stressed the lack of available in-depth research. She said that numerous research papers mention the vulnerability of disabled women, including limited opportunities for education and employment, but they do not express the reasons for this reality. Moreover, disabled women are never involved in fieldwork. If they were, it would allow for the collection of more reliable data, as, according to the representative, "Disabled women open up best to other disabled women." Thus, disabled women need appropriate preparation and support to become good researchers and to do an adequate job in the field.

6.5. GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT POLICIES, INTERNATIONAL APPROACHES, AND MECHANISMS

- Representatives of international and local organizations name experience as one of the strengths of women's organizations. Their profound understanding of gender equality issues and their capacity to articulate a robust stance on this subject demonstrate this.

- CSOs based in the regions need to increase their knowledge about gender equality and women's empowerment policies, international agreements and mechanisms more than CSOs based in Tbilisi.

- There are a number of issues about which the organizations have little knowledge or work experience, such as reproductive health, selective abortion and early marriage, among others.

The organizations surveyed in the quantitative research component assessed somewhat positively their employees' knowledge of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention), the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and the national policy of gender equality (strategies, (Figure 6.18). As it turns out, the employees of women's organizations have relatively little knowledge of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

FIGURE N 6.18:
How would you assess the knowledge of your organization's employees on the following issues? (%)
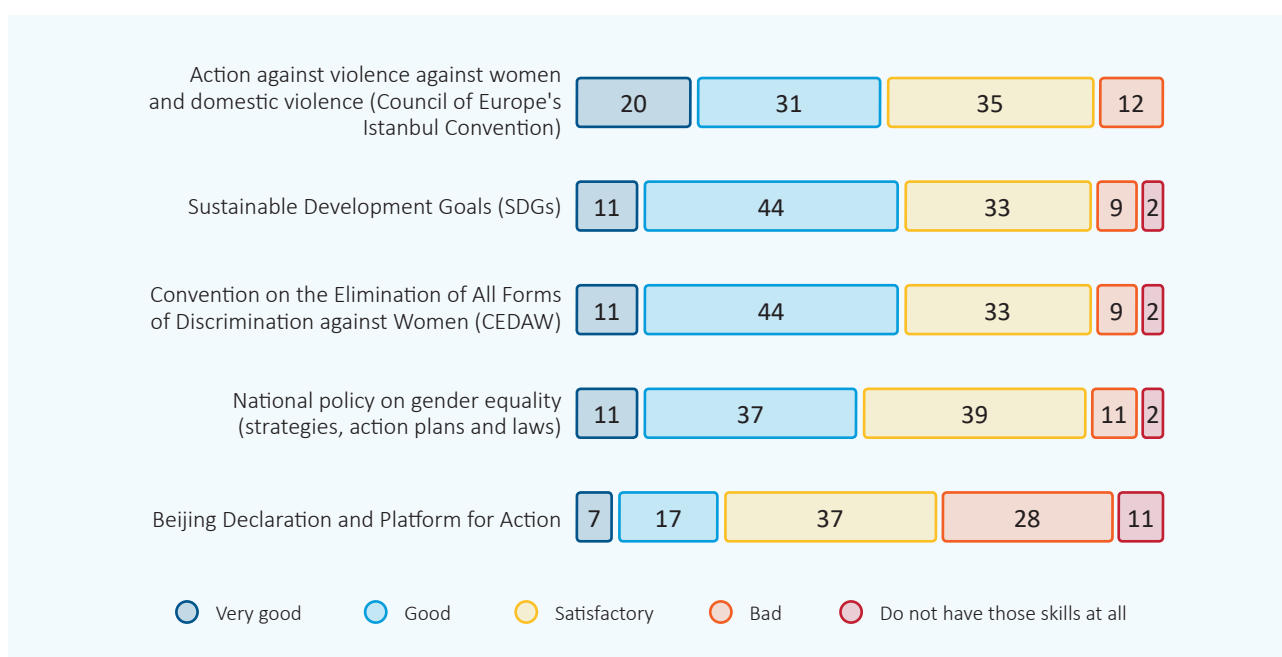
Only 22 per cent of the surveyed CSOs say that they have taken part in preparing alternative reports and materials for different entities. The respondents mentioned the implementation reports regarding CEDAW (50 per cent, or six organizations), GREVIO (33 per cent, or four organizations), the Universal Periodic Review (17 per cent, or two organizations), and other reports.

