

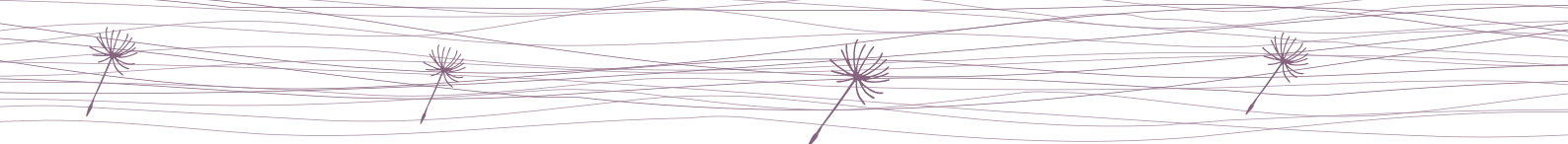


**COVID-19:
Challenges and
Needs of Civil
Society under
Crisis and
Quarantine**

Survey Results

ISAR Ednannia
www.ednannia.ua

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Content

ABOUT SURVEY 3

SURVEY RESULTS 3

DESCRIPTION OF THE SURVEY SAMPLE 3

 ORGANIZATIONAL CHALLENGES..... 4

 PROJECT CHALLENGES 8

 FINANCIAL CHALLENGES..... 10

CROSS COMPARISON OF COMPONENTS..... 12

EXPECTATIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES 18

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS 21



About Survey

Undoubtedly, the quarantine measures—social distancing, remote work, transportation limitations etc.—imposed severe limits on activities and plans of civil society organizations, as well as raised important questions for those supporting them, e.g., donor community. These questions include (but not limited to): (1) how the CSOs and communities they work with could receive emergency support in times of crisis; (2) how to provide support for fast adaptive and technical capacity building for CSOs to ensure their continuous operation; (3) what measures should be taken to design long-term strategies to cope with the consequences of this crisis and those which might arise in the future. It is obvious that the quarantine's measures significantly contributed to changing the civil society approach to work and CSO operations. Due to the new realities the civil society should adapt to new paradigms.

Therefore, ISAR Ednannia designed a survey to harvest data and insights from CSOs themselves, to see how they evaluate the circumstances they had found themselves in as well as to ask them directly about possible opportunities or unnoticed challenges of any kind that had been crystallized because of the COVID-19 crisis. This report summarizes the findings in a short and comprehensive manner.

Survey Results

The questionnaire is a mix of close and open-ended questions. Mostly, the close-ended questions are aimed to harvest the quantitative data on self-assessment: respondents are invited to evaluate the listed challenges on a 10-point scale. The open-ended questions are aimed to provide additional context for these challenges.

Description of the Survey Sample

Table 1 and 2 present the descriptive statistics on the survey sample. As it is seen, the total number of respondents¹ is N=326 organizations operating either in every region of Ukraine, transregionally, or national CSOs on the all-Ukrainian level, selected via convenience sampling

¹ For the sake of convenience, hereinafter those have participated in the study are referred to as respondents.

method. The most numerous type of the organization among the respondents is a public association – 72.09% of the sample.

Table 1: Types of Respondents' Organizations

Organizations:	N	%
Charity foundation	15	4.60
Charity organization	47	14.42
Public association	235	72.09
Civic union	15	4.60
Grassroots	2	0.61
Other	12	3.68
Total:	326	100

Table 2: Geography of Respondents' Operations

Region	N	%
Cherkasy	6	1.84
Chernihiv	2	0.61
Chernivtsi	3	0.92
Dnipropetrovsk	10	3.07
Donetsk (controlled territories)	20	6.13
Ivano-Frankivsk	7	2.15
Kharkiv	21	6.44
Kherson	7	2.15
Khmelnyskyi	8	2.45
Kirovohrad	6	1.84
Kyiv	10	3.07
Kyiv city	32	9.82
Luhansk	12	3.68
Lviv	25	7.67
Mykolaiv	7	2.15
Odesa	11	3.37
Poltava	8	2.45
Rivne	7	2.15
Sumy	11	3.37
Ternopil	7	2.15
Vinnysia	12	3.68
Volyn	3	0.92
Zakarpattia	2	0.61
Zaporizhia	11	3.37
Zhytomyr	6	1.84
All Ukrainian	58	17.79
Transregional	14	4.29
Total:	326	100

Organizational Challenges

The organizational challenges component means challenges influencing the routine operations of the respondents' organizations in terms of their organizational management and capacity, e.g., a need to promptly adjust the operations to the online environment or improving

technical skills to use certain software. Figure 1 below shows the mean estimates of the challenges of a such character provided by the respondents.

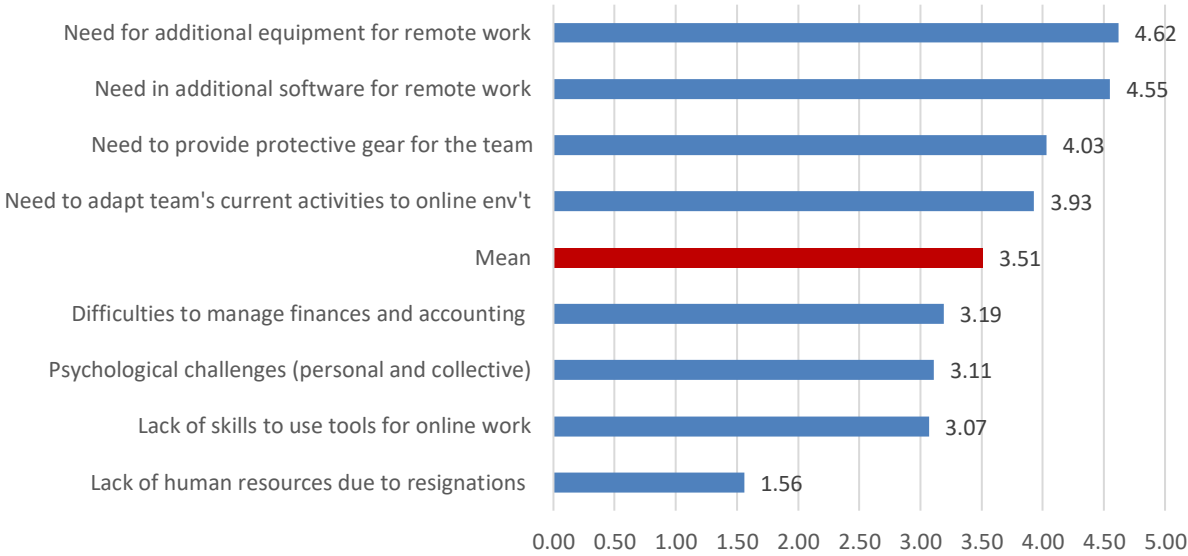


Figure 1: Organizational challenges, mean estimates by sub-components, 10-point scale

As it is seen on Figure 1, the mean of all challenges in this block is 3.51 on a 10-point scale², which suggests a generally *mild impact* of the challenges in total. However, the respondents estimate their lack of necessary equipment (e.g., laptops, home printers, cameras etc.) and software for remote work as moderate—4.62 and 4.55 points on a 10-point scale, respectively. In times of an online office, these instruments may be considered as office essentials for productive and effective operations, especially when the operations themselves are needed to be adjusted for the online environment (3.93 points).

Although represented in the list of close-ended questions, the respondents keep underlining the absence of necessary equipment in the open-ended questions as well, mostly in the context of financial management, accounting, and legal affairs. Currently, the need to have a paper trail in for organization management purposes is a problem.

The respondents also noted the need for protective gear for their team, for instance, to ensure their safety when taking trips to the post office to send out HIV test kits or for volunteers. Moreover, in the open-ended questions, the respondents noted that hardware and software as well as skills or capacity to acquire ones to use them sometimes are not enough. The lack of hardware, software, or digital skills to meaningfully engage with the beneficiaries in respondents’ activities creates the condition of unequal access to the services now being provided online, if being provided at all. The respondents especially vulnerable to this digital divide derivative problem are those working with children—as the access to Internet and computers may also be limited by parents—rural citizens, and elderly.

² The scale used in questions like this one is a 10-point scale. The charts do not necessarily provide the full scale graphically for the space-wise reasons and to avoid non-informative details.

Along with the online access to services, in the open-ended questions, the respondents shared their experience with transport limitations imposed by the government and local authorities. Among the most affected are organizations working with citizens living in temporary occupied territories and distant rural areas. As some respondents heavily relied on public transportation to support their beneficiaries, now it causes service supply distress as not every organization has its own transport and not every member of organization is willing to donate their personal cars for economic reasons—the organizations do not have budgets to pay for car insurance or gasoline.

