

COVID-19 Impact Survey on Civil Society Organizations in Nigeria

BudgIT

BudgIT is a non-partisan civic technology organisation that simplifies the Nigerian budget and makes it accessible to the average Nigerian. BudgIT also provides technical assistance to institutions, equips citizens to track government projects and engage citizens (both online and offline). BudgIT (<http://yourbudgit.com>) operates on the core pillars of open data, which stimulates transparency, accountability and better outcomes in both private and public sectors.

Survey Method

In September 2020, BudgIT through the Open Alliance surveyed a total number of 55 civil society organizations across the country to assess the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on their activities, especially in holding the government accountable. The objective of the survey is to collate information on these CSOs to better understand their operating structures and assess the impact of the pandemic on their operations, resilience levels and involvement in the response to COVID-19. The survey also identifies opportunities emerging from the crisis and the lessons learned.

In ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the impact of the pandemic in Nigeria, we administered this survey through a series of questionnaires. The questionnaires were sent to 55 civil society organisations across the 6 geo-political zones in Nigeria.



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Acknowledgments

BudgIT and Open Alliance Network would like to appreciate all the 55 CSOs who participated in the survey. Special acknowledgement to David Barnard and @AfricanNGOs for supporting this exercise and providing useful materials to make this survey a success.

Summary of our Findings

These findings are based on the feedback from:



55 Civil Society Organizations across
six (6) geo-political zones in Nigeria
who participated in the survey.

Summary of our Findings

80%



of the respondents are members of the Open Alliance Network.

98%



of the respondents reported that COVID-19 impacted and disrupted their operations in one or more ways.

83.6%



of the respondents mentioned that they have lost some fundings due to the pandemic while 72.7% expected to lose more funding in the next 3-6 months.

92.7%



of the respondents have limited their physical interactions at the community levels while 61.8% have restricted the movement of staff.

63.6%



of the respondents strongly agree that they were not prepared to cope with the disruption caused by COVID-19 on their operations

72.7%



of the respondents strongly agree that the pandemic will result in greater public appreciation for the work CSOs do in holding the government accountable.

Summary of our Findings

67.3% 

believe that the pandemic has had a devastating impact on the sustainability of many CSOs.

98%



while

83.6%



of these organizations have not practiced this policy before the pandemic. 49.1% indicated that they would consider making it part of their operations post-COVID-19.

58.2%



had to cancel or reduce their operations while 38.2% expect this to continue over the next 3-6 months.

58.2%



of the respondents have an annual budget under \$100,000 while 87.3% have introduced measures to reduce costs given the possibility of reduced funding or uncertainty about future funding.

65.5%

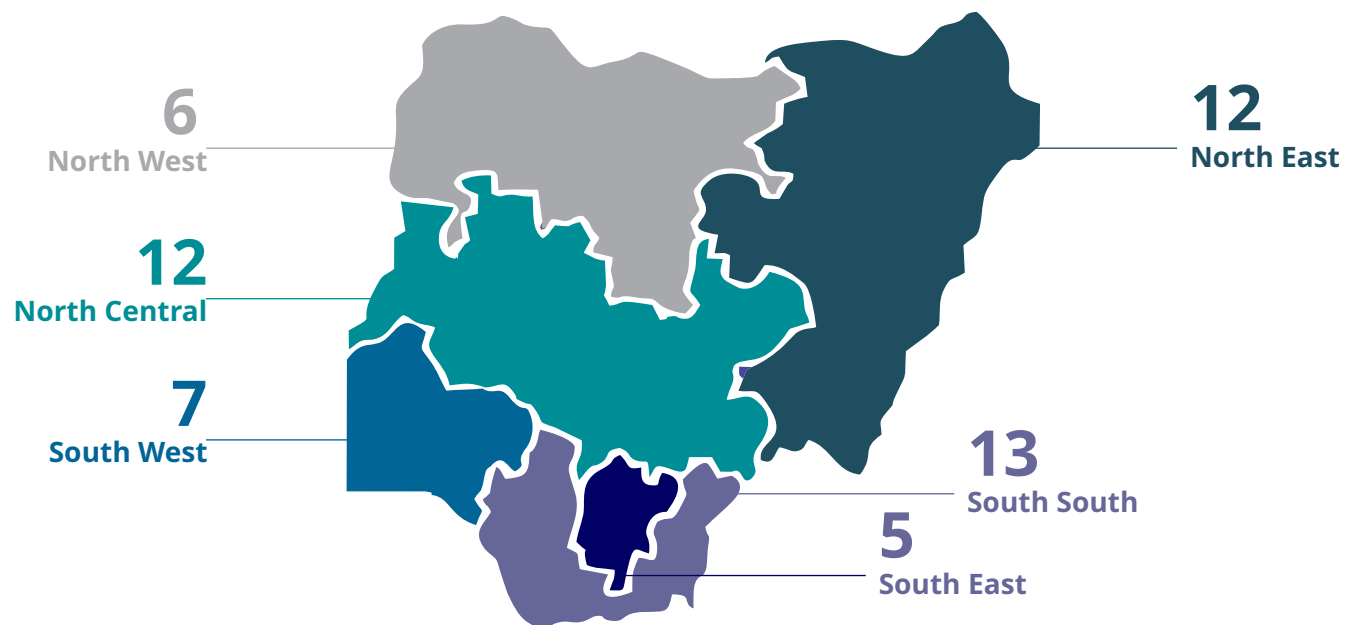


does not have reserves while 45.5% of the 34.5% that have reserves plan to use their reserves over the next 3-6 months to negate the impact of COVID-19 on their funding situation.