The representatives of women's organizations both in Tbilisi and in the regions note that the Tbilisi-based organizations have access to more resources. Therefore, regional and Tbilisi-based organizations differ in

terms of their general knowledge of the matter and their experience working on it. In the experience of one respondent, their organizations find it difficult to find partners to work on gender equality matters in the regions. There are organizations that work on many different topics but lack in-depth knowledge of a specific issue.

According to the representatives of some organizations, existing knowledge is more individualistic than systemic. There are specific people working in this field who have strong knowledge about gender equality and women's empowerment policies, as well as on international approaches and mechanisms. However, at the organization level, this knowledge is not widespread or shared. It is important to have not just theoretical knowledge but an opportunity to learn about success stories. There are numerous conventions and documents about gender equality at the international level that are relevant and significant for Georgia. However, implementing them in Georgia is a challenging task that requires extensive collaboration among numerous individuals.

Some representatives of international organizations say that the organizations sometimes have narrow specializations, and in such cases, their qualifications are higher. However, there are plenty of even narrower issues about which the sector lacks knowledge and experience. For example, CSOs have accumulated quite a lot of knowledge and work experience on the topic of

violence, but they lack knowledge about gender and reproductive health, selective abortion and the harmful practice of early marriage.

The representatives of women's organizations stressed the importance of learning monitoring mechanisms and gender analysis as key preconditions for successful participation in different projects. "Without such an analysis, we often have no chance of obtaining a grant," said a representative of a women's organization. "I would start strengthening my organization with learning, with very serious trainings about gender equality, so that a strong group is established in the organization. This would give us more chances of winning projects," said a representative of a regional women's organization. Despite the need, according to the surveyed organizations, such trainings and other activities aimed at improving opportunities for development are seldom available.

According to the representatives of women's organizations, for international development agencies and donor organizations, it is becoming more and more important to break down the issues of gender equality into those affecting specific groups, such as disabled persons, the LGBTQI+ community, refugees, migrants and other groups. As a result, it is important for them that local partner organizations have knowledge and experience in not only gender equality issues but also much more specialized issues pertinent to specific groups.

7. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research conducted on the needs assessment of CSOs working on gender equality and the protection of women's rights has revealed the following:

Administrative, financial and organizational challenges

The main challenge faced by the surveyed CSOs related to internal institutional development is the dependence of organizations' success not on an entire team but on only several employees. Another challenge is a lack of competence in preparing project proposals according to donor demands as well as monitoring and assessing project results, since organizations often lack employees with the respective qualifications. Yet another challenge is getting CSO employees to recognize the importance of monitoring and assessment.

Still, the most acute problem for women's organizations is related to financial stability. In most cases, organizations struggle to diversify their funding and are dependent on a single donor. This creates difficulties both in terms of the financial viability of an organization and in terms of strategic development, since, in such cases, organizations are unable to carry out their initiatives and are limited to working on the projects identified by their donors.

The research also revealed geographic inequality among organizations with regard to their access to funding. Often, regional organizations cannot independently take part in grant competitions because of complex competition requirements. There are cases where a Tbilisi-based organization receives a grant and partners with regional organizations. However, in such cases, regional organizations cannot exert any meaningful influence on the content of the project or the allocation of its budget.

Financial stability has a great effect on organizations' human resources as well. The organizations are often unable to offer their employees an adequate salary or other benefits such as health insurance or paid mater-

nity leave. As a result, the organizations find it difficult to employ and retain qualified professionals. Thus, organization employees have to perform multiple functions in exchange for low remuneration.

Challenges of advocacy and communication

The results of the research revealed that CSOs are often unable to become meaningfully involved in the decision-making process, both at the central and local levels. Typically, they try to be actively involved in the development of strategic documents; however, their recommendations and suggestions frequently remain unincorporated. In some cases, they are not even able to participate in the consultation process due to unrealistically short time frames set by the central or local governments.

The situation especially worsened after discussions of the March 2023 draft law on the transparency of foreign influence, when cooperation between government agencies and NGOs was severely reduced. Regional women's organizations found themselves in a particularly difficult situation because, for them, close cooperation with local government is an essential component of projects.

