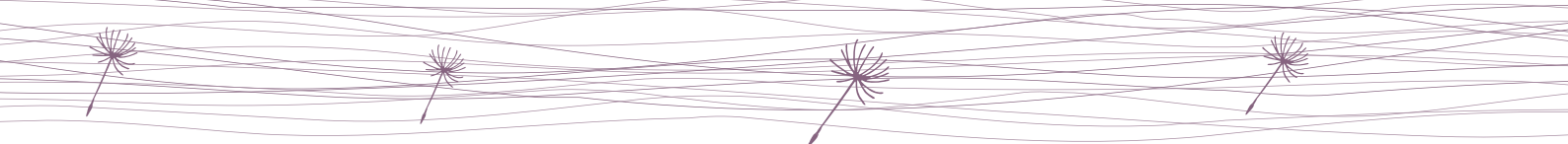




**The Lockdown
Year: Challenges
and Needs of Civil
Society under
COVID-19 Crisis
and Quarantine**
A Survey Report

ISAR Ednannia
www.ednannia.ua

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Ukraine



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About This Report

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. Another important part of the survey is self-assessment of the respondents, encouraging them to reflect and evaluate their success in addressing the challenges.

This report presents the key findings of the survey held during November-December 2020. The report structure is as follows. Chapter 1 presents survey results along with the description of the sample and general methodological approach. The sub-chapters are dedicated to discussions of particular types of challenges the research participants might face, namely organizational, project, or financial ones. In the following sub-section, the cross-comparisons of these components are presented. Chapter 2 provides a simple comparison of the components across the survey. Chapter 3 is filled with data on general expectations of the civil society and opportunities for positive developments in times of crisis. The final part of the report is dedicated to general conclusions in a form of brief summary of findings presented in other parts of the report in detail; as well as recommendations for the donor community.



Key Results

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

- The survey was distributed in November 30 and closed on December 10. The sample method: convenience sampling. The total number of respondents is 105, representing most regions of Ukraine, excluding the temporary occupied territories and annexed Crimea.
- Overall, the respondents experience *moderate* challenges, estimated as 4.04 points on a 10-point scale.
- The financial challenges are generally lower higher than others, but open-ended response suggest underestimation of these issues. The respondents see themselves moderately successful in addressing the financial challenges—5.34 on 10-point scale.
- 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. The mean for the challenge is 3.83 points, while the overall estimation of success is 5.58 points.
- The project challenges are reported to be the in the middle, with the mean being 3.49, while the estimation of success scored 6.16. One may hypothesize that this is due to the wide project support the respondents received from the donor community (60%).
- The respondents still claim the rigidity of donor bureaucratic procedure, which suggest general misunderstanding on how donor organizations operate; and the nature of procedures being imposed on them by a higher-ranked donor, e.g., their government.
- The respondents expect the donors to support risk management and digital capacity building of their grantees. However, other areas, such as advocacy and fundraising should not be overlooked.
- The scars the lockdown and the economic crisis have caused for the civil society are deep and will require a long time to heal. Therefore, the community should consider long-term recovery programs that would encourage HR-sustainability of the sector as well.

Chapter 1: 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=105 organizations operating either in every region of Ukraine, transregionally, or national CSOs on the all-Ukrainian level, selected via convenience sampling method with the help of a web-questionnaire.

Table 1: Types of Respondents' Organizations

Organizations:	N	%
Charity Organization	13	12.4
Public Association	84	80
Governmental body	7	6.7
Business	1	1
Total:	105	100

Table 2: Geography of Respondents' Operations

Region	N	%
Cherkasy	2	1.9
Chernihiv	2	1.9
Chernivtsi	1	1.0
Dnipropetrovsk	5	4.8
Donetsk (controlled territories)	6	5.7
Ivano-Frankivsk	4	3.8
Kharkiv	4	3.8
Kherson	2	1.9
Khmelnyskyi	2	1.9
Kirovohrad	3	2.9
Kyiv	5	4.8
Kyiv city	14	13.3
Luhansk	5	4.8
Lviv	12	11.4
Mykolaiv	0	0.0
Odesa	2	1.9
Poltava	0	0.0
Rivne	2	1.9
Sumy	2	1.9
Ternopil	0	0.0
Vinnitsia	5	4.8
Volyn	0	0.0

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

Zakarpattia	0	0.0
Zaporizhia	2	1.9
Zhytomyr	4	3.8
All Ukrainian	18	17.1
Transregional	3	2.9
Total:	105	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.

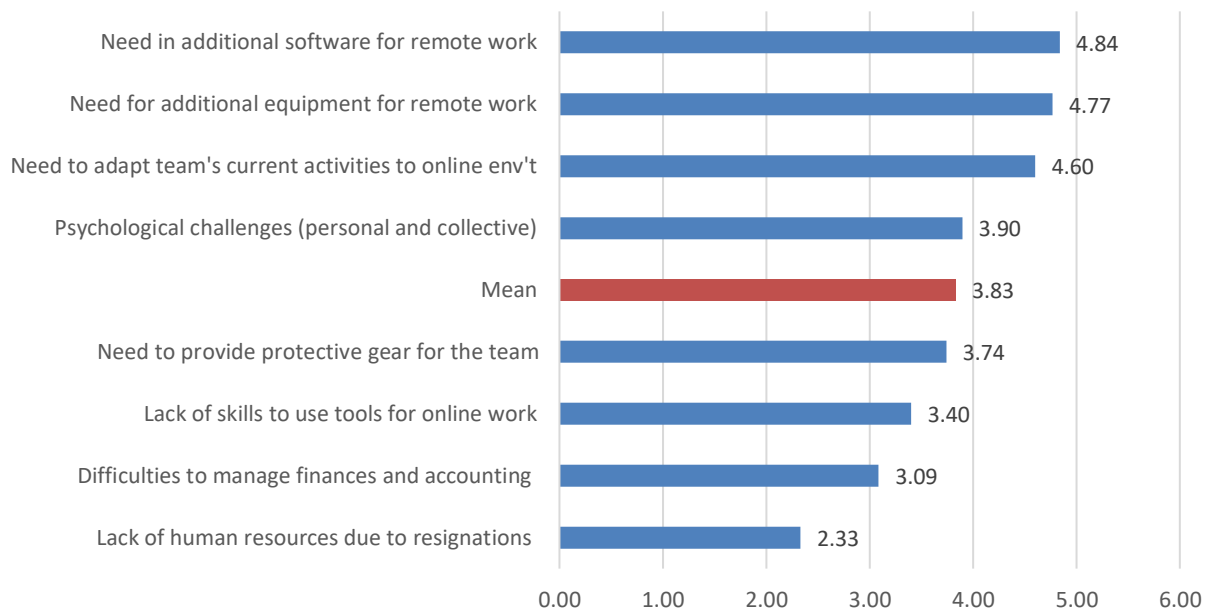


Figure 1: Organizational challenges, mean estimates by sub-components, 10-point scale

As it is seen on Figure 1, the mean of all challenges in this block is 3.58 on on a 10-point scale, which is a moderate impact. However, the respondents estimate their lack of necessary equipment (e.g., laptops, home printers, cameras etc.) and software for remote work as moderate—4.77 and 4.84 points on a 10-point scale, respectively. These tools, along with the need to adapt to new online environment (4.6 points) are obvious necessities during the remote work,