Data Insights

States that participated in the survey

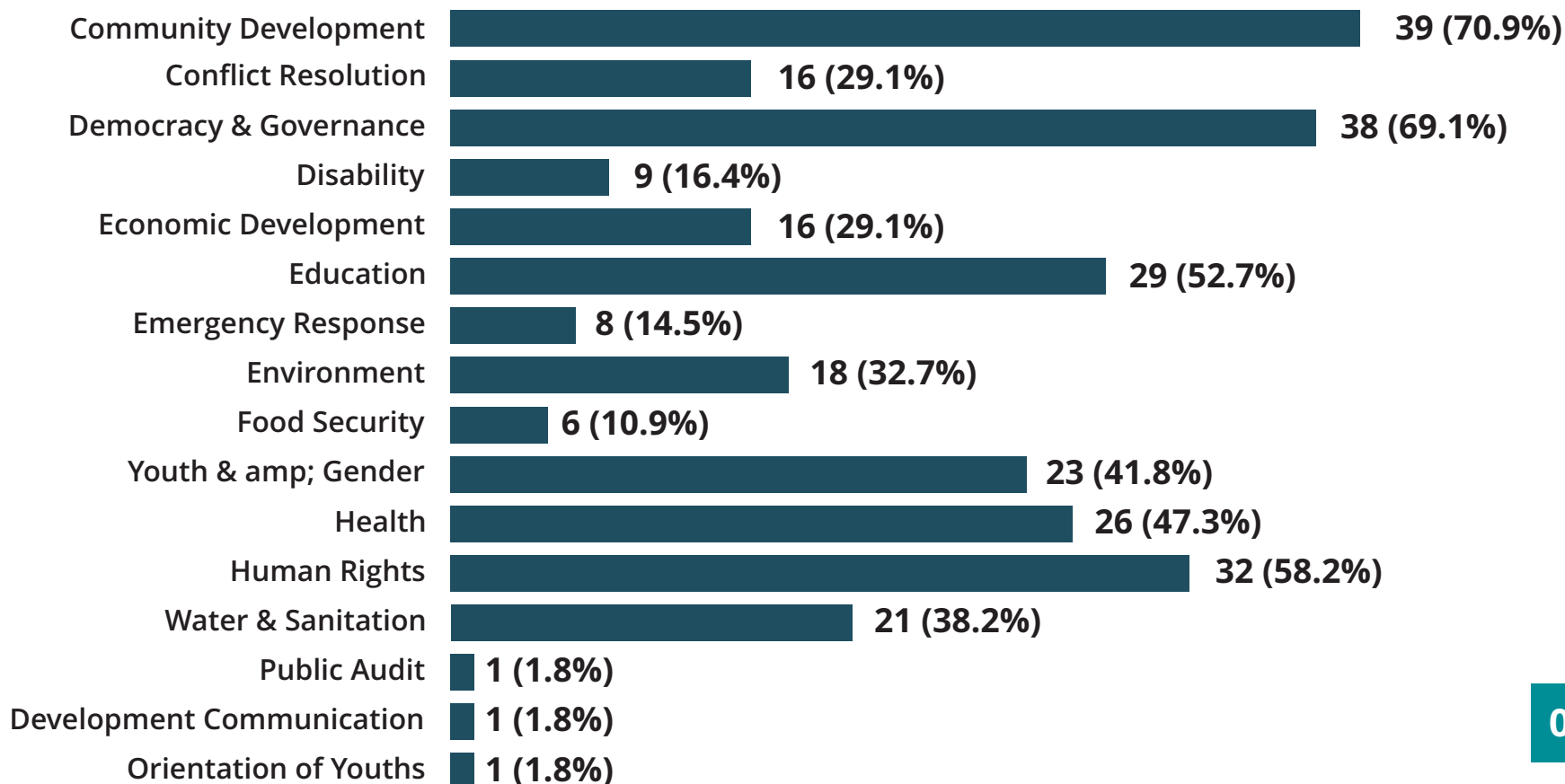
55 A total of 55 CSOs from 6 geo-political zones



Data Insights

The 55 CSOs are actively working on 16 thematic areas which includes Education, Health, etc.

What are your organization's main area of focus?

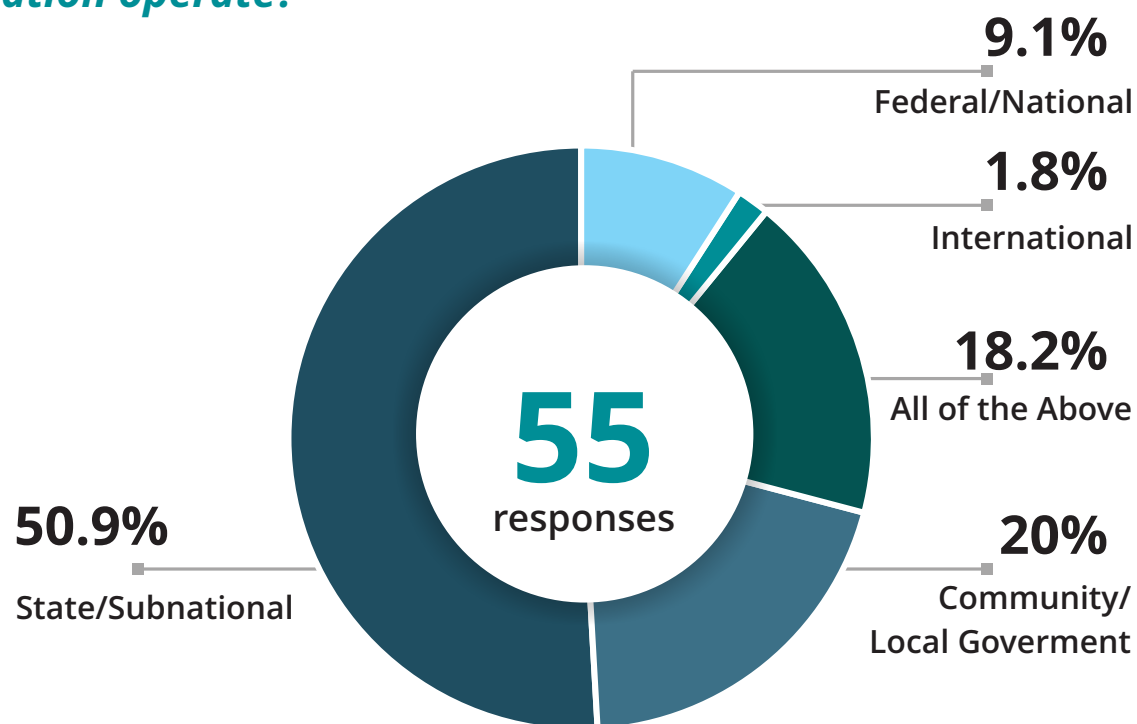


The Geographical Operation of CSOs

At what level does your organization operate?

