

Covid-19 Justice Challenge Results

93 Respondents:

Americas (17%), Asia (26%), Europe (3%), Sub-Saharan Africa (54%)

During a 2-week “sprint challenge,” grassroots justice groups from around the world shared their experiences while responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Here is what we learned.

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New Challenges

What Challenges are Grassroots Justice Groups Facing?

49%

Remote working challenges



Unable to visit clients or hold community meetings; lack of computers, electricity and internet; digital divide challenges, etc.

47%

Financial challenges



Increased expenses for pandemic response activities and transitioning to working from home; donors reducing budgets due to adjustments to work plans, etc.

21%

Logistics and mobility challenges



Restriction of movement due to curfews, lockdown, closing of borders; lack of vehicles to reach remote communities, etc.

20%

Safety, security & health challenges



Lack of Personal Protection Equipment; mental health of staff, etc.

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Adapting to Support Communities

91%

**of respondents have continued to support their communities
by innovating and adjusting the way they work.**

Respondents made adjustments to or introduced activities in the following areas

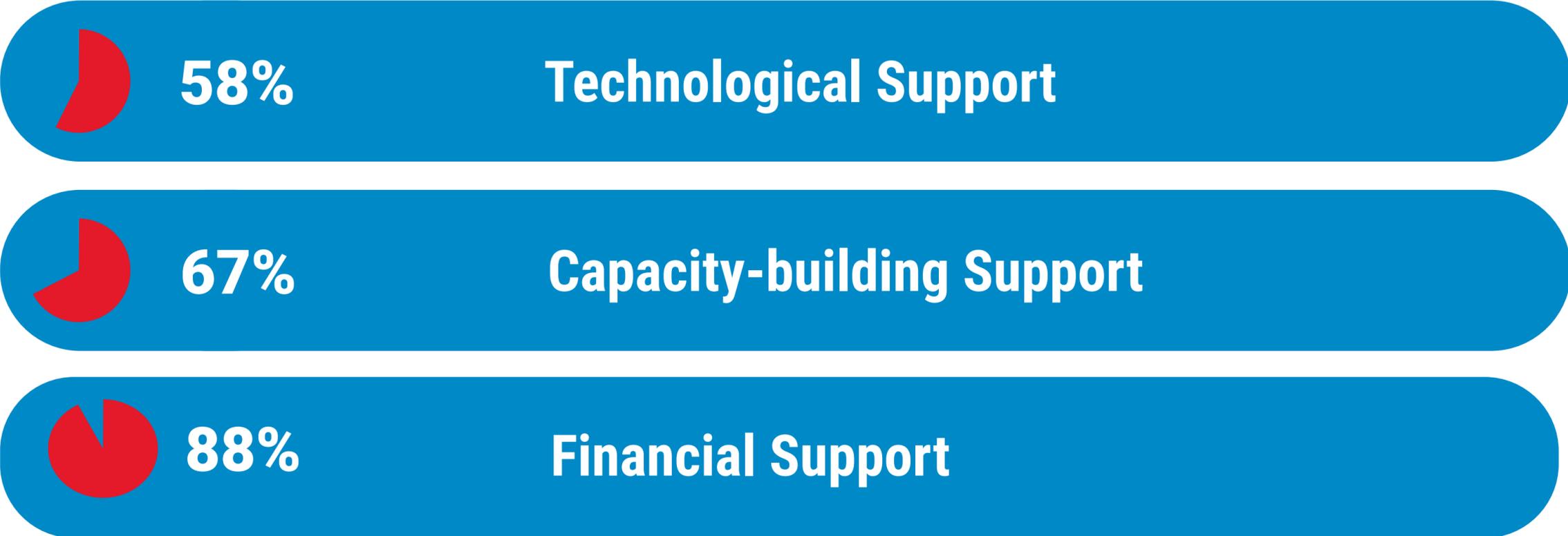


76%

of respondents are participating in discussions at the national or local level about rebuilding our societies and economies after the pandemic.

