



Women's Peace & Humanitarian Fund 

A United Nations & Civil Society Partnership

Survey on COVID 19 Related Impacts & Needs

WPHF CSO Partners

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF) supports local women's rights and women led civil society organizations operating in conflict affected and humanitarian settings.

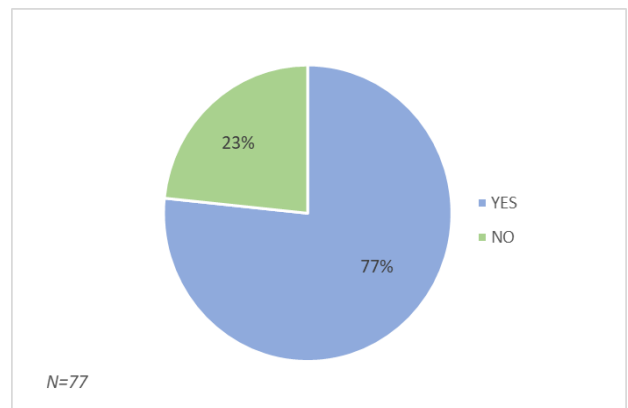
The WPHF conducted a short on-line survey with its active, previous and selected¹ partners to better understand how COVID 19 is potentially affecting their project implementation, the existence of their organizations, and how WPHF could support them.

The survey was made available in English, French, Spanish and Arabic, and responses were collected in all 4 languages between March 27th and April 3rd, 2020. Overall, 78 partners participated from 8 Countries: Fiji, Palau, Iraq, Jordan, DRC, Mali, Liberia and Colombia.²

Is the COVID 19 Pandemic impacting your project implementation?

Overall, 77% of respondents indicate that the pandemic is impacting their ability to implement projects.

Another 23% note that it has not had any impact³. Amongst these organizations, 22% of them (N=4)⁴ no longer have active projects through WPHF, they indicate that their current activities are impacted. There are some geographical trends in responses – in most cases linked to the level of advancement of WPHF projects in a country.



¹ Partners have been selected but implementation has not begun yet or are about to begin implementation (contracting process underway or finalized).

² The names of the organizations have been anonymized.

³ 1 organization did not provide a response.

⁴ Colombia, Fiji and Jordan.

The partners whose project implementation is affected by COVID 19, include CSOs of different sizes, working on different WPHF thematic areas of work. It is likely that the number of positive responses to this question will increase in the coming weeks and months, as it appears that from subsequent survey responses, all CSOs are impacted.

For example, in Mali, most participants have responded ‘no’ to this question yet in the following questions their answers mention implementation and operational challenges due to COVID 19 and a need for flexibility around timelines. They also requested dedicated and sometimes additional funding for COVID 19 related activities and to protect their own staff (face masks, sanitizer, etc.). In the case of DRC, responses vary according to their location in the country. Some organizations in more remote areas have responded ‘no’ as the majority of COVID 19 cases were reported in Kinshasa. However, government restrictions will impact implementation of their activities.

How COVID-19 is impacting project implementation⁵

Of those that indicated the pandemic had impacted their implementation, the primary reason refers directly to movement and gathering restrictions imposed by governments due to COVID 19, which impedes them to implement project activities and limits their overall interaction with project beneficiaries.

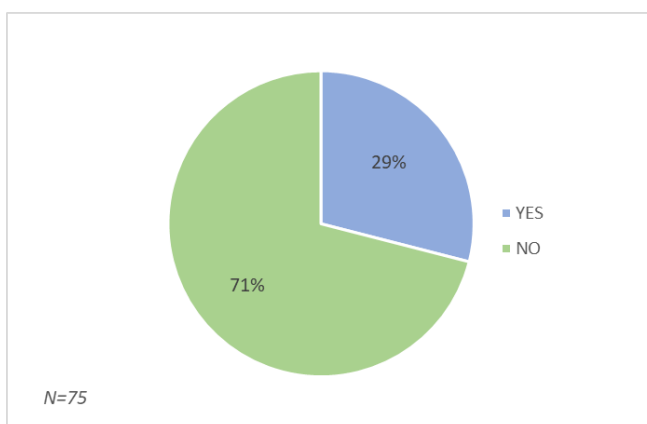
Responses show limitations in terms of alternative ways to implement planned activities. In many locations where they operate, it is not possible to change the format of their meetings to online activities, due to poor connectivity, limited technology and video conference capabilities and costs related to internet. Several participants also mentioned budgetary and logistical constraints due to restrictions on gathering. For example, some meetings will need to be divided into smaller and therefore more numerous meetings, which results in more costs for the organization. In projects related to economic recovery and agriculture for example, restrictions on movement and gathering jeopardizes trainings and the delivery of livestock for beneficiaries. In addition, other costs for the project implementation in this context, such as internet and sanitary products, were not included in their budget at the time of contracting.