In the past, CSOs in Nigeria have placed too much attention on the Federal Government's accountability while leaving the states.

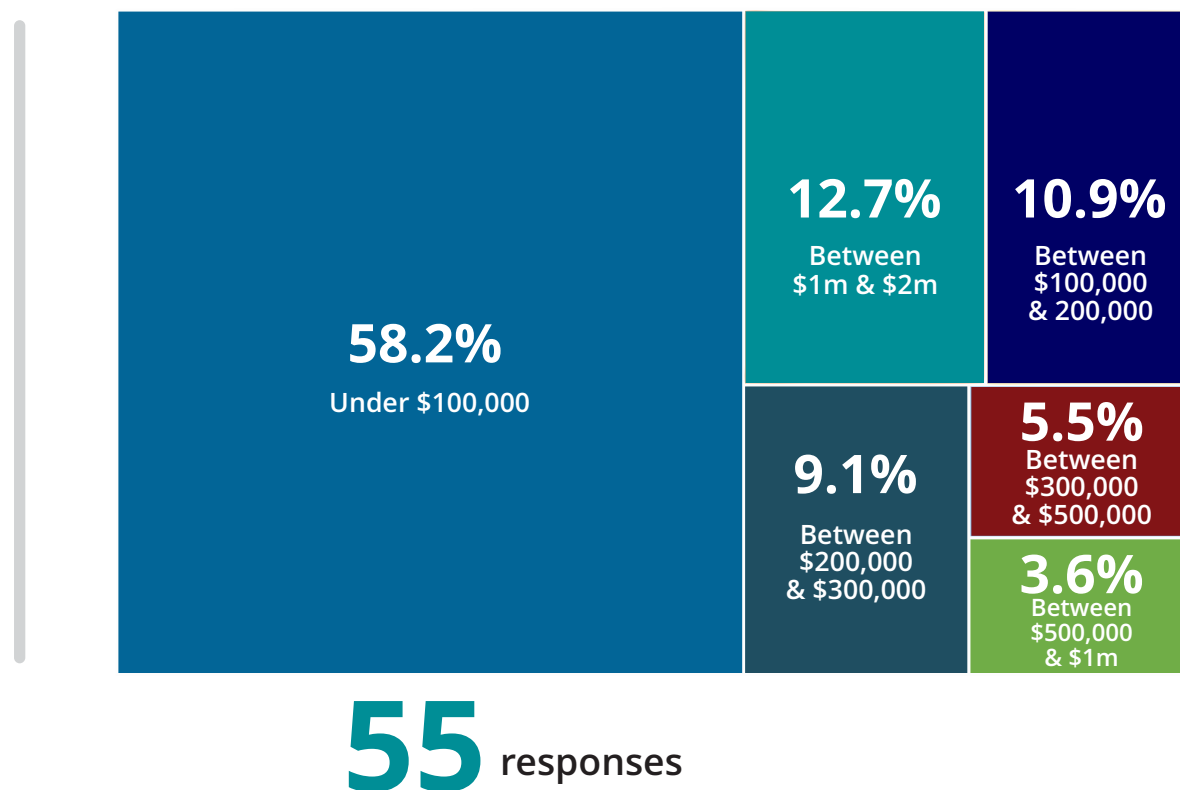
The narrative is changing as at least 50% of the respondents are working at the subnationals to improve their transparency and accountability.



Organization Budget

What is your organization's current year budget?

The annual budget of 58.2% of the respondents falls under \$100,000 while 12.7% of the respondents, precisely seven (7), have a budget between \$1million and \$2 million.

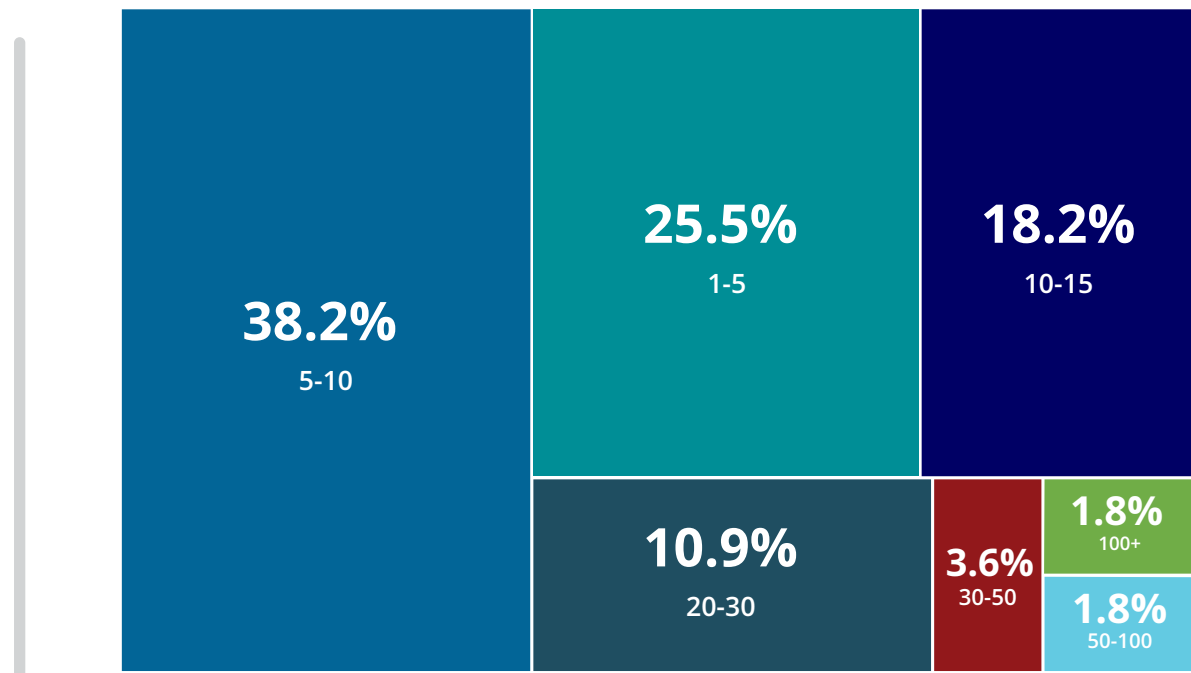


Staff Size

What is the staff size of your organization?

