

WHERE'S THE MONEY FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN UKRAINE?

A REPORT BY THE KVINNA TILL KVINNA FOUNDATION
AND UKRAINIAN WOMEN'S FUND



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KVINNA TILL KVINNA

The Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation has defended women's rights since 1993.
For every woman's right to be safe and to be heard.

Today we are one of the world's leading women's rights organisations, working directly in areas affected
by war and conflict to strengthen women's influence and power. We work closely together with more
than 100 local partner organisations across 20 countries to end violence against women, reach lasting
peace and close the gender gap once and for all.

Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	6
INTRODUCTION	16
METHODOLOGY	22
FINDINGS & ANALYSIS	26
1. IMPACT OF THE WAR ON FUNDING	27
2. DONOR-DRIVEN VS. SELF-IDENTIFIED PRIORITIES. FLEXIBILITY OF FUNDING	36
3. ACCESS TO CORE VS. PROJECT-BASED FUNDING	39
4. ADMINISTRATIVE BURDENS AND REPORTING REQUIREMENTS	44
5. FUNDING FOR VULNERABLE GROUPS	47
6. CAPACITY BUILDING AND SUPPORT NEEDS	49
7. IMPACT OF FOREIGN AID ON LOCAL ADVOCACY	54
CONCLUSIONS	58
RECOMMENDATIONS	62
1. FOR DONORS AND DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS	64
2. FOR WOMEN'S CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS	67
3. FOR THE BROADER FUNDING ECOSYSTEM	69
REFERENCES AND LITERATURE	72
ANNEXES	74

Beyond survival:
financing women’s
rights in Ukraine

The resilience and determination of women in Ukraine have been extraordinary in the face of war and crisis. Women Civil Society Organizations (WCSOs) have played a crucial role in responding to the immense humanitarian and social challenges brought about by Russia’s full-scale invasion in 2022. These organizations have provided lifesaving services, advocated for gender equality, and worked tirelessly to uphold the rights of women and marginalized communities. However, the critical question remains: *Where is the money for women’s rights in Ukraine?*

The Ukrainian Women’s Fund and The Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation have joined forces to present this comprehensive report, offering unique data and analysis on the financial realities facing WCSOs in Ukraine. As Ukraine has received substantial Official Development Assistance (ODA) in response to the war, this report investigates whether these funds are effectively reaching women-led organizations and whether the financial support is sustainable in the long term.

The findings highlight a troubling trend: financial support to WCSOs in conflict-affected settings is often short-term and donor-driven, pushing these organizations into service delivery roles rather than strengthening their ability to advocate for systemic change. This shift risks undermining the independence of WCSOs and their capacity to drive gender-sensitive recovery and reconstruction efforts, which are fundamental to Ukraine’s future and its path toward European Union integration.

The findings of this report serve as a call to action. We urge key donors, international institutions, and policymakers to engage in meaningful dialogue and collaboration to ensure that WCSOs receive the sustainable funding they need. Supporting these organizations is not only a matter of solidarity but also a strategic investment in Ukraine’s democratic, inclusive, and gender-equal future.

We invite all stakeholders to join us in amplifying the voices of Ukrainian women and ensuring that the work of women’s rights organizations is not an afterthought; it is essential to Ukraine’s resilience, democracy, and reconstruction. Together, we can work towards a future where gender equality is not just a goal but a reality for Ukraine.

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Executive summary



The funding landscape for Women's Civil Society Organizations (WCSOs) in Ukraine has undergone profound shifts in recent years. The full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 exacerbated existing funding challenges, as donor priorities shifted toward humanitarian response, often at the expense of long-term advocacy, institutional development, and gender equality initiatives. While donor commitments to Ukraine increased significantly, only meagre percent of funding in the first two years of the war was directly allocated to local actors, with most financial support continuing to be channelled through international intermediaries.

This research examines the availability, accessibility, and conditions of funding for WCSOs, as well as the systemic barriers imposed by donor-driven funding conditions. It seeks to provide a detailed

analysis of financial flows, funding mechanisms, and donor practices, highlighting how these impact WCSO sustainability, autonomy, and effectiveness. For the purposes of this research, WCSOs are defined as non-governmental organizations led by or primarily serving women and girls, focusing on gender equality, advocacy, and direct service provision. The term donors refers to institutional donors, international NGOs, philanthropic foundations, UN agencies, and development partners that provide financial support to WCSOs, either directly or through intermediaries.

By analysing the current funding landscape, donor policies, and WCSO experiences, this report aims to inform policy recommendations and practical solutions to ensure that financial resources effectively support women's rights, gender equality, and long-term systemic change in Ukraine.

Key findings of the research are:

- 1 Funding for WCSOs has increased, but remains unsustainable and misaligned with needs.** Since 2022, 68.9 percent of WCSOs reported an increase in funding. However, this funding remains heavily short-term, project-based, and humanitarian-focused, with only 16.7 percent of WCSOs receiving core support. The Ukrainian government contributes just 1.0 percent, while donors favour large international intermediaries over direct funding to local organizations.
- 2 Short-term humanitarian funding dominates, sidelining advocacy and long-term impact.** Donors prioritize emergency relief over systemic change, with 31.8 percent of WCSOs reported funding skewed toward emergency needs. Only 6.7 percent of WCSOs receive funding dedicated to longer-term efforts such as advocacy and institutional development.
- 3 Severe disparities in funding access disadvantage grassroots WCSOs and rural organizations.** Larger, well-connected WCSOs receive multi-year and core funding, while smaller grassroots organizations struggle to access even short-term grants. Frontline areas attract donor interest, but rural WCSOs face significant barriers, including lack of donor engagement and administrative hurdles.
- 4 Donor conditions restrict WCSO autonomy.** Only 9.6 percent of WCSOs have full control over how they allocate donor funding, while 41.4 percent report significant restrictions. Many organizations are forced to align their work with predefined donor indicators, rather than responding to real community needs.
- 5 Administrative burdens are excessive and unsustainable.** Nearly 35 percent of WCSOs spend more than 30 percent of their working time on compliance tasks. Complex application procedures, rigid procurement rules, and burdensome reporting requirements create inefficiencies that disproportionately affect smaller WCSOs.

- 6 Funding for marginalized groups is extremely limited.** Although 52.9 percent of WCSOs work with vulnerable groups (LBTQI+ women, women with disabilities, ethnic minorities, female veterans), only 12.7 percent receive targeted funding. Donor reluctance to tailor funding mechanisms for intersectional issues perpetuates systemic exclusion.
- 7 Short-term funding models force WCSOs into survival mode.** 76 percent of WCSOs report financial uncertainty beyond 2024¹, as project-based funding creates instability. Without multi-year commitments and core funding, WCSOs remain stuck in a cycle of constantly seeking new grants to sustain operations.
- 8 Foreign aid both empowers and constrains WCSOs.** While international aid has expanded WCSOs' reach, its focus on predefined, short-term deliverables undermines long-term gender equality advocacy. The lack of direct funding, inflexible grant conditions, and reliance on large INGOs limit the effectiveness of foreign aid in fostering sustainable local movements.
- 9 WCSOs require more than funding – they need systemic changes in donor practices.** Capacity building, operational support, and leadership development remain severely underfunded, limiting WCSOs' ability to retain staff, engage in policy advocacy, and drive long-term systemic change.

The resulting **key recommendations** outline actions for donors, WCSOs, and the broader funding ecosystem to improve funding models, reduce administrative burdens, and strengthen accountability. They aim to ensure flexible, locally driven support for WCSOs, enabling them to sustain operations, advocate for gender equality, and contribute to Ukraine's recovery and European integration.



Olena Maksymova, Nataliia Lieshukova, Milena Masliancko, Kateryna Kravets, Anna Sydorak at Ukrainian Foundation for Public Health (HealthRight).

Photo: Oksana Porjennik

¹ The WCSOs completed the survey in early December 2024.

Recommendations for donors and development partners:

1. Increase core, multi-year, and flexible funding.

- Commit to the allocation of at least 15 percent of total gender equality funding to core, unrestricted, multi-year grants for WCSOs.
- Ensure equitable access, prioritizing grassroots, rural, and underfunded organizations.

2. Ensure direct and equitable funding to WCSOs.

- Commit to directly funding grassroots WCSOs in the amount of at least 20 percent of total funding for WCSOs.
- Reduce reliance on intermediaries and strengthen local regranting mechanisms.
- Dedicate at least 5–10 percent of donor budgets to WCSOs working with marginalized groups.
- Simplify applications and reporting for small WCSOs and provide pre-award support.

3. Rebalance funding priorities for both humanitarian aid and long-term impact.

- Ensure that funding for gender equality longer term priorities, including advocacy and movement-building, is not sidelined by short-term humanitarian priorities by allocating an amount equivalent to at least 10 percent of humanitarian funding to these areas.

- Ensure gender mainstreaming projects include dedicated funding, rather than being limited to symbolic commitments or superficial integration without financial support.

- Fund WCSOs as gender advisors in recovery, economic development, and governance.

4. Reduce administrative burdens and strengthen accountability.

- Simplify reporting for small grants and introduce collaborative reporting platforms.
- Standardize procurement and compliance rules to ease financial burdens on WCSOs.
- Track and publicly report how much donor funding reaches local WCSOs.

5. Ensure WCSOs participation in funding decisions and localization efforts.

- Consult regional WCSOs before finalizing donor programs.
- Establish formal WCSO participation in donor coordination bodies.
- Fund WCSOs to provide gender expertise in economic recovery, energy, and governance.

Strategies that the WCSOs may benefit from:

These strategies recognize that many WCSOs operate under significant funding constraints, with limited access to flexible, multi-year support. While they offer a roadmap for strengthening organizational sustainability and influence, they also serve as advocacy tools for WCSOs to push for policy shifts and better funding practices from donors.

1. Strengthen financial sustainability and institutional capacity.

- Diversify funding beyond donor grants (corporate partnerships, endowments, social enterprises).
- Invest in long-term sustainability, digital tools, and financial management.
- Retain and support staff through leadership development and career growth initiatives.

2. Engage in advocacy and influence donor practices.

- Push for direct funding and accountability on donor commitments to WCSOs.
- Participate in funding design processes to ensure alignment with WCSO priorities.
- Leverage data and coalitions to advocate for increased gender-equality funding.

3. Expand partnerships and cross-sector engagement.

- Form WCSO-led consortia to access larger grants and reduce competition.
- Secure funding for gender expertise in economic recovery, energy, and security reform.
- Strengthen collaboration with development partners, government, and private sector.

4. Prioritize staff well-being and organizational resilience.

- Seek funding for mental health support, burnout prevention, and leadership training.
- Integrate self-care, security, and flexible work policies into operations.
- Ensure organizational policies support long-term team sustainability.

Recommendations for the broader funding ecosystem:

(Including UN Agencies, donor coordination platforms)

1. Increase transparency and accountability in gender-focused funding.

- Track and publicly report how much donor funding reaches WCSOs, with breakdowns by organization type, geography, and focus area.
- Ensure gender mainstreaming projects include dedicated funding, not just labels.
- Establish structured feedback mechanisms to allow WCSOs to assess donor-funded gender programs.

2. Improve donor coordination and equitable funding distribution.

- Ensure equitable geographic distribution of funds, particularly to rural and underfunded areas.
- Strengthen donor collaboration to avoid duplication and ensure comprehensive support.
- Align funding cycles, reporting requirements, and evaluation criteria to reduce inefficiencies.

3. Support innovative and sustainable funding models.

- Develop endowment funds, pooled funding, and social impact bonds to ensure long-term financial sustainability for WCSOs.
- Pilot community-driven funding models, allowing local actors to influence funding allocations.

- Support WCSOs in building alternative revenue streams beyond traditional grants.

4. Strengthen WCSO leadership in decision-making processes.

- Include WCSOs in donor coordination bodies to shape funding priorities.
- Ensure WCSOs are consulted before funding decisions are finalized, rather than after programs are designed.
- Fund WCSOs to provide gender expertise in recovery, governance, and economic development programs.



Olha Firtych from the organisation Slavic Heart.

Definitions: Key terms in the study

Women's Civil Society Organizations (WCSOs):

For the purposes of this study, WCSOs are defined as non-governmental organizations led by or primarily serving women and girls. These organizations focus on advancing gender equality, addressing systemic discrimination, and empowering women through advocacy, capacity building, and direct service delivery.

Donors

In the context of this research, donors refer to entities that provide financial resources to WCSOs. This includes institutional donors (such as governments and multilateral organizations), philanthropic foundations, international non-governmental organizations, and UN agencies. Notably, in this research, the term 'donors' include humanitarian and development partners even when the latter provide re-granting rather than their own resources to WCSOs. A key criteria is that WCSOs received funding from these entities. Donors play a pivotal role in shaping the funding landscape, influencing the priorities and operational capacities of WCSOs through their funding models and conditions.

Significance of the research: Bridging gaps in understanding and practice

The relevance of this research is underscored by the unique challenges and opportunities facing WCSOs in Ukraine. While prior global initiatives, such as AWID's *Where is the Money for Feminist Organizing?* campaign,⁹ have shed light on the systemic underfunding of feminist movements worldwide, the context in Ukraine presents distinct dynamics that necessitate focused examination. AWID's research has been instrumental in high-

lighting funding disparities, advocating for feminist funding principles, and pushing for greater accountability from donors to ensure sustained support for women's rights organizations.

Ukraine's geopolitical and humanitarian crisis has underscored the need for localized, sustainable funding mechanisms. Findings from the 2024 Ukraine Localization Survey demonstrate that less than 1 percent of international humanitarian funding reaches local organizations directly, with WCSOs receiving an even smaller share. This underinvestment persists despite evidence of their effectiveness in addressing critical issues such as gender-based violence, economic inequality, and social exclusion. This research builds on such findings by providing a granular analysis of the funding landscape specific to WCSOs, exploring how systemic barriers in funding practices constrain their operations and potential. The recent report by Gender in Humanitarian Action (GiHA) Working Group further enriches this discourse, offering a critical lens on gender-sensitive humanitarian action. The report underscores how gender dynamics intersect with funding inequities, particularly in emergency responses, where WCSOs often receive minimal direct support despite being front-line responders.¹⁰

Moreover, while global frameworks such as the Beijing Platform for Action and UNSCR 1325 emphasize the importance of women's leadership and participation, this research takes a grounded approach, examining how these principles translate into practice within Ukraine's unique context. The war has created both challenges and opportunities: while WCSOs face resource scarcity and operational constraints, they have also demonstrated resilience and adaptability, stepping into leadership roles in humanitarian response and advocacy for inclusive recovery.

The findings of this research are not only relevant to Ukraine but also contribute to the broader discourse on feminist funding. They provide actionable insights for donors and policymakers on how to support WCSOs more effectively, emphasizing the importance of flexible, multi-year funding models that prioritize local ownership and sustainability. Additionally, the study highlights the need for WCSOs to advocate for feminist funding principles, leveraging their collective power to influence funding priorities and practices.

In doing so, this research addresses a critical gap: the lack of localized, context-specific analyses that center the voices and experiences of WCSOs. It seeks to bridge the divide between global funding frameworks and the realities faced by local actors on the ground, offering practical recommendations for creating a more equitable and impactful funding ecosystem. By amplifying the perspectives of WCSOs and situating their challenges within the broader funding landscape, this research aims to drive systemic change that empowers feminist movements and advances gender equality in Ukraine and beyond.



Kateryna Kravets and Nataliia Lieshukova, Ukrainian Foundation for Public Health (HealthRight)

Photo: Oksana Panchuk

⁹ See AWID. "Where Is The Money for Feminist Organizing?" 2024 Survey. <https://www.awid.org/witm2024> Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) in 2020-2024. <https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2024-08/Ukraine-Report.pdf>

¹⁰ Gender in Humanitarian Action (GiHA) Working Group. Accessible Funding for Women's Rights Organizations in Ukraine, 2024. <https://reliefweb.int/report/ukraine/accessible-funding-womens-rights-organizations-ukraine-enuk>

Introduction



Background: A story of resilience, dependency, and opportunity in Ukraine's Women's Civil Society Organizations

The full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russia in February 2022 represents a defining moment in the country's modern history, reshaping every aspect of its geopolitical and humanitarian landscape. This conflict has not only brought unprecedented destruction and displacement but also exposed critical vulnerabilities in the systems designed to support Ukraine's recovery. Among the most affected are Women's Civil Society Organizations (WCSOs), which have long served as the backbone of gender equality and social justice efforts in Ukraine.

One of the most immediate and profound consequences of the war has been the redirection of

donor priorities. The focus of international funding has overwhelmingly shifted toward emergency humanitarian aid – a response to the urgent need for food, shelter, and medical care among the millions of displaced and war-affected individuals. While this aid is indispensable, it has come at a cost. Long-term investments in advocacy, systemic reform, and capacity building have been deprioritized, leaving critical gaps in the funding ecosystem that threaten the sustainability of organizations like WCSOs.

The numbers are stark. According to the 2024 Ukraine Localization Survey by East SOS and Refugees International, less than 1 percent of the nearly \$10 billion in humanitarian funding tracked by the UN has been allocated directly to local and national non-governmental organizations,² including WCSOs. More alarmingly, only 0.07 percent of funding in the first two years of the invasion reached local actors

² Refugees International, East SOS. Less Than 1% of Humanitarian Funding for Ukraine Goes Directly to Local Organizations, 2024. <https://www.refugeesinternational.org/statements-and-news/less-than-1-of-humanitarian-funding-for-ukraine-goes-directly-to-local-organizations/>

directly. This underinvestment persists despite evidence that local intermediaries are significantly more cost-efficient, achieving a 15.5 percent greater efficiency rate compared to international organizations. Redirecting even a fraction of these funds to local actors could yield millions in savings while amplifying grassroots impact.³ The lack of direct support for WCSOs is further compounded by generally limited international funding for gender equality. According to recent OECD data, while official development assistance to Ukraine surged from \$1.3 billion in 2021 to \$18.9 billion in 2022, 90 percent of this funding (\$17.1 billion) included no gender equality objectives. Only \$44 million was allocated specifically to advancing gender equality as a principal objective,⁴ highlighting the marginalization of gender-focused initiatives within Ukraine's broader aid landscape.

The war's impact on women and girls has been particularly devastating, amplifying existing inequalities and creating new vulnerabilities. Intimate partner violence and domestic violence have surged, with the National Police recording over 168,000 domestic violence complaints in the first ten months of 2024 alone. Many women face barriers to accessing services, citing a lack of faith in systemic change, financial dependence, and entrenched social attitudes as key obstacles. Concurrently, economic instability has disproportionately affected women, who now constitute 75 percent of registered unemployed individuals. Female-headed households report poverty levels significantly higher than their male counterparts, with 35 percent living below subsistence levels.⁵

In this crisis, WCSOs have stepped up as first responders, providing critical support to women and girls. From establishing shelters and hotlines for survivors of gender-based violence to delivering psychosocial assistance and advocating for gender-sensitive recovery policies, these organizations have been pivotal in addressing immediate and long-term needs. Yet, they face severe constraints. Most WCSOs operate on project-based funding, with only small percentage receiving core funding⁶ that allows for flexibility and strategic growth. This lack of stable funding poses significant challeng-

es for their ability to sustain operations and plan effectively for the future.

The prioritization of emergency aid has also highlighted the tension between immediate crisis response and the need for systemic reform. While emergency funding is vital for survival, it cannot substitute for the sustained investments needed to address root causes of inequality and build resilient systems. Balancing these competing priorities is one of the most pressing challenges in Ukraine's recovery landscape.

This report delves into these dynamics, exploring the impact of the war on funding priorities and the broader implications for WCSOs. It examines how the shift toward emergency aid has reshaped the funding ecosystem, the challenges it poses for local actors, and the urgent need to recalibrate donor strategies to ensure that immediate relief efforts do not eclipse long-term advocacy and systemic reform. By focusing on these critical issues, the report seeks to illuminate pathways toward a more balanced and sustainable approach to supporting Ukraine's recovery.

Importance of WCSOs and feminist movements: Catalysts for gender equality and social change

WCSOs and wider women's/feminist movement in Ukraine are not merely service providers; they are transformative agents driving progress toward gender equality. Their contributions, spanning decades, have had profound social impacts. From advocating for the ratification of the major international instruments to leading grassroots initiatives that support vulnerable groups, these organizations have proven their effectiveness in addressing systemic gender disparities and advancing human rights.

Evidence of the impact of WCSOs is both quantitative and qualitative, including significant strides in combating gender-based violence, increasing women's political participation, and integrating gender considerations into national policies.⁷ For instance, thanks to persistent advocacy by feminist movements, Ukraine ratified the Istanbul Convention



in 2022, marking a critical milestone in the fight against gender-based violence.

Another notable contribution is the expansion of economic opportunities for women. WCSOs have implemented training programs, advocacy campaigns, and grant initiatives that enable women to enter traditionally male-dominated sectors and support female entrepreneurs. These efforts have contributed to reducing the gender pay gap and fostering women's economic independence, even amidst the ongoing crisis.