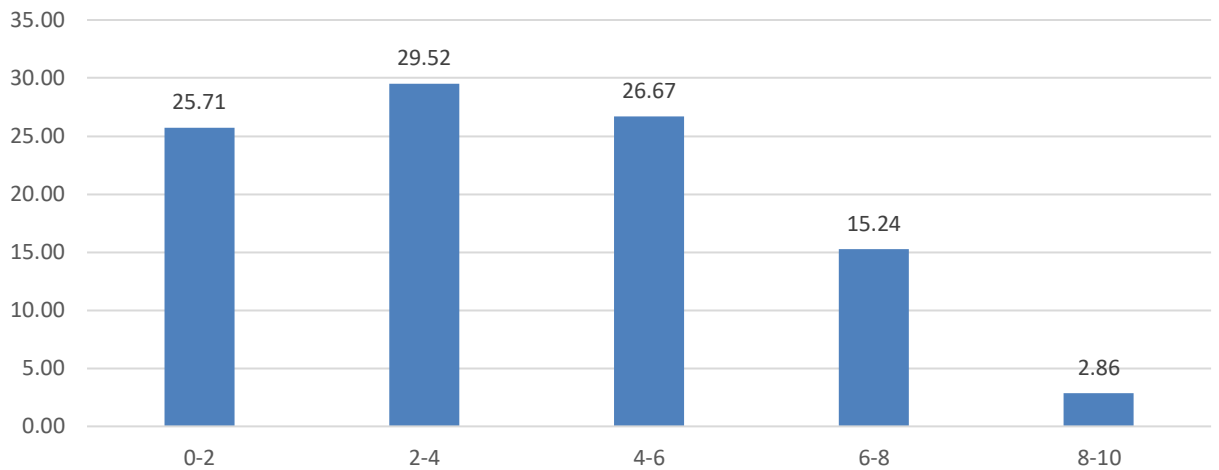
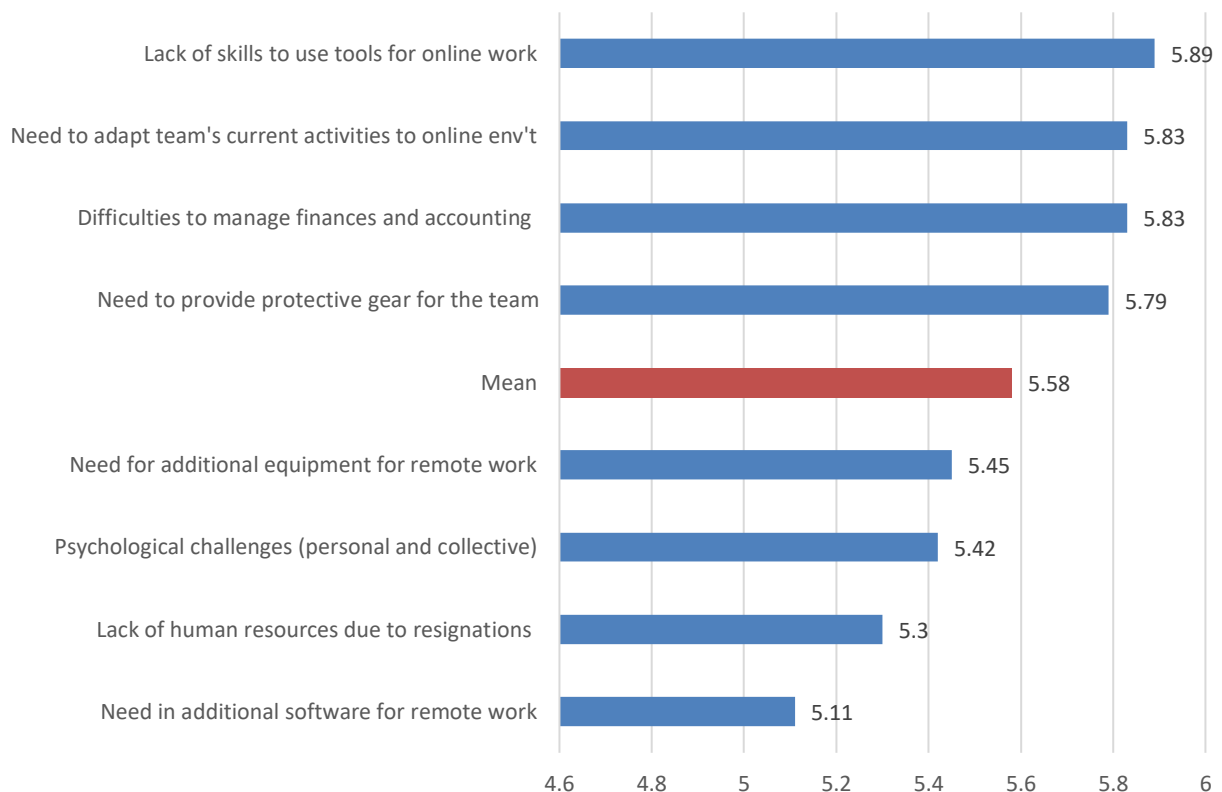


Figure 2: Organizational challenges, distribution of intervals of mean estimates, %

The mean for organizational challenges was also calculated for each respondent. Figure 2 shows the distribution of these means via intervals². As it is seen, only 2.86 % experience severe organizational challenges, while the majority of respondents fall into and 2-4 and 4-6 intervals, meaning their estimation of organizational challenges are mild or moderate.



² 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: Estimated success in addressing the organizational challenges, mean estimates, 10-point scale (0—no success, 10—very successful)

As it is seen on Figure 3, the respondents see their success in addressing the organizational challenges as moderate, as estimates range from 5.11 to 5.89 points. However, in this small distribution it is noticeable, that professional adaptation to new work environment was more successful than addressing the psychological challenges and resource-based challenges (lack of equipment, software, or team members).

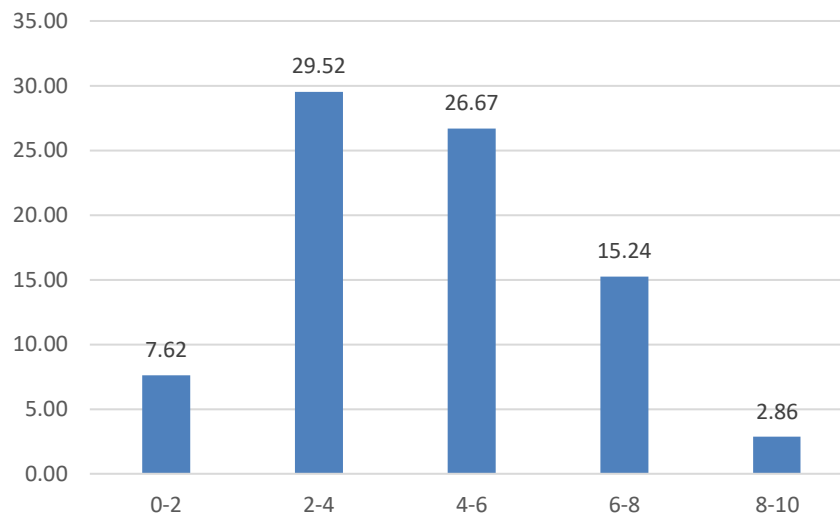


Figure 4: Respondents' success in addressing the organizational challenges, distribution of intervals of mean estimates, %

The figure 4 shows the distribution of the mean estimates of how respondents think about their success in addressing the organizational challenges. It is noticeable, that only 2.86% of respondents see themselves as successful, while the estimates of the majority demonstrate that the respondents may require additional assistance in securing their positions.

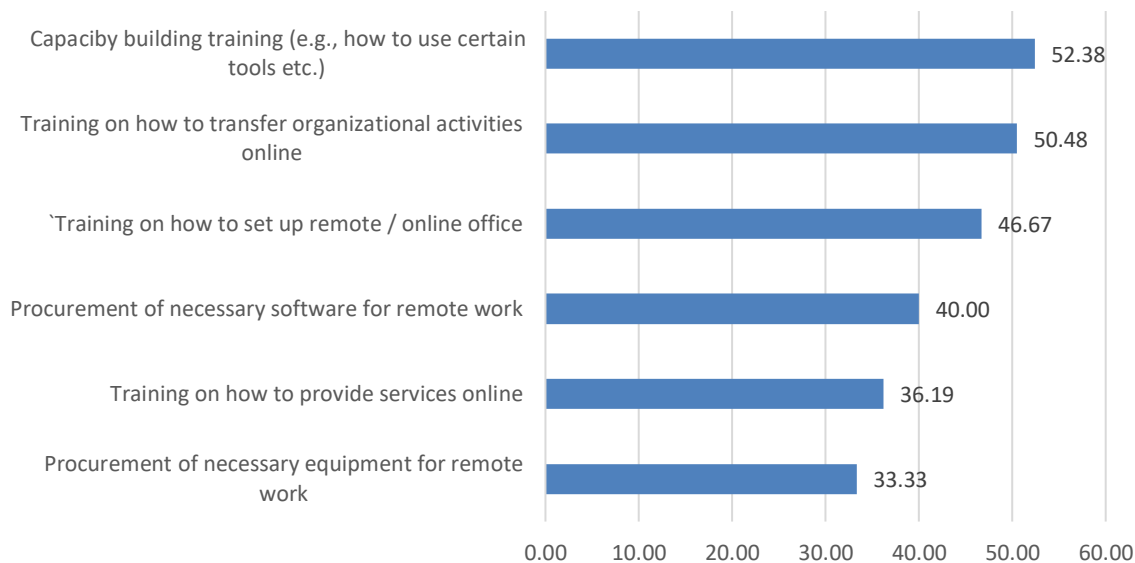


Figure 5: The most useful activities in addressing the organizational challenges, %

The survey also invited the respondents to indicate the activities they see as the most productive in dealing with the organizational challenges. As it is seen, the activities that prepared the respondents for working in the online environment has been outlined as the most useful. However, it must be noted that respondents are mostly ISAR Ednannia's grantees, who usually focus on organizational development and capacity building; therefore, a sample shift is quite possible.