82%

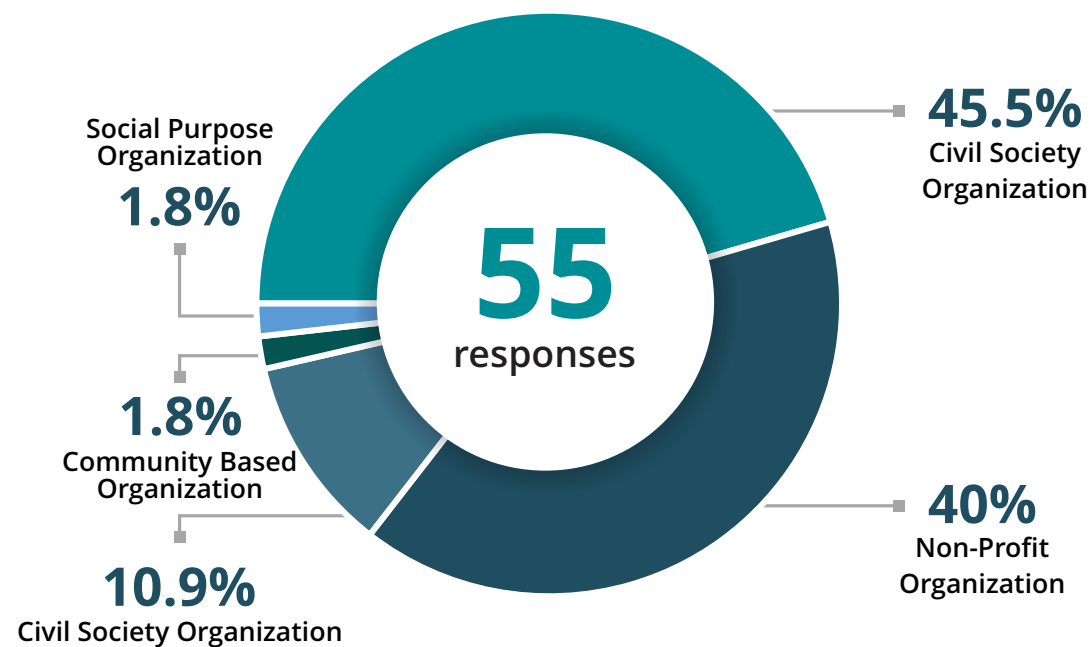
of respondents have between 1-15 staff while 10.9% of the respondents have between 20-30 staff.



Type of Organization

Which term do you prefer/most associated with?

Most respondents would prefer to associate their organization as Civil Society Organizations, Non-Government Organizations and Non-Profit Organizations.



The Immediate Impacts

Overview

The COVID-19 pandemic is the most crippling disruptions to affect the global economy which includes industries, start ups, schools, just to mention a few.

In Nigeria, the ongoing pandemic continues to affect companies including both the profit and non-profit making organizations in different ways. The impact on non-profit organizations have majorly forced them to re-evaluate operation models, cut down their budget especially personnel costs by downsizing or trimming the number of staff due to inadequate funding and so on.



The Immediate Impacts

Overview

The analysis revealed that

98%



of the fifty-five (55) respondents reported that the pandemic have had an impact on their organizations in one or more ways while only 2% reported minimal or no impact at all.



