

Citizen Initiatives for Global Solidarity

Response to and impact of the COVID-19 crisis

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This study¹ provides insight into the response of Northern based small-scale, voluntary development organisations to the COVID-19 crisis and sheds light on the impact of the crisis on these organisations. The study took place among Citizen Initiatives for Global Solidarity (CIGS) and their support organisations in Belgium (with a focus on Flanders), Denmark, France and the Netherlands.²⁰ The 541 CIGS that participated in this study, represent over 7,500 volunteers, more than 500 paid staff and a total annual budget of nearly 30 million euro. Together they are active in 104 different countries across the globe where they support over 885 development projects.

Citizen Initiatives for Global Solidarity in Europe:

No shared definition, but similar phenomenon:

- 10 to 35 core members
- 90% to 96% of the core members are volunteers
- Average annual budget of 51,000 to 147,000 euro
- Private donations and NGO as most important sources of income



Impact crisis on projects: 88% of CIGS' regular projects were affected by the COVID-19 crisis:

- Nearly 30% had to stop (a part of) their activities
- 62% postponed and/or continued (a part of) their projects less intensely
- Almost 1 out of 5 offered (a part of) their activities in a virtual way



Most important reasons for changes made to regular projects:

- Limiting health risks for local employees and/or target group (60%)
- (Travel-)restrictions from authorities in project countries (55%)
- in CIGS' home country (47%)
- Decreased income (38%)

1. This factsheet is based on the report: "Citizen Initiatives for Global Solidarity. Response to and impact of COVID-19" and can be found here <https://unfold-pdis.com/>

2. Participating support organisations: Belgium: 4de Pijlersteunpunt, eu can aid! and the Province of West-Flanders / Denmark: CISU / France: La Guilde / The Netherlands: Stichting Wilde Ganzen, Vastenactie and Partin

CIGS' response to COVID-19: Emergency aid

“No way... there is really no way that we will let our partner organisation down now...”

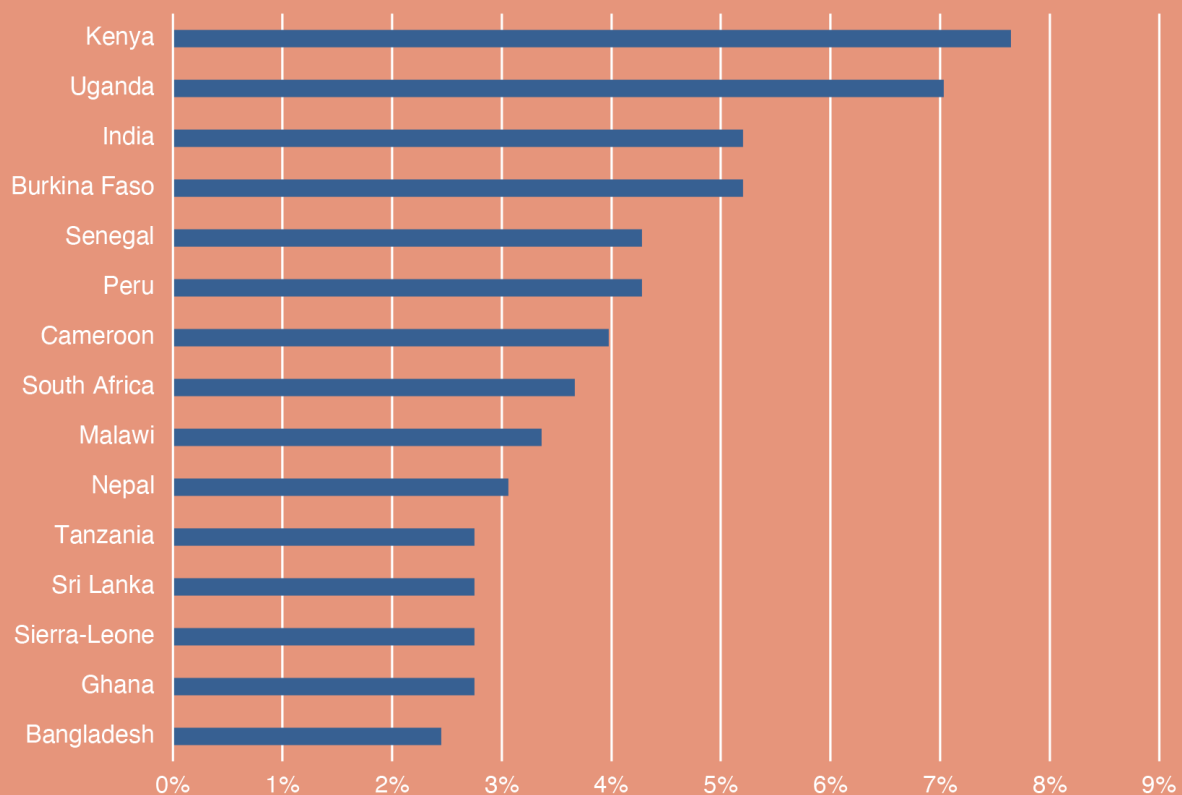
(Interview founder Belgian CIGS)



- **61%** experienced an increased demand for support from their partners
- **52%** started COVID-19 projects

In the period of March till November 2020, a total of 322 CIGS spent at least 5,390,000 euro on emergency aid projects with a focus on health and food security in 58 different countries reaching over 2 million beneficiaries.³