WCSOs have been instrumental in advocating for inclusive recovery strategies during the war, ensuring

that gender considerations are at least acknowledged in national recovery planning. Their persistent efforts have pushed for the integration of women's voices in decision-making, economic empowerment measures, and gender-sensitive approaches across various recovery areas. However, despite extensive advocacy, concrete policy shifts remain limited. A key outcome has been the gender mainstreaming of the Human Capital section in the Ukraine Facility Plan, which recognizes the disproportionate impact of war on women and girls and outlines initial measures to address it.⁸ This progress, while important, highlights the gap between policy commitments and actual implementation, reinforcing the need for continued advocacy by WCSOs.

³ Refugees International. Passing the Buck: The Economics of Localizing Aid in Ukraine, 2024. <https://reliefweb.int/report/ukraine/passing-buck-economics-localizing-aid-ukraine-enuk>

⁴ United Nations. Alliance for Gender-Responsive and Inclusive Recovery in Ukraine Launched with strong support of governments, UN agencies, private sector and civil society, 2024. <https://shorturl.at/Kdmn2>

⁵ United Nations in Ukraine. Ukraine Fourth Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment (RDNA4), 2025. Not published yet.

⁶ Core funding refers to financial support that covers an organization's essential operational costs, such as staff salaries, office expenses, infrastructure, and strategic development, rather than being restricted to specific projects or activities. Unlike project-based funding, which is tied to predefined deliverables, core funding provides flexibility, enabling organizations to sustain operations, respond to emerging needs, and invest in long-term institutional growth.



The long-term social impact of WCSOs is perhaps most evident in their ability to shift cultural and institutional norms. Over the years, feminist movements in Ukraine have challenged entrenched gender stereotypes, promoted equal representation, and fostered a culture of accountability within government institutions. These achievements underscore the critical role of WCSOs as both catalysts for immediate change and architects of sustainable progress.

Despite these successes, WCSOs operate under significant constraints. Systemic barriers such as limited access to decision-making spaces and inadequate recognition of their contributions hinder their potential. Nevertheless, the resilience and adaptability of WCSOs continue to drive progress, demonstrating their indispensable role in Ukraine's journey toward gender equality.

This report seeks to build on these insights, exploring how WCSOs can be better supported to sustain and amplify their impact. By examining their achievements and identifying areas for growth, the report underscores the necessity of investing in WCSOs – not just as implementers of donor agendas but as leaders of transformative social change.

Overview of actors financing WCSOs: Roles and dynamics

The funding landscape for WCSOs in Ukraine is characterized by a diverse range of actors, each playing distinct roles in shaping the financial and operational capacities of these organizations. Institutional donors, United Nations mechanisms, humanitarian actors, and international non-governmental organizations all contribute to the funding ecosystem, albeit with varying priorities and strategies.

Institutional donors: Governments and multilateral institutions such as the European Union, Canada, Sweden, the United States, UK, the Netherlands and others play a pivotal role in financing WCSOs. These donors often prioritize thematic areas such as gender-based violence prevention, women's economic empowerment, and women's participation in peace and security. For example, Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy underscores the importance of supporting feminist movements, providing multi-year, flexible funding to bolster WCSOs' institutional capacities. Similarly, the EU's Gender Action Plan III integrates gender considerations into its broader aid portfolio, emphasizing support for local women's organizations to ensure sustainable outcomes.

UN Mechanisms: UN agencies such as UN Women, UNFPA, and UNDP have been instrumental in advancing gender equality in Ukraine. These agencies often act as intermediaries, channelling funding from institutional donors to local WCSOs while providing technical assistance, capacity building, and advocacy support. For instance, UNFPA has played a significant role in addressing gender-based violence through funding shelters, hotlines, and psychosocial services for survivors. UN Women, on the other hand, has focused on integrating gender perspectives into national recovery strategies, ensuring that WCSOs are included as key stakeholders in policy dialogues.

Humanitarian actors and INGOs: The humanitarian response to the war in Ukraine has brought a surge of INGOs into the funding ecosystem. Organizations such as CARE, Save the Children, and ActionAid have contributed to emergency relief efforts, often collaborating with local WCSOs to deliver aid. However, this influx of international actors has also highlighted tensions in resource allocation. While INGOs bring critical expertise and resources, their dominance in the funding landscape often sidelines local organizations, which have deeper community ties and a nuanced understanding of local needs. The reliance on international intermediaries has also led to inefficiencies, with local actors receiving only a fraction of the resources intended for their communities.

Ukrainian financial organizations and funds: They contribute the largest share of funding to WCSOs, mentioned as a source of funding by 76.9 percent of surveyed organisations. The Ukrainian Women's Fund (UWF) is the primary national donor, supporting over 100 WCSOs through project-based and core funding, capacity-building grants, and

emergency assistance on an annual basis. Unlike international donors, UWF operates with a strong local focus, ensuring that funding aligns with grassroots needs. At the same time, it is critically important to factor that Ukrainian financial organizations and funds rely on international donor funding.

Despite the diversity of actors involved, the funding landscape remains fraught with challenges. The reliance on project-based funding restricts WCSOs' ability to address systemic issues or invest in long-term growth. Donor-driven priorities often clash with the missions of WCSOs, forcing them to adapt their programs to meet external expectations rather than local needs. Additionally, the limited allocation of direct funding to local organizations perpetuates dependency on international intermediaries, undermining efforts to build local capacity and resilience.

This report examines the interplay between these actors and the implications for WCSOs, offering insights into how funding strategies can be restructured to better support local organizations. By highlighting the roles and dynamics of key stakeholders, it aims to foster a more equitable and effective funding ecosystem for WCSOs in Ukraine.

Objectives of the study: Understanding and transforming the funding landscape for WCSOs

The primary objectives of this research are rooted in the urgent need to address the challenges faced by WCSOs in Ukraine's evolving funding ecosystem. These objectives aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of the financial landscape, the systemic barriers imposed by donor-driven funding conditions, and the opportunities for creating more sustainable and equitable support mechanisms for these organizations.

1. Analyzing the financial landscape: This research seeks to map the financial ecosystem for WCSOs in Ukraine, with a specific focus on the availability, accessibility, and conditions of funding. By examining funding flows, sources, and mechanisms, the study aims to identify trends and disparities that shape the operational capacities of WCSOs.

2. Examining the impact of funding mechanisms: The study delves into how current funding practices affect WCSOs' autonomy and ability to address priority issues related to gender equality and women's rights. This includes exploring the constraints imposed by short-term, project-based funding

and the ways in which donor-imposed priorities may limit the alignment of funding with organizational missions.

3. Providing actionable recommendations: The research aims to offer targeted recommendations to both donors and WCSOs. For donors, the study emphasizes the need for flexible, long-term funding models that empower local organizations to lead transformative change. For WCSOs, the research provides strategies for advocating for feminist funding principles and building stronger partnerships with funding entities.



Halyna Fedkovych, from the organisation Women's Perspectives.

Photo: Roksolana Poshurko

Methodology

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative methods to capture the complexity of the funding landscape for WCSOs in Ukraine. The research design emphasized minimizing the burden on WCSOs during data collection, ensuring participation was accessible and meaningful while respecting the constraints these organizations face. This integration of diverse methodologies allowed for a comprehensive and balanced analysis of funding trends, challenges, and opportunities.

DATA COLLECTION METHODS

1. Desk review

The desk review involved analyzing a broad range of documents, including reports from major donors, surveys, and relevant global and regional studies. Key sources included:

- Gender in Humanitarian Action (GiHA) Working Group: Accessible Funding for Women's Rights Organizations in Ukraine, 2024.
- Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC): Real-Time Response Review of Ukraine Humanitarian Appeal, 2023.
- Ukrainian Women's Fund: Read between the Lines: Ukraine Women's Rights Organizations' Response to the Full-Scale War, 2023.
- AWID: 2021 Brief: Where Is The Money for Feminist Organizing?
- EU Neighbours East: Ukraine Country Gender Profile, 2023.
- OECD: Bridging the funding gap for women's rights organisations, 2024.
- Refugees International and East SOS: Less Than 1% of Humanitarian Funding for Ukraine Goes Directly to Local Organizations, 2024.
- CARE Deutschland: Making International Funding Work for Women's Organisations, 2023.
- ODI Policy Brief: Where next for feminist foreign policy on funding feminist movements? 2024.

These sources were used to get insights and cross-reference findings of the key informant interviews (KIIs) and the survey.

2. Survey

The survey, conducted in early December 2024, garnered 104 responses from WCSOs. These organizations varied in geographic coverage and focus areas:

- Geographic distribution: 32.7 percent of WCSOs operate nationwide, 34.6 percent are concentrated in western Ukraine, and 29.8 percent are active in central Ukraine.
- Focus areas: Key sectors of work included Women, Peace, and Security (78.8 percent); women's economic empowerment (64.4 percent); gender-based violence (56.7 percent); political participation (43.3 percent); and humanitarian response (42.7 percent). Additional areas cited included anti-trafficking, leadership development, energy sector participation, and psychosocial support for women and children.
- Years of experience: 66.35 percent of WCSOs reported more than five years of experience, 16.35 percent had been active for 1–3 years, 14.42 percent for 3–5 years, and 2.88 percent for less than one year.

3. Key informant interviews

In December 2024, 31 KIIs were conducted, with participants representing a range of stakeholders:

- WCSO leaders: 19 interviews with leaders of well-established and younger organizations across Kyiv, large cities, smaller towns, and rural areas, spanning advocacy, humanitarian aid, and economic empowerment.
- Donor representatives: 10 interviews with individuals from UN agencies, international government donors, multilateral organizations, international NGOs, and Ukrainian funding organizations.
- Government officials: 2 interviews with officials responsible for coordinating women's rights and gender equality programs.
- Gender composition: 30 female and 1 male interlocutors participated in the interviews.



DATA ANALYSIS METHODS

Quantitative analysis

Survey data was analyzed using statistical tools to identify trends and patterns related to donor-driven conditions, funding accessibility, and administrative burdens. This approach provided a clear picture of disparities in funding distribution, geographic coverage, and organizational focus areas.

Qualitative analysis

A thematic analysis was conducted on data from KIIs and desk reviews, with a focus on AWID's feminist participatory research approach. This method prioritized the perspectives of Ukrainian WCSOs and provided an in-depth exploration of systemic challenges, donor-WCSO dynamics, and lived experiences within the funding ecosystem.

This mixed-methods approach ensured a nuanced understanding of the WCSO funding environment, integrating quantitative breadth with qualitative depth to generate actionable insights.

STUDY LIMITATIONS

While this study provides a comprehensive analysis of the funding landscape for WCSOs in Ukraine, several limitations should be noted:

1. Survey sample representation: Although the survey included 104 WCSOs, the sample may not fully represent the diversity of organizations across all regions and sectors. Smaller or less visible organizations, particularly those in rural or underserved areas, might be underrepresented.

2. Time constraints: Data collection occurred within a limited timeframe in December 2024, potentially restricting the depth of engagement with participants and the ability to explore emerging trends or long-term dynamics.

3. Reliance on secondary data: The desk review relied on existing reports and studies, which, while comprehensive, may contain inherent biases or limitations based on their original scope and methodology.

4. Limited data for analysis of intersectionality: The study sought to examine how intersecting factors such as ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status impact access to funding. However, the analysis was limited by the small number of WCSOs receiving funding for intersectional programs. While gender considerations remain central, future research with broader participation from these organizations would provide a deeper understanding of funding disparities.

5. Focus on Ukrainian context: The study's findings are specific to the Ukrainian context and may not be directly applicable to other countries or regions. The unique geopolitical, social, and economic factors influencing WCSOs in Ukraine shape the results in ways that might differ elsewhere.

6. Dynamic funding environment: The rapidly evolving nature of the funding landscape, influenced by geopolitical changes and donor priorities, means that some findings might become outdated quickly. Ongoing monitoring will be essential to maintain relevance.

These limitations highlight areas for cautious interpretation of the findings and underscore the importance of continued research to address gaps and build on this study's insights.



Olha Karasova, Ukrainian Foundation for Public Health (HealthRight)

Findings & analysis



1. IMPACT OF THE WAR ON FUNDING

How has the ongoing war influenced the availability of funds for WCSOs?

The ongoing war in Ukraine has dramatically reshaped the funding landscape for WCSOs, increasing the availability of funds while altering their distribution and priorities. According to survey data, 68.9 percent of WCSOs reported a rise in funding since the full-scale invasion in 2022. However, this influx of resources has been accompanied by a dramatic shift in donor priorities toward addressing immediate humanitarian needs, often at the expense of long-term advocacy and structural reforms.

The war has prompted an influx of funding directed primarily at emergency responses. Based on the

survey data, 80.8 percent of WCSOs reported gaining access to new sources of funding since Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022. This shift underscores the growing attention from international actors toward supporting women's rights and gender equality in Ukraine amidst the ongoing crisis.

Key sources of funding include international NGOs (70.2 percent)¹¹ and Ukrainian financial organizations or funds (76.9 percent), which have emerged as the primary financial contributors. Multilateral organizations like UN agencies (39.40 percent) and international government donor agencies (35.0 percent) also play significant roles, albeit to a lesser extent. However, contributions from the Ukrainian government (1.0 percent) and local governments (6.7 percent) remain minimal, reflecting limited domestic institutional support.¹²

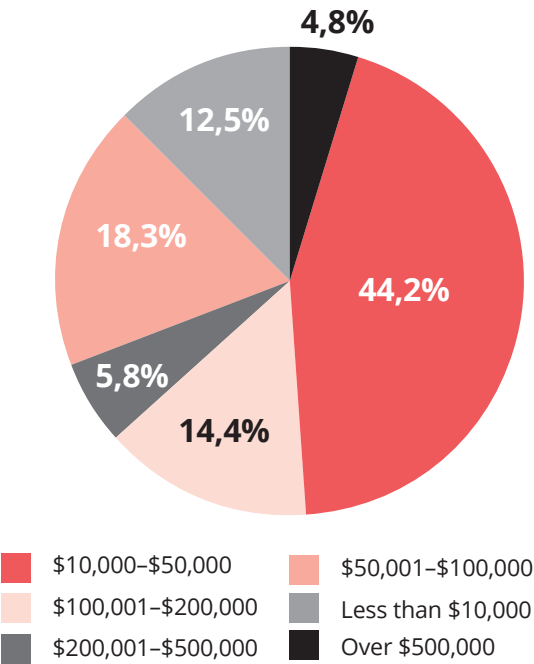
¹¹ It is important to realize that of the 'Ukrainian financial organizations or funds,' the only fund mentioned during the interviews was the Ukrainian Women's Fund. The questionnaire was disseminated between the UWF partners WCSOs. However, since the UWF is cooperating with all WCSOs that are visible in Ukraine, this is not considered as a study limitation.

¹² Multiple answers to this question were possible, therefore the sum of percentage of answers exceeds 100%.

While this diversification of funding sources indicates increased donor interest, the analysis reveals critical gaps in local and long-term investment. Only 11.5 percent of WCSOs receive funding from private foundations, and reliance on membership fees or individual donations remains limited (35.6 percent). These funding sources, while smaller in scale, typically offer greater flexibility compared to institutional donor funding, allowing WCSOs to allocate resources based on their own strategic priorities rather than rigid donor-imposed conditions. The scarcity of such flexible funding further reinforces WCSOs' dependence on external donors and raises concerns about their sustainability should international priorities shift away from Ukraine.

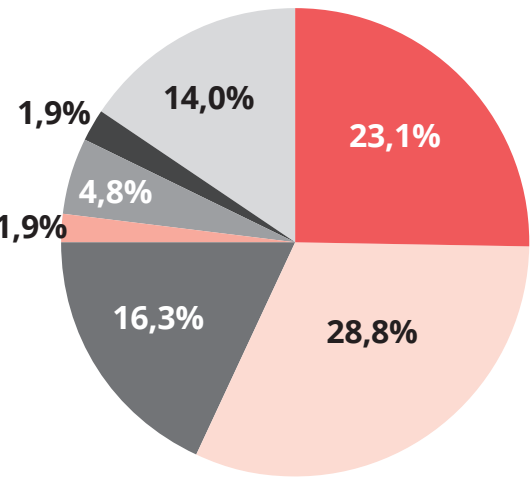
The data highlights that in 2024, nearly half (44.2 percent) of WCSOs in Ukraine received annual funding between \$10,000 and \$50,000, reflecting a relatively modest scale of financial support for most organizations. The second most common funding bracket (18.3 percent) was \$50,000 to \$100,000. Meanwhile, 14.4 percent of WCSOs received between \$100,000 and \$200,000, and 12.5 percent received less than \$10,000. As few as 5.7 percent secured funding ranging from \$200,000 to \$500,000, and only a small percentage (4.8 percent) obtained substantial funding exceeding \$500,000.

GRAPH 1. How much money did your organisation receive in 2024? N=104



This distribution indicates that while many WCSOs benefit from smaller grants, few are able to access the larger financial resources necessary for scaling impactful, long-term initiatives. Such reliance on smaller funding streams limits the potential for strategic planning and institutional growth, leaving WCSOs vulnerable to short-term financial uncertainties and limiting their ability to address systemic gender inequalities effectively. It also leads to the exhaustion of WCO leaders and teams, which negatively affects long-term sustainability.

GRAPH 2. How did the amount of funding your organization receives change since the start of the fullscale invasion? N=104



Regarding changes in funding volumes since the full-scale invasion, 68.9 percent of surveyed WCSOs reported an increase, demonstrating heightened donor interest and investment in supporting women's rights amidst the crisis. However, 8.7 percent experienced a decrease, and 9.7 percent reported no significant change, revealing disparities in the funding landscape. Notably, over 28 percent of organizations saw their funding grow by 1–50%, and 23 percent reported increases exceeding 100% since the full-scale invasion.

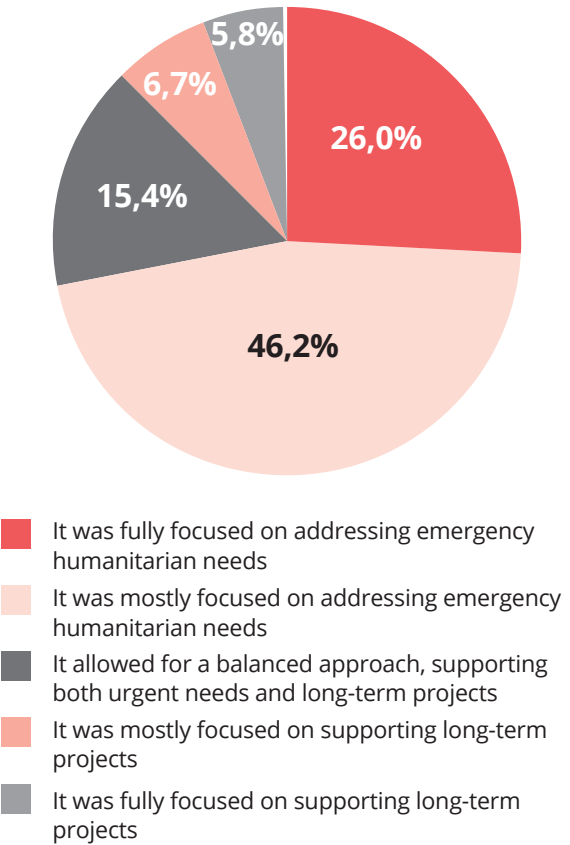
While this influx of resources is a positive development, it has also created significant challenges, particularly for smaller organizations that struggle to rapidly scale up operations – expanding staff, office space, and administrative capacity – only to face instability when short-term funding (often lasting just 3–6 or 6–12 months) ends. This cycle of sudden expansion and contraction undermines sustainability and long-term strategic planning. The uneven distribution of funding further exacerbates these issues, highlighting the challenge of ensuring equitable access to resources across all WCSOs. Those experiencing decreases or stagnation are likely to face significant operational hurdles, reinforcing the need for more inclusive and strategic donor practices to ensure that financial support reaches a broader range of organizations, including smaller and less visible WCSOs.

What proportion of funding is directed to humanitarian needs vs. longer-term priorities?

Donor funding for WCSOs during 2022–2024 has primarily focused on addressing immediate humanitarian needs, often at the expense of longer-term advocacy and capacity building. This trend highlights critical imbalances in funding strategies, with significant implications for the sustainability and effectiveness of WCSOs in Ukraine.

The survey data illustrates a clear prioritization in donor funding during 2022–2024, with the majority of support aimed at addressing immediate humanitarian needs, while fewer resources were directed towards building long-term efforts. Notably, a majority (46.2 percent) of surveyed organizations reported receiving funding that allowed them to balance immediate humanitarian needs with long-term projects, signalling some level of strategic investment by donors.

GRAPH 3. Between 2022–2024, did donor funding primarily support your organization's ability to address urgent humanitarian needs or implement long-term projects for capacity building, development, and gender advocacy? N=104



However, a notable proportion (26 percent) indicated that funding was rather skewed towards addressing urgent humanitarian needs, and 5.8 percent said that they received funding solely for this purpose. At the same time, 15.4 percent emphasized that the focus was rather on longer-term priorities (capacity building, advocacy and development), and only 6.7 percent of WCSOs reported that they received funding dedicated specifically to longer-term priorities. This imbalance underscores the challenge of aligning donor priorities with the dual objectives of immediate crisis response and sustainable gender equality advocacy.