It is also important to note that the research results reveal a lack of coordination among women's organizations. This is particularly noticeable in the relationships between Tbilisi-based and regional organizations. Specifically, when planning and implementing an advocacy strategy, regional organizations are either involved late or not at all. There is a divide between the 'old' and 'new' generations of women's organizations as well. This implied disconnect acts as a barrier to them joining forces to tackle common problems.

As for public communication, despite the majority of women's organizations having direct contact with their beneficiaries in the form of trainings and informational meetings, they are not engaged in effective communication with the media. The reason for this is that they

cannot use effective language and thus fail to deliver messages to the public in a simple and easy-to-understand way.

Challenges related to obtaining knowledge of research and gender equality policy, international approaches and mechanisms

Conducting quality research and effectively utilizing the results remain a challenge for the surveyed organizations. On the one hand, the lack of experience in terms of obtaining financial resources and collecting and processing data serves as a significant barrier for organizations. On the other hand, oftentimes, organizations do not think they need to make decisions based on data.

Another important observation is that the knowledge and expertise of international policy approaches and mechanisms for gender equality and women's empowerment are quite high. But even here, a geographic difference is apparent. Namely, organizations in Tbilisi have more access to resources and, therefore, more in-depth knowledge of alternative methods and approaches to gender mainstreaming than organizations based in the regions. Moreover, there are a number of issues about which there is little knowledge and experience in the sector, including reproductive health and selective abortion.

To overcome the above-mentioned challenges, the following activities are recommended:

- **Develop and/or identify alternate sources of financing,** such as funds from CSOs' own economic activity, individual donations, membership fees and so on, as both local and international organizations emphasize that CSOs' dependence on donors undermines their long-term sustainability.

- **Promote organizational development grant opportunities in order to support CSOs' sustainability.** These grants would enable organizations to retain their employees and offices, purchase or upgrade necessary inventory and address key issues. At the same time, it is essential to include benefits and suitable compensation rates in the project budgetary requirements.

- **Strengthen communication between donors and CSOs,** and encourage donors to consider local organizations' **ideas and capacities** when establishing priority areas for funding. This approach ensures that local organizations can consistently and sustainably address issues important to beneficiaries.

- **Develop CSO networks and coalitions,** or assist and strengthen existing ones, to help consolidate CSO activities for problem resolution, effective advocacy and information exchange on areas of activity and specific initiatives.

- **Raise CSOs' qualifications in advocacy and effective communication with government agencies,** as well as raise awareness among government representatives about the role and function of non-governmental organizations, to improve CSO engagement in policy development and decision-making processes. International organizations can play a leading role in supporting a project by establishing dialogue platforms between the governmental and non-governmental sectors. This issue has been especially relevant since the law on the transparency of foreign influence was proposed, and it is critical to re-establish and maintain beneficial cooperation in a timely manner.

- **Raise CSO staff qualifications in research methods, data analysis, and monitoring and evaluation** so that they may collect data or use existing data and studies to write project proposals and reports, as well as organize their own activities and advocacy efforts.

- **Place emphasis on empowering disabled women's organizations and activists,** as well as their equal and full participation in the activities of gender equality groups at both the non-governmental and governmental levels.

- **Improve the knowledge of organizations working in the regions** on gender equality, women's empowerment policies, and international approaches and mechanisms.

ANNEX

ORGANIZATIONS PARTICIPATING IN THE QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE COMPONENTS OF THE STUDY

TABLE N 1: Details on the in-depth interviews

#	Organization	Mode of communication	Date
1	UN Women	Face-to-face interview	01.08.2023
2	National Democratic Institute (NDI)	Video conference	30.08.2023
3	Delegation of the European Union to Georgia	Video conference	31.08.2023
4	German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ)	Video conference	05.09.2023
5	Mercy Corps	Video conference	07.09.2023
6	Council of Europe	Video conference	07.09.2023
7	CARE International	Video conference	08.09.2023
8	UN Women (group interview)	Hybrid mode	08.09.2023
9	United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (group interview)	Video conference	15.09.2023
10	United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)	Video conference	15.09.2023
11	Women's Fund in Georgia	Video conference	18.09.2023