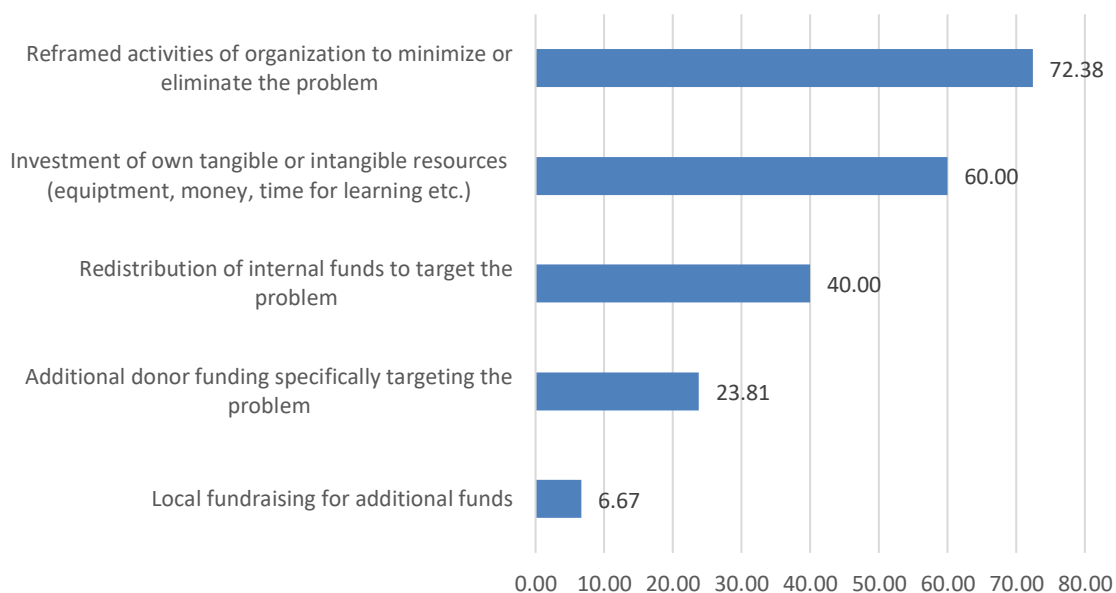


Figure 6: Measures taken to tackle the organizational challenges, %³

As we see on Figure 6, most respondents rethought their activities to adapt to new lockdown realities. Also, the majority of respondents, first of all, looked for their inner resources

³ Multiple choice question

to ensure the sustainability of the organization. Unfortunately, only 6.67% of respondents managed to raise local funds in their communities. However, the survey does not provide the context and logic behind each strategy, so it is impossible to understand if respondents were unable to engage with fundraising for some reasons or did not want to do it on purpose.

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. The respondents stated that even though their donors prolonged the project timelines, the procedures have been the same, with no considerations of the online reality.

In open-ended questions, those respondents who provide the social and protection services indicated that their work suffered a lot in 2020 because of the lockdown. Human right organizations also noted the increased number of far-right attacks on LGBTIQ groups and other marginalized communities. These respondents also noted attacks on civic space that, in their opinion, are orchestrated by the government under the cover of the lockdown. Quite a few respondents noted the psychological challenges and burnout because of the blurred lines between work and personal life of the members of their organizations. One of the most common stated fears is *unpredictability* of state economic policies designed to response the economic crisis caused by the lockdown.



Figure 7: Capacities acquired during the lockdown, %⁴

The Figure 7 demonstrates the respondents which claimed to acquire certain skills through the lockdown. One can reasonably suggest that they were rather forced to do so than it was originally planned in their capacity development strategies. Advocacy and fundraising are to be the least acquired tools—18.1 and 17.14% respectively.

⁴ A multi-choice question

The COVID-19 crisis, however, also opened certain opportunities for the civil society. As briefly noted by the respondents, the quarantine and remote work accelerated the digitalization of their organizations and forced CSO staff to acquire necessary skills. After a year online, many respondents now think about hybrid work, both online and offline, as they see it as more efficient in the future in terms of money and time spent. The trend that was minor among the March survey respondents—engagement of international/national experts and peers to their activities, as there are no travel and accommodation costs needed anymore—became more prominent.

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.

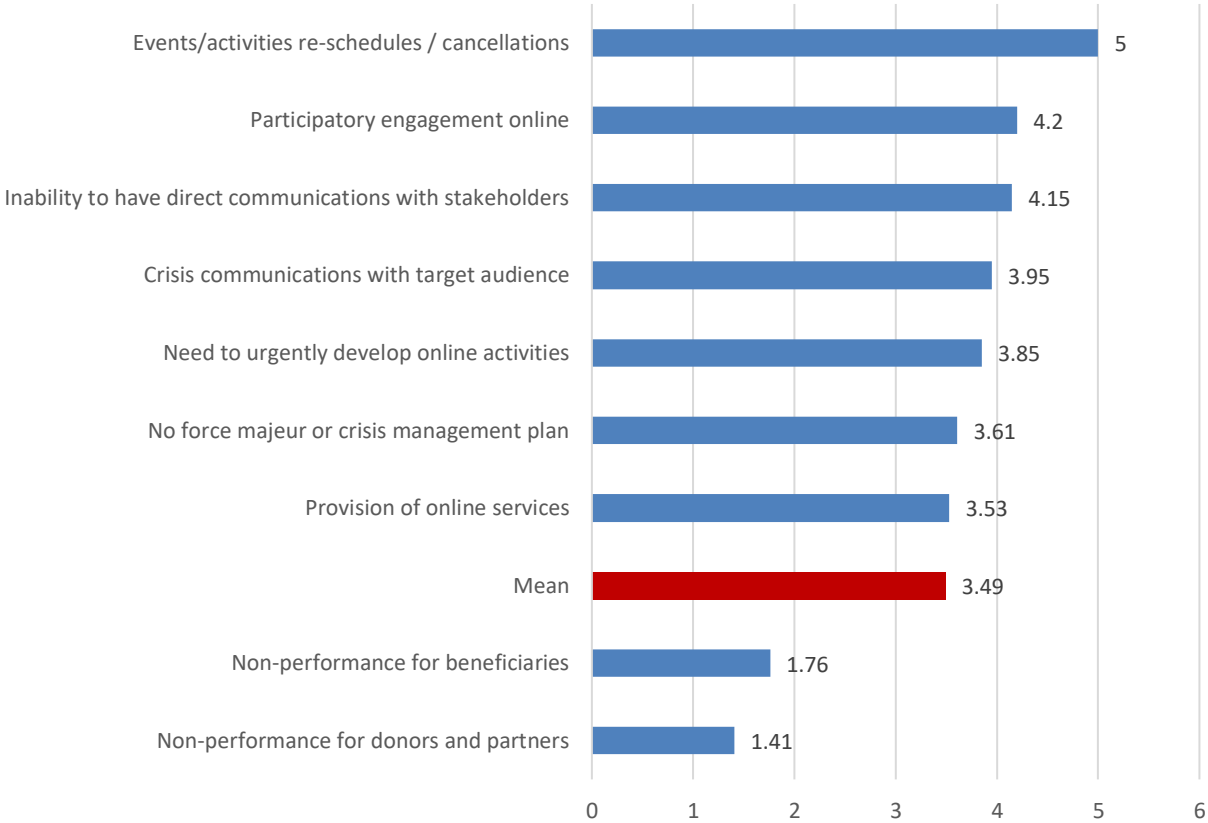


Figure 8: Project challenges, mean estimates by sub-components, 10-point scale

As it is seen in Figure 8, the mean for this component is 3.49 points, which labels it as a *mild* impact, however, on its higher margin. The biggest impact project-wise is cancellation of events or their re-schedule—5 points. Many of the activities simply cannot be transferred into online environment, especially the social services required personal presence.

Also, the organizations estimate their crisis to engage people online as 4.2 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. Inability to directly communicate with stakeholders has scored 4.15 points, however, it is unclear what exact consequences of this challenge have been experienced by the respondents.

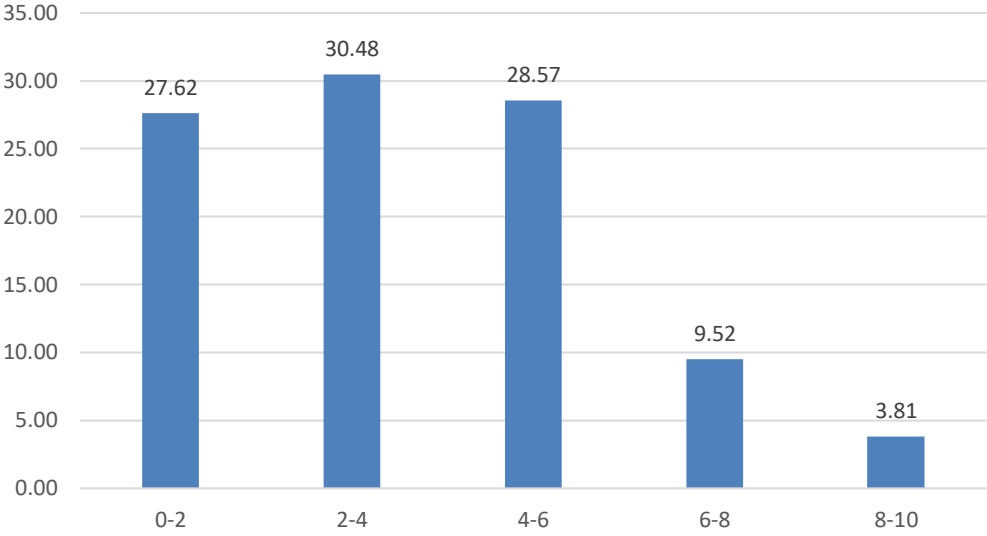


Figure 9: Project challenges, distribution intervals of mean estimates, %

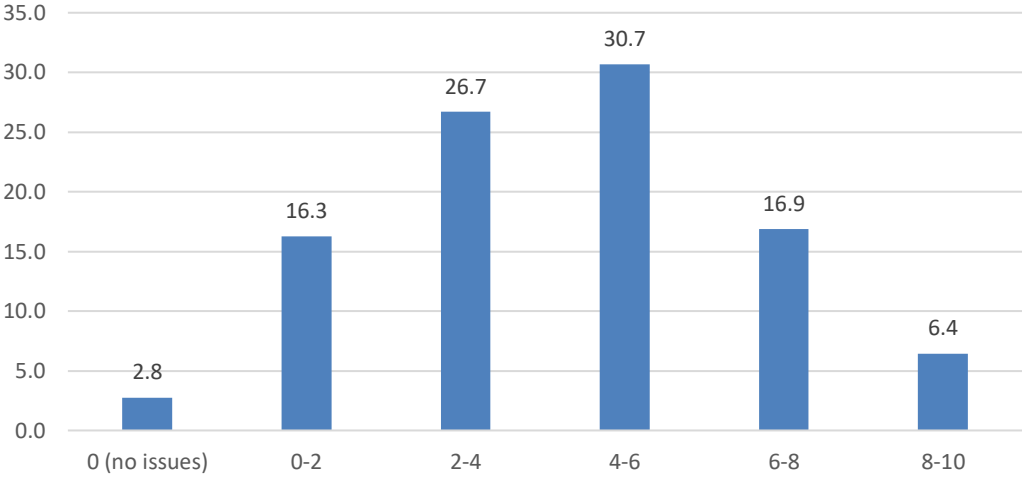


Figure 10: Project challenges, distribution intervals of mean estimates, March 2020 survey, %

The distribution in Figure 9 suggests that the majority of the respondents suffer from insignificant (0-2), mediocre (2-4), and moderate (4-6) project challenges. Although the comparison would not be fair⁵, 54% of respondents of the first survey stated that they experienced moderate, significant and severe challenges (see Figure 9 for a visual illustration).