**What do Grassroots Justice Groups Need
to Continue Supporting Communities?**

What type of support do grassroots groups need to adapt to working in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic?

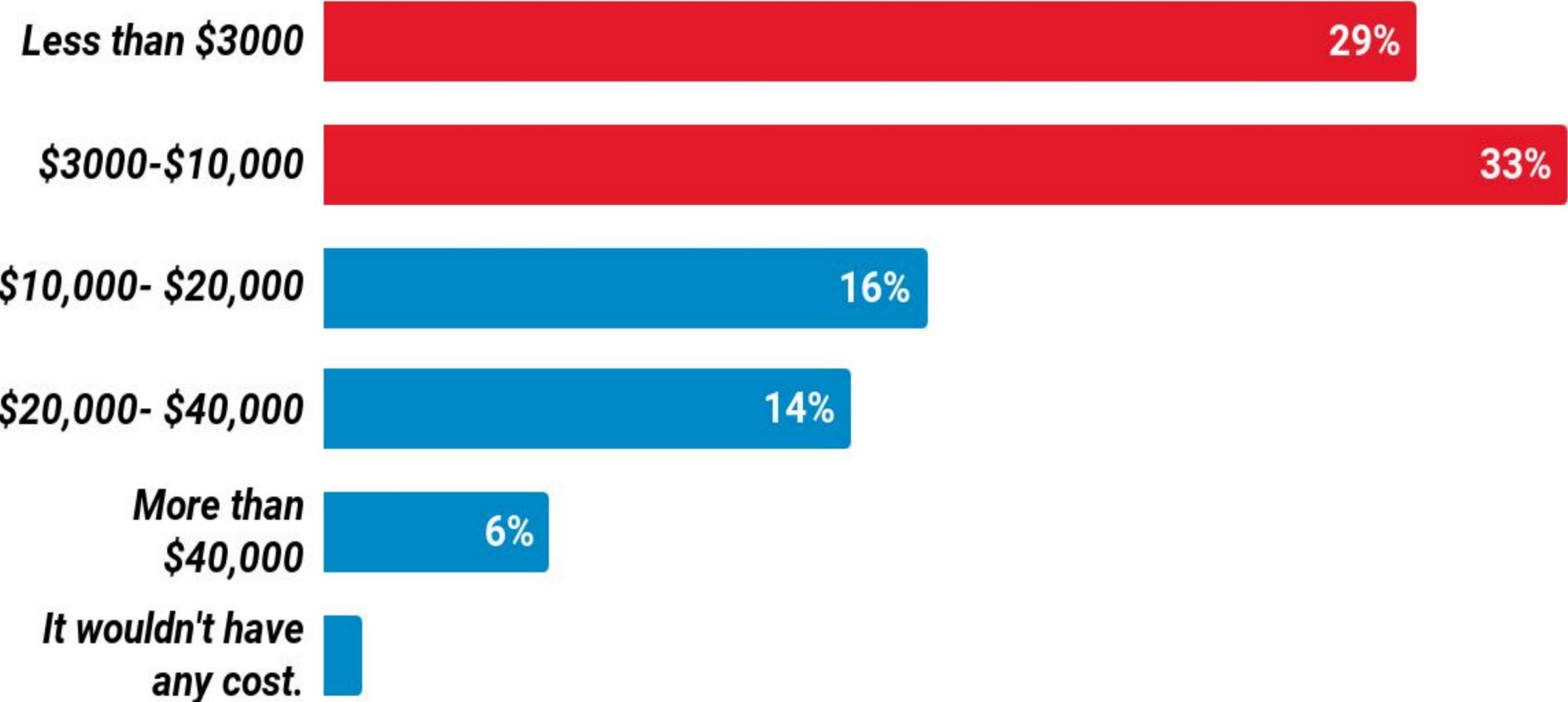


*Respondents were able to choose as many options as applicable (Technology support, Capacity-building support, and/or Financial support)

78%

of respondents have ideas or initiatives in mind to better support communities but cannot implement them due to lack of resources, support or skills.