ICT skills

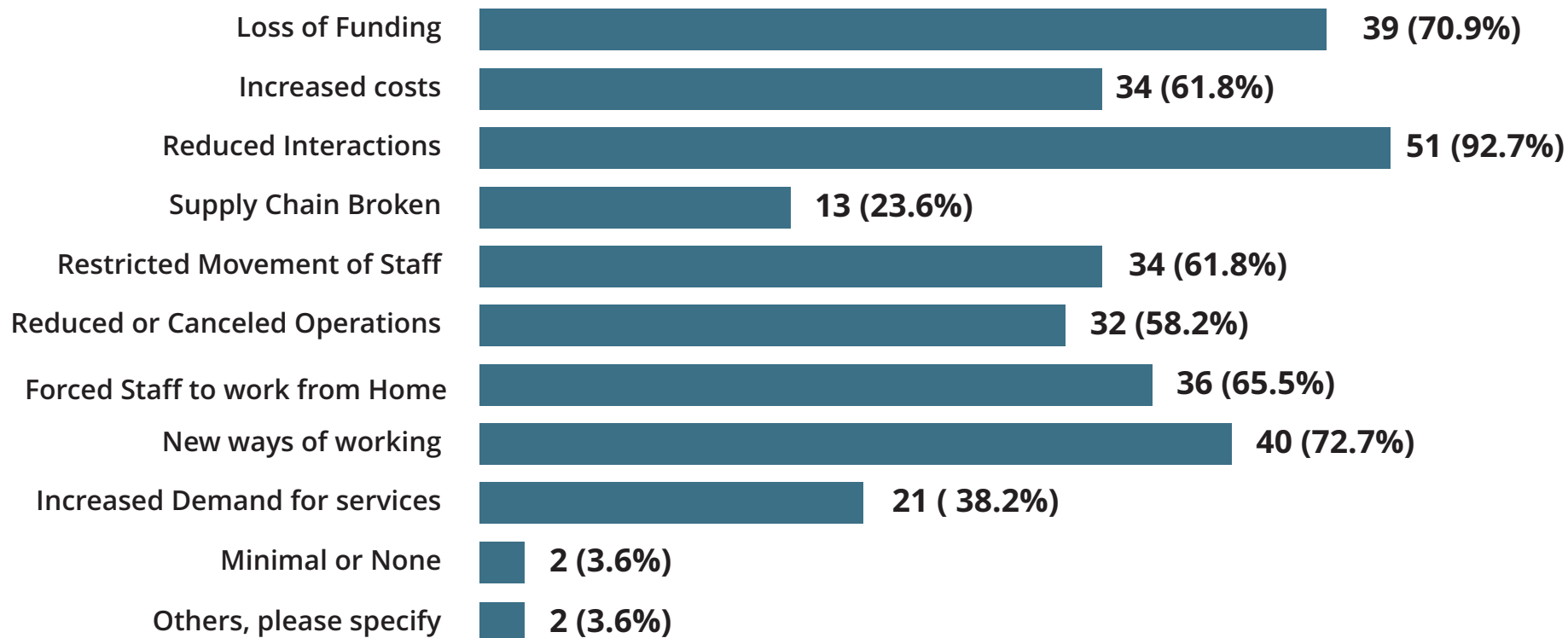


Health related
themes

It is worthy to mention that the pandemic also provided opportunities for recognition, improving ICT skills as most meetings were conducted virtually. It also increased advocacy searchlight on health related themes which includes financing and implementation of capital projects under the health sector.

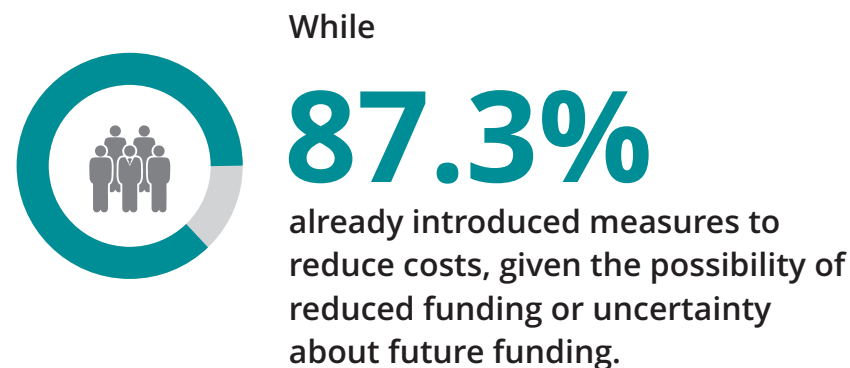
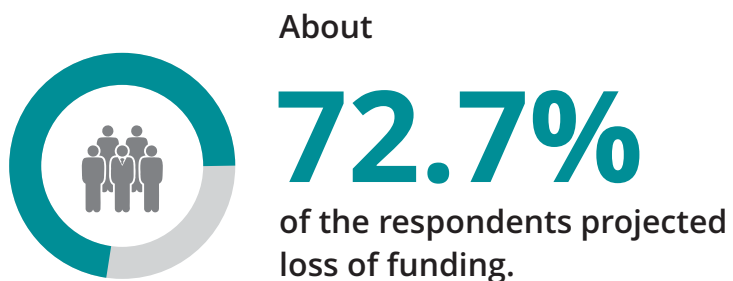
Short term Impact of COVID-19

What has been the overall impact of COVID-19 on your organization since March 2020?



Expected Impact of COVID-19 on CSOs in 3-6 months and Funding

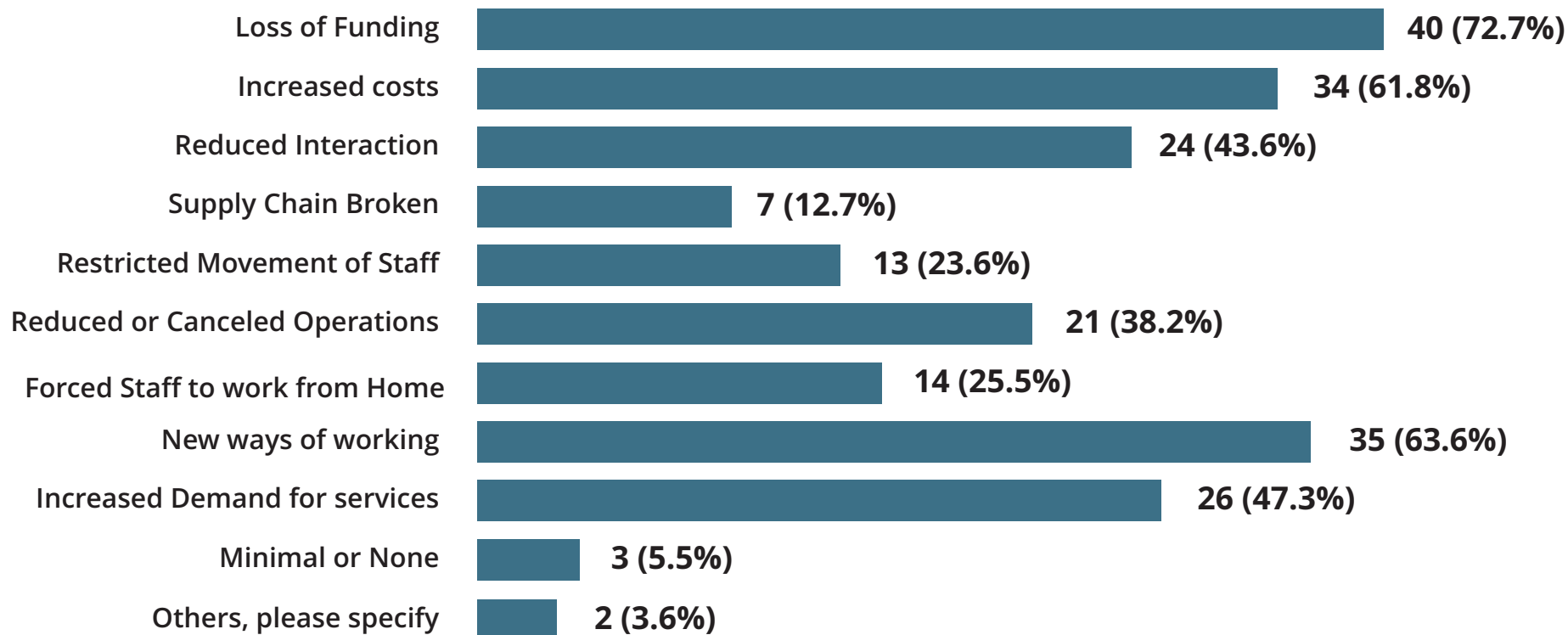
While the immediate impact has been felt by most organizations including the CSOs, the expected impact months after the pandemic is still a concern as some respondents mentioned that some of the financial reserves may not be able to sustain the operations of the organizations such as payment of salaries, etc.