⁵ The series of COVID-surveys is *not* a panel survey. The surveys have different convenience samples and therefore, impossible to compare.

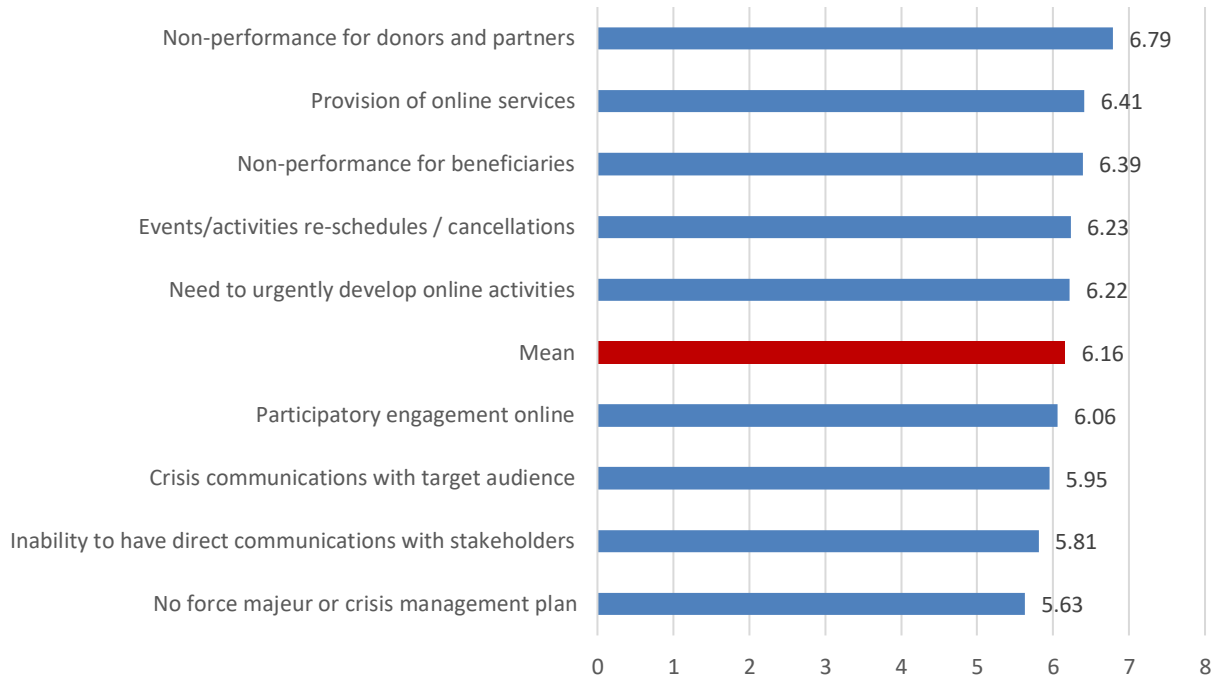


Figure 11: Estimated success in addressing the project challenges, mean estimates, 10-point scale (0—no success, 10—very successful)

As Figure 11 demonstrates, on average, the respondents evaluate their success in tackling the project challenges as a solid 6, which is a moderate success. The most challenging tasks, in respondents' opinions, are the design of the crisis management plan, direct communications with stakeholders, crisis communications with target audiences. In such tasks as commitment to agreements with donors and partners and provision of online services the respondents feel the most secure in their success.

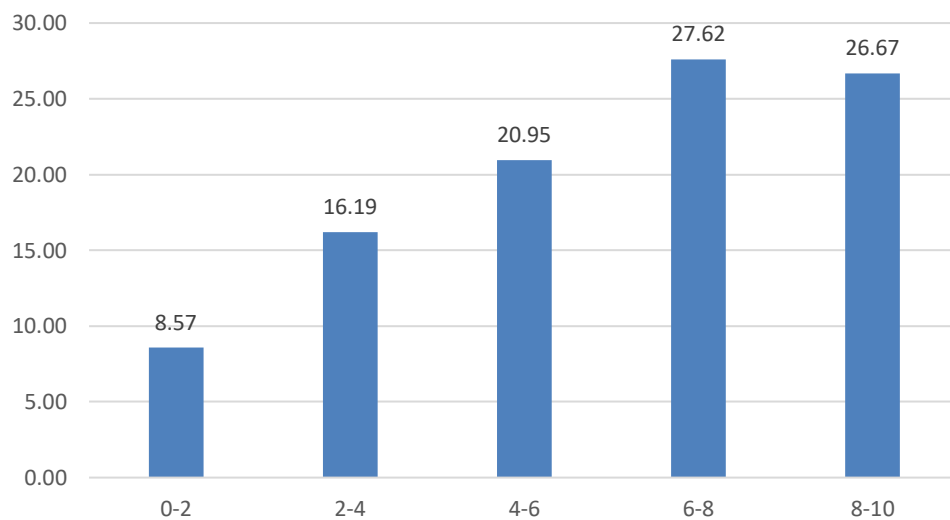


Figure 12: Respondents' success in addressing the project challenges, distribution of intervals of mean estimates, %

As it is seen on Figure 11, the respondents see themselves as more successful in addressing the project challenges than the organizational ones (see Figure 4 for comparison).