Over 60% of respondents would need less than \$10,000 to implement their ideas and initiatives



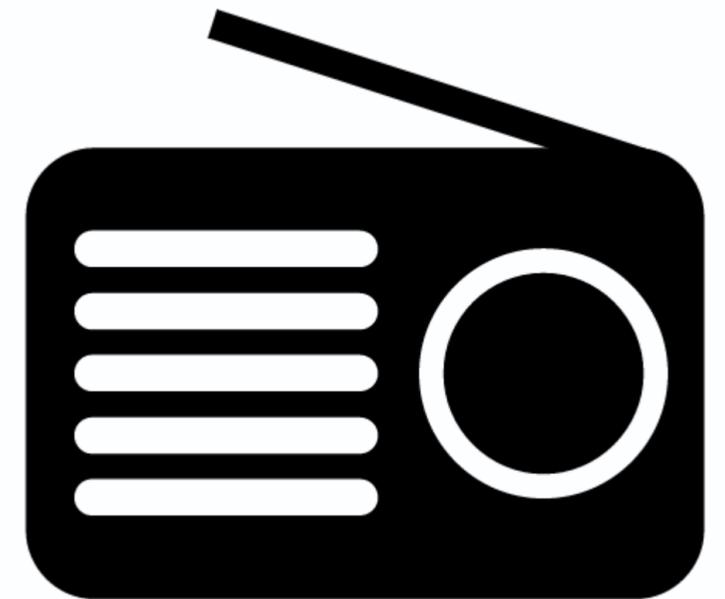
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Ideas for Responding to the Needs and Challenges related to COVID-19

Use community radio to increase awareness regarding people's rights, and broadcast information about COVID-19 and the new decrees and legislations that are being passed as part of the measures to counteract the pandemic.

Key Resources of Interest

- [Using radio to broadcast justice](#)
- [Using radio to empower and engage communities](#)
- [The role of community radio in empowering women in India](#)
- [Community radio: Supporting local voices through the airwaves](#) (p.180-194)



Create a hotline or an emergency helpline for people to call when they are in need of legal information or assistance, or to report human rights violations.

Key Resources of Interest

- [Hotline Development Guide](#)
- [Technology for Legal Empowerment](#)



Use SMS to collect data and monitor:

- ❖ what is happening on the ground, particularly in remote or isolated communities
- ❖ realtime community needs
- ❖ human rights violations

Key Resources of Interest

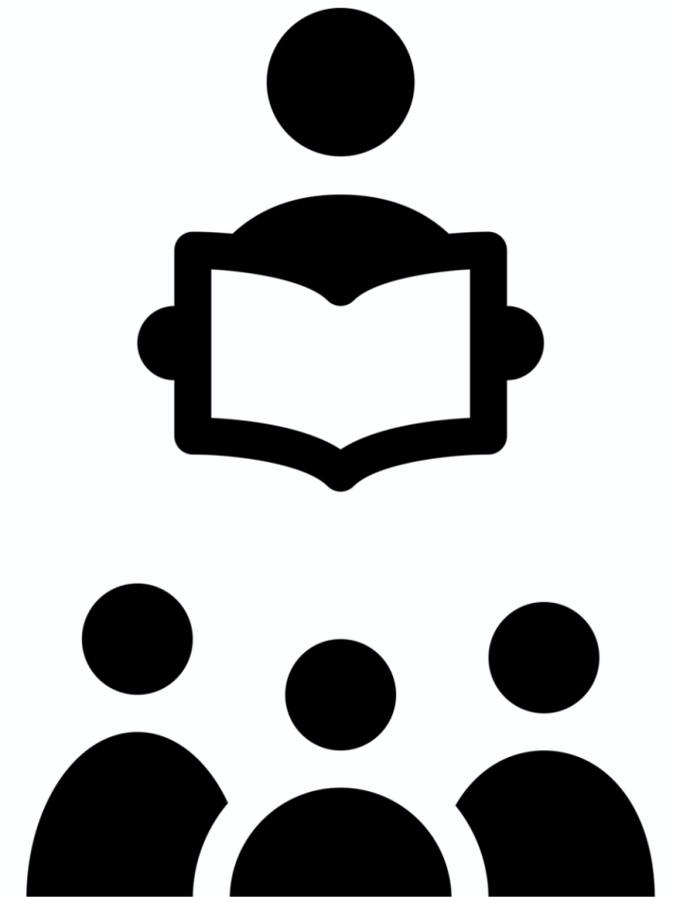
- [SMS for Justice: Women Demand Access to Vital Services in Delhi](#)
- [Wapichan set up Ground-breaking System to Defend Human Rights and Monitor Ancestral Lands](#)