TABLE N 2: Details on the focus groups

#	Organizations	Number of participating organizations	Mode of communication	Date
1	Organizations operating in the regions of Guria and Mtskheta-Mtianeti	8	Video conference	22.09.2023
2	Organizations operating in various regions	6	Video conference	23.09.2023
3	Organizations operating in Tbilisi and various regions	6	Video conference	26.09.2023
4	Organizations operating in the Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti region	9	Video conference	27.09.2023
5	Organizations operating in Tbilisi and various regions	9	Video conference	28.09.2023

TABLE N 3: Organizations participating in the focus groups

#	Name of organization
1	Creative Youth Platform
2	We are Sensible Future
3	Rural Communities Development Agency
4	Women for Regional Development
5	Guria Civic Center
6	Lanchkhuti Youth Movement
7	Women for Counrty's Future
8	Eastern European Centre for Multiparty Democracy – Kutaisi Branch
9	Community Center "AniBani"
10	Women's House
11	International Organization for Women and Children's Rights "Mejlisi"
12	Union FREYA
13	Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship Center "SiNC"
14	Self-Government Resource Center of Racha-Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti
15	Association "Woman and Business"
16	Kvemo Kartli Women's Organization "Unity"
17	Young Feminists
18	Rural Women for Human Rights
19	Samtskhe-Javakheti Media Center
20	TASO Foundation
21	Association of Disabled Women and Mothers of Disabled Children – DEA
22	Association "Mercuri"
23	Community Development Fund "Nepa"
24	Hands for Peace
25	Reactive
26	Association "ATINATI"
27	IDP Women Association "Consent" – Zugdidi Branch Office
28	Women's Association "Gvirila"
29	Neogeni
30	Women's Information Center
31	Women Fund "Sukhumi"
32	Sapari
33	Women's Initiatives Supporting Group
34	IDP Women Association "Consent"
35	Union "Woman and Reality"
36	Sakhli Advice Center for Women
37	Women Engage for a Common Future – Georgia

TABLE N 4: Organizations participating in the quantitative study

#	Name of organization
1	Women for Regional Development
2	We are Sensible Future
3	Rural Women for Human Rights
4	Samtskhe-Javakheti Media Center
5	Oasis
6	Women's Initiatives Supporting Group
7	Platform Salam
8	National Association of Local Authorities of Georgia
9	Civic Engagement and Activism Center
10	Gelati Rural Women Council
11	Georgian Farmers' Association
12	Kakheti Area Development Centre
13	Samtskhe-Javakheti Women for Peaceful Georgia
14	TASO Foundation
15	Women for Change
16	Association "Mercuri"
17	Association HERA XXI
18	Women's Consultation Center House
19	Young Feminists
20	Federation of Women of Georgia "QOLGA"
21	Georgian Girl Scouts "Dia"
22	Women Fund "Sukhumi"
23	Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship Center "SiNC"
24	Self-Government Resource Center of Racha-Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti
25	Sapari
26	The Aged Women's Association "Deserving Old Age"
27	Women's Association "Gvirila"
28	Women's Gaze
29	Association "Disvel Women's Council"
30	Guria Development Union
31	Kvemo Kartli Media
32	Center for Participation and Collaboration (CPC)
33	Civic Initiatives Association
34	Women for Chiatura Future
35	House of Initiatives
36	Tetritskaro Youth Center
37	Kvemo Kartli Women's Organization "Unity"
38	Education and Development Center "Toliskuri"

39	Karaleti Women's Solidarity Center
40	Khobi News
41	Association "Women for Regional Development"
42	Community Center "AniBani"
43	Women's Initiative Group of Chkhorotsku "Equal"
44	Women for the Future of Javakheti
45	Institute for Change and Innovation
46	Step Kharagauli
47	Union FREYA
48	Guria Civic Center
49	Women for Counrty's Future
50	Women for Justice
51	Society of Democratic Women of Marneuli
52	Center for the Protection of Women's and Children's Rights and Gender Equality
53	Parents Organization of Children with Disabilities "Lampari"
54	Media Center Kakheti
55	Carpe Diem
56	Kakheti Regional Development Foundation
57	National Network of Women with Disabilities
58	Rural Communities Development Agency

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