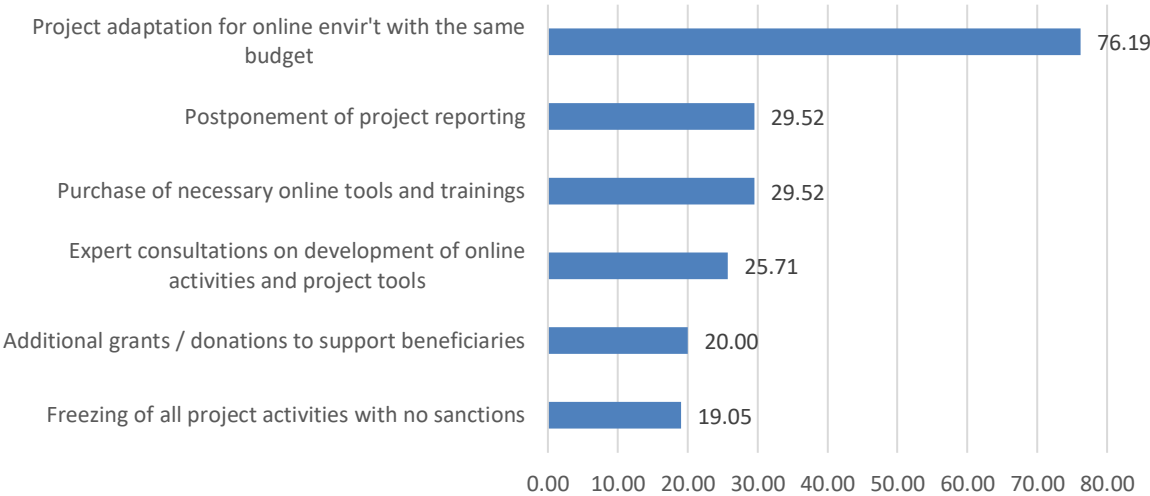


Figure 13: The most useful activities in addressing the project challenges⁶, %

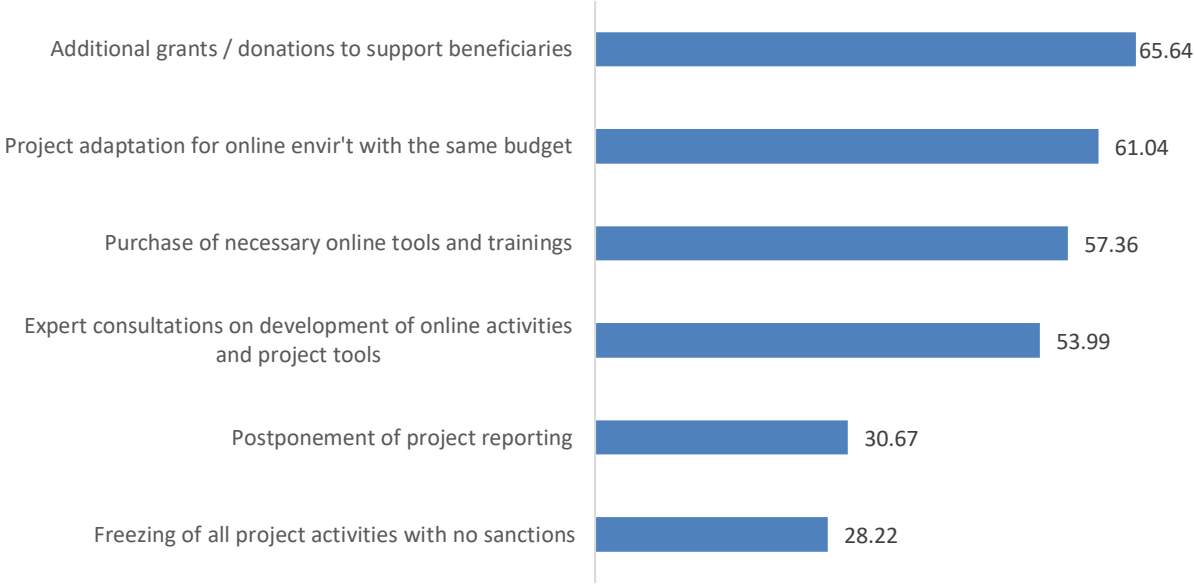


Figure 14: Possible measures to meet project challenges, March 2020 survey, %⁷

On Figure 13, one sees the respondents' opinions on specific measures that helped them tackle the project challenges. As it is seen, the project adaptation for online environment was the most effective measure among all, in the opinion of the respondents. The respondents of the March survey, although seeing adaptation as effective, put more hopes onto the additional finances, either grants or donations, to support their beneficiaries.

⁶ A multiple choice question
⁷ A multiple choice question

Financial Challenges

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

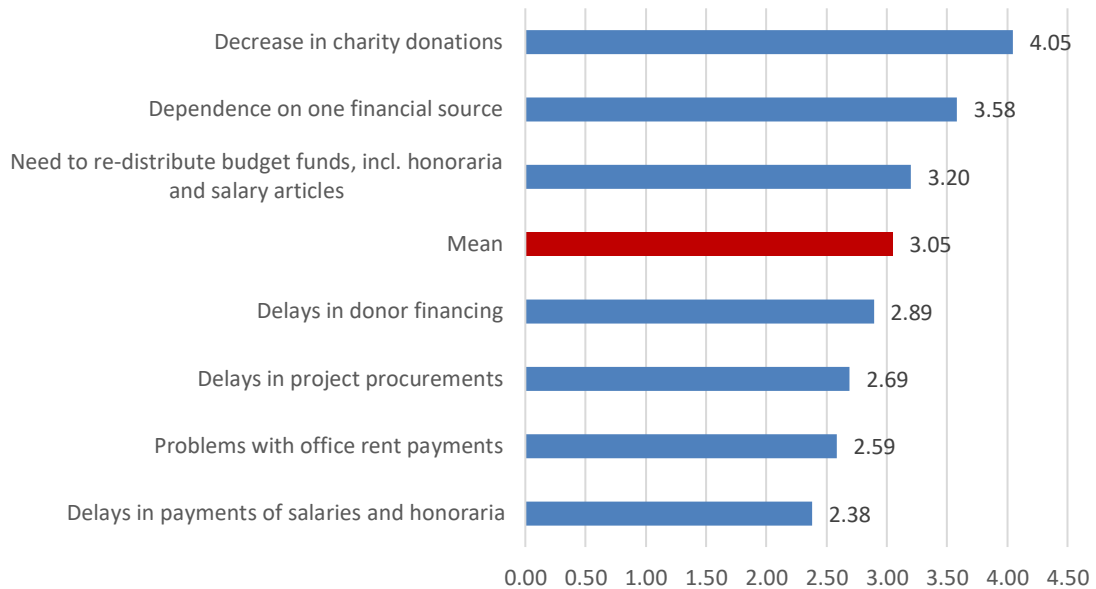


Figure 15: Financial challenges, mean estimates by sub-components, 10-point scale

As we see, the overall mean estimation of the financial challenges is 3.05, which is lower than the March survey respondents estimates. The most severe challenge experienced by the respondents is a decrease in donations and dependence on one financial source—rather systematic and known problems. The respondents also experience delays in procurement and receiving the donor funding. The respondents also report needs to re-distribute the funds, which may have been an additional stress test for an organization.

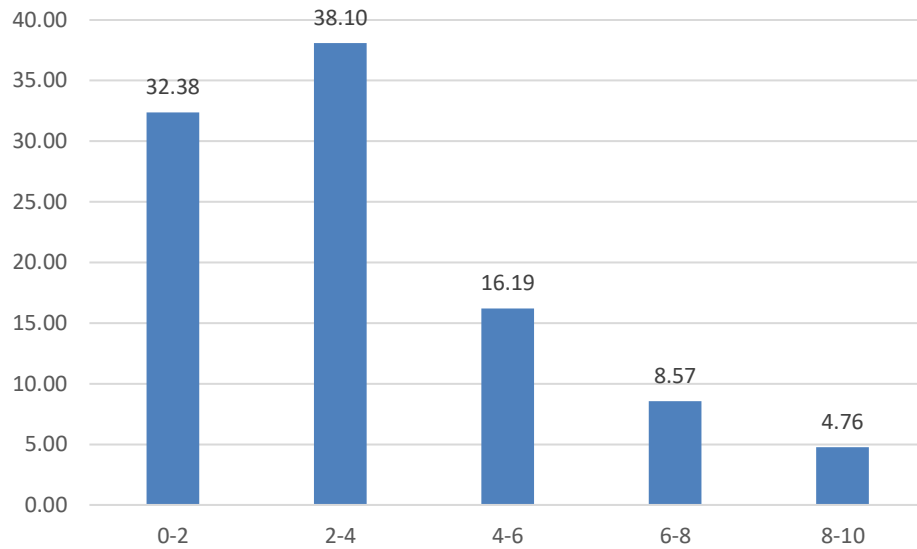


Figure 16: Financial challenges, distribution intervals of mean estimates, %

Figure 16 shows the distribution of the estimations. One can see that it is left-tailed, meaning the majority of respondents see their financial challenges as mild or insignificant. However, financial problems tend to be a topic in the open-ended discussions (mostly expressed in urging donors to continue to support the CSOs financially and even enlarge the support), meaning the provided issues may be underestimated.

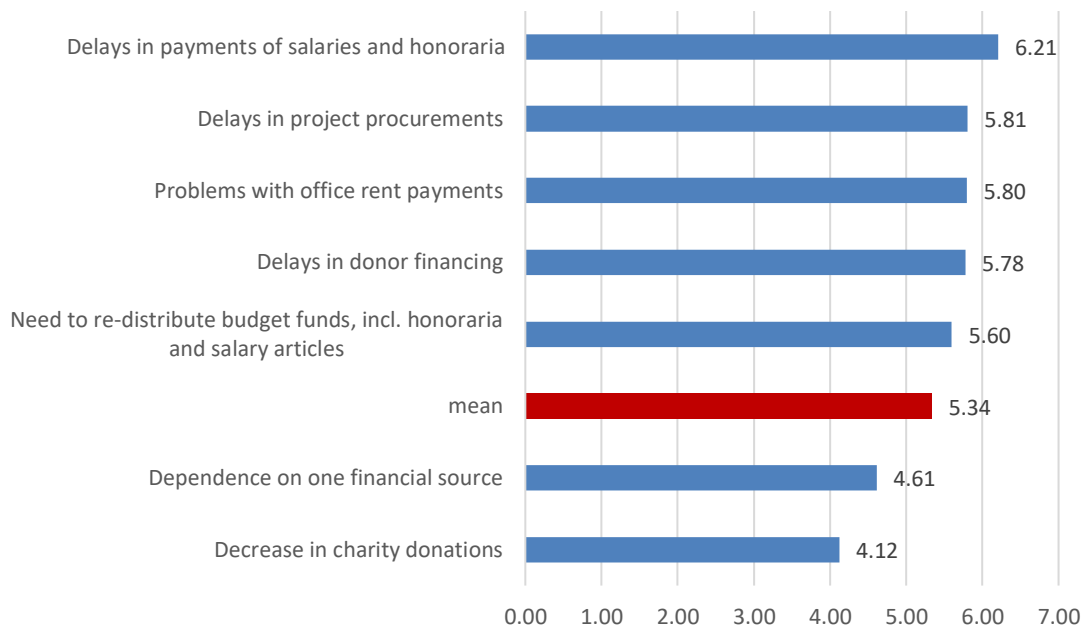


Figure 17: Estimated success in addressing the financial challenges, mean estimates, 10-point scale (0—no success, 10—very successful)

As for success in addressing the challenges, one can see on Figure 17 that respondents more or less secured timely honoraria and salaries, as well as funds for project procurements. Dependence on a single financial source and decrease in charity donations stay on the top of the challenge list.

