

International Women's Day 2024

Funding needs and challenges for local organisations working on gender equality in the Ukraine response

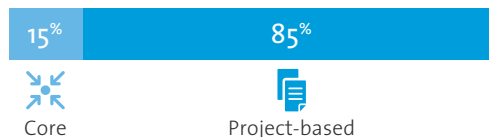
The humanitarian crisis that unfolded following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 has had a devastating impact on people in the region, especially for women, girls and gender minorities. In this context, local organisations working on gender equality – including women-led organisations, women's rights organisations, LGBTQIA+ led organisations, and other local organisations addressing gendered issues – have been a critical actor in providing the much-needed humanitarian assistance to affected communities.

However, two years into the humanitarian crisis, these organisations are still facing significant challenges accessing the funding they need to sustain a gender-sensitive humanitarian response and to continue to contribute to advancing gender equality in the region. Little is known about the proportion of funding that is going to WLOs and WROs, as this is not tracked by the funding tracking systems specifically.

In alignment with the call for [International Women's Day 2024: "Invest in women: Accelerate progress"](#) to ensure these organisations are supported and can continue to play a vital role in responding to the needs of some of the most marginalised communities, donors and intermediaries need to work to provide:

Core funding

Local organisations working on gender equality in the Ukraine response report a lack of core funding. Without core funding, these organisations cannot invest in their institutional capacity or sustainably maintain their staff. This not only negatively impacts their ability to provide humanitarian assistance, but also exacerbates the increasing challenge of burnout amongst staff and volunteers who have been at the forefront of providing humanitarian assistance for over two years. [Funding for these organisations needs to provide for core costs, including staff salaries and overheads, and facilitate investment in the long-term sustainability of the organisations themselves.](#)



“I tell everyone this – if a big organization asked me ‘if I gave you \$150,000, what would you do with it first?’ I would say: core funding. We need to invest in people. Once we have a team of people, then we can actually even start looking for funding. We had core funding before, for 2023, but now it is gone. Now we only have project funding.”

Flexible funding

One of the key strengths of local organisations working on gender equality is their ability to holistically represent the needs of their communities and to quickly adapt as these needs change – however, current funding opportunities are not sufficiently flexible to support this approach.

The lack of flexibility in funding in terms of adapting programming to respond to the evolving needs of refugees was the main challenge identified by organisations to accessing funding. Similarly, these organisation report that lack of funding for the activities or issue areas on which the organisation is working and a mismatch between donor priorities and organisational goals as key barriers to funding. [Donors should recognise the benefits of these organisations' more holistic approach to meeting communities' needs and provide funding that is flexible enough for projects that do not fit neatly into the traditional boundaries of humanitarian funding and/or which are able to shift as needs evolve.](#)

Long, complex and duplicative bureaucratic requirements for funding also create barriers for these organisations to access funding. Local organisations working on gender equality are often smaller, with

few or no specialised staff to manage funding grants. Larger organisations which do have these capacities have still had to use resources and time to shift systems to humanitarian donor requirements, as they were usually new to the humanitarian system when the war escalated. Donors and intermediaries need to be flexible with these requirements for these organisations to be able to access funding – for instance, by building on their existing financial management systems, and acknowledging practical challenges (e.g. lack of access to offices and files due to bombing and mobility restrictions).

“On one hand you want women’s organizations to be flexible, but on the other hand you’re coming in with these really heavy procedures, like what you would give to massive corporations. That’s not flexible. They are rigid, they are cumbersome, and for every single organization they are different.”

Complicated application procedures and short application deadlines are reported two of the six top challenges to accessing funding.

Sustainable funding

Short-term funding grants and a focus on quick impact programming are a significant challenge for organisations working on gender equality in the Ukraine response, drawing their capacity away from their core mission as they constantly seek new funding and preventing them from planning effective responses in the longer term.

Resources:

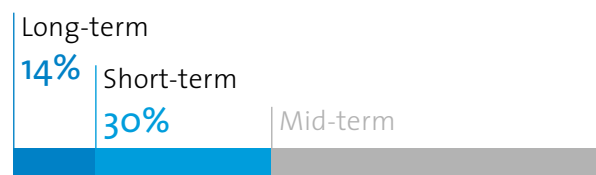
UN Women - [Urgent Funding Needs and Challenges of Local Organizations Working on Gender Equality](#).

OXFAM - [Two years at the forefront: Exploring the needs and experiences of women-led, women’s rights, and LGBTQIA+ led organizations two years into the Ukraine humanitarian response](#).

Voice Amplified - [Waiting for the Sky to Close: The Unprecedented Crisis Facing Women and Girls Fleeing Ukraine](#)

- 1 Statistics in this brief are drawn from UN Women’s survey of WLOs, WROs and LGBTQIA+ organisations in Ukraine and neighbouring countries, released February 2024, Urgent Funding Needs and Challenges of Local Organizations Working on Gender Equality.
- 2 Quotes in this brief are respectively from representatives of women-led, women’s rights and LGBTQIA+ led organisations in Poland and Ukraine, quoted by Oxfam in ‘Two years at the forefront: Exploring the needs and experiences of women-led, women’s rights, and LGBTQIA+ led organizations two years into the Ukraine humanitarian response.’ The authors of the quotes are, respectively: Miłosz Przepiórkowski, Lambda Warszawa (Poland); Feminoteka (Poland); and Oksana Moskalenko, Director, Women’s Consortium of Ukraine.

30% of organizations rely on funding lasting up to 6 months



While funding opportunities have had short horizons, the work of these organisations has not diminished over time. Donors need to provide long-term, sustainable funding so that these organisations can continue to plan for and meet the needs of their communities.

“If we think about all the possible problems [Ukraine is facing], we need some information about our future resources. All of our support depends on foreign partners, and we don’t know how to react to these huge problems because we don’t know how many resources we will have.”

In countries neighbouring Ukraine 45% of organizations reported an increase in refugee programming from 2022 to 2023.