While this increase in funding volume has enabled WCSOs to address urgent needs, it has also skewed the general landscape. Desk review data, notably from the 2024 GiHA Report, highlights how donors

have prioritized funding for humanitarian assistance, such as food distribution, shelter, and medical aid, particularly in frontline and high-risk areas. This heavy reliance on emergency funding restricts the ability of WCSOs to develop strategic plans, invest in organizational resilience, or scale successful initiatives.

The dominance of humanitarian-focused funding reflects not only donor priorities but also the broader security context. The desk review illustrates how donor decision-making is influenced by visibility and immediacy, favouring regions and topics that produce quick, tangible outcomes.¹³ As a result, frontline areas or high-risk zones receive a disproportionate share of attention and resources. While this focus is necessary to address acute crises, it often leaves organizations working in less visible regions or fields struggling to secure funding for equally important, albeit less dramatic, work.

Moreover, advocacy initiatives, which are essential for integrating gender equality into national recovery and development plans, face structural barriers in attracting donor support. Interviews revealed a common frustration among WCSO leaders: interventions such as policy advice, advocacy, gender mainstreaming in recovery are viewed as a 'luxury' rather than a necessity during crisis periods. As one WCSO representative remarked,



Donors focus on outputs they can quantify – advocacy doesn't fit neatly into that framework.

The current funding landscape reflects a significant misalignment between donor priorities and the comprehensive needs of WCSOs. While emergency aid is indispensable, its predominance in the funding ecosystem risks sidelining the transformative potential of advocacy and long-term programming. Desk review findings suggest that this imbalance

perpetuates a cycle where WCSOs are seen primarily as implementers of humanitarian aid (some of interview respondents even highlighted feeling themselves as 'sub-contractors') rather than as strategic actors capable of driving systemic change. This narrow perception undermines the sustainability of gender equality initiatives and limits the impact of WCSOs in shaping Ukraine's recovery.

The emphasis on humanitarian aid also raises questions about the sustainability of donor commitments. Since donor attention may wane as global priorities shift to other crises around the globe, leaving WCSOs vulnerable to reduced funding at a time of recovery when their strategic work is most needed is a major risk jeopardizing the impact of donor funding.¹⁴ It underscores the importance of rebalancing funding strategies to ensure that both immediate relief and long-term advocacy are adequately supported.

Donors that prioritize funding for WCSOs and feminist movements: What drives their support and funding decisions?

Donors that prioritize funding to WCSOs and feminist movements in Ukraine share a common recognition of the pivotal role these organizations play in advancing gender equality, addressing structural inequalities, and fostering inclusive recovery and peacebuilding. Their motivation to support WCSOs and feminist movements often stems from a combination of policy, strategic, and practical considerations, as well as lessons learned from prior global and regional experiences.

1. Commitment to gender equality and human rights. Many donors articulate their support for WCSOs as part of their broader commitment to gender equality and human rights. For example, a donor representative interviewed in a KI highlighted that funding WCSOs aligns with their institutional mandate to "*uphold women's rights as fundamental human rights.*" Certain donors have women's empowerment of feminist policies integrated in international assistance. This perspective is further supported by data from the AWID 2021 Brief,¹⁶ which

highlights the increasing recognition that feminist movements are critical agents of change capable of addressing deeply entrenched inequalities.

2. Recognition of effectiveness. Evidence from KI suggests that donors value the proven effectiveness of WCSOs in driving impactful change, particularly in areas such as advocacy, community mobilization, and gender-sensitive programming. One donor noted in an interview that WCSOs often achieve "*transformational outcomes even with limited resources,*" underscoring their efficiency and grassroots connections.

3. Alignment with broader agendas. Donors also support WCSOs as part of broader global agendas, such as the Sustainable Development Goals and the Women, Peace, and Security framework. Desk review data indicates that donors view investments in WCSOs as essential to achieving SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and other interlinked goals.¹⁷ By supporting feminist movements, donors aim to ensure women's voices are integral to recovery and peacebuilding processes.

4. Local expertise and reach. WCSOs' deep understanding of local contexts is a key factor driving donor support. Donors interviewed during the KI highlighted the ability of WCSOs to navigate complex local dynamics, tailor interventions to specific community needs, and access vulnerable populations. As one donor stated,



WCSOs are often the first to respond and the last to leave, and they have the trust of the communities they serve.

5. Filling gaps in humanitarian and development aid. Certain donors increasingly recognize that WCSOs play a complementary role to larger humanitarian and development actors by addressing gaps in service delivery and advocating for

gender-sensitive responses. For instance, the *GiHA 2024 Report* emphasizes how WCSOs address specific needs, such as protection for survivors of gender-based violence (GBV) and advocacy for women's leadership,¹⁸ which are sometimes overlooked by mainstream aid efforts.

Donors articulate their motivation to support WCSOs through several mechanisms. Certain donors explicitly emphasize flexibility in their funding mechanisms to align with the priorities of WCSOs. As highlighted in the *GiHA 2024 Report*, these donors frame their support as a partnership, rather than a transactional relationship.¹⁹ One donor interviewee stated,



We trust WCSOs to know what is best for their communities, and our role is to empower them to act.

Donors motivated by the localization agenda advocate for channelling resources directly to WCSOs as a way to strengthen local ownership and sustainability. This perspective was echoed in interviews, where donors emphasized the importance of reducing intermediaries and empowering WCSOs to lead on the ground.

Also, donors use evidence from prior funding cycles to justify their support for WCSOs. *The AWID 2021 Brief* demonstrates that feminist movements are among the most effective drivers of social change. By referencing such data, donors strengthen their case for prioritizing funding to WCSOs, ensuring that their investments are seen as both impactful and strategic.²⁰

Despite these motivations, challenges persist. While many donors express strong commitments to supporting WCSOs and feminist movements, these intentions often become distorted in program planning and technical implementation. Interviews with

¹³ Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC). Donor Conditions and their Implications for Humanitarian Response, 2016. https://interagency-standingcommittee.org/sites/default/files/migrated/2016-05/20160416_donor_conditions_study_final_0.pdf; R. Worden and P. Saez. How Do Humanitarian Donors Make Decisions, and What Is the Scope for Change. Centre for Global Development, 2021. <https://www.cgdev.org/publication/how-do-humanitarian-donors-make-decisions-and-what-scope-change>; Real-Time Response Review of Ukraine Humanitarian Appeal 2022 for Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) – Ukraine Country Report, 2023. <https://reliefweb.int/report/ukraine/real-time-response-review-ukraine-humanitarian-appeal-2022-disasters-emergency-committee-dec-ukraine-country-report-submitted-07-february-2023>

¹⁴ See, for example, Ukrainian Women's Fund. Read between the Lines: Ukraine Women's Rights Organisations' Response to the Full-Scale War, Approaches and Threats, 2023.

¹⁶ See, for example, Ukrainian Women's Fund. Read between the Lines: Ukraine Women's Rights Organisations' Response to the Full-Scale War, Approaches and Threats, 2023.

¹⁷ EU Neighbours East. Ukraine Country Gender Profile, 2023. <https://euneighbourseast.eu/news/publications/country-gender-profile-cgp-ukraine/>; OECD. Bridging the funding gap for women's rights organisations: Canada's support through the Equality Fund. A case study, 2024. https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/development-co-operation-tips-tools-insights-practices_be69e0cf-en/bridging-the-funding-gap-for-women-s-rights-organisations-canada-s-support-through-the-equality-fund_6aa9a5d1-en.html

¹⁸ Gender in Humanitarian Action (GiHA) Working Group. Accessible Funding for Women's Rights Organizations in Ukraine, 2024. <https://reliefweb.int/report/ukraine/accessible-funding-womens-rights-organizations-ukraine-enuk>

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ AWID. 2021 Brief: Where Is The Money for Feminist Organizing? <https://www.awid.org/news-and-analysis/2021-brief-where-money-feminist-organizing>

both donors and WCSO representatives revealed a gap between stated commitments and actual funding practices. Although donors emphasize flexibility and trust, WCSOs frequently encounter rigid reporting requirements, short-term funding cycles, and administrative burdens that undermine these principles. One WCSO leader remarked,



Donors speak about empowering WCSOs, but the ways they provide support, including funding, rarely reflect that trust.

This misalignment often stems not from a lack of willingness but from structural constraints, risk aversion, and standardized donor procedures that prioritize control and accountability over long-term sustainability for WCSOs.

Donors that prioritize funding for WCSOs and feminist movements are motivated by a combination of their internal policies, practical considerations, and lessons from prior experience. Their support reflects a growing recognition of the transformative role WCSOs play in advancing gender equality and driving social change. However, to maximize the impact of their investments, donors must address the structural barriers that limit WCSOs' access to resources, including rigid funding frameworks and inequitable distribution practices.

Gender mainstreaming in donor funding: Declarations vs. real allocation of money for WCSOs?

The difference of this question from the previous is that the previous focused on donor support to WCSOs in implementing women's rights programming, and this question deals with mainstreaming gender – including in terms of fund allocation – to other (non-gender) programmes. Gender mainstreaming has become a cornerstone of donor commitments, with many institutional and multilateral donors emphasizing the importance of integrating gender perspectives into their funding strategies. However, despite these declarations, significant gaps exist in how resources are allocated to WCSOs. The practical implementation of gender mainstreaming often falls short, with a disconnect between policy commitments and tangible support for WCSOs.

Declarations of gender mainstreaming. Donor declarations on gender mainstreaming frequently emphasize the importance of ensuring that women and gender considerations are central to recovery, development, and humanitarian efforts. The desk review highlights how donors often classify projects as gender-sensitive or gender-transformative using gender markers – tools that assess the extent to which gender considerations are integrated into a project. However, in practice, gender mainstreaming remains weak in many sectors, particularly in large-scale infrastructure projects, which are set to receive significant funding. In these areas, gender components are often superficial, tokenistic, or entirely absent, posing a risk of sidelining gender equality efforts.

In interviews, only a few donor representatives reaffirmed strong commitments to gender mainstreaming, often describing it as a 'cross-cutting issue' within broader funding priorities. One notable exception is CARE, which has both a gender mainstreaming specialist and a women's leadership specialist. The former trains staff and partners on gender and integrates gender analysis into project planning, while the latter leads the Women Lead in Emergencies program. Importantly, CARE backs these efforts with dedicated funding, both for the gender-focused programming and for personnel who ensure implementation. This investment sets it apart from donors who include gender considerations in rhetoric but fail to allocate financial resources to ensure meaningful integration. However, interviews with other donor representatives, as well as the actual allocation of funding, show a different picture, revealing a persistent gap between commitments and practice.

A very common story reported by both donors and WCSOs is the donor preference for larger implementers/intermediaries. Funding classified as gender mainstreamed is frequently channelled through large international organizations rather than directly to WCSOs. This preference results in limited access for smaller, grassroots WCSOs that are deeply embedded in local communities. A donor representative admitted during an interview,



We trust larger organizations to manage large-scale projects, but this often means smaller WCSOs are left out of the funding equation.



Kateryna Khaneva from Slavic Heart

Photo: Artem Hemon

Also, it was noted by multiple interview respondents that gender mainstreaming is often reduced to a procedural requirement, with minimal substantive engagement. For instance, projects may reference women's participation or gender equality without embedding these considerations into their design or funding structures. This practice was criticized by a WCSO leader:



The so-called gender mainstreaming has become [...] a buzzword, but the WCSOs continue to stay on the sidelines, including financially.

Challenges in translating commitments into practice. Several structural barriers contribute to the disparity between gender mainstreaming declarations and real allocations:

- Lack of accountability mechanisms: Gender markers, while useful for tracking donor intentions, lack enforceable mechanisms to ensure meaningful gender integration. The interview findings indicate that while gender mainstreaming aims to incorporate a gender lens into broader programming, it does not necessarily translate into direct support for WCSOs. This gap highlights the need for targeted funding and recognition of WCSOs as key drivers of change, rather than relying on

gender-blind programming with superficial gender markers as a substitute for transformative action.

- Short-term funding models: The dominance of short-term funding cycles limits opportunities for WCSOs to engage in meaningful advocacy or capacity-building work. While gender mainstreaming declarations emphasize inclusivity, the realities of short-term funding modalities undermine these goals by deprioritizing transformative initiatives. This is particularly problematic for gender equality projects, which often focus on shifting entrenched gender stereotypes, changing social roles, or strengthening support services. These efforts require time and trust-building with communities, which cannot be meaningfully achieved within a typical six-month funding cycle.

- Overemphasis on outputs over outcomes: Donors often prioritize measurable outputs, such as numbers of women reached, over structural outcomes like policy reform or systemic change. As a WCSO leader put in an interview,



A good photo from a coordination meeting in a fancy place is somehow preferable over systemic work to address gender inequalities.

This approach disadvantages those WCSOs that prioritize long-term transformation rather than immediate service delivery.

The gap between donor declarations on gender mainstreaming and actual resource allocation reflects a deeper issue in how gender equality is operationalized. While donors frequently articulate the importance of supporting WCSOs, the lack of dedicated budgets, overreliance on large intermediaries, and focus on short-term goals limit the transformative potential of gender mainstreaming.

Are there disparities in funding access based on the geographic location of WCSOs? How location (urban vs. rural, frontline areas) influences access to funding?

Geographic location significantly impacts the ability of WCSOs to access funding in Ukraine. Disparities exist between urban, rural, and frontline areas, shaped by donor priorities and perceptions of urgency, visibility, and capacity. These differences create unequal opportunities for WCSOs to secure resources and fulfil their roles in advancing gender equality.

Frontline areas: priority but limited scope.

Frontline WCSOs receive the most attention from donors due to the visibility of urgent humanitarian needs. *The GiHA 2024 Report* highlights how these regions are prioritized for funding focused on emergency responses, such as food, shelter, and medical aid.²¹ One donor explained,



Frontline areas are our priority because the needs are so visible.

According to the survey data, perceptions about funding accessibility for organizations working with women in different regions of Ukraine vary significantly. The largest proportion of respondents (43.3 percent) believe that organizations operating in frontline regions have easier access to funding. In contrast, 22.1 percent think organizations in regions distant from the frontline are favoured. Notably, 32.7 percent of respondents were uncertain,

indicating a high level of ambiguity in perceptions about funding priorities. Only 1.9 percent saw no significant difference in funding accessibility based on regional focus. However, funding for frontline WCSOs overwhelmingly supports short-term humanitarian projects, leaving little room for recovery or advocacy. As one WCSO leader noted,



It's all about emergency aid. There's close to no funding for rebuilding or long-term needs.

Rural areas: vulnerable and overlooked. Rural WCSOs face the most significant barriers in accessing funding. They are often excluded from donor priorities. A WCSO leader from a small town expressed frustration, stating,



Our work is invisible to donors because we are not in high-profile areas.

Limited infrastructure, weaker networks, and reduced engagement opportunities further exacerbate their marginalization.

In summary, geographic disparities in funding access are evident across Ukraine. Frontline WCSOs are prioritized for immediate humanitarian needs but lack funding for recovery or advocacy-related interventions. Urban WCSOs dominate funding opportunities due to proximity and capacity, though smaller organizations struggle to compete. Rural WCSOs remain severely underfunded and vulnerable, highlighting the need for donors to adopt more inclusive approaches that address these disparities and support WCSOs equitably across all regions.



How do different donor's commitments and allocations look for the future? What types of funding do they have available now and have planned for the future (2025–2027)? (e.g., which sectors, types, amounts, timeframes, gender mainstreaming, and/or gender equality-specific programming).

Donor commitments and allocations for WCSOs in Ukraine for 2025–2027 indicate a mix of continuity and gradual shifts towards longer-term goals, although immediate humanitarian needs are expected to remain a dominant focus. Insights from key informants and desk reviews highlight both progress and challenges in donor planning and resource allocation.

Current and future funding approaches encompass various types and timeframes, reflecting both short-term and long-term priorities, notably:

Short-term humanitarian focus. The majority of funding continues to be tied to short-term grants, typically lasting 6–12 months. A donor representative noted that while there is recognition of the need for longer-term commitments, the immediate pressures of humanitarian crises dominate priorities, making multi-year funding the exception rather than the rule.

Localization and capacity building. Many donors are increasingly acknowledging the importance of

directing funding to local organizations, including WCSOs. However, according to the 2024 Annual Ukraine Localization Survey, only a small percentage of funding currently reaches local organizations directly, with most resources being funnelled through international intermediaries. Research from The Share Trust and Refugees International further corroborates this, highlighting that only 0.07 percent of funding in the two years following Russia's full-scale invasion reached local actors directly. This underinvestment persists despite evidence that local intermediaries are 15.5 percent more cost-efficient than international ones. A shift to redeploying 25 percent of funding to local intermediaries could result in an estimated cost efficiency gain of \$256 million over two years—resources critical for addressing ongoing humanitarian needs.²²

Sectoral priorities and gender-specific programming: Gender equality initiatives remain a stated priority, with an emphasis on areas such as gender-based violence prevention, women's leadership, and economic empowerment. However, these programs are often embedded within broader humanitarian efforts, which limits the direct allocation of resources to WCSOs. A donor representative highlighted the effectiveness of integrating gender mainstreaming tools, such as gender markers and dedicated specialists, into programming. Yet, these practices remain inconsistent across the sector.

Planned funding for 2025–2027: Several donors have announced multi-year funding plans to support Ukraine's recovery, emphasizing resilience-building and systemic reforms. However, the absence of robust transparency and accountability mechanisms raises concerns about whether these commitments will translate into tangible benefits for WCSOs, especially at the grassroots level. Moreover, it remains unclear to what extent these funds will integrate a gender equality perspective, as past funding trends have shown that gender considerations are often sidelined in broader recovery effort. Additionally, interviewed donor representatives reported encountering notable difficulties in their interactions with WCSOs. These challenges stem from systemic barriers that hinder effective collaboration and equitable resource distribution:

1. Administrative and bureaucratic barriers. Reporting and application processes remain overly complex and burdensome, particularly for smaller

²¹ Gender in Humanitarian Action (GiHA) Working Group. Accessible Funding for Women's Rights Organizations in Ukraine, 2024. <https://reliefweb.int/report/ukraine/accessible-funding-womens-rights-organizations-ukraine-enuk>

²² Refugees International. Passing the Buck: The Economics of Localizing Aid in Ukraine, 2024. <https://reliefweb.int/report/ukraine/passing-buck-economics-localizing-aid-ukraine-enuk>

WCSOs. Many of these requirements are tailored for large international organizations and create significant entry barriers for grassroots actors. A donor representative noted that the administrative workload often prevents smaller WCSOs from accessing funding effectively.

2. Capacity and resource constraints: Many WCSOs lack the staff and financial resources needed to meet donor compliance requirements. Skilled personnel often leave for higher-paying positions in international organizations, leaving WCSOs understaffed and struggling to manage projects effectively. These constraints hinder smaller organizations from scaling their impact or sustaining operations beyond short-term funding cycles.

3. Lack of flexibility in funding structures: Donors often maintain rigid funding structures, which limit WCSOs' ability to adapt to changing local contexts. While some efforts have been made to streamline processes, inflexibility continues to undermine local ownership and innovation.

The funding landscape for WCSOs in Ukraine reflects an inherent tension between immediate humanitarian demands and the long-term goals of systemic change and gender equality. Despite donor recognition of the importance of localization and capacity building, progress remains slow and uneven. The persistent reliance on international intermediaries not only marginalizes local actors but also results in missed opportunities for cost efficiencies and sustainable development. Research demonstrates that increased investment in local intermediaries could yield significant financial and operational benefits, yet this potential remains largely untapped.

The future of donor funding for WCSOs will be shaped by the extent to which donors can address these systemic barriers while fostering equitable partnerships with local actors. Without a deliberate shift toward empowering WCSOs through direct funding and flexible support, the transformative potential of these organizations risks being overshadowed by the inefficiencies of the current aid model.

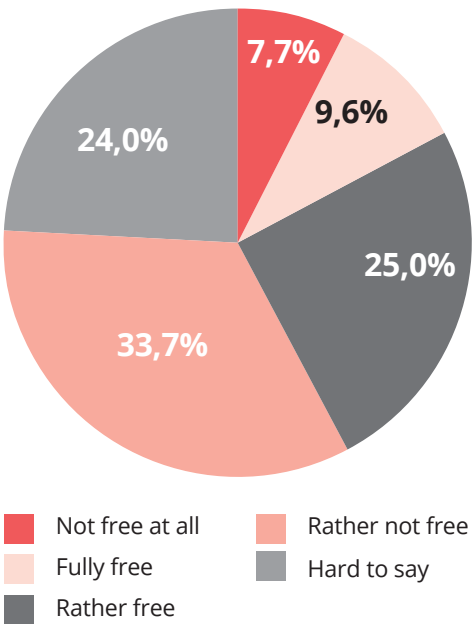
2. DONOR-DRIVEN VS. SELF-IDENTIFIED PRIORITIES. FLEXIBILITY OF FUNDING

To what extent do WCSOs feel that funding aligns with their priorities? Whether donor conditions restrict the autonomy of WCSOs?

Donor-imposed conditions significantly influence how WCSOs allocate funding and shape their agendas, often creating challenges in balancing immediate needs with long-term priorities. Survey and interview findings highlight systemic constraints that limit WCSOs' autonomy and effectiveness.