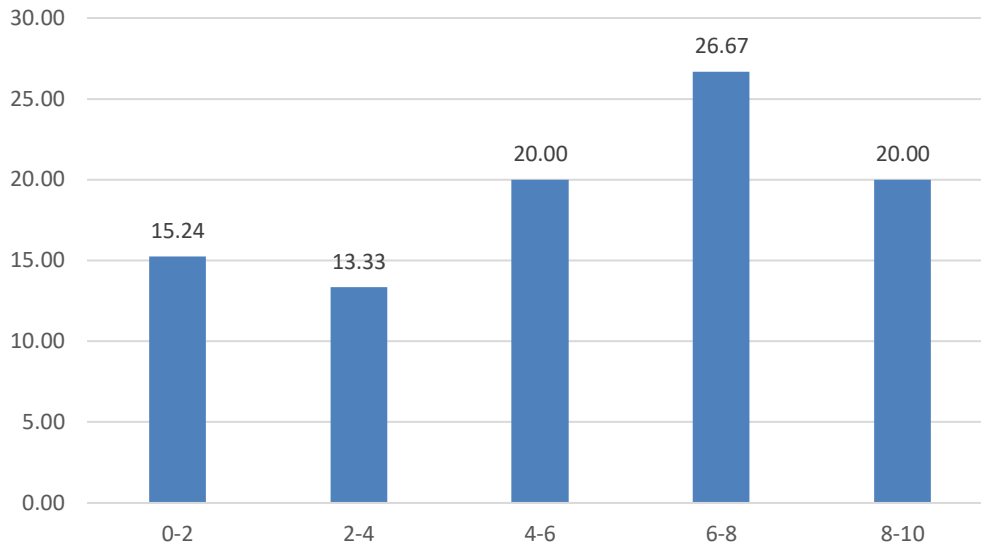


Figure 18: Respondents' success in addressing the financial challenges, distribution of intervals of mean estimates, %

Figure 18 represents the distribution of mean estimates of the success in covering financial sub-components provided by every respondent. As we see, most respondent experience serious or claim they addressed the challenges successfully.

Similar to the March survey respondents, the current respondents discussed their financial challenges in a more precise manner in the open-ended questions. 2020 has been definitely a hard financial year for many respondents, as they claimed extreme shortage of funds and inability to fundraise more as the competition for COVID emergency response grants was increased. Only those respondents which secured funds before March 2020 reported their more or less comfortable situation in terms of funds. However, they noted that the procedures to receive these funds were even more rigorous and timely than usual, so quite a few respondents reported delays in receiving the transfers.

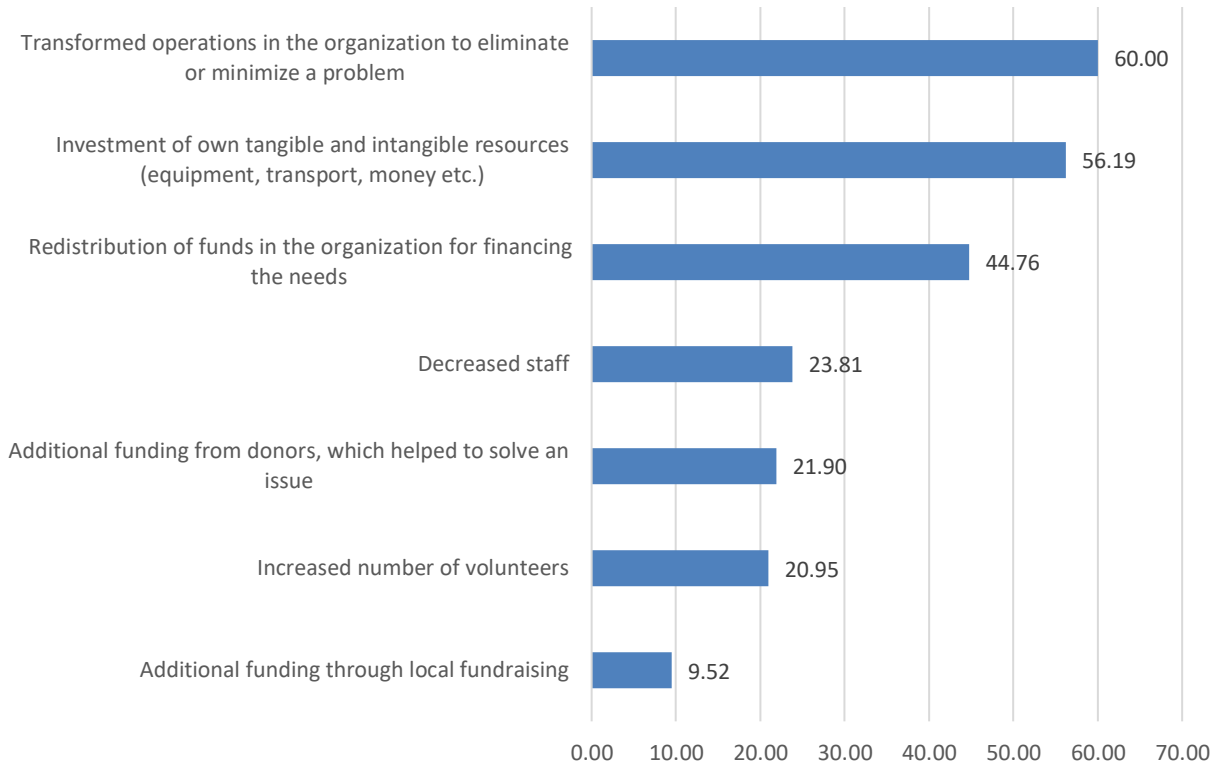


Figure 17: The most useful activities in addressing the project challenges⁸, %

As it is seen in Figure 17, the respondents see measures within their control as the most effective—transformed operations or investment of own resources. However, it might be the case of being forced to do so because of lack of the external funds and assistance. Additional funding was effective only for 21.9% of respondents. One may hypothesize that donors should invest more in building the capacity to manage through crisis for an organization to be ready to address similar crises in future.

⁸ A multiple choice question

Chapter 2: Cross Comparison of Components

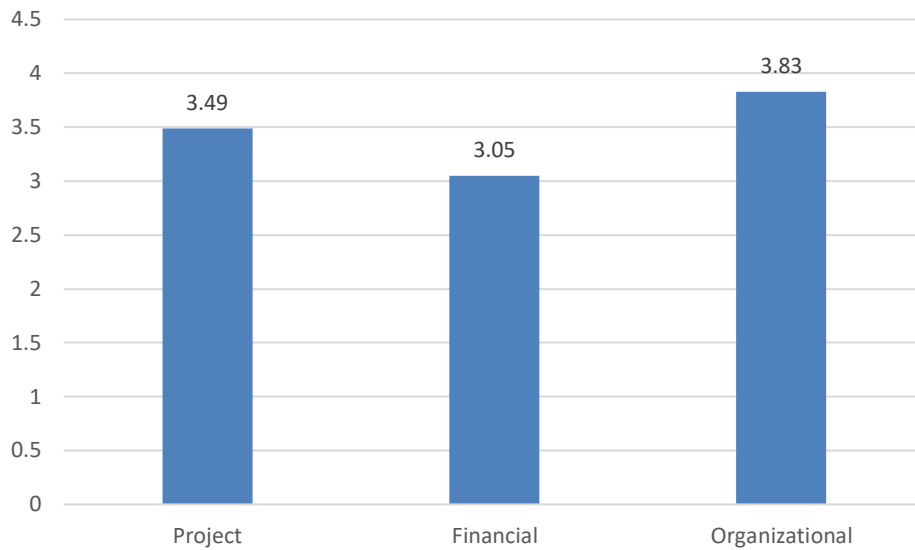


Figure 18: Means of components

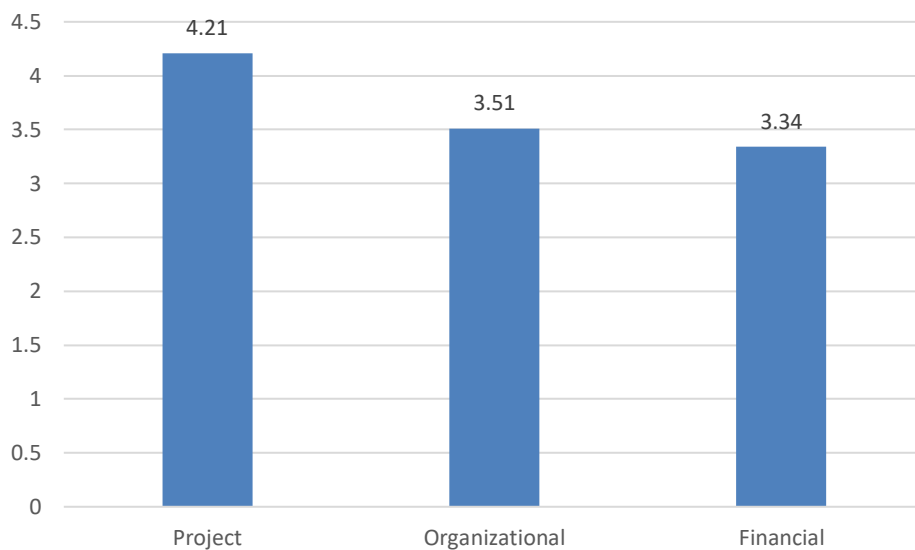


Figure 19: Means of components, March survey

Mean of all components is **4.08 (3.69 in March)**. In total, the respondents see challenges faced by their organizations as *moderate*. Also, the Figure 18 suggests that as of December, the organizational and financial challenges became more prominent, however as it was stated elsewhere, the direct comparison of two samples is impossible.

