



CSO SURVEY ON WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY AND HUMANITARIAN ACTION (WPS -HA)

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Women's Peace & Humanitarian Fund

A United Nations & Civil Society Partnership

Background

Local women's organizations are key actors in building peace and security and providing humanitarian relief in their communities and are at the forefront of advancing gender equality in fragile contexts.

Working across the peace-development-human rights nexus, local women's organizations are often best placed to foster transformative and sustainable change to achieve peace and gender equality in complex environments. They expand the reach and impact of humanitarian aid, accelerate economic recovery, prevent and mediate conflict, respond to the immediate needs of most marginalized people and advance gender equality, which results in more sustainable and inclusive peace. They play critical roles as first responders and peacebuilders in fragile settings. Despite this, their work is consistently under-funded and often goes unrecognized.

Two decades after the adoption of UN Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace, and security, aimed at ensuring women's right to full participation in peace and security decision-making, women's participation is minimal, and financial resources remain low. In October 2020, the UN Secretary General called for "the donor community's support for universal compliance with the target of allocating a minimum of 15% of official development assistance to conflict-affected countries to advancing gender equality ... including multiplying by five direct assistance to women's organizations, currently at 0.2%."

The share of funding that is channeled directly to women's organizations has not increased over the last decade, remaining at 0.2 percent (or 96 million dollars) of bilateral aid to conflict-affected contexts in 2019¹ and one percent of gender-focused aid from governments goes to autonomous women's organizations².

In fragile contexts, almost USD 12 billion of aid was allocated to the humanitarian sector during the same period, however, only 23% of these large amounts of aid focused on gender equality

This lack of funding and support to local women's organizations is further exacerbated in the ongoing pandemic response. Despite the obvious leadership role of women in COVID-19 community response strategies and the recognized negative impact of the pandemic on women's livelihoods and fundamental human rights, evidence suggests that the COVID-19 humanitarian response is neither localized nor women-led³ and less than 0.1% of COVID-19 funding⁴ currently tracked is being channeled to local civil society organizations⁵.

WPHF Global CSO Survey

In December 2020, WPHF launched a global survey with local women's organizations who have received programmatic or institutional funding from WPHF since its establishment in 2016. The objective was to take stock of the space and support for local women's organizations in peace, security and humanitarian action in active WPHF countries.

Made available in English, French, Arabic and Spanish, 154 representatives from local women's organizations from 19 countries participated in the survey, including from Africa (98), Arab States (40), Asia and the Pacific (10), and Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) (6). Overall, 91% of organizations who participated identify as women's rights and/or led by women, 3% youth rights and/or led by youth and 7% as human rights or other type of civil society organizations.

Results of the survey should be read considering the following limitations; i) there were six CSOs from LAC that participated; ii) only quantitative methodology was used, limiting the detail of data collected from women's organizations' experiences; iii) the contexts in which the survey is conducted is ever changing considering that new conflicts and tensions have arisen since its launch.



Key Findings

Risks to the work and existence of local women's organizations

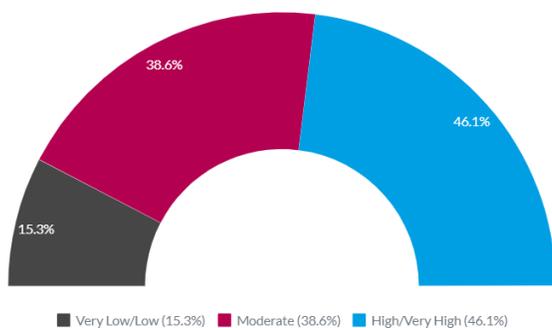
85% of CSOs across all WPHF regions feel that their organization is at a moderate, high or very high risk due to the lack of programmatic or institutional funding for local women's organizations working on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) and/or humanitarian action.

In the past year, funding has been critically impacted due to the global COVID-19 pandemic. In early 2020, a previous WPHF survey with over 70 local women's organizations in crisis and conflict settings, found that almost 30% of respondents felt the existence of their organizations was threatened by the current pandemic and the subsequent redirection of urgently-needed financing away from local organizations and WPS. One year later, this number is even more alarming.

These risks have persisted. More than 77% of organizations note that these risks have increased or remained constant over the past 12 months, threatening the continuity of their operations or ability to implement programming as a result of the pandemic.

This is generally consistent across all regions, with 86% in Arab States, 80% in Asia and Pacific, 74% in Africa, and 67% in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Figure 1: Level of risk for women's organizations

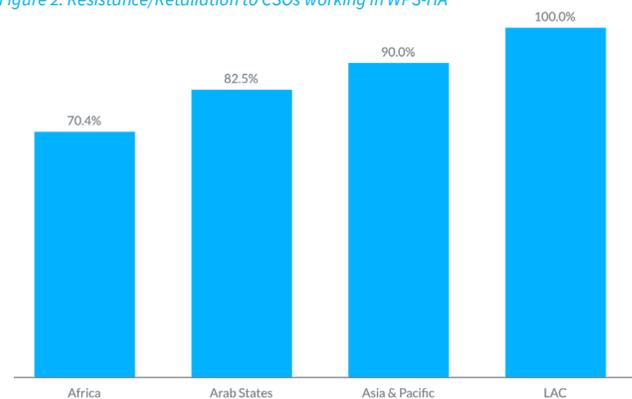


Local women's organizations equally face risk and are impacted by resistance or retaliation as a result of the work they do. 76% of all organizations report that they have experienced or observed resistance or retaliation against women's rights organizations on a frequent or occasional basis.