The majority of WCSOs experience varying degrees of restriction in how they use donor funding. Only 9.6 percent reported being 'fully free' in determining how to allocate resources, while 25 percent described themselves as 'somewhat free.' In contrast, 33.7 percent stated they were 'somewhat restricted,' and 7.7 percent reported 'having no freedom at all'. A significant proportion – 24.0 percent – remained uncertain about their level of autonomy in fund usage. This distribution underscores the pervasive influence of donor-imposed conditions on WCSOs' operational decisions.

GRAPH 4. To what extent are you free to determine how donor funding is used?
N=104



The findings reveal that while some WCSOs retain partial autonomy in their agendas and resource allocation, a substantial portion faces significant constraints imposed by donor conditions. This limited independence, combined with uncertainty and restrictions in fund usage, highlights a systemic imbalance in the donor-WCSO relationship that undermines the ability of WCSOs to align their work with their strategic priorities and local needs.

The survey findings are corroborated by KII responses, which reveal that donor-imposed priorities frequently compel WCSOs to adjust their focus areas, often at the expense of their core missions. For example, during the early stages of the war, one WCSO shifted its focus entirely to humanitarian aid in response to donor demands, despite its longstanding emphasis on gender programming. As a leader from this organization noted,

While addressing immediate needs is essential, [...] it pulled us away from our strategic work on systemic gender reforms.

Another WCSO representative explained that efforts to balance donor expectations with community needs often result in 'patchwork programming,' which hinders the organization from achieving its long-term objectives.

These interviews also highlight significant disparities in how donors understand and respond to WCSO needs. While some donors were praised for their flexibility, allowing WCSOs to reallocate resources to address emerging challenges, such practices are not the norm. A WCSO leader observed that many donors focus excessively on their own reporting requirements and indicators, forcing organizations to dedicate significant resources to compliance rather than addressing their communities' actual needs. For instance, some donors require detailed progress reports for every minor expenditure, which adds to the administrative burden and detracts from programmatic work.

Furthermore, the lack of funding for operational flexibility and long-term sustainability presents another significant challenge. Several WCSO leaders noted that donor funding is often tied to

specific projects, leaving little room for pursuing strategic goals. One interviewee remarked,

We have to accept funding that doesn't fully align with our mission because without it, we can't sustain basic operations.

To navigate donor-driven constraints, some WCSOs have adopted a collaborative approach by forming consortia to strengthen their grant applications. This model allows multiple organizations to pool resources, improve administrative capacity, and enhance their chances of securing funding. As a positive side effect, consortia-building reduces competition among WCSOs, fostering cooperation rather than rivalry over limited financial resources.

What degree of flexibility to WCSOs enjoy in determining the ways to use donor funding?

Lack of flexibility in utilizing donor funding remains a significant challenge for many WCSOs in Ukraine, as donor conditions often dictate strict parameters for resource allocation. This rigidity limits WCSOs' ability to adapt funding to their operational needs and evolving local contexts.

Survey data shows that 48.1 percent of WCSOs report moderate independence in determining and executing their agendas, while 38.5 percent experience limited independence, and only 11.5 percent describe their autonomy as full. These findings suggest that while some organizations retain partial decision-making power, many face considerable constraints in utilizing funds to address their priorities effectively.

Key informant interviews further highlight how donor requirements often restrict flexibility. One WCSO leader noted that donors frequently impose detailed line-item budgets, leaving no room for adjustments during implementation, even when community needs shift. Another respondent shared that strict donor monitoring and reporting processes create additional layers of oversight, reducing their ability to respond quickly to emerging priorities. For instance, reallocating unspent funds for urgent needs often requires extensive donor

approvals, which delays critical interventions. Such inflexibility was described as “*not practical in crisis settings*” where rapid decision-making is essential.

Desk review findings corroborate these observations, emphasizing that short-term project-based funding models exacerbate the issue. The lack of multi-year grants and operational support further constrains WCSOs, forcing them to adapt their activities to meet donor specifications rather than addressing systemic or long-term needs.²³

The limited flexibility in donor funding undermines WCSOs’ ability to operate effectively and sustainably. While some organizations manage to navigate these restrictions, the overall lack of adaptive funding models hampers their responsiveness to dynamic contexts and evolving community needs. Addressing these barriers through streamlined funding processes and increased flexibility would enhance the operational efficiency and impact of WCSOs in Ukraine.

How has the influx of humanitarian funding affected the autonomy of WCSOs? Whether WCSOs have been able to maintain their core missions or had to adapt to donor agendas.

The influx of humanitarian funding in Ukraine has significantly reshaped the operational landscape for WCSOs. While this funding has provided critical resources for immediate needs, it has also introduced challenges regarding the preservation of autonomy and alignment with core missions. Survey data and qualitative insights highlight how WCSOs have navigated the balance between adapting to donor priorities and maintaining their strategic goals.

Survey findings show that 76 percent of WCSOs reported their core missions and long-term goals remained mostly unchanged, indicating a degree of resilience in maintaining their organizational focus. However, one in four organisations have had to abandon some or all long-term goals due to donor priorities – notably, 20.2 percent noted they had to abandon some long-term goals, and 5.8 percent admitted they had to adapt entirely to donor priorities, effectively relinquishing their core missions. The remaining 3.8 percent of respondents emphasised that their adjustments were more influenced by the war rather than donor conditions.

When asked to assess the impact of current funding conditions on their ability to fulfil their missions, 41.3 percent of WCSOs perceive donor funding conditions as having a “very positive” impact, while 44.2 percent describe the impact as “somewhat positive.” However, 12.5 percent rated the impact as “neutral,” and a small minority of 2 percent expressed negative experiences. These findings suggest that while humanitarian funding has been broadly beneficial, the degree of its alignment with WCSO priorities varies significantly.

GRAPH 5. How have donor conditions affected your organization’s ability to maintain its core mission and long-term goals? N=104



Key informant interviews reveal that many WCSOs had to temporarily shift their focus to meet immediate humanitarian needs, particularly in the initial stages of the war. For instance, one WCSO leader explained,

During the initial phase of the [full-scale] war, we had to pivot to humanitarian aid to secure essential funding, which temporarily diverted us from our advocacy work.

Another representative noted that

the emphasis on immediate relief efforts by donors often means less attention and resources are available for our long-term gender equality initiatives.

However, as highlighted in the interviews, in 2023 and especially 2024, more established and experienced WCSOs were able to gradually return to addressing their longer-term priorities and securing funding for these initiatives. In contrast, younger or less experienced WCSOs and organisations working on vulnerable groups remained more dependent on donor-imposed priorities, which predominantly focused on emergency funding. As a result, these organizations often had to adapt their activities to align with donor preferences, limiting their ability to pursue strategic, mission-driven goals and contribute to feminist movement. This dynamic underscores the critical need for capacity-building support and more flexible funding structures to empower younger WCSOs to maintain autonomy and effectively contribute to systemic change, even during times of crisis.

The desk review supports these findings, noting that while donors emphasize flexibility during crises, this rarely translates into meaningful support for systemic initiatives like advocacy. Reports such as a recent publication by Refugees International also highlight the tension between short-term emergency funding and the long-term development goals of local actors.²⁴

The influx of humanitarian funding has had a dual impact on the autonomy of WCSOs. On one hand, it has enabled organizations to address critical needs, sustaining their operations during a crisis. On the other hand, the emphasis on donor-driven priorities and immediate outcomes has constrained their ability to fully pursue long-term strategic goals. While most WCSOs demonstrate resilience in aligning funding with their missions, the pressure to adapt has often resulted in compromises, particularly for advocacy and systemic reforms.

3. ACCESS TO CORE VS. PROJECT-BASED FUNDING

How many WCSOs are receiving core, including multi-year, funding vs. project-based funding? Funding trends, with particular emphasis on the availability of operational support.

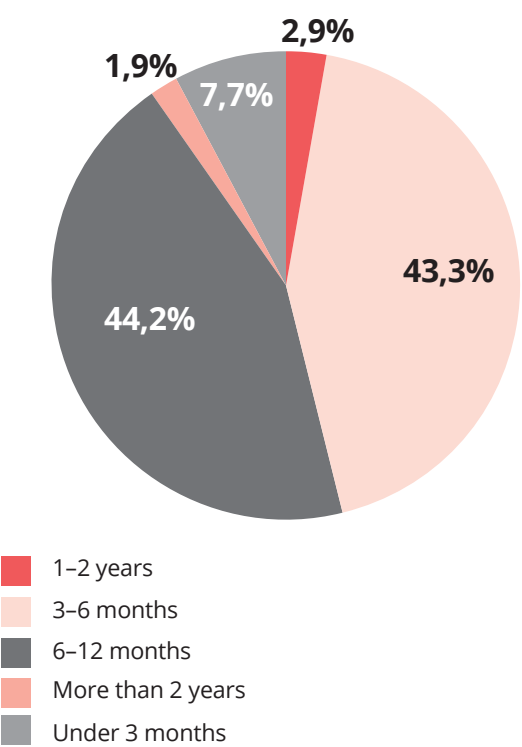
The funding landscape for WCSOs in Ukraine is overwhelmingly dominated by short-term project-based funding, with minimal access to core or multi-year funding. This imbalance poses significant challenges for the long-term sustainability and strategic development of WCSOs, particularly in the context of the ongoing war and its multifaceted impacts.

Survey data indicates that the majority of funding agreements between WCSOs and donors during 2022–2024 were short-term. Specifically, 44.2 percent of funding agreements lasted 6–12 months, and 43.3 percent were limited to 3–6 months. Agreements exceeding one year were rare, with only 2.9 percent lasting 1–2 years and a mere 1.9 percent extending beyond two years. Additionally, 7.7 percent of agreements were less than three months in duration.

²³ Ukrainian Women's Fund. Read between the Lines: Ukraine Women's Rights Organisations' Response to the Full-Scale War, Approaches and Threats, 2023.

²⁴ Refugees International. Passing the Buck: The Economics of Localizing Aid in Ukraine, 2024. <https://reliefweb.int/report/ukraine/passing-buck-economics-localizing-aid-ukraine-enuk>

GRAPH 6. What was the average duration of funding agreements between your organization and donors during 2022–2024?
N=104



This data underscores the predominance of short-term funding models that limit strategic planning and sustainability. As one WCSO leader described,



Short-term grants mean we’re constantly scrambling to keep things afloat. There’s no space for strategic planning.

A key informant from the donor community acknowledged that these requirements are a reflection of broader accountability frameworks but admitted they often place undue pressure on smaller, grassroots organizations. This dynamic exacerbates existing inequities, as larger, better-resourced WCSOs are more likely to have dedicated staff and manage these processes successfully.

Further data reveals the distribution of funding types received by WCSOs. A striking 85.6 percent of organizations reported receiving funding for specific programs or projects, while 52.5 percent received humanitarian funding. However, only 16.7 percent²⁵ of respondents received funding explicitly aimed at supporting their organizational mission and goals outside the framework of specific projects. This distribution highlights the critical gap in flexible and core funding, as most funding remains restricted to predefined activities.

The interviews with WCSOs highlights that the majority of core funding is provided by the UWF a small group of progressive international donors, such as Sweden, Canada, and some UN agencies. These donors view core funding as essential for strengthening WCSOs’ institutional capacities and ensuring sustainability.

Project-based type of funding is typically tied to narrowly defined outcomes, such as humanitarian aid, GBV response, or specific advocacy campaigns. While it provides critical resources for implementing projects, it offers limited flexibility for organizations to address their broader strategic or operational needs. KIIs with WCSO representatives reveal widespread frustration with the constraints of project-based funding. One WCSO leader remarked,



Project funding keeps us afloat, but it doesn’t allow us to invest in our organization. Everything is tied to donor objectives, with no room for building our capacity or planning for the future.

Operational support, which includes funding for salaries, administrative costs, and infrastructure, remains one of the most underfunded areas. The desk review underscores the implications of this gap, noting that without operational support, many WCSOs are forced to divert resources from programmatic activities to sustain their day-to-day functions.²⁶ KIIs echoed this concern, with one WCSO leader stating,



We spend so much time trying to piece together funding for our operations that it takes away from our ability to focus on our mission.

WCSOs are increasingly advocating for multi-year funding as a way to improve planning, sustainability, and impact. While a few donors have piloted multi-year agreements, these are still exceptions. As one donor noted during an interview,



Multi-year funding requires trust, and we’re not there yet [...] with many organizations.

The combined findings reveal a systemic imbalance in the funding ecosystem, where project-based and humanitarian funding dominate at the expense of flexible and core funding. While project-specific grants enable WCSOs to address immediate needs, the lack of core funding restricts their ability to invest in long-term goals, organizational development, and sustainability. The reliance on short-term agreements compounds these challenges, creating an environment where WCSOs must constantly seek new funding to remain operational.

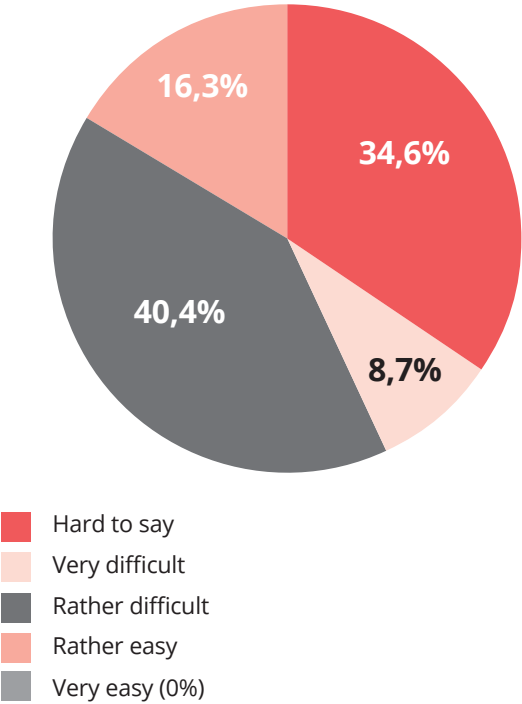
What are the challenges in securing sustainable funding? Barriers to financial stability and long-term growth for WCSOs.

Securing core funding is a pivotal challenge for WCSOs in Ukraine, as it directly impacts their ability to maintain operational stability, pursue long-term strategic goals, and ensure the sustainability of their missions. Despite the critical role WCSOs play in humanitarian and advocacy efforts, accessing flexible and unrestricted funding remains a significant barrier.

Survey data reveals that a substantial majority of WCSOs find it difficult to obtain funding from donors. Specifically, 40.4 percent of organiza-

tions reported that it is “rather difficult” to secure funding, while an additional 8.7 percent described the process as “very difficult.” Furthermore, 34.6 percent of respondents were unsure about the ease of obtaining funding, indicating a lack of clarity or inconsistent experiences among WCSOs. Only 16.4 percent of WCSOs felt that securing funding was “rather easy,” and no respondent reported it being “very easy,” highlighting the pervasive challenges faced across the sector. These figures illustrate that over 80 percent of WCSOs encounter significant obstacles in accessing donor funding, underscoring the widespread difficulty in obtaining the financial support necessary for their operations and growth.

GRAPH 7. How easy or difficult is it for your organization to obtain funding from donors? N=104



The survey also illustrates the significant challenges faced by WCSOs in securing funding, highlighting systemic barriers that limit their access to financial resources. The most frequently reported challenge, cited by 54.8 percent of respondents, is the restricted availability of funding for smaller organizations. This underscores the disproportionate disadvantage faced by grassroots WCSOs, which often lack the administrative capacity or networks to compete with larger organizations for limited funding opportunities. Additionally, 45.2 percent

²⁵ Multiple answers to this question were possible, therefore the sum of percentage of answers exceeds 100%.
²⁶ Multiple answers to this question were possible, therefore the sum of percentage of answers exceeds 100%.



Stanislava Petytsia, Anna Sharyhina, Anastasia Anhelova from organisation Sphere.

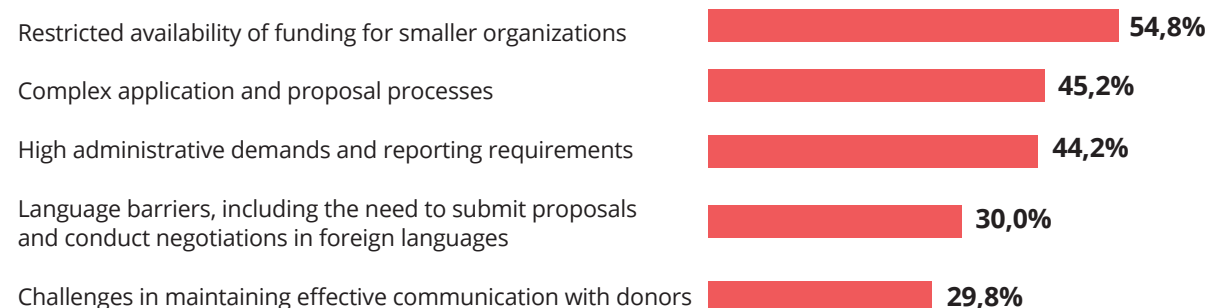
Photo: Oksana Porofenik

of respondents identified complex application and proposal processes as a major obstacle, reflecting the burdensome requirements that smaller organizations struggle to navigate. High administrative demands and reporting requirements were noted by 44.2 percent of respondents, further exacerbating the strain on limited organizational resources.

Language barriers, including the need to submit proposals and conduct negotiations in foreign

languages, were a significant issue for 34 percent of WCSOs, highlighting a gap in donor accessibility and inclusivity. Lastly, 29.8 percent reported challenges in maintaining effective communication with donors, pointing to a broader issue of limited donor engagement and transparency in the funding process.²⁷ These barriers collectively reinforce the systemic challenges that hinder the sustainability and impact of WCSOs, particularly those operating at smaller scales.

GRAPH 8. What are the main challenges your organization faces in obtaining funding (select up to three)? N=104



²⁷ Multiple answers to this question were possible, therefore the sum of percentage of answers exceeds 100%.

In addition, the survey respondents identified other key challenges in securing core funding, emphasizing the disproportionate effort required relative to the outcomes achieved. One WCSO highlighted,

“

The number of hours spent on each grant application is disproportionate to the results, considering the average success rate of 1 out of 10 grants. [...] Additionally, fundraising and administrative staff cannot be paid from project grants, forcing us to expend considerable effort for minimal returns.

This sentiment was echoed by another organization, which noted:

“

Short project durations and varying donor requirements make it extremely hard to sustain our operations and retain qualified staff.

Other challenges include a crisis in staffing, where small teams are stretched thin “We have a small team, so only a few people can write grants,” one respondent explained. Additionally, the inconsiderate timelines imposed by donors were a significant hurdle:

“

Donors often require quick turnarounds for applications, making it difficult to produce high-quality proposals.

²⁸ CARE Deutschland. Making International Funding Work for Women's Organisations, 2023. <https://www.care.de/media/websitedateien/care-allgemeines/publikationen/advocacy/care-deutschland-briefing-ukraine-conflict-making-funding-work-for-womens-organisations.pdf>; AWID. 2021 Brief: Where Is The Money for Feminist Organizing? <https://www.awid.org/news-and-analysis/2021-brief-where-money-feminist-organizing>

The lack of transparency in selection processes further complicates efforts, as one WCSO stated,

“

After submitting a proposal, very few donors provide feedback on rejection reasons, hindering our ability to improve future applications.

Moreover, the competitive nature of funding and the absence of funding for essential organizational activities exacerbate these issues:

“

There is intense competition for limited funds, and little to no support for our advocacy work or programs tailored to women from military families, including widows,

another respondent added. This lack of targeted funding restricts WCSOs from addressing specific and critical needs within their communities.

The interviews and desk review corroborate these survey findings, revealing systemic barriers that hinder WCSOs from accessing core funding. Recent reports highlight that the lack of core funding not only affects operational capacities but also limits the ability of WCSOs to engage in systemic change.²⁸ It is emphasized that without stable funding, WCSOs cannot invest in essential areas such as organizational development, capacity building, and sustainable programming, which are crucial for long-term impact and resilience.

The convergence of survey data and qualitative insights underscores a critical funding gap for WCSOs in Ukraine. The predominance of short-term, project-based funding creates a precarious financial environment where WCSOs must continuously seek

new grants to sustain their operations. This cycle not only diverts resources away from strategic initiatives and capacity building but also increases the administrative burden on already limited staff. The absence of core funding impedes WCSOs' ability to maintain a stable workforce, invest in necessary infrastructure, and develop long-term programs that address systemic gender inequalities.

Furthermore, the lack of transparency and feedback from donors hampers WCSOs' ability to refine their grant-writing processes and align their proposals more closely with funding opportunities. This inefficiency leads to frustration and burnout among staff, further threatening the sustainability of these organizations. The desk review's emphasis on the need for flexible and multi-year funding aligns with the respondents' calls for a shift in donor funding strategies to support the enduring missions of WCSOs.