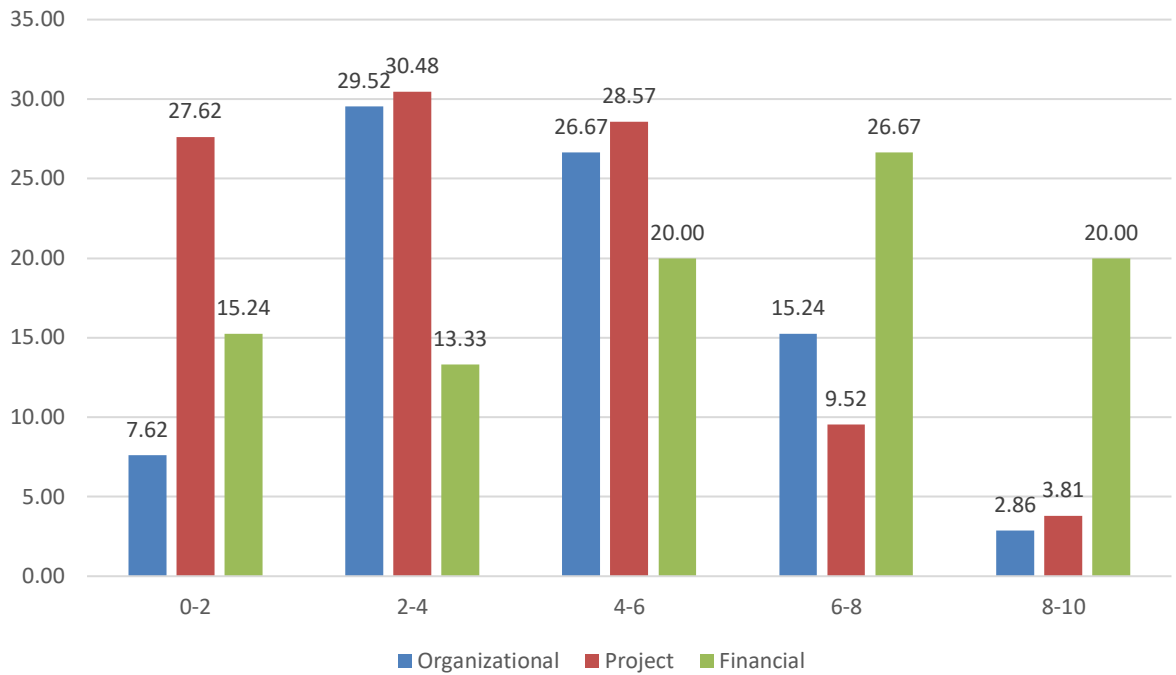


Figure 20: Distribution of mean estimates by intervals, all components

Figure 20 conveniently presents all the interval distributions combined. As we see, the distribution of organizational challenges tends to be left-tailed (leaning towards lower estimates), financial ones lean to the right (leaning towards higher estimates), while the project ones are left-tailed as well.

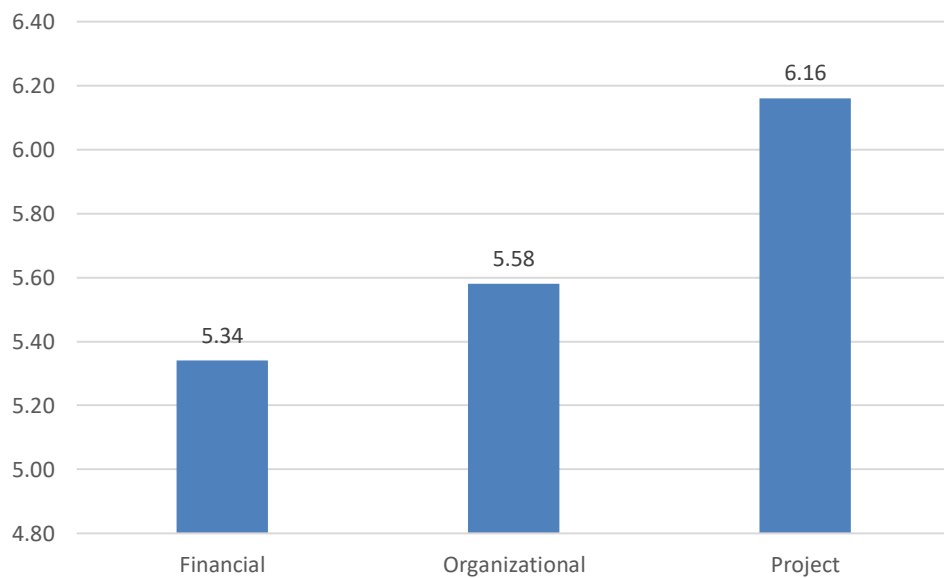


Figure 21: Means of success, 10-point scale

As of success in addressing the challenges, the mean for all components is 5.69 on a 10-point scale, meaning the respondents evaluate their success in addressing all three components as moderate.

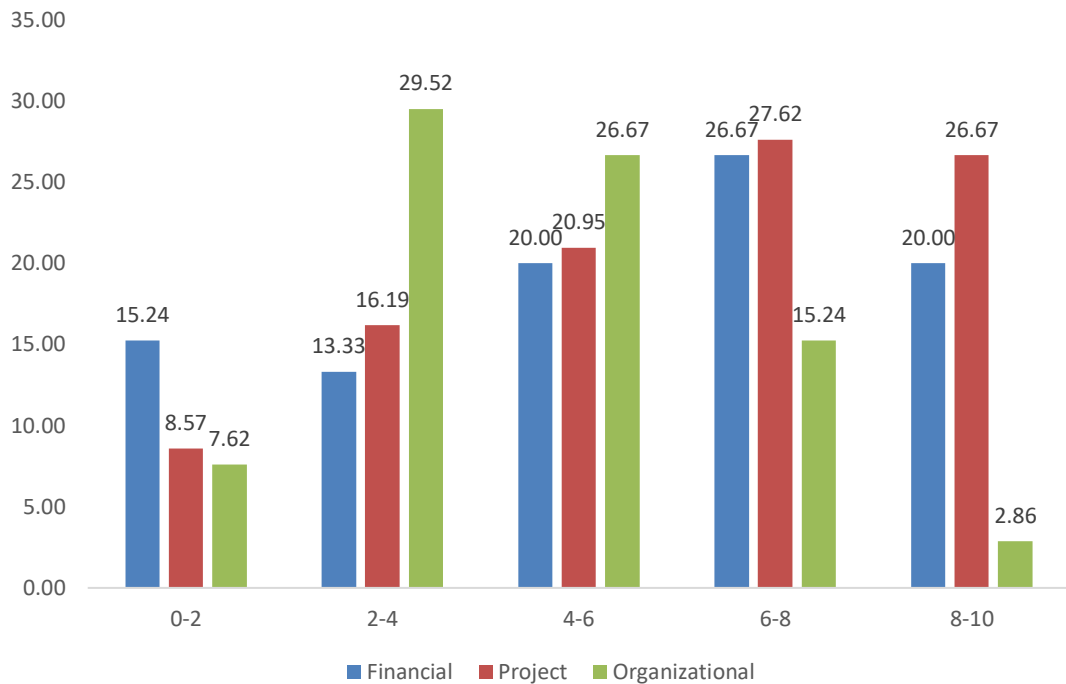


Figure 21: Distribution of success mean estimates by intervals, all components

Figure 21 shows the general distribution for the success mean estimates. As we see, financial and project ones lean towards the right tail, to higher estimates, while the organizational one is close to normal.

Chapter 3: Interactions and Expectations from Donors

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. The respondents provided the information on their interaction with donors during 2020. Specifically, they were asked to estimate the effectiveness of the funding and programs (if they received / participated in any) designed by donors to response to COVID-19 challenges.