Do you feel the existence of your organization is threatened by the current pandemic and its effects? If yes, please explain why

29% of partner CSOs feel the existence of their organization could be at risk due to the current pandemic and its effects.⁶ This number is likely to increase over the next few weeks and months.

Various reasons for this were noted:

- Financial: funding is being re-directed towards other organizations and governments
- Reputational: not being able to deliver for their communities and vis-à-vis the donors
- Institutional: under these conditions, the staff cannot engage in project management and delivery therefore they need to look into alternative ways of keeping their staff onboard.



⁵ Follow up question in the survey to the question: ‘Is the COVID 19 Pandemic impacting your project implementation?’

⁶ 3 organizations did not respond.

It is possible that not all participants understood or perceived the question in the same way, as responses in the survey have shown important challenges and concerns and a need for additional funding in the majority of cases. Overall, responses vary geographically depending on how much the location is impacted by COVID 19 and its effects at the time of the survey. These numbers are likely to change over the next months and potentially increase depending on the spread of the virus and the duration of restrictions.

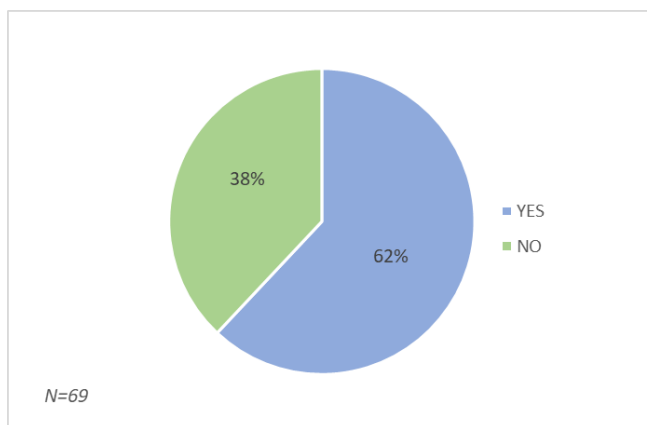
Interest in reallocating some of the existing WPHF funding to COVID19 prevention or response

The majority of respondents are interested in reallocating some funding of their projects to adapt and respond to the COVID 19 crisis.⁷

Respondents who would like to reallocate some of their existing WPHF funding have mentioned a variety of interventions in the context of COVID 19 and its impacts on communities, and women in particular.

Interventions include: psychological support for women, supporting women in cases of SGBV, supporting women in the face of food insecurity, acquiring and disseminating protective gear and hygiene kits, raising awareness and countering fake news/misinformation, work with community leaders to implement protocols for response to SGBV during humanitarian crises, train women to service as community response teams, develop awareness campaigns for COVID 19 prevention with the media and within communities, economic support to women, provision of hygiene kits and food packages for women head of households in displaced and refugees communities, and providing economic opportunities to vulnerable women to make masks and protective gear as a source of income,

Target groups mentioned include people with special needs, displaced women and girls, women and girls' refugees, widows, women led household with no or limited income, rural women and communities.



Organization is well placed to take action in prevention and/or response to COVID 19

Most organizations highlighted their experience, grounding and linkages within communities as well as with local and national authorities. Several mentioned how they can build on their networks and relationships with community leaders and key actors to raise awareness on COVID 19. The grassroots and community-based organizations can reach some of the most vulnerable people and use an inclusive approach to raise awareness and building resilience. A strong will to continue to support their communities and the most fragile women and girls at risk (intersectional approach) was also expressed through the responses.