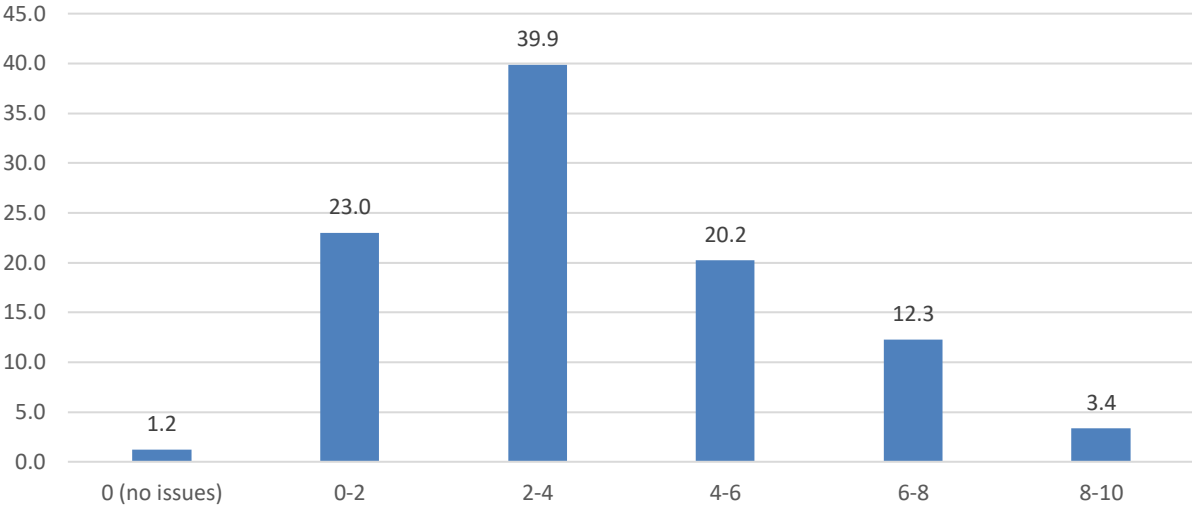


Figure 2: Organizational challenges, distribution intervals of mean estimates, %

The mean for organizational challenges was also calculated for each respondent. Figure 2 shows the distribution of these means via intervals³. As it is seen, only 3.4% experience severe organizational challenges, while the majority of respondents fall into 0-2 and 2-4 intervals, meaning their estimation of organizational challenges are mild or moderate.

The median, or an estimate that falls on the 50th percentile of the general estimate distribution, of all organizational challenges sub-components is 3 points. It means that 50% of all estimates in the component are less than 3 points.

³ The intervals should be read as follows: 0–no issues; 0-2–insignificant issues; 2-4–mild issues; 4-6–moderate issues; 6-8–significant issues; 8-10–severe issues.

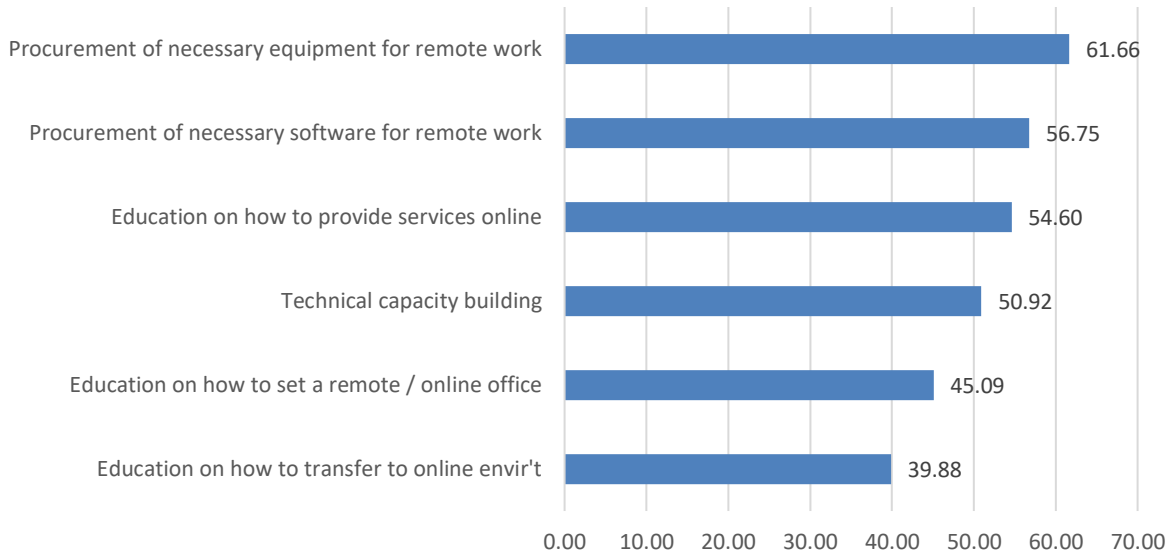


Figure 3: Possible measures to meet organizational challenges, %⁴

Obviously, necessary procurements and education on how to provide services online are among top of the list of possible solutions.

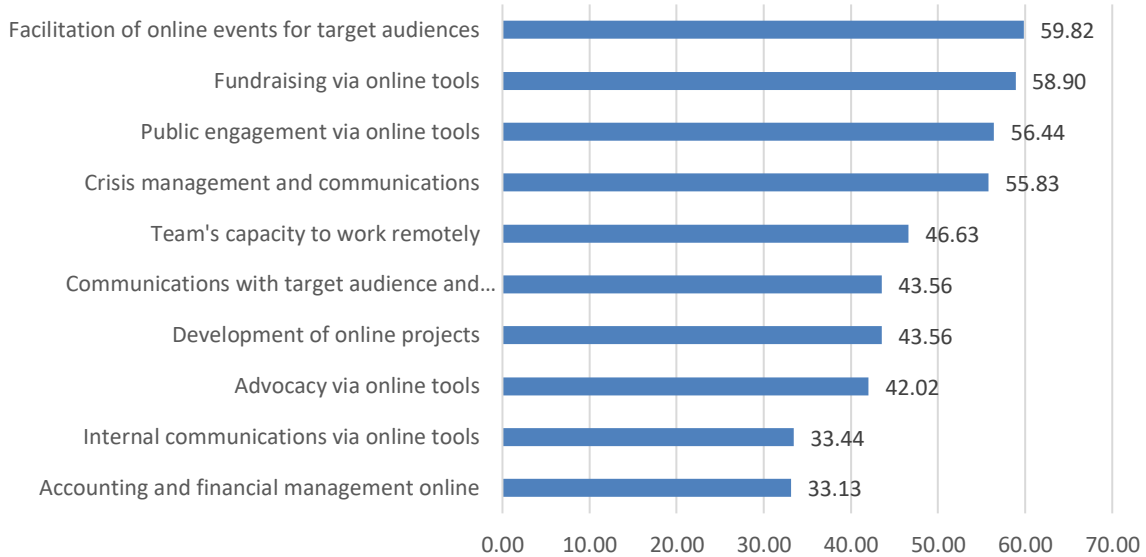


Figure 4: Skills necessary in times of COVID-19 crisis, %⁵

The survey also invited the respondents to think about the skillset they see as useful in times of COVID-19 crisis and its consequences. As expected, the skills necessary to build a solid online presence and effective engagement with the audience are at the top of the list. As many offline events are either cancelled or now being held online, it is required to have essential skills

⁴ A multi-choice question

⁵ A multi-choice question

of facilitation and engagement. Fundraising via online tools is necessary to sustain the financial situation of the organization, while crisis management and communications are crucial skills to be prepared for any force majeure.

Project Challenges

The project challenges include the ones targeting specific programs and project run by the respondents, as well as interaction with their partners, target audience, and beneficiaries.

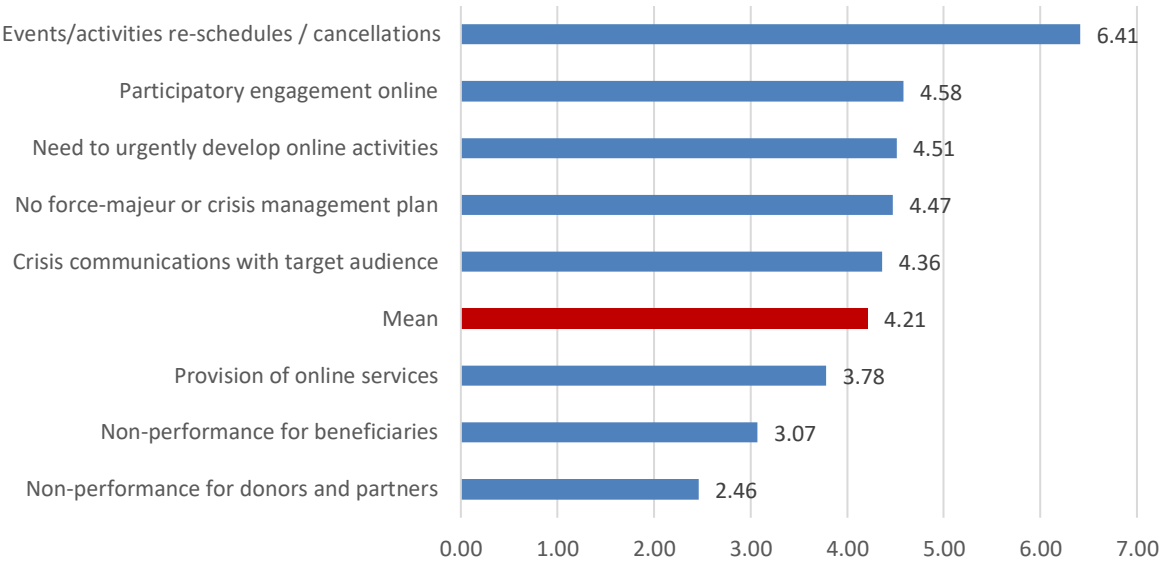


Figure 5: Project challenges, mean estimates by sub-components, 10-point scale

As it is seen in Figure 5, the mean for this component is 4.21 points, which labels it as a moderate impact, however, on its lower margin. The biggest impact project-wise is cancellation of events or their re-schedule—6.41 points, which is the highest estimate of all the estimates across all three components. Many of the activities simply cannot be transferred into online environment, for instance, first-aid trainings or because the project target audience lack digital skills.