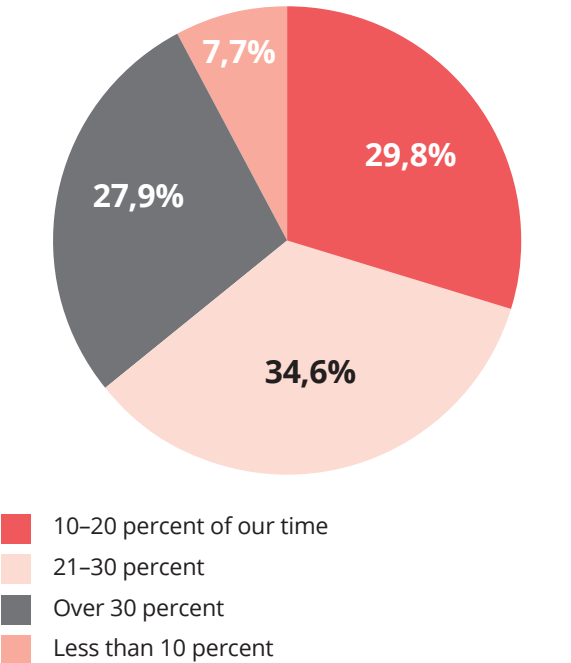
4. ADMINISTRATIVE BURDENS AND REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

How much time and resources do WCSOs spend on complying with donor requirements? Quantification of administrative burdens and their operational impact. What barriers do WCSOs face in meeting administrative demands?

Administrative burdens associated with donor requirements significantly impact the operations of WCSOs in Ukraine. Survey data, desk review and KIIs highlight that excessive reporting and compliance demands consume a disproportionate amount of WCSOs' time and resources. This not only hampers their ability to deliver impactful programs but also exacerbates inequities between smaller and larger organisations.

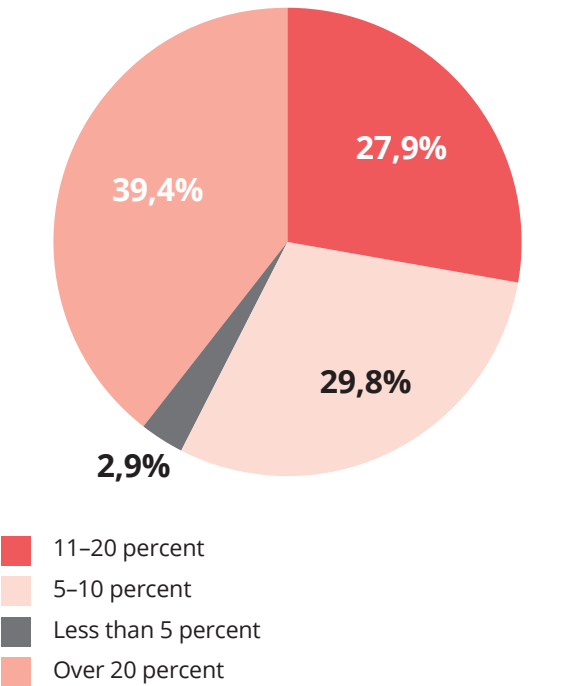
Survey data indicates that administrative tasks related to donor requirements consume a significant portion of WCSOs' time. For 34.6 percent of respondents, such tasks take up 21-30% of their working time, while for 27.9 percent, they consume over 30%. A smaller group, 29.8 percent, reports spending 10-20% of their time on administrative responsibilities, with only 7.7 percent stating less than 10% of their time. This distribution highlights the pervasive nature of administrative burdens, which divert critical time and resources from programmatic work.

GRAPH 9. What portion of your organisation's working time is spent on administrative tasks related to donor requirements? N=104



In addition to compliance, WCSOs were asked a separate question – what percentage of their working time they spend on fundraising activities. According to survey findings, the most common answer (39.4 percent) is that the organisations dedicate over 20% of their working time to securing funding. Also, 27.9 percent allocate 11-20% of their time to these efforts. 29.8 percent report spending 5-10% of their working time, and only 2.9% spend less than 5% of their working time for fundraising. The overlap between time spent on compliance and fundraising activities illustrates how administrative tasks compound the operational strain on organizations, leaving less room for impactful advocacy or program delivery, since short-term projects almost never cover costs for such tasks at all.

GRAPH 10. What portion of your organisation's working time is spent on fundraising? N=104



The survey respondents also provided detailed accounts of the challenges they face in meeting donor administrative requirements, painting a vivid picture of the operational impact. Their responses are summarised below:

1. High reporting and bureaucratic requirements. One respondent summarized the burden succinctly: *"We submitted 7 kilograms (sic!) of financial and narrative reports."* Another noted,

For a project of €7,000 over four months, we spent more time on reporting, translations, and approvals than on actual project activities. Each receipt had to be translated into English, and we attended multiple donor meetings with minimal compensation for staff.

2. Inflexible and resource-intensive processes. The demand for compliance often requires organizations to adapt their internal procedures to donor-specific requirements. For example, one respondent explained, *"Adapting internal organizational policies to meet international donor standards is a major strain."* Another pointed out,

Donors require tendering for nearly every budget line item, detailed budgets for projects scheduled years ahead, and additional mentoring programs that instead of strengthening us, create more administrative burden.

3. Lack of flexibility and delayed funding. Delayed disbursements were highlighted as a critical issue: *"Delays in donor payments forced us to achieve project outcomes with significant strain on our team and organization."* One WCSO leader noted,

When donors delayed funding, we had to cover expenses from personal or organizational reserves, sometimes for significant amounts.

4. Specific operational challenges. Safety concerns and contextual barriers:

Donors demanded personal data from women leaders, including their home addresses, during wartime, which posed significant security risks.

Rigid procurement policies: *"Finding suppliers that meet the strict donor criteria was particularly challenging in rural areas."*

5. Overwhelming volume of requirements: “Sometimes the reporting demands and compliance meetings took so much time that the actual project activities felt secondary,” one respondent stated.

The KIIs corroborate these survey findings, emphasizing how administrative burdens disproportionately affect smaller organizations with limited staff capacity. One KII respondent highlighted,



The sheer volume of reporting and compliance activities often requires hiring additional staff, but this expense [...] isn’t covered by project funding.

Operational impact of administrative burdens.

The high volume of reporting requirements diverts resources away from program implementation. Survey responses revealed that WCSOs frequently have to reallocate staff time from projects to meet donor demands. This dynamic weakens their ability to maintain quality in program delivery and advocacy. As one WCSO leader shared during a KII,



When reporting becomes the priority, the actual programs suffer. We’re constantly juggling deadlines instead of focusing on making an impact.

Many WCSOs receive funding from multiple donors, each with its own reporting framework. This lack of standardization adds complexity and increases the workload. A survey respondent described this as



a constant cycle of adapting to different formats and expectations, with no clear way to streamline the process.

This complexity disproportionately affects smaller organizations that lack specialized administrative staff.

Smaller WCSOs, which often operate with minimal staff and budgets, face significant barriers in meeting donor requirements. KIIs and desk review findings, such as those from the *GIHA 2024 Report*,²⁹ note that these organizations are frequently excluded from funding opportunities due to their inability to meet the extensive compliance demands.

The reviewed secondary sources describe how inflexible donor requirements exacerbate these challenges. WCSOs allocate a substantial portion of their limited resources to comply with donor requirements. These include detailed financial reporting, compliance audits, and adhering to donor-specific guidelines. A 2024 study by the OECD noted that smaller organizations, in particular, face significant challenges due to limited administrative capacities, which divert time and effort away from direct program implementation.³⁰

Quantifying the administrative burden reveals a significant impact on WCSOs. According to a recent report by Humentum, approximately two-thirds of grant agreements with civil society organizations fail to cover the full costs associated with administrative requirements.³¹ This results in organizations either reallocating funds from other areas or risking non-compliance. Beyond financial strain, this burden takes a toll on activists’ well-being, leading to high levels of stress and burnout among WCSO personnel. When donors fail to cover these essential costs, activists end up paying with their health.

The evidence paints a clear picture of the overwhelming administrative burden placed on WCSOs

by donor requirements. These demands, combined with delayed payments and inflexible policies, create significant operational challenges. The strain on resources often results in reduced capacity for program delivery and advocacy, limiting the long-term impact of these organizations. Moreover, the inefficiencies created by such rigorous systems disproportionately affect smaller WCSOs, which lack the administrative infrastructure to manage these demands effectively.

5. FUNDING FOR VULNERABLE GROUPS

Are there specific challenges in accessing funding for WCSOs working with vulnerable groups? Analysis of how funding mechanisms impact WCSOs representing vulnerable communities (e.g., LBTQI+ women, women with disabilities, ethnic minorities).

This analysis examines the challenges faced by WCSOs in securing funding to support vulnerable groups such as LBTQI+ women, women with disabilities, women veterans, ethnic minorities and others.

Approximately 52.9 percent of surveyed WCSOs reported actively working with vulnerable groups such as LBTQI+ women, women with disabilities, and ethnic minorities. However, a significant 47.1 percent of organizations indicated that they do not engage directly with these groups. This division highlights the uneven distribution of capacity and focus areas among WCSOs, potentially influenced by factors such as organizational priorities, geographic location, or access to relevant funding.

Out of the 58 organizations working with vulnerable groups:

- 60.3 percent identified a key barrier as donors’ reluctance to adapt to local needs, often imposing their own priorities.
- 51.7 percent cited the absence of funding mechanisms tailored to vulnerable groups.
- 39.7 percent reported a lack of flexibility in funding.
- 24.1 percent noted limited donor interest in these projects.
- 22.4 percent faced overly complex funding requirements.³²



These challenges exacerbate the resource gap for vulnerable groups, hindering long-term, meaningful support. Specific comments emphasized donor disinterest in regions outside their priority areas and monopolization of funding by larger organizations.

Intersectionality is not just about representation – it determines whether funding reaches those with the greatest barriers to access. Many vulnerable groups, particularly LBTQI+ women, ethnic minority women, and women with disabilities, face multiple, overlapping layers of discrimination, which create distinct barriers to economic security, legal protection, and access to services. However, donor structures often do not account for these compounded vulnerabilities, as funding frameworks tend to classify projects by single-issue categories rather than addressing multiple intersecting risks. As one WCSO leader put it:



The problem is that most funding is designed for ‘women’s rights’ or ‘disability rights’ separately. But where does that leave a woman who is both disabled and from a marginalized ethnic group? There’s no funding that acknowledges these overlapping challenges.

²⁹ Gender in Humanitarian Action (GIHA) Working Group. Accessible Funding for Women’s Rights Organizations in Ukraine, 2024. <https://reliefweb.int/report/ukraine/accessible-funding-womens-rights-organizations-ukraine-enuk>

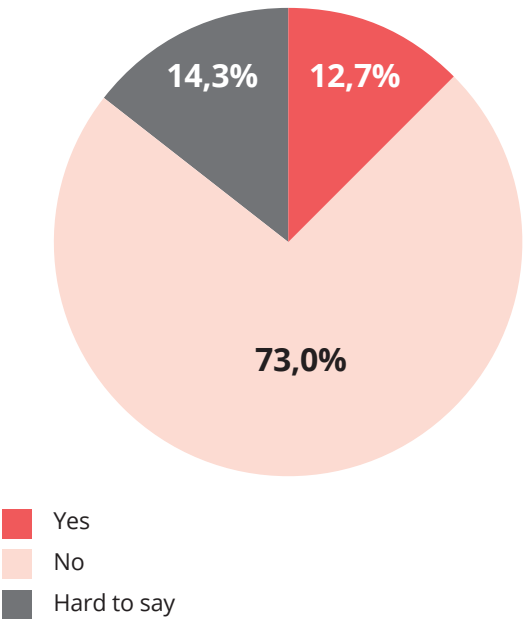
³⁰ Euan Ritchie. What the OECD’s latest data tells us about global aid in 2022, 2024. <https://www.bond.org.uk/news/2024/01/what-the-oecd-latest-data-tells-us-about-global-aid-in-2022/>

³¹ Samantha Musoke, Christine Sow. New harmonized financial reporting will truly shift power, 2024. <https://humentum.org/blog-media/new-harmonized-financial-reporting-will-truly-shift-power/>

³² Multiple answers to this question were possible, therefore the sum of percentage of answers exceeds 100%.

Only 12.7 percent of organizations reported receiving specialized funding to promote diversity and inclusion, while 73.0 percent explicitly stated they lacked such financial support. An additional 14.3 percent were uncertain about their funding status. This indicates a significant gap in targeted resources, making it difficult for WCSOs to sustain or expand efforts in addressing the unique needs of vulnerable groups. Without designated funding, these organizations face challenges in integrating inclusivity into their broader programming, limiting their capacity to foster systemic change for under-represented populations.

GRAPH 11. Does your organization have dedicated funding to promote diversity and inclusion in working with your target groups?
N=58



These findings resonate with what WCSO representatives and donors reported in the KIIs. The interviews highlighted significant challenges in funding mechanisms aimed at supporting vulnerable groups such as LGBTQI+ women, women with disabilities, and ethnic minorities. A recurring issue raised by WCSOs was the limited donor interest in these groups’ specific needs. One WCSO leader emphasized,



We work with women with disabilities, but very few donors see this area as necessary for development.

Donors acknowledged these challenges but highlighted systemic constraints. One donor representative noted,



We require projects to align with broader funding objectives, [...] which may unintentionally limit support for specific vulnerable groups.

While some donors incorporate inclusivity principles, such as “*leaving no one behind*,” this often remains a secondary consideration during the selection process. One donor representative said that their organisation has no earmarked funding for the priorities of vulnerable groups, but “*this may be a good idea for the future*.” Another donor shared that while funding proposals often include components for diversity, there is no dedicated funding stream specifically for these populations, leaving gaps in resource allocation and tailored program development.

Additionally, WCSOs criticized inflexible donor requirements as a barrier to effectively supporting vulnerable groups. Many WCSOs expressed frustration over inflexible frameworks, with one leader stating,



Donors often impose their own perspectives, rather than listening to the needs of local communities.

This lack of adaptability hampers WCSOs’ ability to design impactful programs that address the real challenges faced by vulnerable groups. Combined with limited long-term funding opportunities,

these constraints leave WCSOs without the stability needed to create sustainable solutions.

The desk review highlighted several key findings regarding funding for WCSOs supporting vulnerable groups. These sources consistently emphasized that while inclusivity principles are increasingly recognized, specific funding streams for vulnerable groups, such as LGBTQI+ women, women with disabilities, and ethnic minorities, remain limited. *The GiHA 2024 Report* highlights how funding frameworks typically adopt a one-size-fits-all approach, overlooking the specific needs of women in vulnerable communities.³³ Similarly, CARE Deutschland report observed that despite the integration of gender markers in some donor frameworks, these are often symbolic and do not guarantee financial backing for gender-inclusive initiatives.³⁴

Grassroots organizations, which frequently work closest with vulnerable groups, struggle to access donor funding due to stringent application and reporting requirements. As highlighted in the *AWID 2021 Brief*, this creates a funding dynamic where larger organizations dominate, leaving smaller WCSOs with fewer resources to address the needs of vulnerable populations.³⁵ This results in a reliance on short-term, scarce funding that inhibits long-term program sustainability.

The findings underscore systemic issues in how funding is structured and allocated for supporting vulnerable groups. In practical terms, the limited engagement of WCSOs with vulnerable groups reflects significant capacity and resource gaps that leave critical needs unmet. This is not just a matter of priorities but a consequence of structural barriers such as donor-imposed frameworks and stringent requirements that disproportionately favour larger organizations. These dynamics marginalize smaller, grassroots WCSOs, which are often better positioned to address local needs but lack the financial stability or administrative capacity to compete for funding effectively.

6. CAPACITY BUILDING AND SUPPORT NEEDS

What types of support do WCSOs need beyond financial aid?

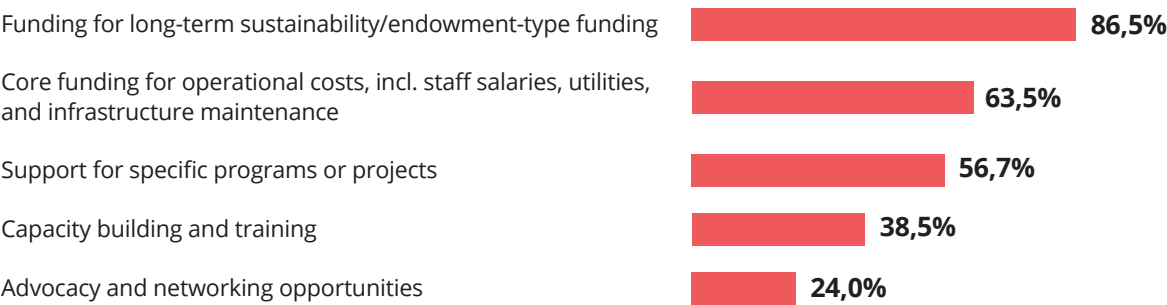
While financial resources are critical for the survival and operations of WCSOs, non-financial support is equally essential for their sustainability, effectiveness, and growth. Survey data, desk reviews, and KIIs highlight that WCSOs in Ukraine need capacity-building, technical support, and advocacy training to strengthen their impact and resilience.

The survey data highlights the pressing needs of WCSOs, offering a clear picture of their capacity-building priorities. The most critical need identified was for long-term funding for sustainability support/endowment-type funding, with 86.5 percent of respondents selecting this option. This overwhelming figure demonstrates the vital importance of building resilience and reducing dependency on short-term, project-based funding. Many WCSOs expressed a desire for more stable operational frameworks, including endowment funds or other mechanisms to ensure continued functionality. Additionally, 63.5 percent³⁶ of WCSOs indicated a need for funding operational expenses, such as staff salaries, utilities, and infrastructure maintenance. This reflects a common challenge where financial aid is often project-specific, leaving organizations struggling to cover essential administrative costs. Furthermore, 56.7 percent prioritized program-specific support, underscoring the demand for resources to develop and expand impactful initiatives.

Capacity building and training were specifically mentioned by 38.5 percent of respondents. Technical assistance is specifically welcomed in areas such as monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL), grant writing, and reporting. Interviews with donor representatives acknowledged that smaller WCSOs often lack the expertise required to meet donor compliance standards. Finally, 24.0 percent of organizations pointed to challenges in advocacy and network-building, signalling the importance of fostering stronger coalitions and enabling organizations to collaborate more effectively on shared goals.

³³ Gender in Humanitarian Action (GiHA) Working Group. Accessible Funding for Women’s Rights Organizations in Ukraine, 2024. <https://reliefweb.int/report/ukraine/accessible-funding-womens-rights-organizations-ukraine-enuk>
³⁴ CARE Deutschland. Making International Funding Work for Women’s Organisations, 2023. <https://www.care.de/media/websitedateien/care-allgemeines/publikationen/advocacy/care-deutschland-briefing-ukraine-conflict-making-funding-work-for-womens-organisations.pdf>
³⁵ AWID. 2021 Brief: Where Is The Money for Feminist Organizing? <https://www.awid.org/news-and-analysis/2021-brief-where-money-feminist-organizing>
³⁶ Multiple answers to this question were possible, therefore the sum of percentage of answers exceeds 100%.

GRAPH 12. What are the most pressing needs your organization faces right now (select up to three)? N=104



Other types of support needs mentioned in the interviews with WCSO leaders include digital and technological tools, as well as support for mental health and burnout prevention. The increasing reliance on digital platforms has created a need for training in digital security, social media advocacy, and data management. The high-pressure environment in which many WCSOs operate has increased the need for mental health support. KIIs with WCSO representatives highlighted concerns about burnout and staff well-being, with one leader stating,

”

We’re so focused on helping others that we sometimes neglect our own mental health. Support in this area would make a big difference.

These findings suggest that while financial aid remains crucial, non-financial support such as capacity-building initiatives, technical training, and advocacy tools are equally vital for enabling WCSOs to achieve sustainable growth and drive systemic change. This multifaceted approach is essential for ensuring their effectiveness and resilience in addressing gender equality.

How do WCSOs rate donor-provided capacity-building initiatives?

This issue often does not receive much attention during higher-level analyses. Therefore, it was important to prioritize it in the research.

KIIs with WCSOs reveal mixed feedback regarding donor-provided capacity-building initiatives. While

many organizations acknowledged the value of donor-supported training and technical assistance, significant gaps and inefficiencies were also identified. One recurring theme was the mismatch between training content and practical needs. Several WCSO representatives noted that donors often design capacity-building programs with limited input from beneficiaries, leading to a lack of alignment with local contexts. One leader stated,

”

We’ve attended countless webinars and training sessions, but many failed to address the core challenges we face, such as organizational sustainability and strategic planning.

Almost all donors have the practice of collecting feedback after the capacity building events – however, the interviewed WCSOs mention that the donors seem to not systemically consider the feedback that the latter provide:

”

When [the donor] is get used to deliver its trainings in a certain way, it continues doing it this way, regardless of how happy or unhappy we as the target audience are.

Despite these challenges, there were positive examples. The Ukrainian Women’s Fund, Kvinna till Kvinna and International Renaissance Foundation were praised for their tailored capacity-building programs, which included advocacy training, leadership development, and mentoring. These initiatives were viewed as effective because they considered the realities faced by grassroots organizations, including limited staffing and local knowledge gaps. However, even these successful programs were constrained by funding cycles and lacked long-term support mechanisms.

The KIIs also highlighted logistical and accessibility issues. Smaller, grassroots organizations often find it challenging to participate in capacity-building initiatives due to geographical barriers or resource limitations. This dynamic disproportionately favors larger organizations, further widening the capacity gap within the women’s rights movement. Moreover, while some donors provide high-quality training, the lack of follow-up support was repeatedly mentioned. Without ongoing mentorship or practical applications, the impact of these capacity-building efforts often remains short-lived.