Top 15 countries COVID-19 emergency aid

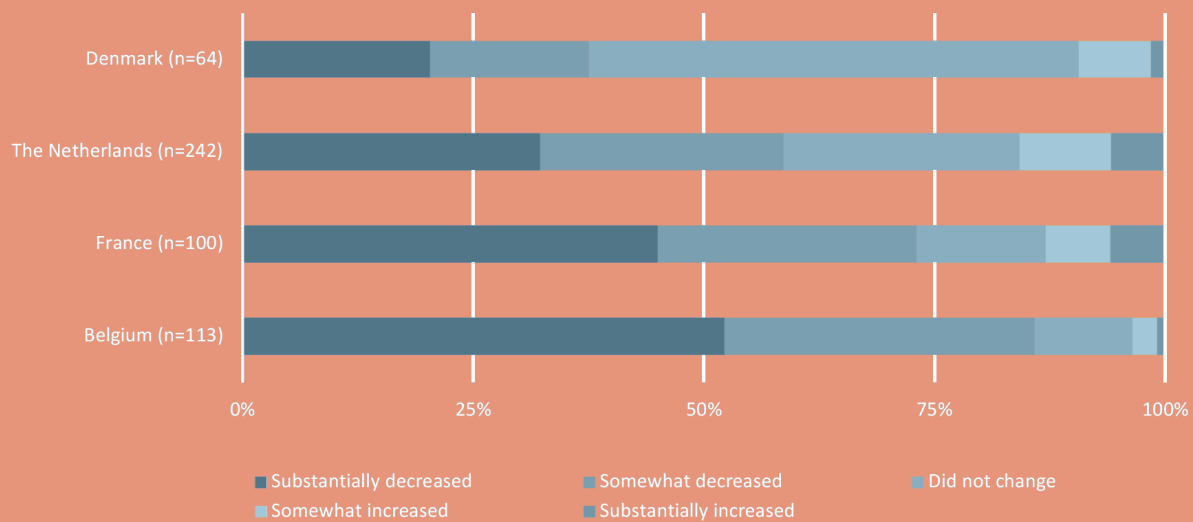


3. These are CIGS supported by CISU, La Guilde, Province of West-Flanders and Wilde Ganzen.

Impact of COVID-19 crisis on CIGS:

- 65% of CIGS experienced a decrease in income
- 24% of CIGS experienced no change in income
- 10% of CIGS experienced an increase in income
- Belgian and French CIGS experienced the largest decrease in income

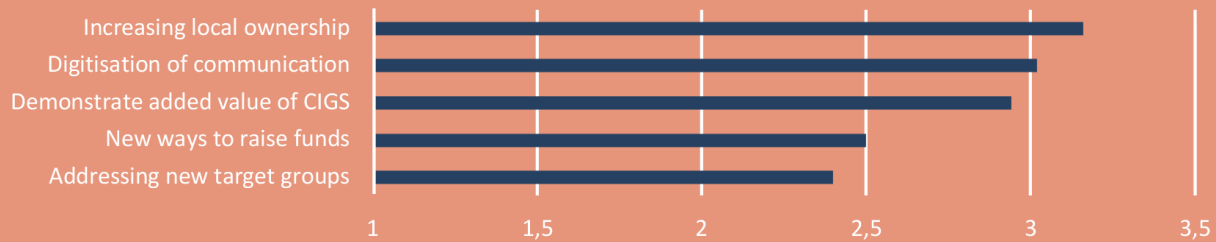
Impact of COVID-19 on budget



Concerns and opportunities: Belgian and French CIGS are most concerned about the future. Danish and Dutch CIGS perceive most opportunities resulting from the COVID-19 crisis.

- CIGS are most concerned about their ability to organise fundraising activities and the impact of travel restrictions on the motivation of their volunteers
- 65% expects a decrease in their income in the near future
- CIGS are least concerned about the survival of their own organisation and the survival of their local counterpart
- CIGS expect the crisis to result in increased local ownership

Opportunities



Values X-axis: 1. No opportunities – 5. Many opportunities

Risk factors: which CIGS are hit hardest by the crisis?

- High dependence on offline fundraising activities (e.g. events)
- High dependence on donations by private individuals



Immunity factors: which factors protect against the impact of the crisis?

- Larger annual budget and larger number of core members
- High dependence on private (family or corporate) foundations

CIGS show great resilience, but for how long?

CIGS show strong resilience with many of them finding ways to continue their regular work and/or start COVID-19 interventions. So far, they have shown great dedication to provide continued support to their local counterparts and the communities where they work.



How will a prolonged impact of the crisis affect CIGS?

- **Motivation:** with the personal encounter being at the heart of the work of CIGS, prolonged travel restrictions might disable CIGS and their local counterparts to personally meet. These personal encounters have a motivating role for the CIGS members and a catalysing role for (mobilising) their donors
- **Digitalisation:** the on average middle age of CIGS members in most countries might be an extra obstacle, since this might hamper CIGS to adapt personal communication and fundraising strategies into a durable online strategy
- **Fundraising strategies:** on the longer term it might become more challenging for CIGS to raise funds from regular (private) donors and to reach out to new (private) donors
- **Role in global citizenship:** a longer duration of the crisis could impact the visibility of CIGS in their own communities and hence also affect the role they play in contributing to global citizenship
- **Emergence of new CIGS:** changing times and an uncertain future, may inhibit the emergence of new CIGS

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