Also, the organizations estimate their crisis to engage people online as 4.58 points. Here once again, one may talk about lack of technical and digital capacity to engage the audience online. However, for a long time, offline activities have been prioritized in project activities, since the offline communications is seen as more meaningful and therefore, productive. Hence, there has not been sufficient incentives to build digital capacity of an organization that goes beyond social media marketing. As a result, the respondents feel certain urgency in their need to develop online activities fast to meet the expectations of their audience—4.51 points and to provide online services—3.78 points.

The chart also demonstrates that respondents saw some value in a crisis management plan: 4.47 points suggest that the availability of such plan would have somewhat cushion the crisis

impact. Fear to fail their partners and donors, or beneficiaries is rather low, 2.46 and 3.07 points accordingly.

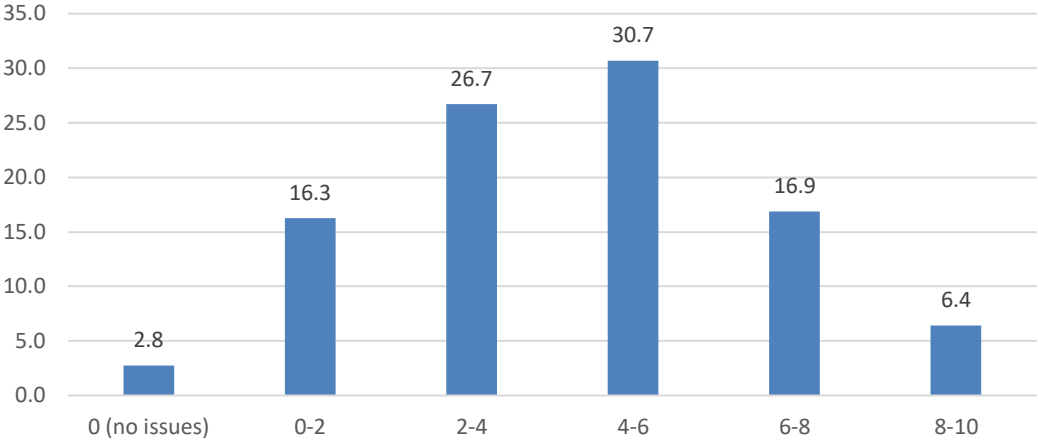


Figure 6: Project challenges, distribution intervals of mean estimates, %

The distribution in Figure 6 suggests that more than half of the respondents suffer from moderate, significant and severe challenges—54%. It is also proved by the median of the estimates in the component—4 points, meaning 50% of respondents estimate their project difficulties higher than 4 points.

Considering the open-ended comments regarding the project challenges, event or activities re-schedules or cancellations indeed caused the most significant impact. The comments also suggest that delays in services or activities may damage trust connections the respondents built with their target groups and beneficiaries. The discourse in open-ended questions suggests mild anxiety caused by the uncertainty and lack of actions and instructions from the donor community and other stakeholders.

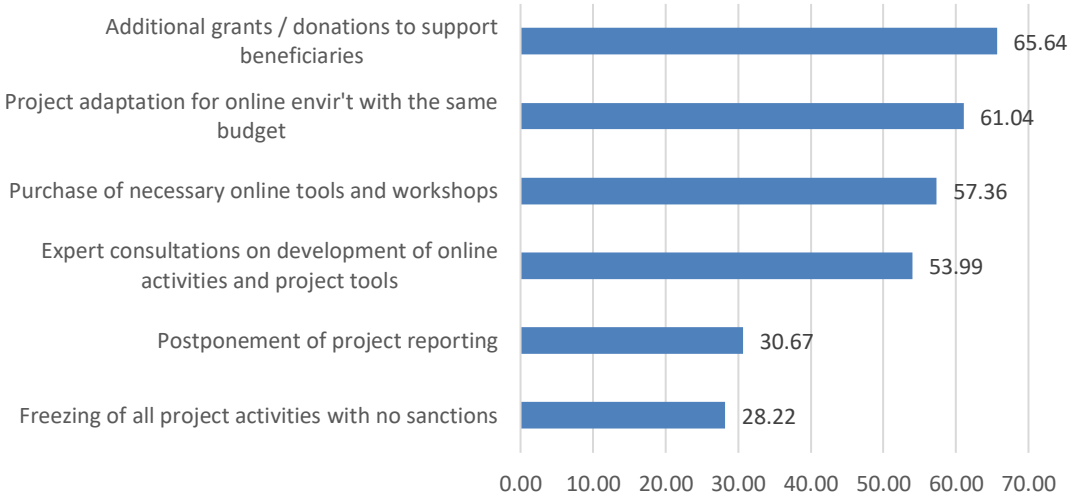


Figure 7: Possible measures to meet project challenges, %

First of all, respondents see additional grants and donations as necessary to support their beneficiaries in times of crisis. Also, the respondents require adaptation of their project activities, which may be both time consuming and costly. For more than half respondents, expert consultations for development of online tools and projects might be helpful. Interestingly, roughly third of respondents see postponement or freezing of projects as necessary.

Financial Challenges

Financial challenges include the components that impact the financial sustainability and operations of the respondents, be it budgeting or fundraising.

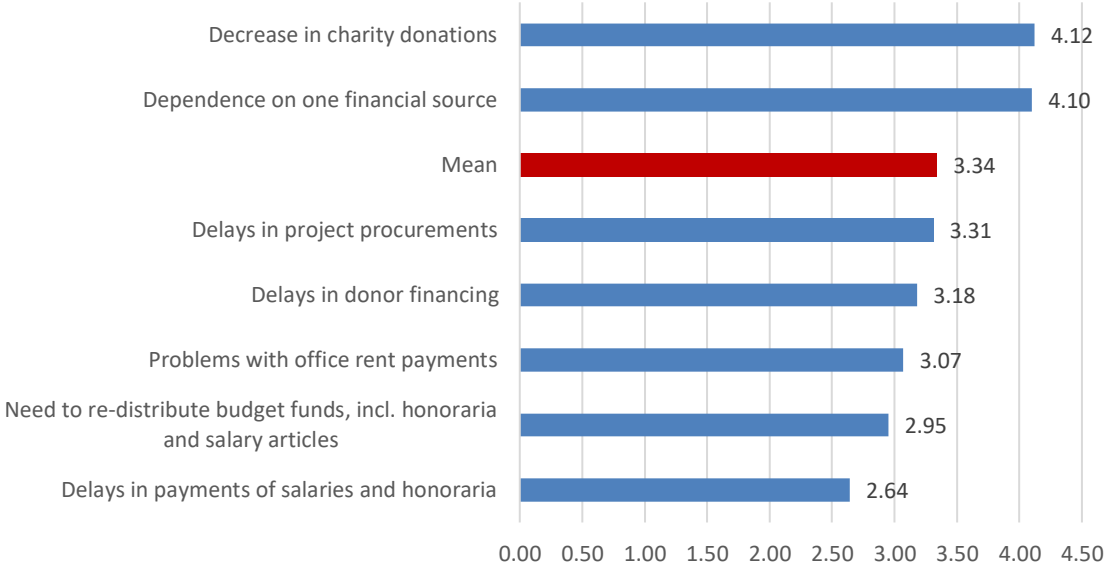


Figure 8: Financial challenges, mean estimates by sub-components, 10-point scale

As we see, the overall mean estimation of the financial challenges is 3.34 points—the respondents see this component as *mild* as well. The COVID-19 economic consequences manifested as decrease in charity donations—4.12 points: one can hypothesize that charity is the first spending being cut by individuals in the circumstances of a looming economic recession.

The next issue highlighted by the current situation is the dependence on one financial source—4.1 points. The question option specifically has not provided any hints on possible kinds of sources, e.g., donor funding, charity donations etc. However, the estimate does suggest that respondents lack knowledge and skills on diversification of their financial sources.

The respondents also experience delays in procurement and receiving the donor funding. The data provided in the organizational challenges block regarding the lack of equipment and therefore, delays in legal and accounting procedures, hypothetically may be one of the underlying reasons for financial delays.