In conclusion, while donor-funded capacity-building initiatives can be effective when tailored and sustained, their overall impact is limited by structural

inefficiencies, one-size-fits-all approaches, and insufficient follow-up mechanisms. Addressing these gaps would significantly enhance the long-term effectiveness of these programs for WCSOs.

Are donors investing in capacity of WCSOs for long-term planning, including multi-year financial planning? Trends, successes, challenges.

Investment in the long-term capacity of WCSOs in Ukraine remains inconsistent and underdeveloped. While some progressive donors have initiated efforts to integrate multi-year planning into their frameworks, the majority of funding continues to be project-based and short-term. This limits WCSOs’ ability to plan strategically and achieve sustainable growth, particularly in addressing systemic gender equality issues and empowering vulnerable communities.

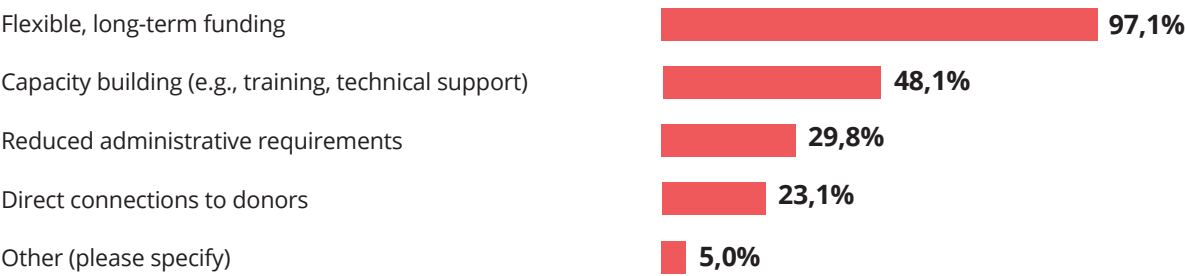
The survey data reveals that flexible, long-term funding is overwhelmingly seen as the most impactful type of support for increasing the influence of organizations, with 97.1 percent of respondents selecting this option. This indicates a strong demand for funding models that allow organizations to plan strategically and address both immediate and long-term needs.



Tanya Herasymova from the organisation Fight for Right

Photo: Alina Harmash

GRAPH 13. Which type of support would help your organization the most to increase its impact (select up to three)? N=104



Capacity building, such as training and technical support, was also highly prioritized, chosen by 48.1 percent of respondents, highlighting the critical role of skills development in organizational growth. Other forms of support, such as reducing administrative burdens (29.8 percent) and establishing direct donor relationships (23.1 percent), were also noted, reflecting ongoing challenges with bureaucratic processes and accessibility. Minor responses, including mentoring or infrastructure support, collectively made up less than 5 percent. The data underscores the urgent need for donors to focus on flexible funding and capacity-building initiatives to empower organizations effectively.

KIIs with WCSO representatives further illuminate the challenges in donor investment for long-term capacity building. Many organizations expressed frustration over the short-term nature of donor funding, which limits their ability to engage in comprehensive multi-year financial planning. One WCSO leader remarked,



Donors provide initial training sessions, but there is little follow-up support to ensure that the skills are effectively integrated into our long-term strategies.

This sentiment reflects a broader issue where capacity-building initiatives, while beneficial, lack the sustained support necessary for meaningful organizational development.

From the donors' perspective, KIIs revealed an acknowledgment of the importance of long-term capacity building but also highlighted systemic constraints that impede their ability to provide sustained support. A donor representative noted,



We require projects to align with broader funding objectives, which may unintentionally limit support for specific topics or areas of focus.

This constraint often results in funding cycles that prioritize short-term, project-specific outcomes over the development of long-term, strategic capabilities within WCSOs. Consequently, organizations are compelled to focus on immediate deliverables to secure funding, rather than investing in multi-year planning and sustainable growth.

Certain progressive donors have begun integrating multi-year capacity-building components into their funding frameworks. These initiatives aim to strengthen WCSOs' financial management and strategic planning capabilities, enabling them to diversify funding streams and achieve greater resilience. However, such efforts remain limited, with most donors struggling to reconcile long-term capacity-building needs with their existing short-term funding priorities. Donors also tend to prioritize short-term measurable outputs over the development of sustainable organizational practices. This fragmented and short-sighted funding model perpetuates a cycle of dependency and prevents WCSOs from achieving the financial and operational stability required for systemic impact.

The desk review corroborates these findings, emphasizing that donor strategies predominantly favor short-term, project-based funding rather than facilitating long-term organizational sustainability. Reports from the Ukrainian Women's Fund and CARE Deutschland have highlighted that while there is a growing recognition of the need for capacity building, the actual implementation of multi-year financial planning support remains limited.³⁷ This discrepancy creates a funding dynamic where larger organizations with more resources and administrative capacity are better positioned to secure and manage donor funds, leaving smaller, grassroots WCSOs struggling to access the necessary support for long-term planning.

In practical terms, the insufficient investment in long-term capacity building by donors forces WCSOs to operate in a state of financial uncertainty, limiting their ability to engage in strategic planning and implement sustained initiatives. This instability not only hampers organizational growth but also diminishes the overall impact of WCSOs in promoting gender equality and supporting vulnerable groups. Without adequate long-term support, WCSOs remain constrained to reactive measures, unable to fully realize their mission of fostering systemic change and addressing the deep-seated challenges faced by vulnerable communities.

How are smaller, grassroots WCSOs compared to larger organizations in terms of funding access? Comparison of challenges faced by grassroots WCSOs and established organizations.

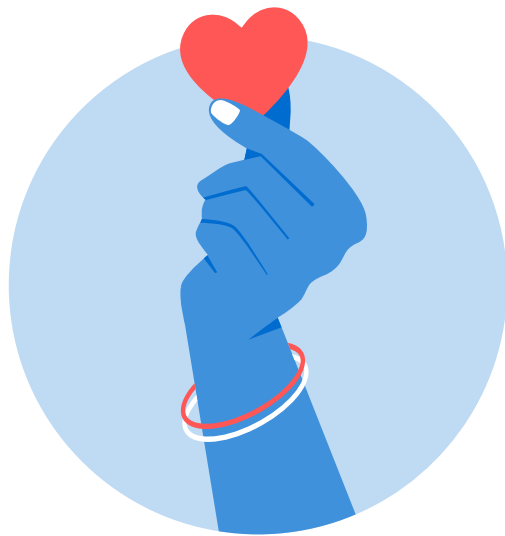
The disparities in funding access between smaller, grassroots WCSOs and larger, well-established organizations have been thoroughly examined in the preceding sections of this report. Various aspects, such as administrative capacity, donor preferences, funding models, and operational challenges, have been analyzed to highlight how these dynamics impact the ability of grassroots organizations to secure and sustain funding. The following is a synthesized summary of these findings, emphasizing the critical differences in challenges and opportunities faced by grassroots and larger WCSOs.

- **Administrative capacity and access to funding:** Larger WCSOs often have dedicated administrative teams and established systems to navigate donor requirements, giving them an edge in securing funding. In contrast, grassroots organizations typically lack the staff and resources needed to manage complex application and reporting processes, leaving them at a disadvantage when competing for limited resources.
- **Preference for established organizations:** Donors often favour larger, well-established WCSOs due to their perceived ability to handle complex projects and meet compliance standards. This creates a funding landscape where grassroots organizations struggle to access significant financial support, despite being deeply embedded in local communities and often having a better understanding of local needs.
- **Short-term funding models:** Grassroots WCSOs are disproportionately affected by the dominance of short-term, project-based funding. Such models offer little flexibility and force smaller organizations to focus on immediate deliverables rather than long-term planning and systemic change.
- **Limited visibility and networking:** Larger WCSOs benefit from strong networks and greater visibility among donors, further consolidating their dominance in the funding ecosystem. Grassroots organizations, especially those in rural or underserved regions, are often overlooked, despite their critical role in addressing localized needs.
- **Operational support gap:** The lack of operational and core funding disproportionately impacts grassroots organizations. Many of them struggle to cover basic administrative costs, such as salaries and infrastructure, which are often excluded from project-based grants.
- **Competitive disadvantage:** Grassroots organizations frequently compete with larger WCSOs for the same limited pool of resources. This dynamic exacerbates tensions within the sector and limits opportunities for smaller organizations to grow and sustain their operations.
- **Challenges in capacity building:** Grassroots WCSOs often face greater challenges in accessing donor-funded capacity-building initiatives. They encounter barriers such as language requirements, logistical issues, and training programs that are not tailored to their specific needs, further widening the capacity gap.

Grassroots WCSOs, despite their deep connections to local communities and critical role in addressing

³⁷ Ukrainian Women's Fund. Read between the Lines: Ukraine Women's Rights Organisations' Response to the Full-Scale War, Approaches and Threats, 2023; CARE Deutschland. Making International Funding Work for Women's Organisations, 2023. <https://www.care.de/media/websitedateien/care-allgemeines/publikationen/advocacy/care-deutschland-briefing-ukraine-conflict-making-funding-work-for-womens-organisations.pdf>

immediate needs, are disproportionately excluded from significant funding opportunities due to structural barriers such as limited administrative capacity, short-term funding models, and a lack of operational support. These challenges not only perpetuate inequalities within the WSCO landscape but also undermine the overall effectiveness of donor investments.



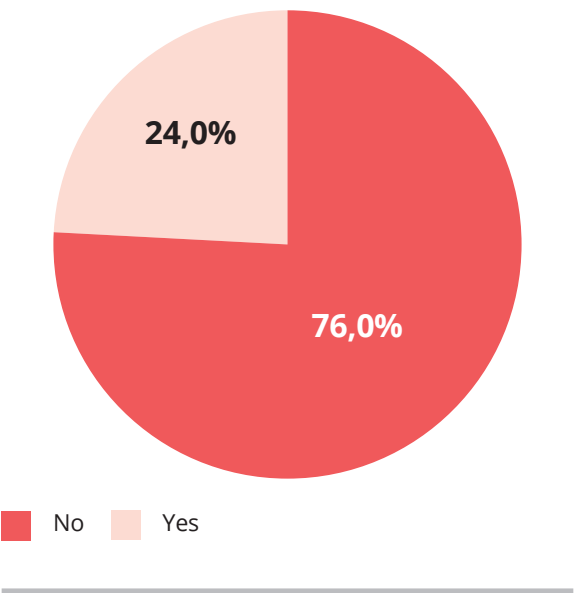
7. IMPACT OF FOREIGN AID ON LOCAL ADVOCACY

To what extent do foreign-funded projects contribute to long-term gender equality initiatives? Sustainability and long-term impact of donor-funded programs.

It is widely recognized that the donor-funded projects have been instrumental in supporting WCSOs in Ukraine. However, their contribution to long-term gender equality initiatives and organizational sustainability remains limited. While donors have increased their focus on women's rights in response to the ongoing crisis, funding practices often prioritize short-term humanitarian needs over systemic advocacy and capacity-building efforts.

Survey data highlights the precarious financial situation faced by WCSOs. Only 24.0 percent of WCSOs have secured funding for 2025 that equals at least 50 percent of their 2024 budgets, leaving the majority (76.0 percent) with significant financial uncertainty. This instability disrupts long-term planning and undermines the capacity of WCSOs to retain staff, maintain infrastructure, and sustain advocacy initiatives. KIIs with WSCO leaders revealed widespread anxiety about their ability to fulfill these essential functions without consistent funding.

GRAPH 14. Has your organisation funding secured for 2025 in the amount of at least 50% of your 2024 budget? N=104



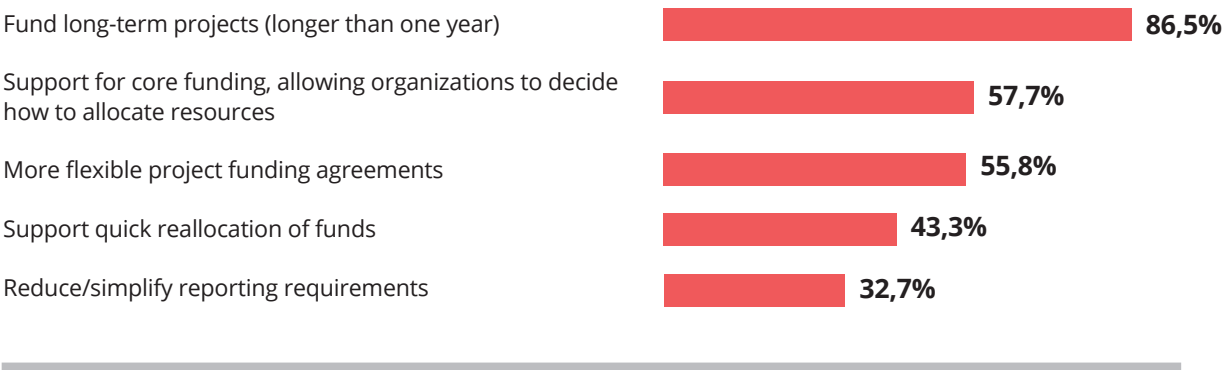
Among WCSOs that have secured funding for 2025, a half have guaranteed agreements, while 40.0 percent have conditional arrangements tied to specific milestones. Only 10.0 percent have reserved funds, and 3.3 percent rely on alternative resources such as personal contributions. These statistics underscore a fragmented funding landscape, where the heavy reliance on short-term agreements exacerbates financial vulnerability and forces organizations to prioritize immediate deliverables over systemic advocacy.

KIIs with donors and WCSOs corroborate these findings, emphasizing the structural barriers within the current funding ecosystem. Donors acknowledged the limitations of short-term project funding, which often prevents WCSOs from engaging in multi-year strategic planning. A donor representative highlighted this issue, explaining,



We've seen that short-term funding limits the ability of organizations to focus on transformational goals. [...] It's not enough to support services – we need to invest in their resilience.

GRAPH 15. What changes would you recommend to donors to improve the funding environment for WCSOs in Ukraine (select up to three)? N=104



The survey data also reveals that WCSOs in Ukraine strongly advocate for changes in donor practices to improve funding mechanisms and ensure sustainability. The most frequently recommended change, supported by 86.5 percent of respondents, is the provision of long-term funding for project implementation. Additionally, 57.7 percent³⁸ of respondents emphasized the importance of core funding, which is essential for covering operational costs and ensuring organizational resilience. Simplified donor requirements were highlighted by 32.7 percent of WCSOs as a critical improvement, addressing the administrative burdens that disproportionately affect smaller organizations with limited capacity. Quick approval for reallocation of funds was another key recommendation, supported by 43.3 percent of respondents, highlighting the need for greater flexibility in adapting to emerging priorities and unforeseen challenges. Lastly, 55.8 percent advocated for more flexible project funding agreements to allow organizations to adjust activities based on evolving needs and reduce unnecessary bureaucratic constraints.

These recommendations align with qualitative findings from key informant interviews, where WSCO leaders consistently expressed the need for donor practices that are more flexible, accessible, and supportive of long-term organizational development. Certain donors have begun piloting core and multi-year funding initiatives, but such practices remain the exception rather than the norm.

If the conditions and focus of the funding looked differently, what could WCSOs and feminist movements do differently from today? (Presenting an alternative vision).

The current funding landscape for WCSOs in Ukraine, characterized by short-term grants, donor-driven priorities, and administrative rigidity, constrains their ability to achieve long-term systemic change. An alternative funding vision – focused on flexibility, core funding, and alignment with WCSOs' self-identified priorities – could dramatically enhance their advocacy, sustainability, and impact. This reimagined funding approach would address the structural barriers highlighted in survey data, KIIs, and desk review, paving the way for transformative progress in gender equality.

Enhanced advocacy and systemic impact. If funding mechanisms allowed for more flexibility and long-term commitments, WCSOs could shift from addressing immediate, donor-imposed deliverables to focusing on strategic advocacy and systemic reforms. With stable, multi-year funding, WCSOs could prioritize activities such as lobbying for gender-sensitive legislation, integrating gender considerations into national recovery plans, and addressing systemic inequalities. As one WSCO leader explained in a KII,



With consistent funding, we could finally focus on advancing policies rather than just firefighting emergencies.

Moreover, organizations could invest in evidence-based advocacy by conducting research, producing policy recommendations, and engaging with policymakers at national and international levels.

³⁸ Multiple answers to this question were possible, therefore the sum of percentage of answers exceeds 100%.

This shift would position WCSOs as strategic actors driving systemic change rather than temporary service providers.

Sustainability and organizational resilience. Core funding, which currently reaches only 16.7 percent of WCSOs, is essential for fostering organizational stability. Without resources to cover operational costs, retain skilled staff, or invest in infrastructure, many organizations operate in a state of financial precarity. KIIs with WCSO leaders consistently emphasized the challenges of sustaining a skilled workforce when salaries depend on short-term project grants. One respondent remarked,



We lose talented [...] staff to international organizations because we can't guarantee stable income.

Some donors have adopted more flexible and inclusive funding models that directly support WCSOs' resilience and sustainability. For example, multi-tiered funding approaches that combine project-based grants, core funding, and direct support for grassroots organizations have proven effective in strengthening local women's rights movements. Key informants emphasized that donors who provide not only financial resources but also institutional support – such as funding for operational costs, leadership development, and security measures – enable WCSOs to sustain their work beyond individual projects. One donor representative noted,



It's not just about funding services; it's about investing in the organizations themselves, so they remain strong and impactful over time.

Expanding such funding models could help WCSOs build long-term capacity and navigate the shifting donor landscape more effectively. An alternative funding model that includes operational support would enable WCSOs to build institutional resilience,

allowing them to weather financial uncertainties and focus on their missions. For example, organizations could use core funding to develop long-term strategies, establish robust governance frameworks, and diversify their funding sources. This would not only enhance their ability to sustain operations but also increase their credibility and effectiveness in engaging with donors and stakeholders.

Fostering collaboration and innovation. Rigid, donor-driven funding structures often limit collaboration and discourage innovation. Survey data and KIIs reveal that many WCSOs are forced to work in silos, competing for the same limited resources. Most interviewed donor representatives recognize this issue. Flexible funding would encourage partnerships and collective action among WCSOs, reducing competition and fostering a unified approach to advocacy and service delivery. For instance, WCSOs could form coalitions to address cross-cutting issues such as gender-based violence, women's leadership, and economic empowerment. Such collaboration would amplify their collective impact and provide opportunities for smaller, grassroots organizations to benefit from the expertise and networks of larger partners.

Innovation, often stifled by rigid donor requirements, could also flourish under a more flexible funding model. WCSOs would have the freedom to pilot new approaches, such as digital advocacy campaigns or community-led initiatives, without the pressure of meeting narrowly defined project outcomes. This would enable organizations to adapt quickly to emerging challenges and explore creative solutions to entrenched gender inequalities.

Strengthening representation of vulnerable groups. Dedicated funding for vulnerable groups, including women with disabilities, LGBTQI+ women, and ethnic minorities, is critical for achieving inclusive gender equality. Desk review findings reveal that only 12.7 percent of WCSOs reported receiving specialized funding for promoting diversity and inclusion, leaving significant gaps in support for these communities. KIIs further highlighted that many donors fail to prioritize the specific needs of vulnerable groups, resulting in programs that are often generic and disconnected from local realities. With targeted funding, WCSOs could design and implement programs tailored to the unique challenges faced by vulnerable populations. This would include initiatives to improve access to services, amplify vulnerable voices in decision-making,



Sofia Yenina, Stanislava Petlytsia, Anastasia Anhelova from the organisation Sphere

and advocate for policies that address intersectional inequalities. Moreover, direct funding to grassroots organizations working with vulnerable groups would ensure that resources are allocated where they are most needed, fostering equity and inclusion.

Integrated self-care and safety measures.

Burnout and safety risks are pressing concerns for WCSOs, particularly in the context of Ukraine's ongoing crisis. KIIs highlighted the toll of managing high workloads, limited resources, and the emotional strain of working with vulnerable populations. However, most current funding models fail to account for these challenges, leaving WCSOs without the means to prioritize staff well-being. A reimagined funding approach would allocate resources specifically for self-care and organizational security. For instance, grants could include provisions for psychosocial support, team retreats, and safety training. One WCSO leader noted,



Having funds to address burnout would allow us to support our teams better and sustain our work in the long run.

Such measures would enhance the resilience of WCSOs, ensuring they can continue to serve their communities effectively.

An alternative funding model that prioritizes flexibility, core funding, and inclusivity would enable WCSOs to move beyond survival mode and focus on their long-term missions. By aligning funding conditions with the needs of WCSOs, donors could empower these organizations to achieve transformative change in gender equality, build sustainable futures, and amplify their collective impact. This vision not only addresses the immediate challenges faced by WCSOs but also strengthens the foundation for a resilient and inclusive women's movement in Ukraine.

Conclusions



1

The dual impact of the war on WCSO funding: opportunity and dependency.

The war in Ukraine has brought unprecedented attention and resources to WCSOs. While 68.9 percent of organizations reported an increase in funding since 2022, this influx has created a dependency on external donors, with minimal contributions from local governments. Additionally, the dominance of short-term, project-based funding prevents WCSOs from making long-term strategic investments, reinforcing financial instability. As donor priorities shift, this dependency threatens the sustainability of WCSOs, leaving them vulnerable to sudden funding cuts. Moreover, humanitarian funding has taken priority over structural reforms and movement-building, limiting the ability of WCSOs to implement systemic gender equality initiatives.