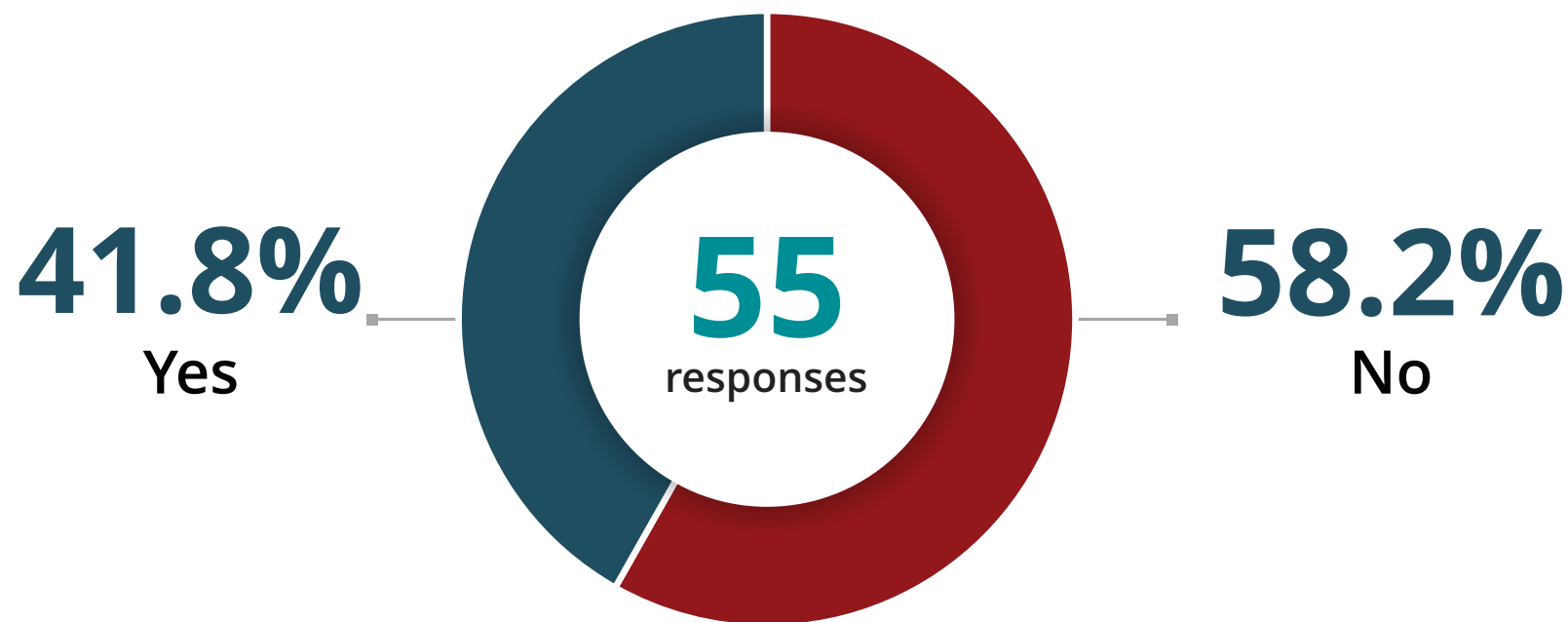
36 out of 55 CSO interviewed have no reserves. This simply means that the sustainability level of most CSOs in Nigeria is still low. This is worrisome as 41.8% of the respondents stated that most or all of their donor funders have reached out to discontinue their support.

Medium-term Impact

What do you expect will be the impact of COVID-19 on your organization in the next 3-6 months?



Have any of your funders informed you that COVID-19 may impact their ability to continue supporting your organization?



Operations and Programs

As stated in the impact assessment, most respondents had reasons to adjust to the new realities due to the pandemic. Since organizations are known for their activities and operations, the most affected was the operations of these organizations due to restricted movement - lockdown.



According to the respondents,

61.8%

of them had restrictions in the movement of staff,



92.7%

could not interact with the communities physically such as having town hall meetings, courtesy visits, etc.

As a result, 58.2% had to reduce or cancel some programs and operations while thinking through innovative ways of implementing their programs.

Coping with the Impacts Of COVID-19

Adaptability in the pandemic became the new norm as CEOs and Managers had to adjust to the new realities within a short period of time. With every adjustment, there was a huge opportunity to learn, relearn and unlearn.