The three lowest sub-components represent the financial challenges posed to administration. Although estimated as low moderate, these challenges may become more acute in

the future if no actions are taken—this is suggested by the open-ended responses regarding this component.

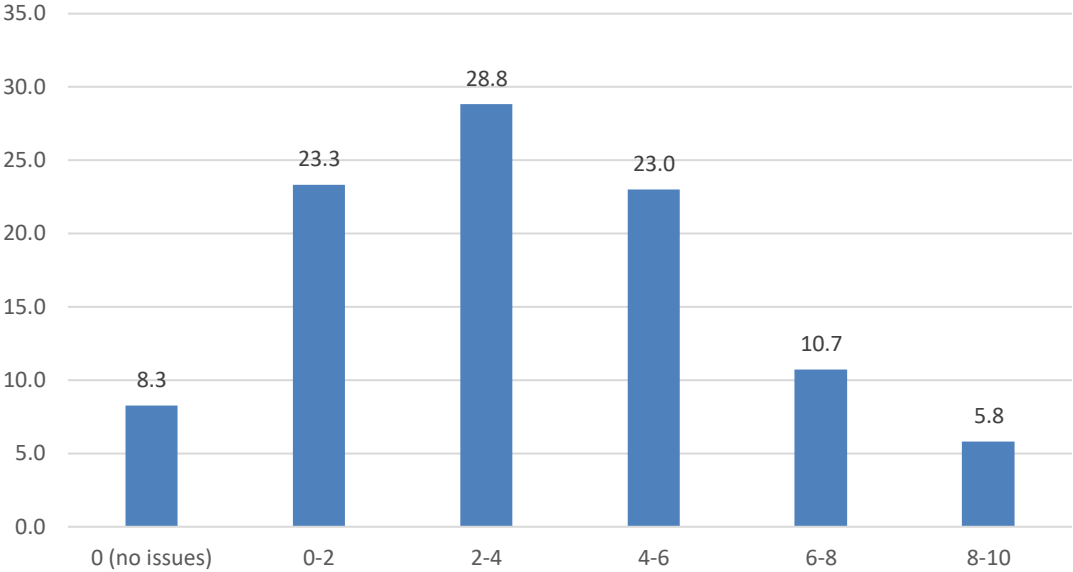


Figure 9: Financial challenges, distribution intervals of mean estimates, %

Figure 9 represents the distribution of mean estimates of the financial sub-component provided by every respondent. As we see, most respondent experience insignificant or mild challenges—23.3% and 28.8% respectively; 23% label their challenges as moderate. However, 16.5% see their financial situation as significantly or severely challenging.

Although the mean of the component is mild (3.34 points) and lower than the organizational mean, and median for all the estimates in the component is 2, the interval distribution shows that the general number of those affected financially more seriously is higher in comparison with the organizational impact. This thesis is supported by data presented in Figure 9 below and the open-ended responses even in non-financial questions. Many responses discussed their shortage of financial resources, inability to guarantee further operations, and pay rent. Also, cancellations of certain paid activities, such as workshops for their target audience, resulted in a financial impact on the respondent’s budgets.

Having considered the pervasiveness of discourse related to financial difficulties, one can hypothesize that the problem may be more acute than any respondent subjectively estimates. It seems to be a plausible explanation, as most challenges of any character suggested in the survey responses may be successfully addressed with availability of time and financial resources.

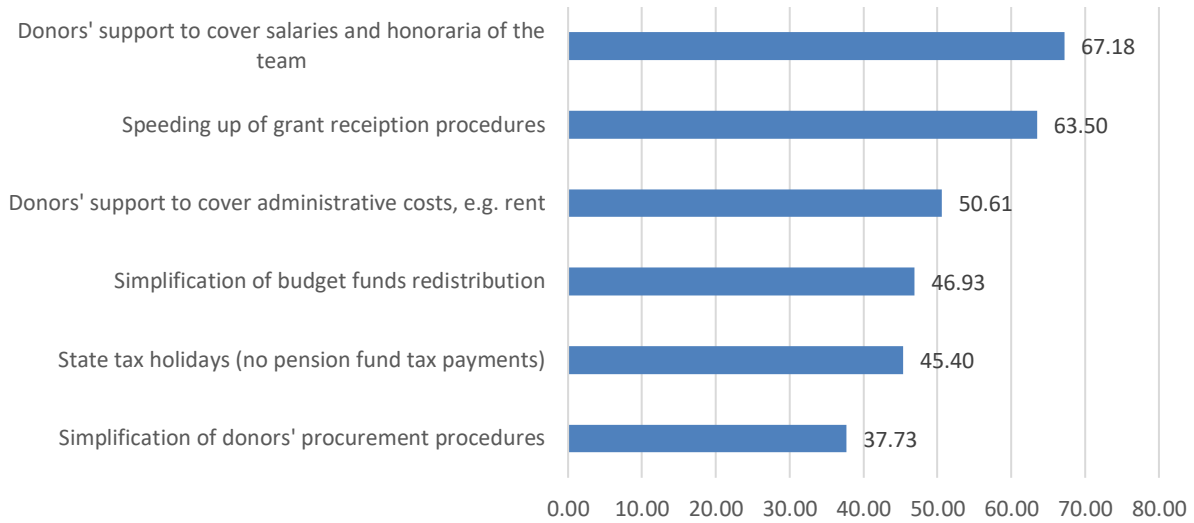


Figure 10: Possible measures to meet financial challenges, %⁷

Despite problems with salaries and honoraria are generally estimated lower than the mean (2.64 points), the top measure the respondents see necessary is donors' support to cover salaries and honoraria of the team—67.18%. The next priorities are the speed of grant procedures and specific support to cover administrative costs (although, it is also rated below the general mean of the component—3.07 points).

Cross Comparison of Components

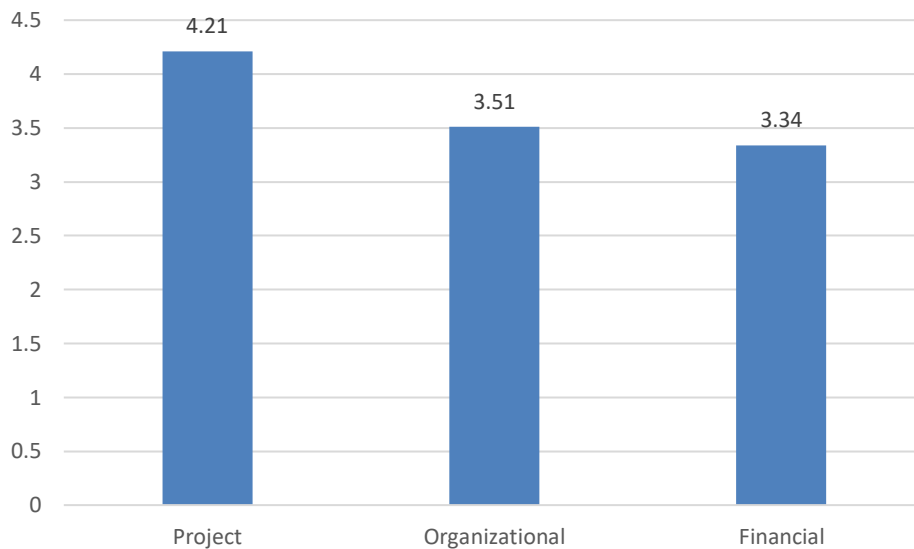


Figure 11: Means of components

⁷ A multi-choice question

Mean of all components is **3.69**. In total, the respondents see challenges faced by their organizations as *mild*.

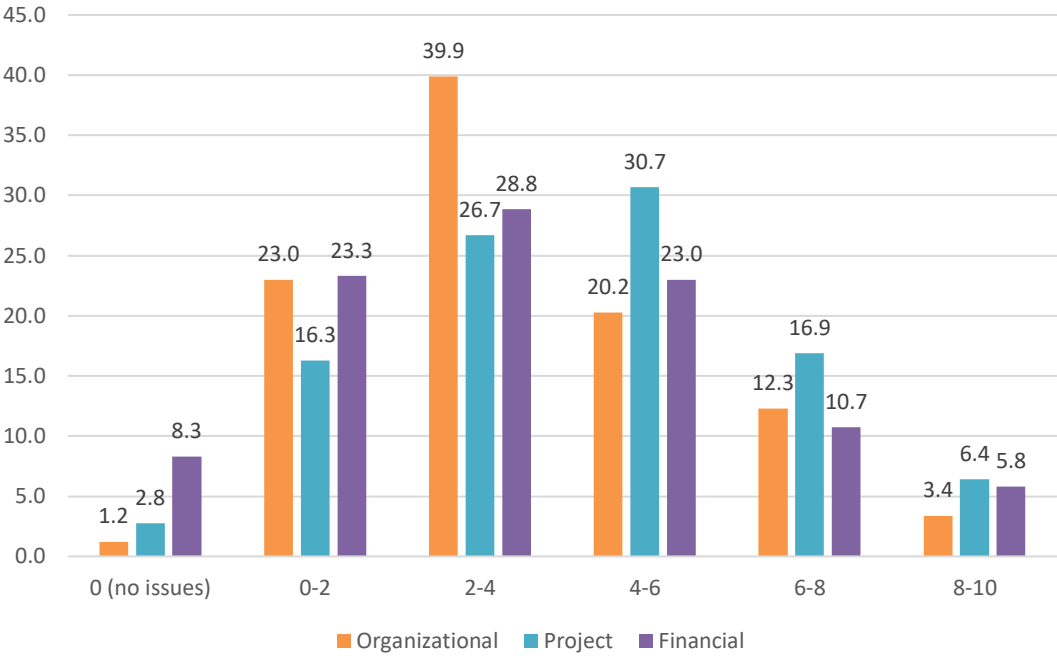


Figure 12: Distribution of mean estimates by intervals, all components

Figure 12 conveniently presents all the interval distributions combined. As we see, the distribution of organizational challenges tends to be left-tailed (leaning towards smaller estimates), financial is close to normal, while the project ones are slightly right-tailed (leaning towards higher estimates). Median of all the estimates provided by the respondents is **3**, meaning 50% of respondents estimate the severity of their challenges by less than 3 points on a 10-point scale.