Use storytelling, case studies, and compelling visuals to support advocacy efforts for improved government assistance and services for historically-oppressed communities.

Key Resources of Interest

- [Storytelling for good](#)
- [How to tell a world-changing story](#)
- [Preparing a Case Study: A Guide for Designing and Conducting a Case Study for Evaluation Input](#)



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Case Studies from Respondents

Protecting Indigenous Communities and Their Lands in the Face of Extractivism

Asociación Paz y Esperanza -
Peru

In Peru, indigenous communities—which are greatly affected by COVID-19 and the measures taken to counteract it—are being left behind by the governmental response to the pandemic.

Despite the loss of livelihoods and an alarming food security situation, guidelines for the provision of social assistance and healthcare to indigenous communities are nonexistent. Furthermore, extractive industries - considered “essential” for the country’s economy - continue to operate despite enormous impacts on indigenous peoples. Serious concerns are mounting about the infringement of the right to free, prior, and informed consent, and the ability to conduct meaningful consultations during lockdown, when movement is severely restricted.

In response, Asociación Paz y Esperanza has been communicating with indigenous communities and monitoring what’s happening in their territories through Comunicamazonia, a phone-based initiative.

Increased funding would allow Asociación Paz y Esperanza to invest in a deforestation satellite monitoring mechanism, as well as in monitoring equipment—including drones—to guarantee the protection, safety and security of indigenous communities and their lands in the face of illegal mining and deforestation.

Keeping Prisoners, Families and Lawyers Connected: Guaranteeing Prisoners' Rights

Commonwealth Human Rights
Initiative (CHRI) - India

Living in overcrowded facilities with inadequate sanitation and healthcare services, detainees and prisoners are at a higher risk of being infected by COVID-19. The suspension or slowing down of the justice system is delaying their court cases. Lockdown measures and movement restrictions are denying prisoners access to families and lawyers, further marginalising them, denying them information about hearings, and leading to fair trial violations.

While unable to conduct prison visits, CHRI monitors the situation on the ground by communicating with government and prison officials and grassroots organisations via telephone and video meetings.

CHRI also conducts policy advocacy at various levels around the guarantee of prisoners' rights and their health and safety. They prepared guidance documents regarding precautionary measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 inside prisons, guidance for temporary releases of prisoners to decongest prisons, notes for police arrests during this period, as well as notes for the effective functioning of unsentenced prisoner review mechanisms.

More funding would enable CHRI to pilot an initiative that ensures communication of prisoners with their lawyers and families. CHRI would work with prisons to provide adequate video communication (VC) equipment, ensure spaces in compliance with social distancing norms, and assist authorities in preparing guidelines for the use of VC equipment, in consultation with the bar association and other stakeholders.

Fighting Gender Based Violence

Fundación Markani -
Argentina

Fundación Markani works to protect female victims of gender based violence (GBV), who are under increased risk during the pandemic. During compulsory lockdown, women are more likely to be confined at home with their aggressors. Meanwhile, courts and protection and assistance mechanisms for GBV are closed or at reduced capacity.