By region, all organizations in LAC (100%) note this, followed by 90% in Asia and Pacific, 83% in Arab States, and 70% in Africa.

Local women's organizations operate in complex crisis and fragile contexts, where the activities of their organizations, security of their staff and rights of their communities are often at dire risk. They continue to serve their communities despite these risks, but lack of funding for these organizations could roll back progress made for peace and gender equality in contexts where their existence and knowledge is key to build inclusive and sustainable peace within their communities.

Figure 2: Resistance/Retaliation to CSOs working in WPS-HA



Securing Funding for WPS and Humanitarian Action

Overall, the lack of multi-year programmatic or institutional funding⁷ is a key concern for local women's organizations in fragile and crisis contexts, with 60.8% of local women's organizations noting this as a primary challenge. Many organizations highlight that there are insufficient funding opportunities and information for local women's organizations working in the field of WPS-HA.

Moreover, 29% of women's organizations note that funding is not flexible enough for smaller organizations, nor considers the realities and constraints of working in crisis and fragile contexts. It is likely this experience is more widespread for CSOs that have not accessed WPHF funding.

Cumbersome or complex application processes and procedures also act as a deterrent for engaged and qualified local women's organizations from securing needed funding.

88% of local women's CSOs working on WPS-HA issues also emphasized that there is a need to balance between programmatic and institutional funding in order to effectively deliver in this space.



Way Forward

Despite the gains made since UNSCR 1325 and global calls for enhanced women's leadership and participation in WPS-HA, more funding is needed to support local women peacebuilders, humanitarians and human rights defenders and their organizations' work to build peace, gender equality and respond to crisis. It is essential to sustain local women's organizations' leadership, work and impact to avoid rolling back vital progress made on inclusive peace and the realization of women's rights⁸. WPHF calls on the international community and the private sector to support:

- ▶ Flexible and quality funding to support local women's rights organizations working in crisis and conflict settings, including multi-year institutional/core funding and programmatic funding.
- ▶ Access to funding with simplified application documents and processes for local women and youth grassroots organizations in applying for funds for WPS-HA, including diverse languages and more support/guidance on project proposal writing while ensuring a demand-driven process.
- ▶ Recognize the expertise and knowledge of local women's rights organizations in building peace and responding to crisis by enhancing their meaningful participation in decision-making mechanisms, including in the design and coordination of peacebuilding and humanitarian responses.
- ▶ Investment in strengthening the institutional capacity of local women's organizations working in conflict and crisis settings to increase their access to funding, financial and risk management, adaptation and overall impact and sustainability of their work.

For additional key recommendations from local civil society organizations engaging with WPS-HA in fragile contexts around the world, see the [Vienna Declaration 2020: Women Peacebuilders & Humanitarian Actors Define Key Priorities in 2020 and Beyond](#) launched at the Global Women's Forum for Peace and Humanitarian Action.⁹

References

¹ <https://data.unwomen.org/features/chronically-underfunded-women-peace-builders-need-support-more-ever> (based on data from OECD)

² OECD, (March, 2019). *Aid in Support of Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Donor Charts*. Available online:

<https://www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-topics/Aid-to-gender-equality-donor-charts-2019.pdf>

³ <https://insights.careinternational.org.uk/publications/why-we-need-women-in-covid-19-response-teams-and-plans>

⁴ OCHA Financial Tracking System -

<https://reliefweb.int/report/world/charter-change-statement-revised-un-global-humanitarian-response-plan-covid19>

⁵ Grand Bargain signatories have committed to ensure that 25 percent of humanitarian funding reaches local and national actors as directly as possible.

⁶ OECD (2020), *States of Fragility 2020*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/ba7c22e7-en>

⁷ Institutional funding refers to resources provided to an organization to sustain themselves through a crisis and build its institutional capacity. This is also referred to as core funding.

⁸ See also the recent report by AWID and Mama Cash (November, 2020). *Moving More Money to the Drivers of Change: How Bilateral and Multilateral Funders can Resource Feminist Movements*.

⁹ <https://wphfund.org/2020/02/20/global-women-peacebuilders-unite-at-global-forum-to-set-priorities-call-for-action/>

About the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund

The United Nations Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF) is a global partnership designed to accelerate action and support for women's participation, leadership, and empowerment in humanitarian response and peace and security settings. WPHF mobilizes critical financing for local women-led and women's rights organizations to prevent conflict and sexual and gender-based violence, respond to crises and emergencies, and seize key peacebuilding opportunities.

Since its launch in 2016, WPHF has established itself as a highly relevant and credible multi-partner trust fund, channeling urgently-needed funds to local and grassroots civil-society organizations working on women, peace and security and humanitarian action around the world. To date, it has funded over 400 local women's organizations in 25 countries.