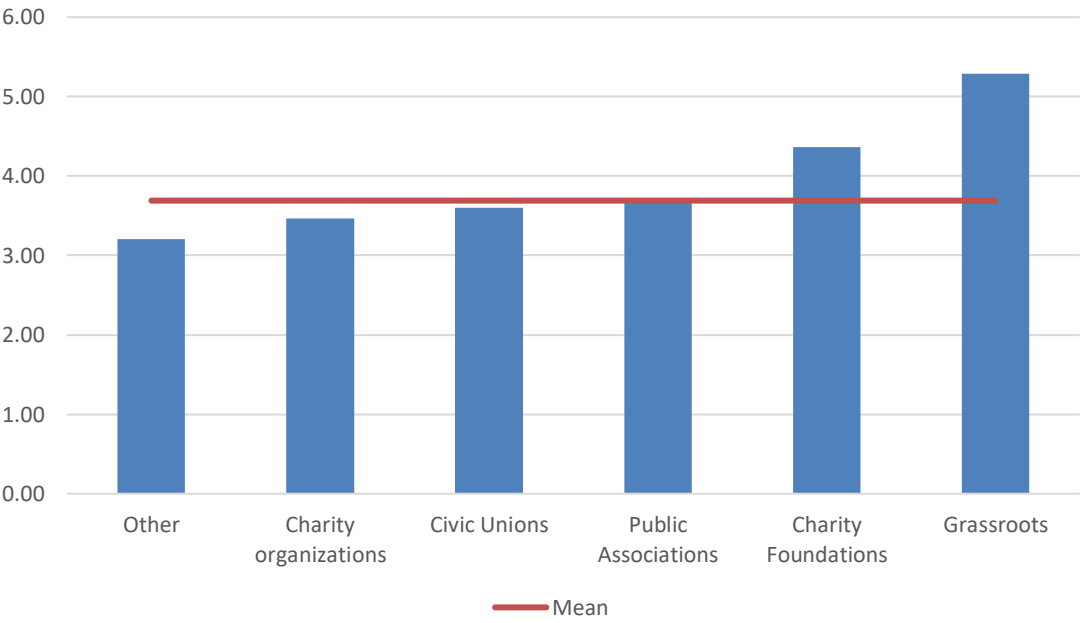
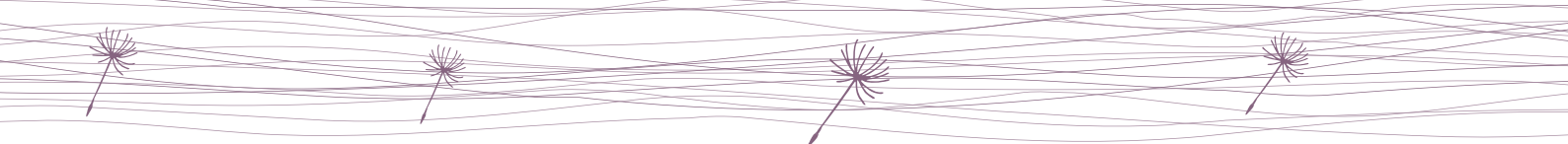


Figure 13: Challenges by organization types, total mean estimates



As we see, the most affected are charity foundations. Despite grassroots being presented, only two organizations labelled themselves as such, therefore, there is no sufficient data on them and hence we would disregard them from the further analysis. The “other” category includes those who have not labelled themselves with categories provided.

Below, Figures 14-16 present the challenges means across different types of organizations represented in the survey.

- Considering the data in Figure 14 means specifically, it seems that among all types, charity foundations experience their organizational challenges more acutely than others: their mean of 4.12 is higher than the component mean of 3.51 by 0.61 points. Other types are below the mean.
- Figure 15 presents a similar chart on project difficulties. Here, the means of only two types, CSOs and others are below the component average of 4.21 points. The charity foundations, again, report their difficulties the highest of all: 5.09.

Figure 16 presents the data on financial challenges (general mean: 3.34 points). Only charity organizations and civic unions are below the mean, all other types experience their challenges on a higher level, with charity foundations, again, being affected the highest—4.12 points.