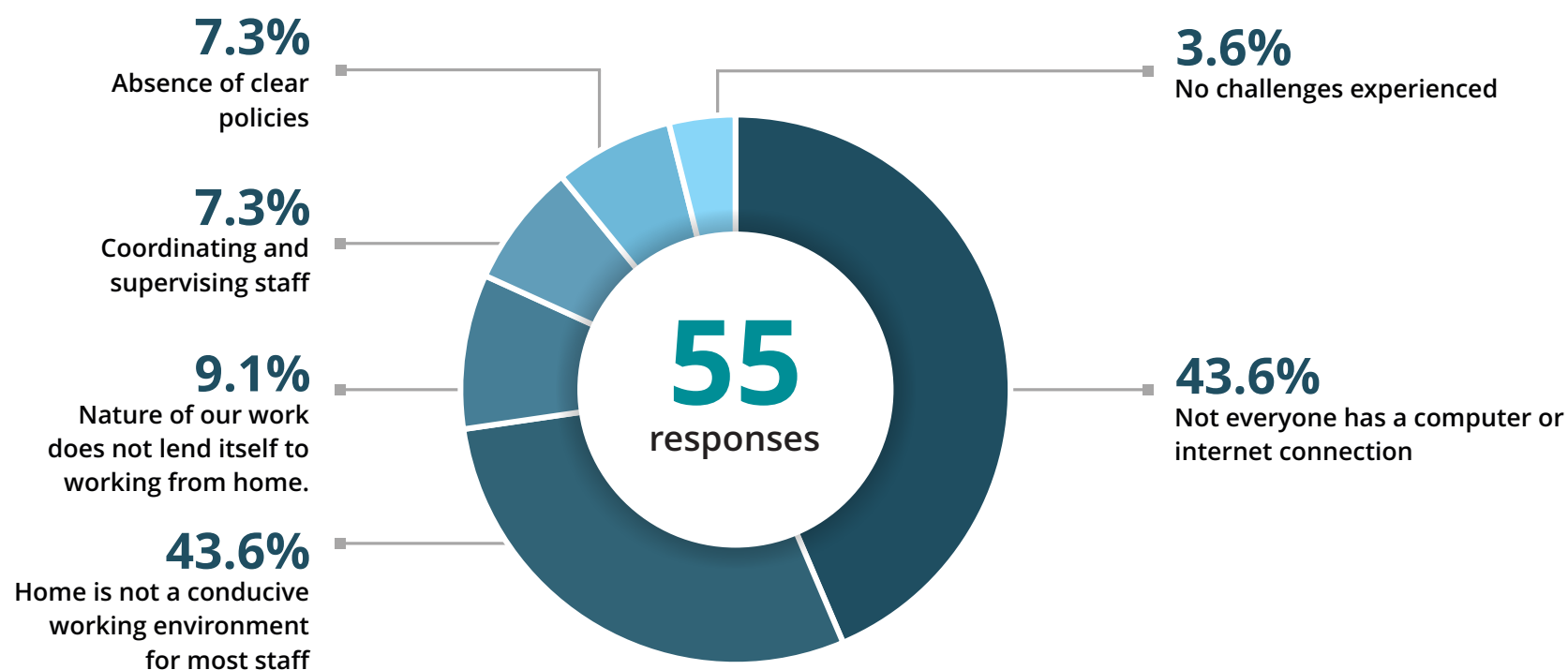
Working From Home - WFH

The need to ensure that work continues became a priority for some respondents as 65.5% of them had to force their staff to work from home. Most employees and employers hardly practiced the work from home policy before the pandemic as mentioned by the 83.6% of the respondents. This came with its challenges as they were unprepared. Challenges like access to stable internet, constant and uninterrupted electricity supply, less supervision, among others, were imminent.

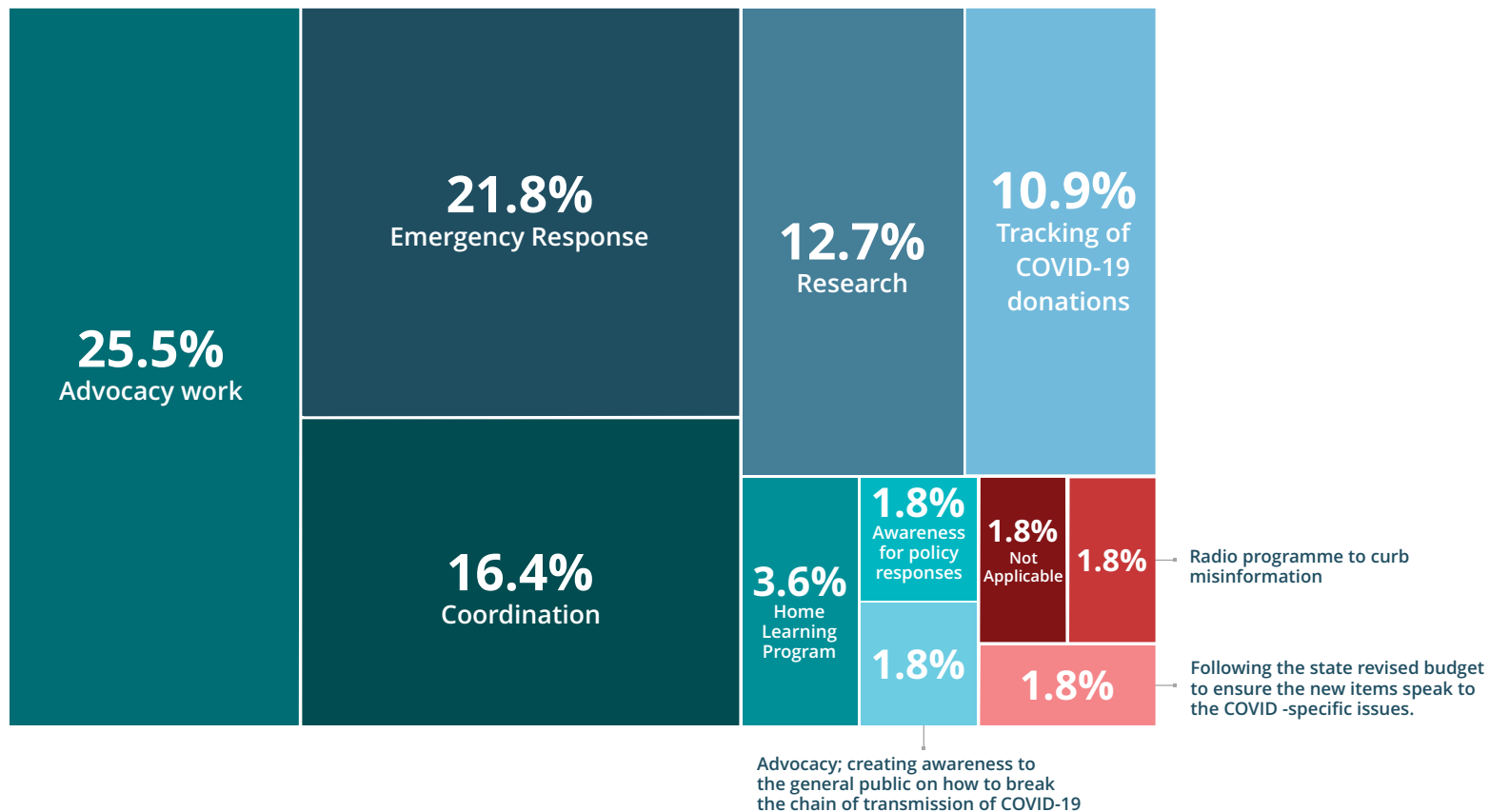
The work from home policy gave room for cutting or adjusting the expenditure of some organizations in Nigeria. Due to the lockdown, overhead cost was cut down drastically while some had to downsize. For some, it was an opportunity to keep the operational staff and let off the administrative staff or better still, maintain them with a pay cut.

