

# CSO ANNUAL SURVEY ON WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY AND HUMANITARIAN ACTION

August, 2022



**Women's Peace & Humanitarian Fund**

A United Nations & Civil Society Partnership

© 2021, UNW Malawi

## Background

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%."<sup>3</sup>

Despite latest funding commitments, the share of bilateral aid supporting feminist, women-led and women's rights organizations and movements in fragile or conflict-affected countries still remains at only 0.4 per cent (179 million)<sup>1</sup>, and has been stagnant since 2010 as per the 2021 report of the Secretary General on Women and Peace and Security<sup>2</sup>.

The lack of funding and support to local women's organizations is even more worrying in a context of escalating conflicts and crisis such as Afghanistan, Myanmar and Ethiopia, as well as the continued pandemic gendered impacts.

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 was neither localized nor women-led and less than half of policy measures adopted to respond to the pandemic were considered gender-sensitive<sup>4</sup>.

## WPHF Global CSO Survey

In December 2021, WPHF launched its second 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 countries where WPHF is channeling funding.

Made available in English, French, Arabic and Spanish, **161 representatives from local women's organizations from 23 countries** participated in the survey, including from Africa (80), Arab States (39), Asia and the Pacific (23), and Latin America and Caribbean (9). Overall, 85% of organizations who participated identify as women's rights and/or led by women, 7% youth rights and/or led by youth and 8% as other type of civil society organizations.

The anonymous survey specifically explores questions related to risks related to lack of funding for women's rights and led CSOs, challenges in securing flexible funding, as well as the context for local women's rights and led organizations working in WPS-HA, including the impact of the security or political situation in their country, experience of retaliation or threats to their organization, and level of consultation or engagement of these organizations in policy in WPS-HA. CSOs were also asked about key priorities for funding for women's rights organization in the WPS-HA space.

Results of the survey should be read considering the following limitations: i) only quantitative methodology



was used, limiting the detail of data collected from women's organizations' experiences; ii) the contexts in which the survey is conducted is ever changing considering that new conflicts and tensions have arisen since its launch; and iii) two questions in this year's survey were updated, thus comparisons from the previous year were not always possible. Despite these limitations, this year's survey demonstrates the continued need and urgency to support women's rights organizations in conflict and crisis settings.

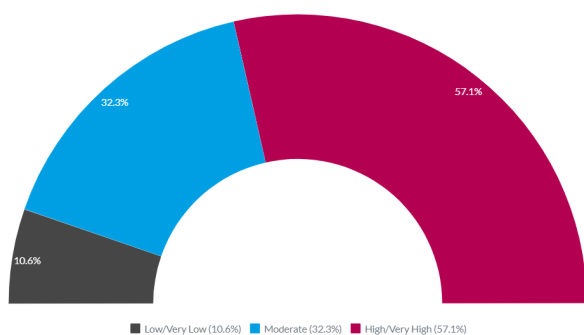
## Key Findings

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

In 2021, 89% of CSOs across all WPHF regions felt that their organization is at a moderate, high or very high risk for continuity 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, an increase of 5% from 2020. Over half of these organizations (57%) specifically report that the risk is high or very high.

More than 66% of organizations also 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, increased violence and conflict and volatile contexts.

Figure 2: Level of risk for women's organizations



The risks were most notable in Asia and Pacific (including countries such as Myanmar and Afghanistan) with 85% of CSOs reporting the risk had continued or increased in the past year. However, on a positive note, across all countries, the risks have decreased slightly from the previous year.

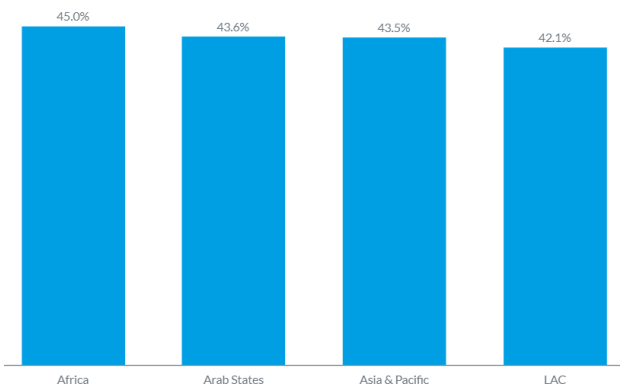
In the past year, funding continued to be critically impacted due to the global COVID-19 pandemic. In 2020, a

previous WPHF survey with over 70 local women's organizations in crisis and conflict settings, found that 77% 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, and has increased by 12%, whereby 89% of CSOs continue to be impacted in their ability to carry out their mandate.