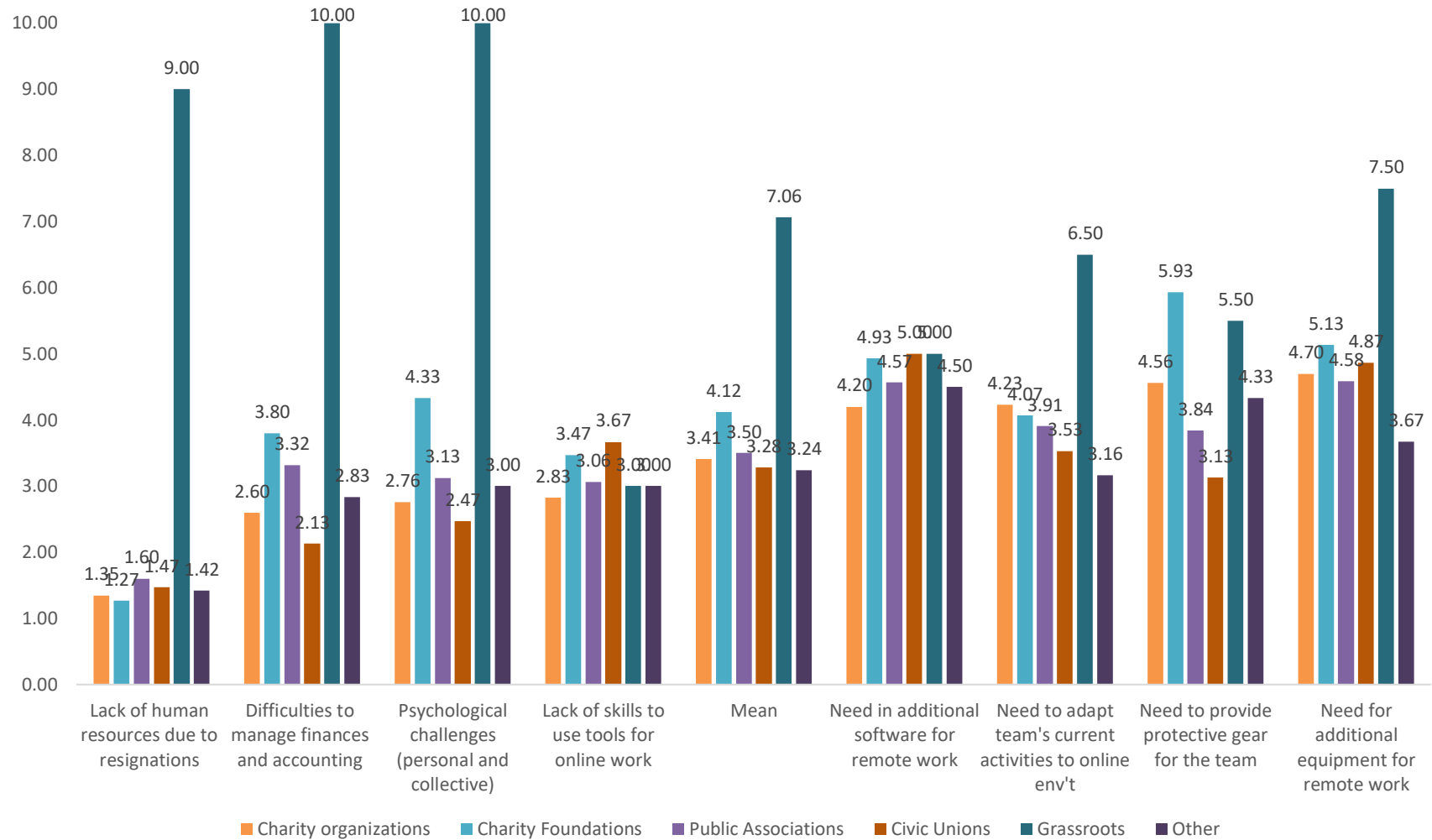


Figure 14: Organizational challenges, means across the types of respondents

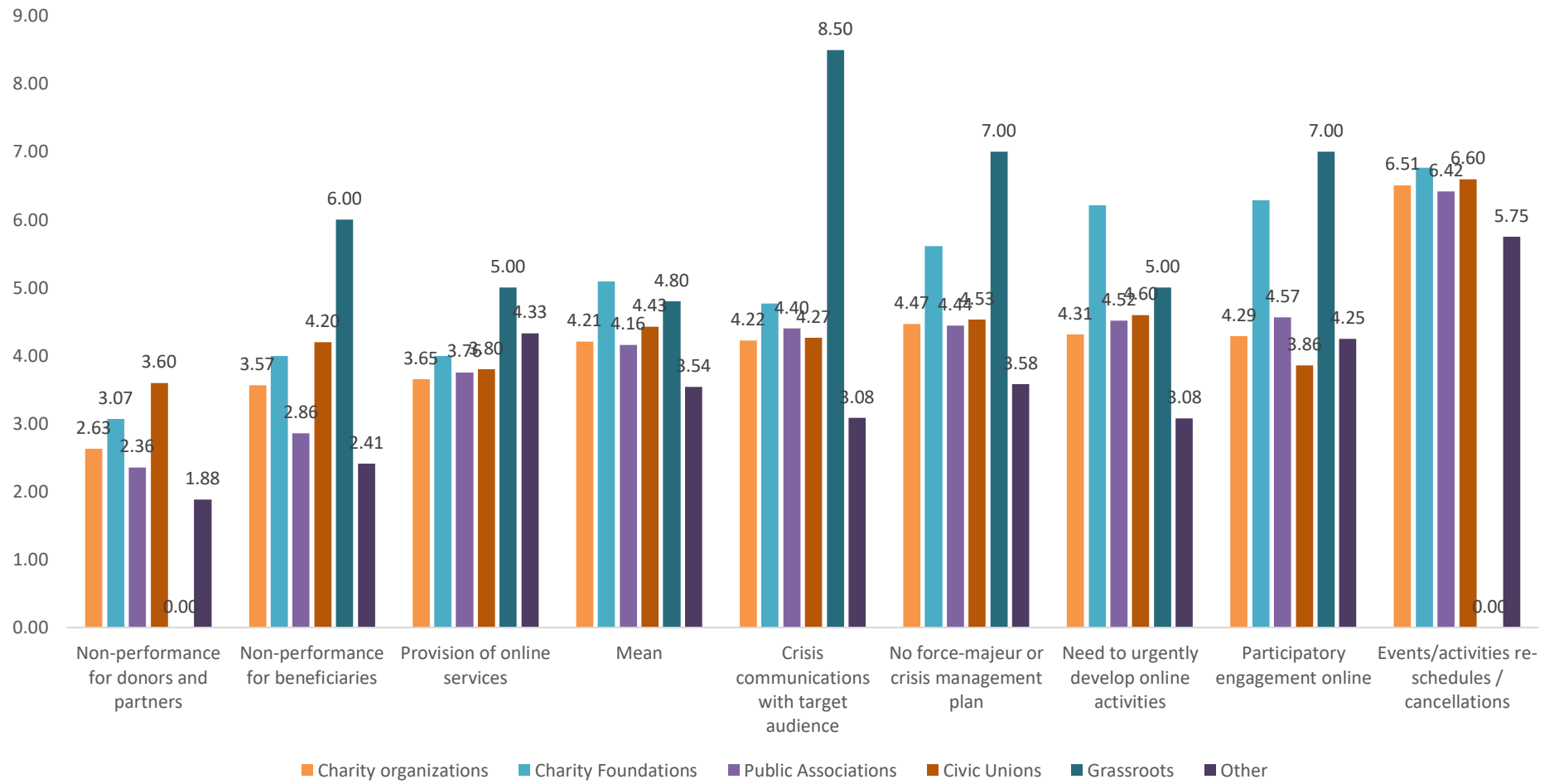


Figure 15: Project challenges, means across the types of respondents

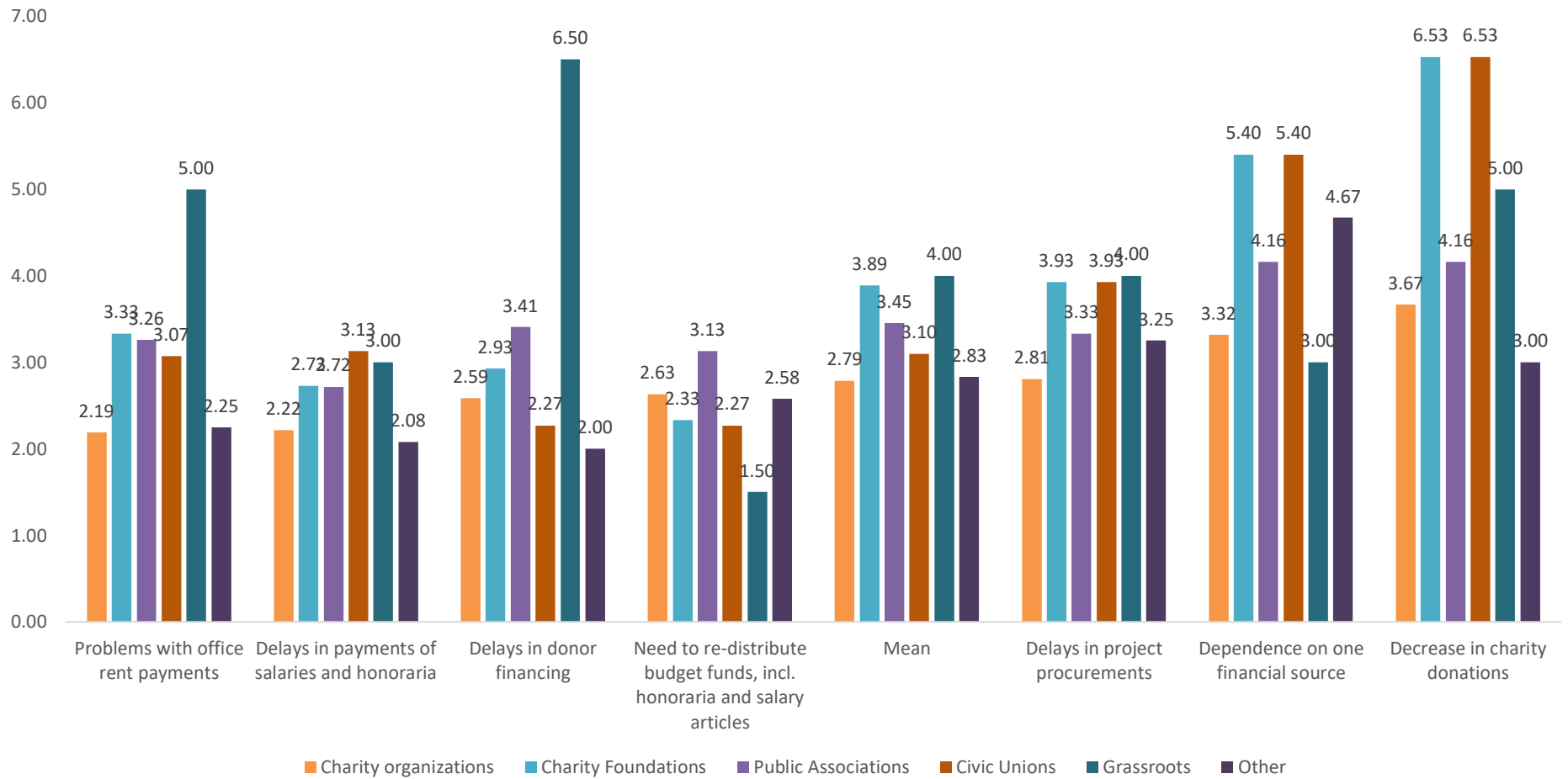


Figure 16: Financial challenges, means across the types of respondents

Expectations and Opportunities

In this section, the overall expectations of the respondents in terms on what they expect or desire to be done by donors, business, or civil society in general, are discussed.