In addition, several organizations mentioned their previous experience in working on a specific thematic area closely linked to their proposed intervention in the previous question. For example: experience in working on counselling and/or psychological support for women, economic support for women, experience in prevention/awareness raising from Ebola, experience in supporting survivors of SGBV, access to media and experience in the design and development of campaigns.

⁷ 4 participants did not answer the question. It was not applicable to 4 other organizations whose funding has already ended.



How can WPHF support your organization throughout this crisis?

Additional funding was raised as the primary need in almost all responses to this question. This additional funding was requested for additional new activities related to COVID 19 context or to allow organizations to cover for additional costs due to COVID 19 restrictions to adjust and implement their planned activities. Some responses also mention core funding to ensure the possibility and security of their organization to work in COVID 19 context. The need for flexibility in implementation timelines was also raised throughout the survey responses. Technical and strategic support was also mentioned several times, allowing for organizations to adjust to the challenging new context.

Responses called for continued financial support for women organizations and CSOs, to ensure marginalized women's voices are heard and their work supported.

CONCLUSION

It is clear from the short survey that WPHF partners are impacted by COVID 19 and its effects. This impact is felt at two main levels: programmatic and institutional. The programmatic impacts are very important – the majority of partners would see their projects paralyzed due to restrictions and lack of flexibility to adapt in part because of limited funding and technological resources. Existential risks due to the pandemic are significant. With almost 30% of CSOs who feel their organization is at risk across the countries surveyed, it is key to invest in their institutional capacity to safeguard their existence throughout and after the crisis. This number is likely to increase depending on the nature and duration of imposed restrictions and the extent of the spread of COVID 19.

From the responses to the survey, 4 main recommendations can be made:

- If no flexibility is shown, implementation in some contexts will face significantly delays if not a complete pause until the aftermath of the crisis. Most organizations – with a few exceptions in some areas of Mali and the DRC – are significantly affected by the crisis and are not able to carry on their activities in the same way as before. Many countries have adopted confinement measures, or, at the minimum, drastically restricted public gatherings which limits the ability of these organizations to carry out their work.
- Project budgets may be affected due to a rise in prices and availability of resources needed to conduct activities which were not considered at the time of budget and workplan approval. This includes also hygiene products to ensure the safety of the staff and participants (masks, soap, etc.) when conducting some activities. Some organizations have requested for additional funding.
- Local and women's organizations are particularly well placed to build movements in the communities, and address the gender dimensions of the crisis, including advocate for more gender-responsive solutions and build networks of solidarities in these difficult times. Some organizations are willing to adapt their workplans and some of their interventions to the crisis.
- Some of WPHF partners, local and women's organizations working in conflict-affected and humanitarian contexts, are threatened by the pandemic in their existence and survival through the crisis. Now more than ever, institutional support to civil society organizations, including those who cannot/do not want to respond to COVID19 is particularly important. There is strong need to protect women's organizations to be able to sustain through the crisis.

THE WAY FORWARD

In response, the WPHF has designed and established a COVID 19 Emergency Response Window to support local organizations in the Fund's eligible countries, to prevent and respond to COVID 19, as well as to support their institutional core funding as a safeguard to their existence. Moving forward, it is critical that the international community steps up its support to local civil society organizations and their specific needs and capacities, while ensuring a 'A Do No Harm approach' in funding and programming.

ABOUT US

The Women's Peace & Humanitarian Fund (WPHF) mobilizes critical support for local and grassroots civil society organizations working on women, peace and security and humanitarian action. The WPHF is a flexible and rapid financing mechanism supporting quality interventions designed to enhance the capacity of women to prevent conflict, respond to crises and emergencies, and seize key peacebuilding opportunities. Since its launch in 2016, WPHF has funded over 130 civil society organizations in 12 countries working to support women to be a force for crisis response and lasting peace.

WPHFUND.org