2

Misalignment between donor priorities and WCSO missions.

Donor-driven funding conditions often compel WCSOs to prioritize immediate humanitarian needs over their core missions of advocacy and systemic reform. Survey data indicates that 31.7 percent of organizations experienced funding skewed entirely toward urgent needs, while only 22.1 percent emphasized longer-term goals. Additionally, donor-defined project indicators often fail to reflect local priorities, forcing WCSOs to adjust their strategies to meet predefined benchmarks rather than addressing the most pressing needs in their communities. The dependence on foreign aid further reinforces this misalignment, as WCSOs must conform to external funding priorities rather than driving locally-led solutions.

3 **Unequal access to funding and its systemic implications.**

The findings reveal systemic inequities in funding distribution, with larger organizations having better chances of securing long-term and core funding compared to small and young WCSOs. Geographic location further exacerbates disparities, with frontline areas prioritized for humanitarian aid, while rural and underrepresented regions struggle to secure resources. These inequities hinder smaller organizations' growth and their ability to engage in sustained advocacy. Moreover, many grassroots WCSOs report exclusion from direct donor funding opportunities, as international intermediaries often dominate the distribution of resources.

4 **Administrative burdens limit WCSO capacity and localization efforts.**

Excessive administrative and reporting requirements consume significant time and resources, particularly for smaller WCSOs. Nearly 35 percent of organizations spend over 30 percent of their working time on compliance tasks, diverting focus from programmatic work. These burdens disproportionately affect grassroots organizations with limited administrative capacity. Additionally, despite donor commitments to localization, only a small fraction of funds reaches local organizations directly. Stringent donor requirements and the reliance on international intermediaries create further barriers, preventing grassroots WCSOs from accessing critical funding. To make localization a reality, donors must streamline application processes and reduce bureaucratic hurdles that disadvantage smaller organizations.

5 **Challenges in supporting vulnerable groups.**

Funding mechanisms often fail to address the specific needs of vulnerable groups such as LGBTQI+ women, women with disabilities, women veterans, and ethnic minorities. While 52.9 percent of WCSOs reported working with vulnerable communities, only 12.7 percent received targeted funding for diversity and inclusion. Donor reluctance to adapt funding frameworks to local realities perpetuates systemic exclusion and limits the ability of WCSOs to foster equitable and inclusive programs. Additionally, as highlighted in broader funding disparities, smaller WCSOs – especially those working with marginalized populations – often lack direct access to donor funding, as larger, well-established actors receive the majority of resources.

6 **The need for capacity building beyond financial aid.**

WCSOs emphasized non-financial support, particularly in capacity building, advocacy training, and technical assistance, as essential for achieving sustainability. However, donor-provided training often fails to align with the practical needs of organizations, with many programs lacking follow-up support. Capacity-building initiatives that do not address organizational realities risk becoming short-term interventions rather than drivers of sustainable development. In particular, WCSOs highlighted the need for leadership development, digital transformation, and strategic planning as priority areas for capacity-building investments.

7 **Localization requires more than rhetorical commitments.**

Despite donor commitments to localization, only a small fraction of funds reaches local organizations directly. Grassroots WCSOs often lack access to resources due to stringent donor requirements and reliance on intermediaries. This disconnect undermines the principles of local ownership and raises concerns about the long-term viability of localized efforts. The persistent reliance on intermediaries diminishes the potential for grassroots-led solutions, which are often more attuned to local contexts and needs. While some donors have attempted to increase direct funding for WCSOs, many organizations continue to report barriers in accessing these opportunities, particularly due to complex eligibility criteria and administrative demands.

8 **Short-term funding models perpetuate a reactive cycle.**

The overwhelming reliance on short-term, project-based funding forces WCSOs to continuously seek new grants just to sustain operations. Survey data indicates that 76 percent of organizations face significant uncertainty about funding beyond 2024. This instability hinders the development of comprehensive strategies and long-term programming, reducing the ability of WCSOs to build sustainable, impactful movements. Additionally, frequent shifts in donor priorities force WCSOs to adapt their focus areas rather than invest in systemic change.

9 **Donor aid: balancing empowerment and constraints.**

While foreign aid has enhanced the capacity of WCSOs to address immediate needs and engage in policy advocacy, its focus on short-term outcomes often compromises long-term goals. The effectiveness of foreign aid in supporting systemic change depends on its alignment with the strategic goals of WCSOs, as well as donors' willingness to invest in movement-building rather than short-term service delivery. Strengthening accountability mechanisms and ensuring that foreign aid prioritizes long-term sustainability is key to balancing immediate crisis response with meaningful systemic change.

10 **Interconnected challenges and opportunities in the funding landscape.**

The findings reveal interconnected challenges across the funding ecosystem for WCSOs. The prevalence of donor-driven priorities, inequitable resource distribution, and administrative burdens creates systemic barriers that limit the effectiveness of WCSOs. At the same time, the increased visibility of WCSOs in Ukraine's crisis response has opened opportunities for greater engagement with donors and policymakers. Strengthening collaboration between WCSOs, donors, and government actors is critical to ensuring that funding mechanisms support sustainable, locally driven solutions rather than reinforcing dependency on external aid.

Recommendations



The recommendations presented in this section are tailored to address the diverse needs of WCSOs and the broader funding ecosystem. They are categorized into three key areas:

1. For donors and development partners:

Focused on direct actions to improve funding models, reduce administrative burdens, promote localization, and strengthen accountability.

2. For WCSOs:

Designed to enhance their institutional capacities, advocacy efforts, well-being, and resilience.

3. For the broader funding ecosystem:

Highlighting systemic strategies to foster collaboration, advance gender-sensitive approaches, and address structural barriers.

The suggested recommendations are focused on direct actions to improve funding models, reduce administrative burdens, promote localization, and strengthen accountability, ensuring that WCSOs can meaningfully contribute to Ukraine's recovery and long-term resilience. By employing more sustainable and locally driven funding models, donors and development partners can enhance the effectiveness of Ukraine's civil society in addressing both immediate humanitarian needs and systemic reforms. These recommendations directly align with Ukraine's broader development goals – supporting gender equality, inclusive post-war recovery, economic growth, and community resilience – all of which are crucial for the country's reconstruction and European integration efforts. These recommendations are complementary and interlinked, ensuring a comprehensive approach to supporting WCSOs and promoting equitable and sustainable funding practices.



1. FOR DONORS AND DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

Improve funding models

Expand access to core funding:

- Commit to allocating at least 20–30 percent of donor budgets annually to core funding for WCSOs, prioritizing smaller and grassroots organizations with limited operational funding capacity.
- Pilot core funding programs offering unrestricted grants for up to three years, with mid-term reviews to ensure alignment with evolving needs.
- Establish transparent eligibility criteria for core funding to ensure equitable access for diverse WCSOs, including newer and rural-based organizations.
- Support the development of legal frameworks that allow WCSOs to establish endowment funds, ensuring long-term financial sustainability. Donors should facilitate technical assistance for WCSOs to navigate legal and regulatory requirements for endowments.

Increase multi-year, flexible funding:

- Design 2–3 year funding cycles with provisions for mid-term reallocations to address dynamic local contexts such as conflict escalation or recovery needs.
- Introduce a flexible funding component within multi-year grants, enabling rapid response to urgent needs without reapplication.
- Develop contingency grant schemes allowing WCSOs to access emergency funds swiftly for operational crises or community emergencies.

Develop dedicated funding streams for marginalized groups:

- Allocate at least 5–10 percent of donor budgets to support WCSOs working with marginalized communities, such as LGBTQI+ women, women with disabilities, rural women, female veterans, widows of deceased servicemen, women from ethnic minorities and other groups.
- Simplify the application and reporting processes for grassroots organizations serving marginalized populations, providing mentorship during the application phase.
- Create thematic funding opportunities to address intersectional issues, such as access to justice for marginalized women or targeted education initiatives.
- Include support for mental health, safety, and accessibility measures in grants targeting these groups.

Reduce administrative burdens

Simplify reporting requirements:

- Implement proportional reporting guidelines for smaller grants (e.g., grants under \$50,000 requiring simplified, annual narrative updates).
- Standardize donor reporting templates across agencies to ease compliance efforts for WCSOs managing multiple grants.
- Introduce collaborative reporting platforms enabling WCSOs to submit one report that satisfies multiple donor requirements.

Streamline procurement rules:

- Permit single-source procurement for expenses below certain (low) threshold, subject to simple and short justification.
- Adapt procurement policies to accommodate the realities of conflict zones, such as limited supplier availability and fluctuating prices.
- Offer procurement training to WCSOs to navigate donor requirements effectively while maintaining compliance.

Provide pre-award support:

- Provide tailored pre-award support for WCSOs, including capacity assessments, financial planning

assistance, and access to consultants for proposal development (in the form of core funding, targeted capacity-building grants, or direct technical support).

- Organize donor-led workshops on grant writing, budgeting, and compliance tailored to small and emerging WCSOs.
- Share examples of successful applications to guide WCSOs through the application process.

Foster collaboration and local ownership

Engage WCSOs in program design:

- Form inclusive advisory councils comprising diverse WCSOs to co-create funding priorities and strategies. Rotate memberships annually to ensure representation.
- Integrate gender-sensitive budgeting in program designs, including funding for childcare, safety equipment, and mental health resources.
- Pilot participatory budgeting initiatives that allow WCSOs to influence the allocation of funds in real-time.

Prioritize direct funding to grassroots WCSOs:

- Commit to allocating at least 25 percent of total donor funds directly to grassroots WCSOs, bypassing intermediaries where possible.
- Collaborate with local networks to identify eligible grassroots organizations, ensuring equitable distribution of funding.
- Establish mentorship partnerships between established WCSOs and grassroots groups to strengthen capacity and funding readiness.
- Fund local regranting organisations that have direct access to grass-roots/frontline organisations, when funding to grass-roots/frontline organisations is not feasible.

Invest in leadership development:

- Fund leadership programs focused on advocacy, crisis management, and strategic planning, with follow-up mentoring to reinforce learning.
- Offer travel grants for WCSO leaders to attend international conferences, increasing visibility and facilitating cross-border knowledge exchange.

- Create regional leadership hubs to mentor young and emerging women leaders and foster collaboration across diverse contexts.

Support frontline safety and resilience:

- Include specific funding provisions for the procurement of safety equipment, such as protective vests, first aid kits, and GPS trackers for WCSOs operating in high-risk areas.
- Establish emergency funds to enable immediate relocation or crisis response for WCSOs working in frontline zones.
- Provide comprehensive training on navigating high-risk environments, including conflict-sensitive approaches and personal safety protocols.

Promote cross-sector partnerships through dedicated funding streams:

- Incentivize partnerships between WCSOs and organizations in other sectors (e.g., economic development, environmental sustainability, digital transformation) through co-funding models that ensure gender mainstreaming across all fields.
- Introduce funding mechanisms that require or reward multi-sector collaborations, ensuring that WCSOs play a leading role in integrating gender perspectives into broader development initiatives.
- Support joint grant applications where WCSOs collaborate with sectoral organizations, ensuring that gender considerations are embedded across humanitarian, economic, and reconstruction efforts.
- Ensure dedicated funding for WCSOs to provide gender mainstreaming expertise and capacity-building support to other civil society organizations, development partners, donors, and government structures at all levels in emerging sectors, such as agriculture, energy, and recovery.

Enhance capacity building

Tailor capacity building programs:

- Conduct biennial needs assessments to ensure training programs align with WCSOs' evolving priorities and skills gaps.
- Employ cascading models where larger, established WCSOs deliver workshops to smaller organizations within their regions.

- Develop e-learning platforms for cost-effective, accessible capacity building tailored to WCSOs' operational challenges.

Support well-being initiatives:

- Fund off-site retreats focused on psychological well-being and resilience, excluding mandatory training components, and considering family/child-care roles of the WCSO staff.
- Provide grants for long-term psychological counseling programs offering at least 8–10 sessions per individual annually.
- Include budget provisions for wellness activities such as art therapy, recreational outings, and staff care packages..

Strengthen data analysis and knowledge sharing:

- Establish data grants enabling WCSOs to document, analyze, and share insights from their activities, enhancing their credibility.
- Create donor-supported platforms for WCSOs to publish research, share success stories, and access sector-wide best practices.
- Fund partnerships between WCSOs and academic institutions to produce high-quality, actionable research on gender equality initiatives.

Address mental health and resilience gaps:

- Allocate flexible funding for psychosocial support programs, ensuring long-term access to mental health resources for WCSO teams.
- Provide specialized training for WCSO leaders on managing team well-being and addressing burnout.
- Support the integration of mental health provisions into grant applications as standard practice.

Promote accountability and transparency

Mandate reporting on localization:

- Disclose the proportion of funds directly allocated to local WCSOs, segmented by region, organizational type, and focus area (e.g., advocacy, service delivery).
- Publish annual reviews of localization progress,

showcasing success stories, best practices, and areas needing improvement. Include specific metrics, such as the percentage increase in funds reaching grassroots WCSOs.

- Use publicly accessible dashboards to provide real-time data on fund disbursement, ensuring transparency for stakeholders.

Establish feedback mechanisms:

- Develop structured, regular feedback forums where WCSOs can openly discuss their challenges, successes, and recommendations with donors. Ensure these forums are scheduled semi-annually.
- Introduce anonymous online feedback systems to allow WCSOs to voice concerns without fear of repercussions. Incorporate this input into periodic donor strategy reviews.

- Publish summary reports of feedback received and actions taken, ensuring accountability to WCSOs.

- Improve access to information about funding opportunities by ensuring broad dissemination among partners. Identify and remove barriers that hinder access to funding information, communication, and other donor services, particularly for organizations led by people with disabilities.

Encourage mutual accountability:

- Create joint accountability frameworks that require donors and WCSOs to collaborate on setting realistic objectives, timelines, and expected outcomes.
- Implement bi-directional (mutual) evaluations within funding agreements, enabling WCSOs to assess donor responsiveness, communication, and support practices.
- Establish partnership review committees, including representatives from both donors and WCSOs, to regularly evaluate and improve collaboration practices.
- Provide capacity-building sessions for donors on localization, equity, and effective collaboration, ensuring mutual understanding and alignment with WCSO needs.



2. FOR WOMEN'S CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

These recommendations are written with an awareness that many WCSOs may face structural constraints – particularly limited and short-term funding – that make it difficult to fully implement them. As highlighted in this report, the lack of flexible, multi-year funding often restricts WCSOs' ability to invest in long-term institutional development, capacity building, and strategic planning. Therefore, these recommendations should not only serve as a guide for strengthening WCSOs but also as a framework for dialogue with donors. WCSOs can use these points in their fundraising efforts and advocacy with donors to secure the necessary resources and policy shifts that enable them to implement these actions effectively.

Strengthen institutional capacities and knowledge

Prioritize organizational development:

- Conduct organizational audits to identify gaps in governance, financial management, and operations, and use findings to create targeted action plans.
- Develop a comprehensive roadmap for capacity building that includes staff training, policy development, and leadership succession planning.
- Establish internal monitoring systems to evaluate progress toward strategic goals and operational efficiency.
- Given the increasing migration of young professionals from Ukraine, prioritize the retention and

support of experienced WCSO staff. Seek donor support for retention strategies, including long-term employment support, professional development, and career growth initiatives for existing WCSO personnel.

Focus on resource diversification:

- Identify and cultivate relationships with a variety of donors, including private sector sponsors, foundations, and local government grants.
- Launch an internal fundraising committee to coordinate grant applications, cultivate donor relationships, and explore alternative revenue streams such as social enterprise models.
- Regularly update and share success stories and impact reports to attract funders and demonstrate organizational effectiveness.

Invest in digital transformation:

- Develop a digital strategy that includes investing in essential hardware, adopting modern financial and project management software, and enhancing cybersecurity protocols.
- Conduct periodic staff training to improve proficiency in using digital tools for data management, reporting, and advocacy campaigns.
- Create a secure digital archive to store organizational documents and beneficiary data, ensuring compliance with privacy and data protection regulations.

Build expertise in key sectors:

- Identify priority sectors such as gender in recovery, agriculture, energy, and armed forces, and conduct targeted research to deepen understanding and build organizational expertise.
- Develop tailored training programs for staff and stakeholders focused on these sectors, ensuring the organization has the skills and knowledge to engage effectively.
- Create a portfolio of case studies, policy briefs, and success stories showcasing expertise and impact in these sectors.
- Establish partnerships with development and/or donor projects working in these areas, offering consulting services to integrate gender perspectives and elevate to decision-making the voices of women represented in these sectors.
- Use sector-specific expertise to apply for thematic grants and advocate for funding priorities that align

with organizational strengths, leveraging networks and beneficiary/constituents voices to strengthen proposals.

Build networks and partnerships

Foster collaboration within the movement:

- Create formal networks at the regional and national levels to streamline advocacy, resource sharing, and capacity building by developing shared objectives and aligning program priorities.
- Organize thematic retreats or annual conferences to foster collaboration and the sharing of best practices across diverse organizations.
- Establish shared service agreements, such as co-locating office spaces, pooling resources for grant applications, or sharing administrative and IT support to reduce operational costs and improve efficiency.

Engage with international networks:

- Establish affiliations with global feminist coalitions to access international platforms, training, and resources. Focus on aligning local initiatives with global gender equality agendas for increased visibility.
- Actively publish articles, blogs, and reports in international outlets to raise awareness of WCSO achievements and challenges, connecting with audiences worldwide.
- Host virtual exchanges or study tours with global counterparts to learn from successful models and replicate effective strategies tailored to local contexts.

Enhance community engagement:

- Conduct regular focus groups, community dialogues, and surveys to align programming with the needs of beneficiaries, with a special focus on marginalized and vulnerable groups.
- Train local advocates from underserved communities to represent the organization's work and ensure inclusive participation in decision-making.
- Develop tailored outreach programs to address the specific needs of vulnerable groups, including displaced women, women with disabilities, rural women, widows of the deceased servicemen, female veterans and others.

Address well-being and resilience

Implement self-care policies:

- Create flexible work policies, such as adjustable hours or remote working options, to accommodate staff needs and personal circumstances.
- Establish a wellness fund to provide resources for activities like yoga sessions, art therapy, or recreational trips, ensuring these activities are accessible and valued by staff.
- Hold regular staff check-ins to assess stress levels and identify areas requiring additional support, fostering open communication.

Prioritize mental health support:

- Partner with licensed mental health professionals to provide ongoing individual and group counseling tailored to WCSO staff needs.
- Offer mental health first aid training to leaders, equipping them to address early signs of burnout among team members.
- Incorporate mental health days into organizational policies, encouraging staff to take leave for emotional recovery without stigma.

Establish and promote safety protocols:

- Develop comprehensive safety policies that include clear procedures for risk assessments, emergency evacuation plans, and regular security training, ensuring these measures feel practical and supportive rather than burdensome.
- Procure essential safety equipment such as protective vests, first aid kits, and GPS trackers for staff working in high-risk areas.
- Conduct periodic safety drills and ensure all team members are trained to handle emergencies effectively, reinforcing a culture of preparedness without creating undue stress.

Enhance advocacy and influence

Strengthen advocacy skills:

- Deliver tailored workshops on effective advocacy techniques, including storytelling, public speaking, and digital campaigning, focusing on actionable outcomes.
- Create a centralized repository of advocacy tools, such as policy briefs, fact sheets, and media kits, for easy access and use by team members.
- Leverage social media platforms and multimedia content to amplify advocacy messages and reach diverse audiences, adapting to local and global contexts.

Build evidence-based campaigns:

- Collaborate with academic institutions or research organizations to generate data on gender equality issues, using findings to advocate for systemic change and create sector-specific solutions.
- Develop interactive platforms to showcase impact stories and advocacy progress, making campaigns relatable and impactful for donors, policymakers, and communities.
- Host public forums and policy discussions with stakeholders, including government officials, private sector leaders, and community representatives, to promote informed dialogue on gender issues.

Engage policymakers and stakeholders:

- Schedule meetings with government officials, donors, and private sector leaders in accessible formats that minimize additional burden, such as briefings during existing events or virtual consultations.
- Organize project site visits for stakeholders to witness the impact of WCSO efforts firsthand, ensuring visits are integrated into ongoing activities to avoid disrupting workflows.
- Build coalitions with other advocacy groups to amplify voices, focusing on shared goals and coordinating resources. Facilitate regular communication to align messaging and create cohesive advocacy campaigns.



3. FOR THE BROADER FUNDING ECOSYSTEM

This section is aimed at donors, intermediaries, and policy stakeholders who influence the funding ecosystem for WCSOs. While Recommendations 1 focus on direct actions for donors to improve funding models, reduce administrative burdens, and promote localization, this section highlights complementary strategies that address broader systemic issues. Recommendations 3 are designed to create a more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable funding environment for WCSOs by fostering collaboration, accountability, and innovation across the ecosystem.