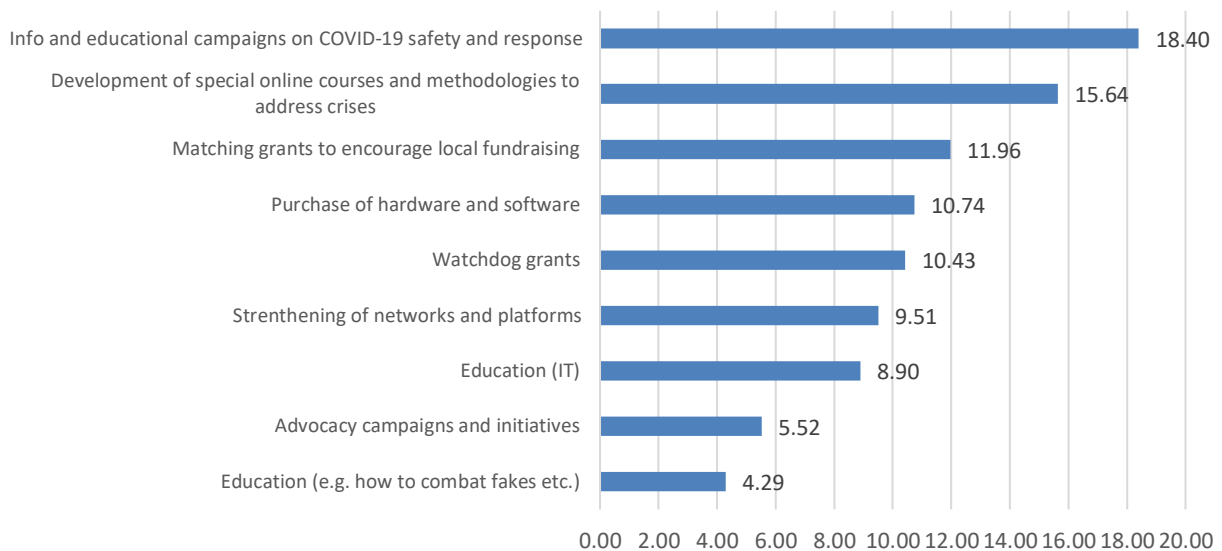


Figure 17: Types of expected grants

As it is seen in Figure 17, the respondents expect more grants to be issued to cover informational and educational campaigns on COVID-19 safety and response scenarios. Similar to other data presented in the sections above, the respondents expect grants to finance the development of various online courses and methodologies, which would help them to cope with this and any other possible crisis. In general, education and advocacy are the three lowest priorities.

In terms of types of grants to be distributed, 31% suggest institutional support to cover administrative costs, e.g., salaries and rent, would be helpful right now. The discussions on institutional support continue in the open-ended questions, where respondents claim that the barriers of eligibility criteria for institutional support should be lowered. There is also a general sentiment of demanding certain reconsideration of current procedures and rules in terms of bureaucracy and speed. Also, the respondents also suggest that the budget line for administrative costs in project budgets should be also removed, especially when conditions of quarantine emphasized the need to invest in professional capacities of the CSO staff: “it is impossible to hire a highly qualified professional with such a low budget”. Again, the discourse of financial needs is manifested greatly and the respondents require project support, new grant programs, and “continue donor operation all costs”.

The details on how the expectancy of grant needs varies across different types of respondents and it is presented in Figure 18 below.

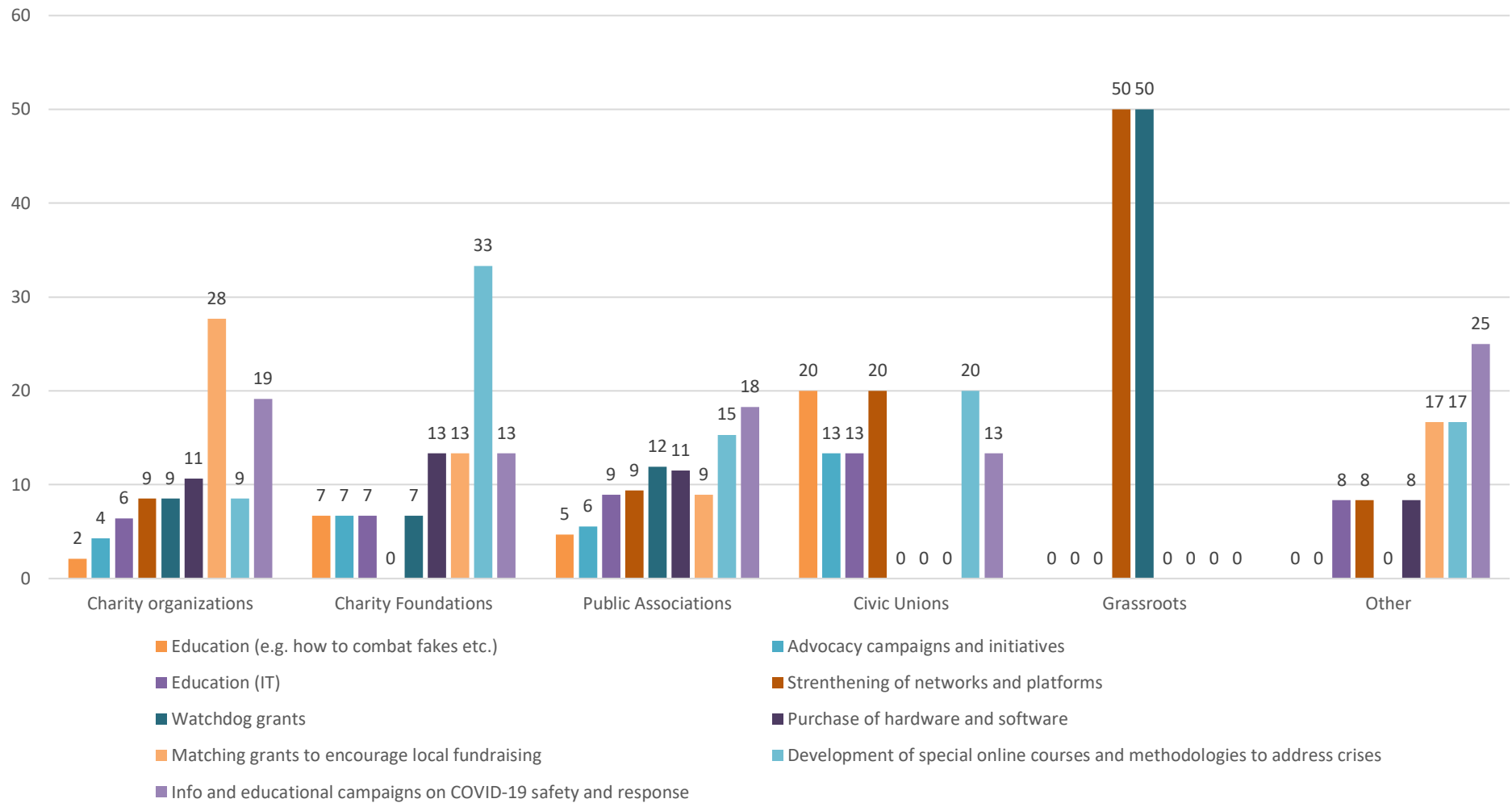
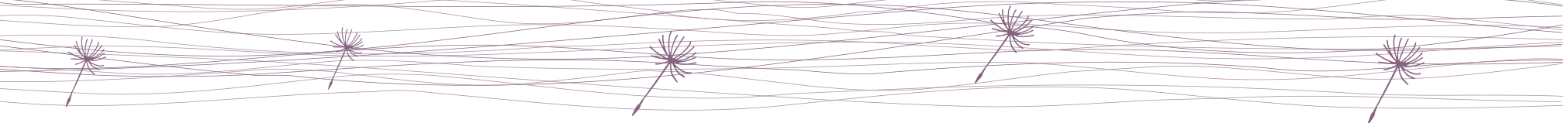


Figure 18: Grant expectations by organizations types, % from totals by organizations (see Table 1).

The general data on challenges faced by respondents' beneficiaries are presented in Figure 19 below.

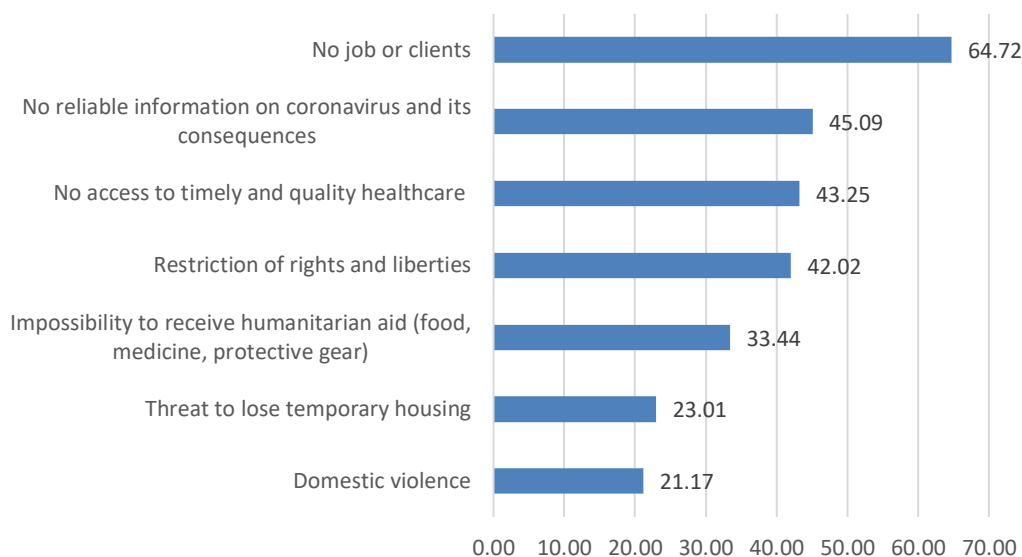
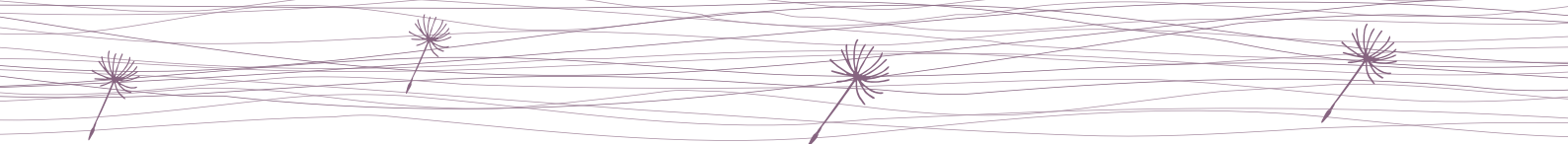