### Threats and retaliation faced by local women's organizations

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 and even targeted threats or retaliation as a result of their advocacy and work in WPS-HA.

Almost half of all organizations (44%) reported that their organization and staff have received threats as a result of their work in WPS-HA in the last 12 months.



### Securing Funding for WPS and Humanitarian Action

Overall, the lack of access to multi-year programmatic or institutional funding<sup>5</sup> is a key concern for local women's organizations in fragile and crisis contexts, with 58% of local women's organizations noting this as a core challenge. A quarter of organizations also highlight that more broadly, that there is insufficient funding available specifically for WPS-HA work.

Barriers to accessing funding and the lack of flexibility in the donor environment for grassroots organizations working in crisis and fragile contexts is also of concern. 56% of women's organizations note that funding is not

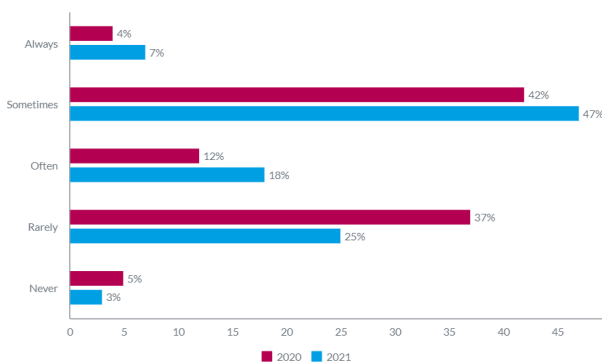
flexible enough for smaller organizations, nor considers the realities and constraints of working in crisis and fragile contexts, application processes are cumbersome or too demanding, and the amount of time required to secure funding is lengthy. It is likely this experience is more widespread for local CSOs than is known, and complex application processes and procedures also act as a deterrent for engaged and qualified local women's organizations from securing needed funding.

83% of local women's CSOs working on WPS-HA issues emphasized that there is a need to balance between programmatic and institutional funding in order to effectively deliver in this space.

### The critical role of women's rights organizations in WPS-HA

Despite the challenges persistently faced by local women's rights organizations working in conflict and crisis settings, some positive transformations are occurring. In the last year alone, there have been incremental increases in women's organizations being consulted or invited to engage on policy or action plans in WPS-HA at local, regional or national levels. In 2021, 54% of organizations stated that they were sometimes or always consulted to engage on WPS-HA issues, representing an 8% point increase from 46% in 2020.

Figure 3: Frequency that CSOs are consulted/invited to engage in WPS-HA policy and action planning



### Priorities of local women's organizations

Finally, participating organizations were asked about their priorities in WPS-HA given their intimate knowledge of their communities and contexts. They highlight that the protection of women and girls in conflict and crisis settings continues to be a core area needed with 30% citing this as their main priority. Another 27% note that peacebuilding and economic recovery is a main priority for their organizations, followed by creating an enabling environment for WPS with the monitoring of the implementation of National Action Plans in their countries. 15% of organizations equally highlight that women's

participation in humanitarian and crisis response is a need and priority.

### 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 rights<sup>6</sup>. More support from the international community, the private sector and individuals is needed for:

- ▶ Continued 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.
- ▶ 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 continuation and sustainability of their work to impact WPS-HA
- ▶ Supporting the protection and participation of women peacebuilders and WHRDs from crisis and conflict settings, including through fast and flexible funding to individual WHRDs and women's organizations
- ▶ Use of 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.

For additional information on the WPHF funding mechanisms, please visit:

- ▶ WPHF's Regular Funding Cycle: <https://wphfund.org/calls-for-proposals/>
- ▶ WPHF's Rapid Response Window: <https://wphfund.org/rrw/>
- ▶ WPHF's Funding Window for Women Human Rights Defenders: <https://wphfund.org/whrds/>



## References

<sup>1</sup> United Nations Security Council (September 2021). *Women and Peace and Security – Report of the Secretary General (S/2021/827)*

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> 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>

<sup>4</sup> United Nations Security Council (September 2021). *Women and Peace and Security – Report of the Secretary General (S/2021/827)*

<sup>5</sup> 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.

<sup>6</sup> 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*.

<sup>7</sup> <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 700 local women's organizations through 24 funding allocations in 32 countries.