Recognize and support the extensive work already being done by WCSOs

Acknowledge existing contributions:

- Recognize that WCSOs are not only implementers but also innovators driving systemic change in gender equality, humanitarian response, and recovery efforts.
- Highlight the contributions of WCSOs in donor communications, global forums, and public campaigns to amplify their influence.
- Incorporate the insights and expertise of WCSOs into donor strategies and program designs to ensure alignment with local priorities.

Support WCSOs' thought leadership:

- Create opportunities for WCSOs to contribute to global policy dialogues, including funding their participation in international conferences and forums.
- Develop partnerships with WCSOs to co-author research and policy papers that highlight gender-sensitive approaches in various sectors.
- Fund platforms for WCSOs to lead webinars, workshops, and training sessions for other stakeholders, showcasing their expertise and expanding their reach.

Advance gender-transformative approaches

Integrate gender-focused principles across all funding streams:

- Ensure that projects labeled with gender markers allocate dedicated funding to gender-related activities, including direct support for WCSOs, women's leadership programs, and gender-responsive programming.
- Fund transformative projects that address root causes of gender inequality, such as economic disparities, access to decision-making roles, and systemic barriers in male-dominated sectors.

Prioritize accountability and feedback:

- Require transparent reporting on how gender-sensitive goals are being met and the outcomes of funded projects.
- Establish structured feedback mechanisms allowing WCSOs to evaluate the effectiveness of donor-funded gender-sensitive programs.

Foster collaboration across the ecosystem

Promote shared learning opportunities:

- Create platforms for cross-sector collaboration where WCSOs, donors, and intermediaries can exchange experiences, challenges, and solutions.
- Organize workshops and panels focused on building partnerships that enhance collective impact and address gaps in resource distribution.

- Increase visibility of WCSOs in Ukraine's regions by supporting initiatives such as joint public reporting practices (e.g., through 1325 coalitions). Donors should allocate resources for WCSOs to improve their public outreach and engagement.

Align funding practices with WCSO realities:

- Encourage donors to coordinate their funding cycles, reporting requirements, and evaluation criteria to reduce duplicative burdens on WCSOs.
- Promote co-funding models that allow smaller WCSOs to access multiple sources of support for integrated programming.
- Include the WCSOs in coordination mechanisms for consultations and decision-making on funding priorities related to humanitarian aid and development assistance, encouraging them to contribute with their expertise and perspectives.

Address systemic barriers

Prioritize equity in resource distribution:

- Encourage donors to adopt funding benchmarks that ensure equitable allocation across diverse regions, organization sizes, and focus areas.
- Support WCSOs in developing endowment funds or alternative financial mechanisms to reduce long-term dependency on external donors.

Promote innovation in funding models:

- Pilot innovative funding models, such as social impact bonds or pooled funding mechanisms, to diversify resources and foster sustainability.
- Support experimentation with community-driven funding approaches, where beneficiaries participate in allocating resources to local WCSOs.



Anna and Olha at Ukrainian Foundation for Public Health's shelter in Kyiv.

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Annexes

ANNEX 1. QUESTIONNAIRE FOR SURVEY

Survey: Where's the Money for Women's Rights in Ukraine?

Thank you for participating in this survey, which aims to understand the funding landscape for Women's Civil Society Organizations (WCSOs) in Ukraine. Your responses will help identify key challenges and opportunities to improve support for WCSOs. The survey should take about 10–12 minutes to complete. All responses are confidential.

Section 1: General information

1. What is the name of your organization?
[Open-ended]

2. Where is your organization based?

- Kyiv
- Western Ukraine
- Central Ukraine
- Southern Ukraine
- Northern Ukraine
- Eastern Ukraine
- Other (please specify): [Open-ended]

3. What is the focus of your organization?
(Select all that apply)

- Gender-based violence (GBV)
- Women, Peace and Security
- Women's political participation
- Women's economic empowerment
- LBTQI+ rights
- Women with disabilities
- Humanitarian response
- Other (please specify): [Open-ended]

4. How long has your organization been active?

- Less than 1 year
- 1–3 years

- 3–5 years
- More than 5 years

Section 2: Funding sources and conditions

5. What are your organization's main sources of funding? (Select all that apply)

- International government donor agencies (e.g., USAID, FCDO, Embassy of Canada, Sida)
- Multilateral organisations (e.g., UN Agencies)
- European Union
- International NGOs
- Ukrainian funding organisations/foundations
- Government of Ukraine
- Local government
- Private foundations
- Membership fees or individual donations
- Other (please specify): [Open-ended]

6. Has your organization received any new funding since Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022?

- Yes
- No

7. If yes, what type of funding did you receive?
(Select all that apply)

- Emergency funding
- Project-based funding for specific activities
- Funding for projects/programs
- Core/organisational development funding
- Other (please specify): [Open-ended]

8. How free are you in identifying the ways of using donor funding

- Very free
- Rather free
- Hard to say
- Rather unfree
- Not free at all

9. How easy or difficult is it for your organization to access funding from donors?

- Very easy
- Easy
- Neither easy nor difficult
- Difficult
- Very difficult

10. What are the main challenges you face in accessing funding? (Select all that apply)

- Complex processes of preparing and submitting applications
- High administrative burden/reporting requirements
- Slow, cumbersome communication with donors
- Limited funding available for smaller organizations
- Application in a foreign language and the need to conduct negotiations in a foreign language
- Other (please specify): [Open-ended]

11. What is the average amount of funding your organization has received annually since 2022?

- Less than \$10,000
- \$10,000 – \$50,000
- \$50,000 – \$100,000
- \$100,000 – \$200,000
- \$200,000 – \$500,000
- More than \$500,000

12. Has the amount of funding your organization receives changed since the start of the full-scale invasion?

- Increased by 1–50%
- Increased by 51–100%
- Increased by more than 100%
- Decreased by 1–50%
- Decreased by 51–100%
- Decreased by more than 100%
- Almost unchanged: our funding levels remain about the same as before 24 February 2022
- Other (please specify): [Open-ended]

13. What is the average length of funding agreements between your organisation and the donors?

- Up to 3 months
- 3–6 months
- 6–12 months
- 1–2 years
- Over 2 years

14. In your opinion, which organizations find it easier to obtain funding in 2024: those working with women in regions far from the front line or those working in frontline regions?

- Organizations working in regions far from the front line
- Organizations working in frontline regions
- No significant difference
- Hard to say

Section 3: Impact of funding conditions

15. How would you describe the impact of donor funding conditions on your organization's ability to carry out its mission?

- Very positive
- Somewhat positive
- Neutral
- Somewhat negative
- Very negative

16. In your opinion, how much independence does your organization have in setting and pursuing its agenda, given the current funding landscape?

- Complete independence
- Moderate independence
- Limited independence
- No independence

17. Has your organisation funding secured for 2025 in the amount of at least 50% of your 2024 budget? (if no, proceed to question 19)

- Yes
- No

18. If yes, in what form?

- In the form of agreements with donors that will last until the first half of 2025
- In the form of agreements with donors that will last until the second half of 2025
- In the form of agreements with donors that will last beyond 2025
- In the form of reserves
- In other form (please specify): [Open-ended]

19. What percentage of your organization’s time is spent on fundraising?

- Less than 5 percent
- 5–10 percent
- 10–20 percent
- More than 20 percent

20. What percentage of your organization’s time is spent on administrative tasks related to donor requirements (e.g., reporting, monitoring, etc.)?

- Less than 10 percent
- 10–20 percent
- 21–30 percent
- More than 30 percent

21. To what extent has donor funding supported or limited your ability to address urgent humanitarian needs versus long-term priorities?

- Entirely supported urgent needs
- Mostly supported urgent needs
- Balanced between urgent needs and long-term priorities
- Mostly supported long-term priorities
- Entirely supported long-term priorities

22. How have donor conditions influenced your organization’s ability to maintain its core mission and long-term goals? (Select all that apply)

- We had to adapt to donor-driven priorities
- We had to deprioritize certain long-term goals
- Our core mission remains largely intact
- Other (please specify): [Open-ended]

23. What has been the most significant challenge for your organization in meeting donor requirements? [Open-ended]

Section 4: Organizational needs

24. What are the most pressing needs your organization faces right now (Select up to three)?

- Core funding for operational costs
- Capacity building and training
- Support for specific programs or projects
- Advocacy and networking opportunities
- Funding for long-term sustainability/endowment-type funding
- Other (please specify): [Open-ended]

25. Which type of support would help your organization the most to increase its impact (Select up to three)?

- Flexible, long-term funding
- Reduced administrative requirements
- Direct connections to donors
- Capacity building (e.g., training, technical support)
- Other (please specify): [Open-ended]

Section 5: Funding for marginalized groups

26. Does your organization work with marginalized groups (e.g., LBTQI+ women, women with disabilities, ethnic minorities)? (if no, proceed to question 30)

- Yes
- No

27. If yes, what are the specific challenges in accessing funding for these groups? (Select all that apply)

- Limited donor interest in funding marginalized groups
- Lack of funding opportunities tailored for these groups
- Complex funding requirements
- Lack of funding flexibility
- Donors do not listen enough to the local needs and implement their vision
- Other (please specify): [Open-ended]

28. Are there particular donor requirements that you feel limit your organization’s work with marginalized groups (e.g., LBTQI+ women, women with disabilities)?

- Yes (please specify): [Open-ended]
- No

29. Does your organization receive funding specifically aimed at promoting diversity and inclusion within your initiatives?

- Yes
- No
- Hard to say

Section 6: Recommendations and feedback

30. What changes would you recommend to donors to improve the funding environment for WCSOs in Ukraine (Select up to three)?

- More flexible project funding agreements
- Support for core funding, allowing organizations to decide how to allocate resources
- Reduce/simplify reporting requirements
- Support rapid reallocation of funds
- Support long-term projects (longer than one year)
- Other (please specify): [Open-ended]

31. Is there anything else you would like to share about the funding challenges your organization is facing? [Open-ended]

Thank you for your participation!

Your responses are valuable to understanding the funding needs and challenges faced by WCSOs in Ukraine.

ANNEXES 2. GUIDES FOR KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

Annex 2.1. KIIs with WCSO leaders

INTRODUCTION: Thank you for taking the time to participate in this interview. Your insights as a leader of a Women’s Civil Society Organization are critical in helping us understand the challenges, opportunities, and dynamics of the funding landscape for WCSOs in Ukraine. The information you provide will be confidential, and findings will be presented in a way that does not identify individual respondents.

This interview will take approximately 45–60 minutes, and we will focus on several key areas, including your organization’s funding experiences, challenges, and the support needed to increase impact.

I. General background on the organization

1. Could you briefly introduce your organization, its mission, and primary areas of focus?

- How has your organization evolved since its founding?
- What are the key priorities for your organization today, especially in the context of Ukraine’s current situation?

II. Access to funding

2. What has been your organization’s experience with accessing funding, particularly since the start of the full-scale invasion in 2022?

- Which types of funding (e.g., project-based, core, humanitarian) have been most accessible to your organization?
- How have funding patterns changed since the crisis began, and what role has location played in your access to funding?

3. What are the most significant barriers your organization faces in securing funding?

- Are there any specific donor requirements or processes that pose challenges?
- How have these challenges impacted your organization’s operations?

III. Donor relations and conditions

4. How would you describe your organization's relationship with donors?

- Do you feel that donors understand the specific needs of WCSOs in Ukraine?
- How would you assess the level of communication and feedback between your organization and your donors?

5. To what extent do donor conditions (e.g., reporting requirements, priorities) impact your ability to maintain your organization's mission and activities?

- Have you had to adjust your priorities or activities to align with donor conditions?
- In what ways, if any, have donor conditions affected your organization's ability to address both urgent humanitarian needs and long-term advocacy goals?
- How do you balance donor requirements with the needs of your target communities?

IV. Impact of funding and sustainability

6. How has the current funding landscape affected your organization's long-term sustainability?

- Are you able to secure multi-year or flexible funding, or is funding typically short-term and project-based?
- What are the challenges in ensuring the sustainability of your operations?
- Has your organization faced any trade-offs between focusing on immediate humanitarian needs versus long-term goals due to donor funding conditions?

7. Can you share any examples where limited funding or specific funding conditions have impacted your organization's ability to deliver programs or services

- How have these funding challenges affected the communities you serve?

V. Support for marginalized groups

8. Does your organization work with marginalized groups (e.g., LGBTQI+ women, women with disabilities, ethnic minorities)?

- If so, what specific challenges do you face in securing funding for these groups?

- Are there gaps in donor support for marginalized groups, and how could these be addressed?
- Have you encountered specific donor requirements that limit your organization's ability to serve marginalized groups effectively?

VI. Capacity building and organizational needs

9. What are the main capacity-building needs of your organization?

- Would support in areas like financial management, proposal writing, or advocacy help improve your ability to secure funding?
- Have you received any capacity-building support from donors? If yes, how effective was it?

10. What type of support would help your organization increase its impact?

- Flexible core funding, long-term funding, or reduced administrative burdens?
- Direct connections to donors or tailored support for specific projects?
- To what extent does your organization need support in adapting to both immediate humanitarian and longer-term advocacy work, given the shifting funding landscape?

VII. Recommendations for donors

11. What changes or improvements would you recommend to donors to make the funding landscape more accessible and responsive to the needs of WCSOs?

- What role should donors play in addressing systemic barriers to funding for WCSOs?
- How can donors better support WCSOs in balancing immediate response needs with long-term sustainability and advocacy goals?

12. Looking ahead, what kind of donor support or partnerships would be most beneficial to your organization in the long term?

- How can donors better align their support with the evolving needs of WCSOs in Ukraine, especially given the ongoing crisis?

Thank you for sharing your valuable insights. Is there anything else you would like to add about the challenges or opportunities your organization faces in terms of funding and sustainability?

Annex 2.2. KII with donors and development partners

INTRODUCTION: Thank you for taking the time to participate in this interview. We are conducting research to better understand the funding landscape for Women's Civil Society Organizations in Ukraine. Your insights as a donor or development partner will help shape recommendations for improving support to WCSOs, especially in the context of ongoing crises in Ukraine.

This interview will take approximately 45–60 minutes. We will cover areas such as your organization's funding priorities, challenges in supporting WCSOs, and recommendations for improving donor-WCSO partnerships.

I. Funding priorities and approaches

1. Can you describe your organization's funding priorities, particularly regarding women's rights and gender equality in Ukraine?

- To what extent do you prioritize supporting WCSOs in your funding strategy?
- What specific areas (e.g., GBV, economic empowerment, political participation) receive the most attention in your programs?
- How does your organization approach gender mainstreaming within its funding practices? How do you ensure that funding supports not only women's immediate needs but also long-term gender equality goals?

2. What types of funding (e.g., project-based, core funding, emergency humanitarian aid) does your organization provide to WCSOs in Ukraine?

- How do you determine the most appropriate type of funding for a particular WCSO?
- Is there a balance between short-term emergency funding and long-term institutional support?

II. Access to funding and barriers

3. What are the main challenges or barriers you have encountered when providing funding to WCSOs in Ukraine?

- Are there issues related to capacity, administrative burdens, or local context that make it difficult for WCSOs to access funding?
- How do you address these challenges to ensure

that WCSOs can effectively access and manage funding?

4. How does your organization assess the capacity of WCSOs to absorb and manage funding, especially in crisis contexts?

- Do you tailor your application and reporting requirements based on the size or capacity of the WCSO?
- How do you ensure that smaller or grassroots WCSOs are not excluded from funding opportunities?

III. Donor-WCSO relationships

5. How would you describe the relationship between your organization and the WCSOs you support?

- How frequently do you engage with WCSO leaders and staff beyond the grant-making process?
- Are there mechanisms for WCSOs to provide feedback on your funding processes or requirements?

6. What kind of support (financial or non-financial) do you provide to WCSOs beyond funding?

- Do you offer capacity-building initiatives, technical assistance, or mentorship?
- How effective have these initiatives been in strengthening WCSOs' capacities?
- To what extent do you involve WCSOs in shaping the priorities or conditions of your funding, especially in terms of balancing humanitarian and advocacy work?

IV. Impact of funding on WCSOs

7. In your experience, how has your funding contributed to the sustainability and long-term development of WCSOs in Ukraine?

- Have you observed any significant organizational growth or impact as a result of your support?
- In what ways, if any, has your funding helped WCSOs balance urgent humanitarian needs with long-term advocacy for gender equality?
- What challenges have you seen in achieving long-term sustainability for WCSOs?

8. What impact do you think your funding has had on WCSOs' ability to address gender equality and women's rights in Ukraine?

- Are there specific successes or challenges you would highlight in this regard?

V. Support for marginalized groups and Inclusivity

9. How does your organization ensure that WCSOs working with marginalized groups (e.g., LBTQI+ women, women with disabilities, ethnic minorities) receive adequate support?

- Are there specific funding streams or initiatives designed to support these groups?
- What specific challenges do you face in ensuring that funding reaches WCSOs working with marginalized groups, and how could these be addressed?
- What are the main challenges in ensuring inclusive funding for these marginalized communities?

10. What steps does your organization take to promote diversity and inclusion in its funding processes?

- How do you ensure that diverse voices, particularly those of marginalized women, are considered in the design and implementation of programs?

VI. Recommendations for future support

11. What improvements would you suggest to make the funding environment more accessible and supportive for WCSOs in Ukraine?

- Are there changes needed in terms of application processes, reporting, or donor coordination?

12. Looking ahead, what kind of donor partnerships or collaborations would be most beneficial to improving the impact of funding on WCSOs in Ukraine?

- How can donors work together to provide more sustainable, flexible, or inclusive funding?
- How can donors better balance immediate funding needs with long-term funding stability to support both humanitarian and advocacy roles of WCSOs?

Thank you for sharing your insights. Is there anything else you would like to add about the challenges or opportunities in supporting WCSOs in Ukraine, particularly in light of the current crisis?

Annex 2.3. KII's with government officials

INTRODUCTION: Thank you for participating in this interview. We are conducting research to better

understand the funding landscape and support mechanisms for Women’s Civil Society Organizations in Ukraine. As a government official, your insights are crucial to understanding how government policies and actions can enhance support for WCSOs and promote gender equality.

This interview will take approximately 45–60 minutes. We will discuss your perspectives on WCSOs, the role of government in supporting their work, and opportunities for strengthening collaboration.

I. Government role in supporting WCSOs

1. What role does the government currently play in supporting Women’s Civil Society Organizations in Ukraine?

- Are there specific programs, policies, or initiatives that provide support to WCSOs?
- How does the government prioritize gender equality in its partnerships with civil society?

2. How has the government’s approach to supporting WCSOs evolved since the start of the full-scale invasion in 2022?

- Have there been any significant shifts in priorities, funding, or policies to better address the needs of WCSOs and gender equality?

II. Collaboration between government and WCSOs

3. How would you describe the collaboration between government agencies and WCSOs working on gender equality and women’s rights?

- Are there structured platforms or mechanisms that facilitate regular dialogue between WCSOs and government entities?
- How effective is the collaboration in influencing policy decisions related to women’s rights?

4. What challenges or barriers exist in the collaboration between the government and WCSOs?

- Are there challenges related to coordination, resource allocation, or differing priorities?
- How do you think these challenges can be addressed?

III. Funding and resources

5. Does the government provide any resources to WCSOs (social public procurement, co-funding of activities, administrative support, etc.)?

- If yes, what types of support or resources are available, and how are these resources allocated?
- Are there criteria for which types of WCSOs receive government support or resources, particularly those focused on marginalized groups?
- Are there administrative, regulatory, or bureaucratic barriers that make it difficult for WCSOs to access support or resources? How could these funding mechanisms be improved?

IV. Government policies and gender equality

6. To what extent are government policies and programs designed to promote gender equality in line with the priorities of WCSOs?

- Are there areas where WCSOs’ work aligns with or complements government policies?
- What gaps exist between WCSO priorities and government actions on gender equality?

7. What steps has the government taken to ensure that WCSOs working with marginalized groups (e.g., LBTQI+ women, women with disabilities, ethnic minorities) receive adequate support?

- Are there specific policies or programs aimed at addressing the needs of these marginalized groups?
- How do you assess the inclusiveness of current government efforts?

V. Impact of government support on WCSOs

8. In your opinion, how effective has government support been in helping WCSOs achieve their goals?

- Have you seen measurable impacts on gender equality or women’s empowerment as a result of this support?
- Are there specific examples of successful partnerships or initiatives?

9. What challenges do WCSOs face in delivering their programs due to limitations in government support?

- Are there particular areas (e.g., funding, capacity-building, policy engagement) where the govern-

ment’s involvement could be enhanced to support WCSOs more effectively?

VI. Recommendations for future collaboration

10. What actions should the government take to strengthen its collaboration with WCSOs?

- How can the government better integrate WCSOs into national decision-making processes on gender equality?
- Are there specific platforms or processes that should be created or improved to foster deeper engagement?

11. Looking forward, what key policy or funding changes would you recommend to better support WCSOs and their work on gender equality in Ukraine?

- How can the government ensure that its policies and programs are responsive to the evolving needs of WCSOs, especially in the context of ongoing recovery and rebuilding efforts?

Thank you for your insights. Is there anything else you would like to add regarding the government’s role in supporting WCSOs, gender equality, or broader collaboration with civil society?



Stanislava Petlytsia, Anna Sharyhina, Anastasia Anhelova from the organisation Sphere.

**For all women's rights,
in every corner of the world.**