In response, Fundación Markani is providing legal counselling and advice to women who are victims of GBV through Whatsapp groups and a private Facebook page.

They are also participating in civil society roundtables and coordinating with public institutions to develop better assistance protocols and mechanisms, and to support women with their needs resulting from the pandemic and its effects.

Increased funding would allow Fundación Markani to invest in an online platform to serve women and people with non-binary gender identities. The space would be used for learning and discussion, as well as sharing resources, information and diverse experiences with GBV. Through this platform, Fundación Markani would provide legal counselling, assist the participants with their questions and cases, share resources on local and national prevention and protection mechanisms, as well as other relevant information.

Interacting with Police and the Criminal Justice System

Kariobangi Paralegal Network -
Kenya

The Kariobangi Paralegal Network has observed a surge in justice challenges due to COVID-19, including an increase in cases relating to police brutality and extortion by the police. Arrests are leading to overcrowding in police holding cells, violating social distancing requirements. Meanwhile, independent oversight bodies are limiting client access to their offices, diminishing public confidence levels in the accountability of the justice system.

The Kariobangi Paralegal Network has stepped up legal counselling over the phone and uses local radio stations to educate the community on what to do when interacting with authorities. Their guidance includes advice on terms to use and various sections of the law to cite. They continue to take cases and interact remotely with clients and courts.

Increased funding would help Kariobangi Paralegal Network to form a criminal justice reform committee that conducts interactive sessions with communities members to engage them in the reform process. Kariobangi Paralegal Network would also update their technology use capacity and devices to improve outreach and service to their clients.

Emergency Paralegal Aid for Roma Communities

Association for Legal Education and
Transparency (LET STATION) -
Republic of North Macedonia

In Prilep, North Macedonia, Roma communities and other marginalised groups are increasingly at risk of being infected by COVID-19 due to the lack of infrastructure, basic sanitation products, and, in some cases, water. This is worsened by a lack of information regarding the pandemic and the measures to counteract it, and obstacles in accessing social benefits for those affected by the pandemic. Cases of unequal treatment against members of the Roma community in quarantine facilities have also been reported.

LET STATION shifted from in-person to online / phone legal assistance. They set up the Call Emergency Paralegal Aid tool through their website, through which they conducted more than 100 legal consultations over six weeks. The tool has also allowed them to expand their coverage from the municipality level to the whole country. They continue to monitor obstacles to the realisation of rights and follow up with the relevant institutions.

Increased funding would enable LET STATION to expand the Call Emergency Paralegal Aid tool to include more paralegals from different marginalised communities, increasing outreach to more people. LET STATION would also invest in capacity-building for paralegals and necessary equipment and infrastructure.

Monitoring Human Rights Violations Against Indigenous Rural Communities

Centro de Estudios para la Equidad y Gobernanza en los Sistemas de Salud (CEGSS) - Guatemala

Indigenous rural communities are greatly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Lockdowns and restrictions of movement have affected their livelihoods, risking their food security as well as their access to water, basic sanitation products, and healthcare. Lack of information about the pandemic, and lack of knowledge regarding what is happening in indigenous communities, is a serious concern.

In response, CEGSS has implemented a phone survey system to gather weekly information about the experiences of indigenous rural communities, provide them with reliable information, and monitor human rights violations as a result of the pandemic and measures implemented to counteract it.

This includes monitoring access to health services, access to information, prices of basic products, access to transportation, police and authority abuse, safety and protection, COVID-19 infections, and cases of people returning to their communities. In addition, CEGSS is also participating in the civil society alliance Pacto Ciudadano to advocate for and promote better policies to address the pandemic and its consequences.

Increased funding would allow CEGSS to maintain their weekly surveys, acquire the necessary equipment for the initiative, build the team's capacities regarding technology and safety, and potentially expand the surveys to other rural indigenous communities.