Challenges faced during the transition to working from home

What challenges, if any, is your organization facing to transition to working from Home?



Involvement In The Response To COVID-19



Involvement In The Response To COVID-19

Introducing New Programs

Despite having to manage the resources within the organizations, all 55 respondents added new programs in response to the pandemic. Some added research, advocacy work e.g highlighting human rights abuses; tracking of COVID-19 palliatives. Though they may be new programs but 89.1% of the respondents believe it falls within the scope and mission of their works.

27%

of the respondents accessed new funds to support their COVID-19 activities and out of these 27% respondents, 6 received funding from individuals, 3 from international donors, and the remaining 7 respondents received funding from the government and private sector.

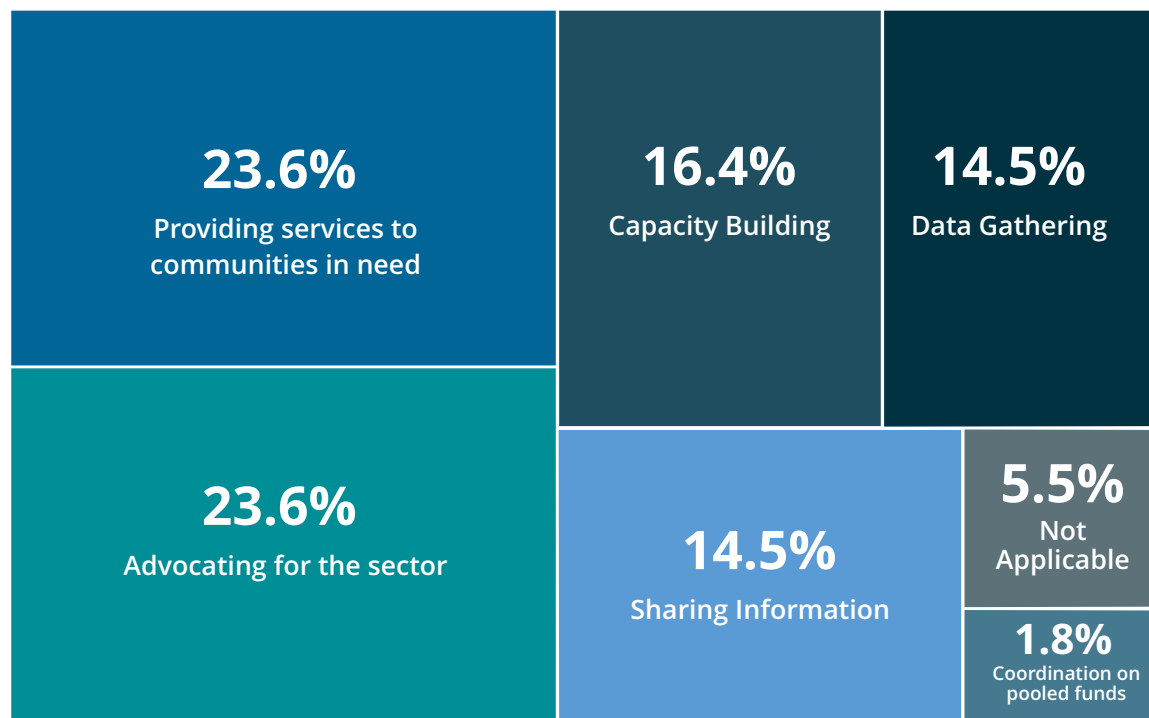
Networking and Partnerships

Networking and Partnerships

Before the pandemic, few CSOs did not buy the idea of partnership as this is not always mutually beneficial to the parties involved. However, the pandemic improved the level of partnerships amongst civil society organization in Nigeria.

92.7% agreed to partnering with other CSOs in ensuring government is held accountable through information sharing both online and offline, data gathering and advocating for the people in ensuring the palliatives are distributed within their states.

Networking and Partnerships



Furthermore, 56.4% of the respondents indicated that coalitions have been formed in different states to coordinate specific COVID-19 related activities.

Opportunities and Lessons Learned

One of the key lessons presented by the pandemic is the need for Civil Society Organizations to reevaluate their recurrent expenditure which includes personnel and overheads cost. It is high time CSOs maintained budget cuts to avoid having redundant staff who do not contribute to the core implementation of activities in the organizations. Other means can also be employed, especially where the WFH policy has been deployed. Some non-core staff can be translated into consultancy, thereby reducing the overall wage bill of the organization.

CSOs need to build a reserve purse for eventualities and as a sustainability plan - a long term plan for the organization. Most organizations are adopting rendering services to other stakeholders in improving their long existence even when donor funding stops.

The pandemic also showed the need for CSOs to embrace digital technology as a way to keep the organization relevant in the event of lockdown situations in the future. Communicating the work of CSOs could be a major challenge for the analogue CSOs who are yet to go fully digital. Ensuring visibility through the use of social media to disseminate the activities that have been implemented is therefore, very expedient.

Government, on the other hand, should continually partner with CSO by leveraging their experiences in coordinating and monitoring donations and beneficiaries.