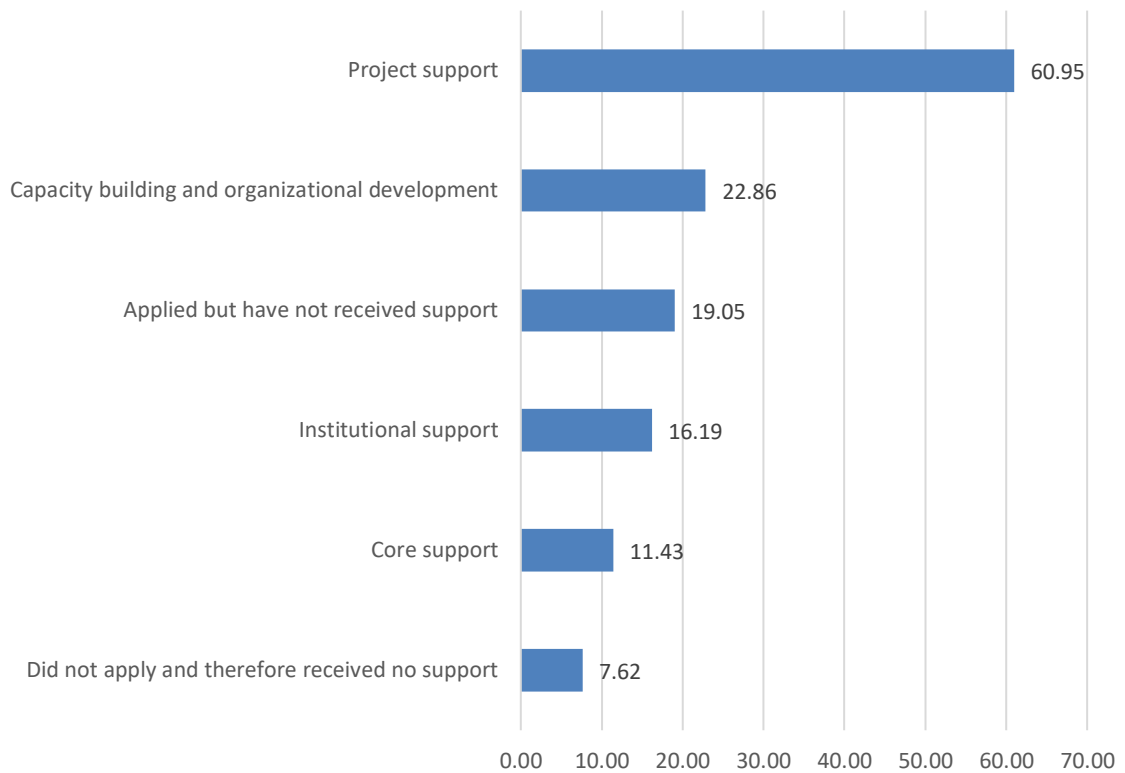


Figure 22: Donor support, %⁹

As it is seen on Figure 22, most respondents received project support—60.95%. Despite March survey respondents claimed that the most desirable support from donors would have been the core or institutional ones, only 11.43% and 16.19% of the respondents in the sample of this survey have indicated that they secured such types of support, respectively. Also, 22.86% of respondents secured funding for capacity building and organizational development.

However, in the open-ended questions, the majority of respondents stated that the COVID-19 response grants and programs were quite bureaucratically heavy, and sometimes the paperwork needed for the grant was unreasonable when compared to the amount of the possible support.

⁹ A multi-choice question

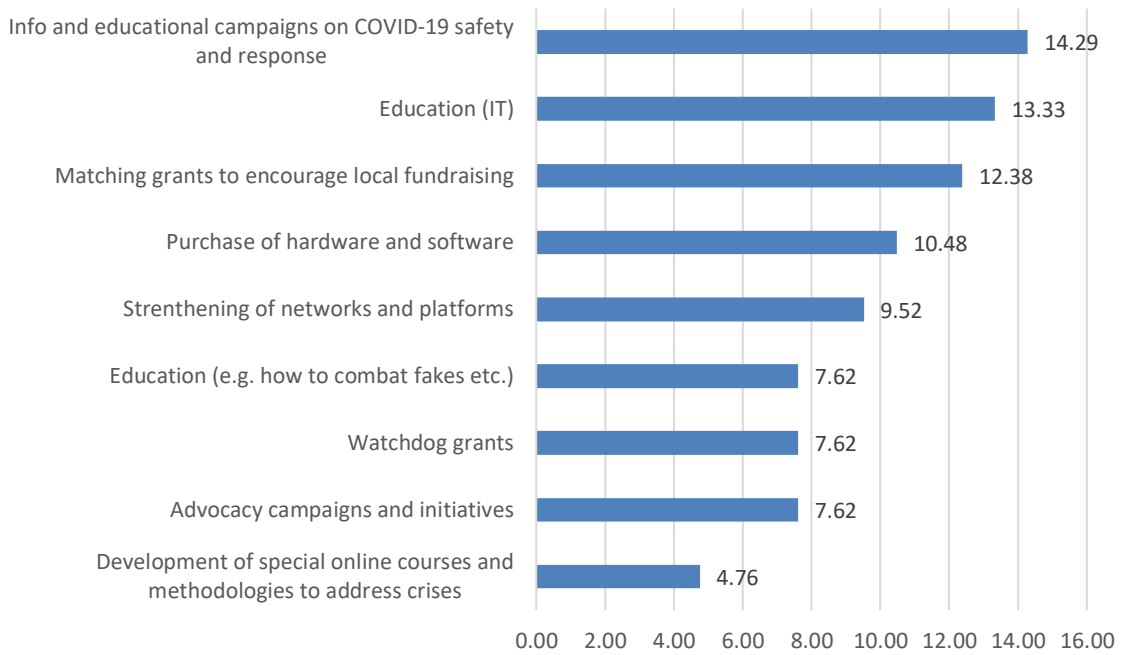


Figure 23: Types of expected grants, %

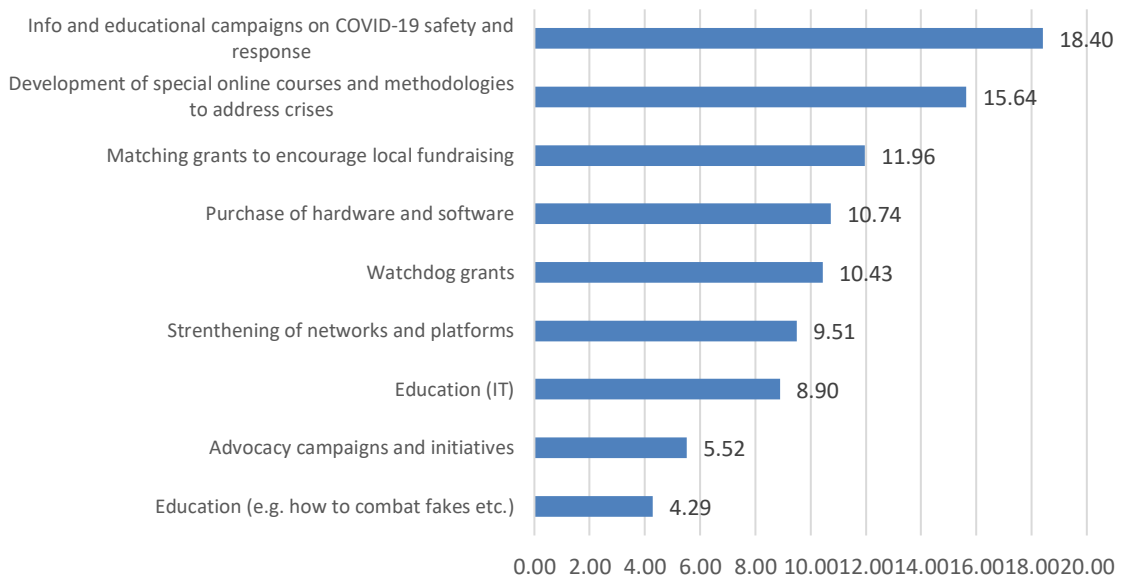
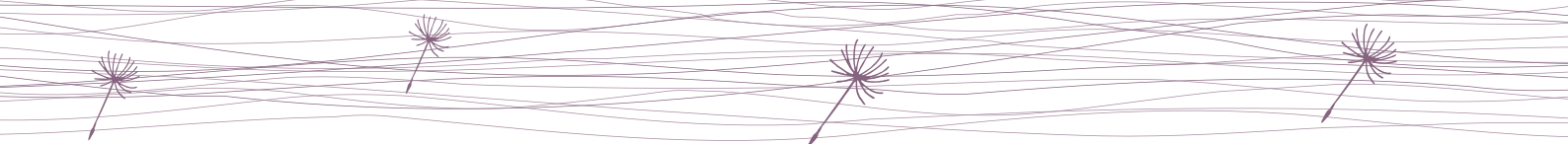


Figure 24: Types of expected grants, March survey, %

In comparing two samples, it is noticeable that the order of priorities in December 2020 is not significantly different from those of March survey respondents. As Figure 23 shows, the respondents expect the donors to prioritize informational and educational campaigns. However, one should bear in mind that the responses could have emotional rather than rational grounds. No doubt, the COVID-19 has been a tremendous game changer in all spheres of society, and therefore, it also has impacted the tactics and priorities of the organizations.

In the open-ended responses, the respondents mostly repeated the same four theses regarding their general expectations from the donor and philanthropic community:

- 
- Various kinds of flexible support, ranging from equipment procurements to institutional support of CSOs
 - Redefinition of priorities: respondents urge the donors to review their project priorities in Ukraine due to the pandemic
 - Prioritization of local CSOs
 - More investments into the healthcare reform
 - More investments into the crisis management capacities of the civil society

The expectations from entrepreneurs and business in general are equally 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. These demands are usually put as “*Stop being marauders!*”. However, most respondents expect businesses to engage into joint social activity and act as a client ordering certain social services from the organization for the benefit of the whole community. 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, which was also prevalent among the March survey respondents.



Recommendations

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:

- **Focus on digital capacity building should stay a priority:** 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 crisis management, financial management, and adaptive capacities.** The survey suggests that those who know how to adapt and cherish this capacity within the organization, tend to be more successful project wise and financially.
- **Pre-institutional support should be considered.** 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. However, the institutional support requires certain level of capacity from the applying organizations. *The programs aimed to put an organization on-track to institutional support should be considered.* They may not be financial, but rather mentor ones in nature.
- **More flexibility is still desirable.** As of now, many organizations are struggling to meet project indicators or deliver planned results, just like the March survey trend demonstrated; however, the respondents still report the rigidity of bureaucracy. Donors' flexibility in terms of reporting or other necessary paperwork, and general empathy with these struggles would be much appreciated.
- **In times of a healthcare crisis, we should not lose sight of other areas.** Despite the respondents urge donors and philanthropists to support healthcare and economics, other areas should not be ignored. The shrinking of civic space, attacks on democracy are still unfortunate Ukraine's present, therefore, strong and capable watchdog organizations are needed more than ever.