Protecting Community Lands

Indigenous Movement for
Peace Advancement and
Conflict Transformation
[IMPACT] - Kenya

Pastoralist communities are trying to register their lands under the Community Land Act (CLA). IMPACT has been supporting this process, but due to COVID-19 and the decree to maintain social distancing, implementing activities has been a challenge. IMPACT cannot organise community meetings to create awareness on the CLA, for example.

In response, IMPACT has embraced outreach through radio to disseminate information about the CLA and raise awareness of the process.

They continue to help community representatives to understand the registration process under the CLA through modified in-person trainings. They establish shifts, reduce the number of participants, and provide participants with the necessary PPE equipment to ensure safety and security.

Increased funding would enable IMPACT to introduce the use of technology to implement and monitor their program. They would train community representatives to use devices and applications to collect signatures and monitor issues such as land grabbing.

Increasing Access to Information and Enhancing Accountability

Accountability Lab -
Liberia

Accurate information lays the groundwork for accountability and better governance. However, the pandemic has led to a flood of inaccurate reporting and misinformation. Lack of digital literacy and poor internet access has exacerbated the problem.

In response, Accountability Lab has launched the Coronavirus CivActs Campaign, which gathers rumours, concerns and questions from communities across the country to eliminate information gaps between the government, media, NGOs and citizens. By providing the public with facts, the Campaign ensures a better understanding of needs regarding the coronavirus and debunks rumours before they can do more harm, thus curbing the potential for social conflict.

Accountability Lab is also working to ensure greater accountability within the national response to Covid-19. It launched a Coronavirus Crisis Response Project in Liberia, with the aim of increasing the accountability and transparency of COVID-related public funding.

Increased funding would help Accountability Lab to generate more data and case stories for their informational bulletins, and to help the essential, validated information they provide reach more people.

Guaranteeing the Rights of Pre-trial Detainees and Incarcerated People

AdvocAid - Sierra Leone

With the suspension of access to correctional centres and movement restrictions between different regions, providing legal aid and verifying that clients are being released from detention centres is becoming increasingly difficult.

In response, Advocaid Sierra Leone has developed a data collection system by which they distribute forms at correctional centres that are filled out by the inmates and then picked up by the paralegals and discussed with the correctional centre manager.

Paralegals are also providing legal advice, following up on existing cases and taking on new cases through phone calls. Where physical access to police stations is still possible, paralegals continue to monitor such spaces and engage police officers to ensure the prioritisation of non-custodial measures.

In coalition with other organisations, they have also called for the release of pre-trial detainees and vulnerable prisoners.

Increased funding would allow AdvocAid to equip themselves with the necessary resources for remote working (including laptops, wifi connectivity, phone credit), as well as to acquire necessary logistics and mobility equipment (like car hire), to guarantee that paralegals can reach and serve their clients.

Protecting Women Victims of Domestic and Sexual Violence

Women Rights Initiative -
Uganda

Movement restrictions, the closure of courts and the lack of access to legal assistance are hindering access to justice for victims of domestic and sexual violence. The Ugandan government failed to declare legal representation an essential service, thus placing legal aid organisations in a bind.

The Women Rights Initiative connects with victims of domestic violence through its hotline, communication with local council leaders at village levels and local radio.

They have also partnered with the police at Family and Children Protection units for fast response of domestic violent and rape complaints. They offer legal advice to survivors and follow up on the cases reported to ensure that the survivors are safe.

Increased funding would allow the Women Rights Initiative to purchase a van and a public address system so that they can move around the community sensitizing people about their rights regarding domestic violence, while still ensuring social distancing.



Justice For All is a global campaign that is working to ensure equal access to justice for all by 2030 by advocating for funding and protections for grassroots justice defenders.

The campaign is powered by the Legal Empowerment Network.

www.justiceforall2030.org



The Legal Empowerment Network is the largest community of grassroots justice defenders in the world.

Our members help people to know, use, and shape the law, so that they can exercise their rights and have a say in the decisions that affect them.

We'd like to thank all the network members who shared their ideas and experiences during the COVID-19 Justice Challenge.

www.namati.org/network