Figure 19: Challenges faced by respondents' beneficiaries

All of these challenges are significant as these numbers represent struggles of people being quarantined, in poor economic conditions and with no accessible healthcare. In the open-ended responses on how the donor community should address the crisis, respondents claim support of healthcare initiatives and those supporting socially disadvantaged and vulnerable groups to be crucial.

As for long-term actions expected from the donor community, the open-ended responses suggest more emphasis on adaptive capacity building should be made, e.g., risk management, digital capacities etc. Certain provisions on risks and force majeure are expected to be explicitly and fully covered in the grant agreements as well as general action plan to be employed in times of crises. The respondents generally expect so-called policy and procedure to be put in place; as well as 'crisis response fund' to be established by the donor community.

The short-term expectations from entrepreneurs and business in general are even more demanding. In the open-ended responses, the respondents suggest that business enterprises should cooperate with the civil society in terms of providing financial support to civic initiatives addressing the crisis, cancelling / reducing rent and prices for other services provided to CSOs as well as procuring required medical equipment and protective gear for healthcare institutions and individuals in need. These demands are mostly framed as "business should be socially responsible" or "we must stand together in the crisis" and form the discourse of business becoming a financial donor of civil society.

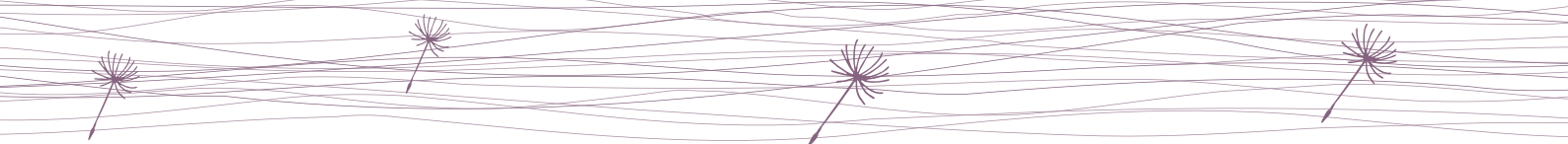


The COVID-19 crisis, however, also opened certain opportunities for the civil society. As briefly noted by the respondents, the quarantine and remote work fastened the digitalization of their organizations and forced CSO staff to acquire necessary skills (“there was never enough time to study; now the conditions force us”). The respondents also report their appreciation for a chance to unleash their creative thinking and design and test new ideas for online projects and formats, for instance, try podcasting or gamification. Some organizations are reconsidering their administrative needs (“we don’t need an office anymore”) and thinking about not holding costly offline events. Also, the respondents note the opportunity to engage international experts and peers to their activities, as there are no travel and accommodation costs needed anymore. Although as of now such trend is minor, it is a general opportunity to strengthen CSOs and optimize CSO operations and routine in a post-quarantine period.

Conclusions and Recommendations

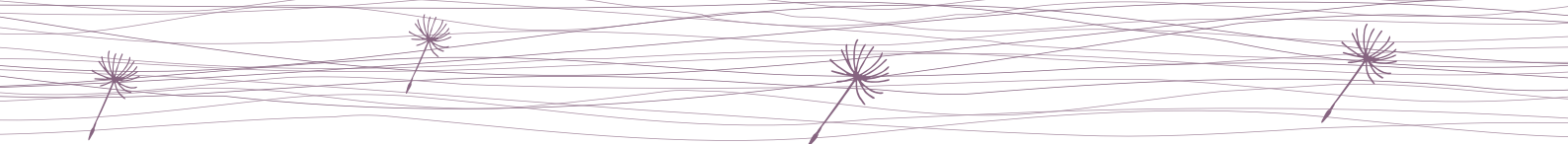
In this section, a brief summary of survey key results is provided.

- The survey was distributed on March 30 and closed on April 12. The sample method: convenience sampling. The total number of respondents is 326, representing all regions of Ukraine, excluding the temporary occupied territories and annexed Crimea.
- Overall, the respondents experience mild challenges, estimated as 3.69 points on a 10-point scale; the median of all estimates is 3, meaning that 50% of respondents estimate their challenges below 3 points. The difference between components’ means is no higher than 0.9 points.
- The project challenges are generally estimated higher than others, which is due to offline events / activities cancellations or re-schedule, as well as general need to adapt activities for online environment. The respondents see urgent necessity to design new online activities, as well as learn how to facilitate big online events and meaningfully engage with their audience, given the limitations of access to certain equipment and skills among their target groups.
- As for organizational challenges, the respondents report their struggle with the lack of hardware and software, as well as technical and digital skills necessary for remote / online work. The respective procurements are seen as necessary to address the challenges of remote work. The education on how to provide services online is also perceived as essential.
- Although financial challenges are reported to be the lowest, we hypothesize that financial challenges are underestimated. It is rather pervasive, as the respondents repeatedly emphasize their financial needs in the open-ended parts of the questionnaire. The respondents experience the decrease in donations and see moderate issues with being dependent on a single financial source. Currently, the respondents expect the donor community to provide additional grants or other forms of financial resources to support the organizations’ operations in terms of salaries and projects. The grants are also expected to cover the design of new online activities and methodologies.

- 
- The most affected organizations are charity foundations; however, the difference between them and other groups is insignificant.
 - There are certain expectations that organizations will receive action plans or some sort of guiding instructions on how to address crises like the current one.
 - The respondents suggest that the donor community should simplify the bureaucratic procedures and speed them up as well. There is also an expressed sentiment of general reconsideration of eligibility criteria for institutional support.
 - The respondents expect the donors to support risk management and digital capacity building of their grantees.

Having considered the survey data, we encourage the donor community to think on how to address specific challenges faced by the civil society across the following lines:

- **Emergency response grants are needed.** The survey results suggest paying serious attention to those organizations that provide direct help to their beneficiaries, especially representing vulnerable or disadvantaged groups. There is also a need to support the capacity of local communities as well, as not many of them have skills or opportunities to use online services, therefore, will be limited in engaging with CSOs' online activities.
- **Focus on technical capacity building.** The support should cover purchase of equipment and software to ensure the effectiveness of the remote work and smooth operations. The grants may cover the procurements of laptops, cameras, microphones, office packages, service subscriptions (Google Suite, Zoom, Skype Business etc.), specialized software (for instance, video production for investigative journalists).
- **Focus on digital capacity building:** The crisis demonstrates low digital and technological literacy. Certain educational packages in forms of online demonstrations or workshops will make the organizations more tech and digital savvy and ensure their consistent and effective work with their beneficiaries online.
- **Focus on financial capacity.** The survey suggest that the respondents are moderately dependent on a single funding source. Therefore, cross-funding and general financial diversity should be encouraged by the donor community; and general approaches to financial management should be included in capacity building strategies of donors.
- **Emergency institutional support is needed.** Many organizations report their struggle to cover administrative costs in times of quarantine and numerous cancellations of activities, including those in the scope of social services / entrepreneurship. The teams and staff are under a threat of losing their salaries and honoraria, which may result in seizing their operations.
- **Speed is essential.** Many needs risen because of the crisis are time sensitive and require timely actions. It is especially true for CSOs working with the disadvantaged groups and those in immediate danger.
- **More flexibility is desirable.** As of now, many organizations are struggling to meet project indicators or deliver planned results. Many of them require extra time to adapt their current activities or employ creative approaches. Donors' flexibility in



terms of reporting or other necessary paperwork, and general empathy with these struggles would be much appreciated.

- **Communication is key.** There is general uncertainty causing anxiety and frustration. Clear communication of the attitude of the donor community and possible measures to tackle the crisis would be reassuring and unifying.
- **In times of a healthcare crisis, we should not lose sight of other areas.** Considering the flux of Ukrainian politics and possible power abuse in the times of the pandemic and after it, the donor community should continue to support democracy, governance and human rights programs.