



LEGAL EMPOWERMENT FUND

GRANTEE PARTNER SURVEY

April 2024

INTRODUCTION

The Legal Empowerment Fund (LEF), housed at the Fund for Global Human Rights, is a global, multi-stakeholder, and participatory grantmaking initiative set up to resource community-led groups to close the global justice gap. The LEF currently supports 150 groups in over 56 countries.

Between September and October 2023, the Fund invited grantee partners to participate in an online survey to document their experiences, strength, and priorities, as they relate to the support they receive from the LEF. This report presents key findings from 100 LEF grantee partners who took part in the survey. The survey results center around key themes such as organizational health, efforts to pursue legal empowerment, contribution to change, and grantee feedback and recommendations about the LEF's support.

METHODOLOGY

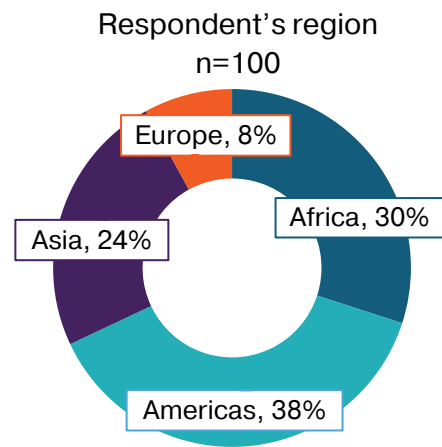
Who did we intend to target with the survey?

The survey targeted all current LEF grantee partners in all regions. This included groups with an active grant with an end date in or later than November 2023. The Fund's survey partner, Progress Inc., distributed and managed the survey using KoboToolbox.

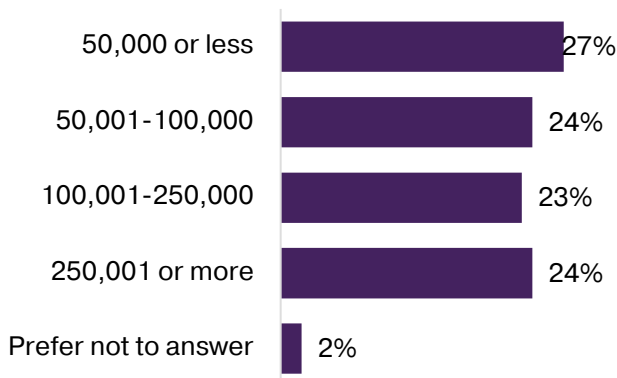
Survey participants could choose from eight languages to complete the survey (Arabic, Burmese, English, French, Hindi, Portuguese, Spanish, and Thai). The survey was translated with support from Translators without Borders. The survey was open for responses from September 25 through October 13, 2023.

Who responded to the survey?

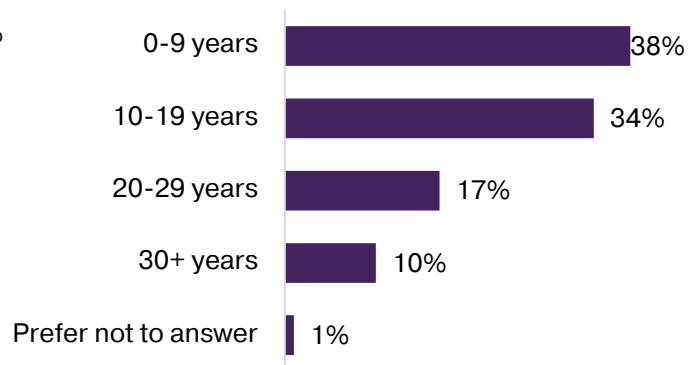
Out of the 121 LEF grantee organizations, 100 responded to the survey, representing an 83 percent response rate (with rounding).



Total budget for 2022 (in USD)



Time since organization establishment

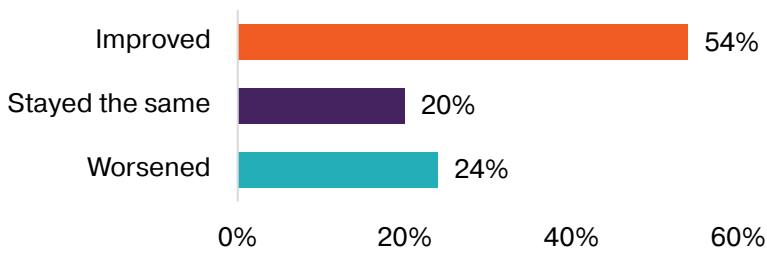


ORGANIZATIONAL HEALTH

Many groups face funding restrictions or sustainability concerns

Nearly 73 percent of groups have mostly restricted funding that cannot be used for general operating costs. Despite the restrictions, many groups report an improved funding situation as compared to last year. This funding situation underscores the importance of flexible two-year support from the LEF.

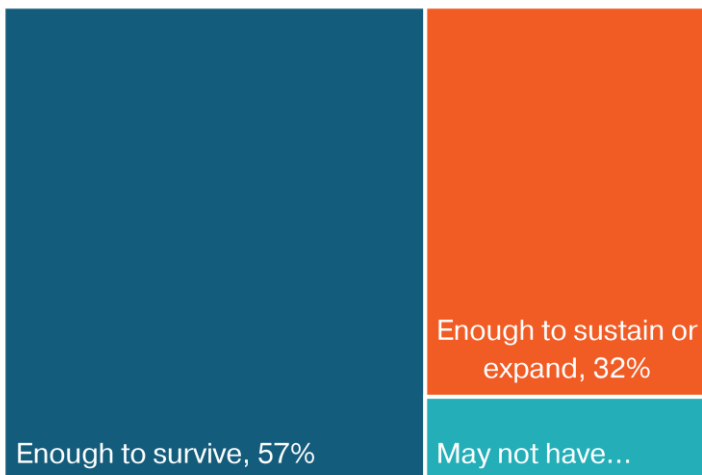
The funding situation is positive for most compared to last year:



n=100, 2% preferred not to answer

Grantees report fairly diverse funding sources, with more than half (52 groups) reporting two or three different types of funding sources. More than a third (35 groups) report one type of funding source. Few groups have a strong outlook on financial sustainability for the year ahead. More than half (57 groups) report that they have enough to survive but may have to make budget cuts to sustain their operations. Few (seven groups) report severe funding sustainability challenges for the year ahead.

Funding for the coming year
4% Prefer not to answer



Types of funding sources

- Philanthropic** foundations or charities (72%)
- Institutional** donors, including foreign aid (28%), multilateral agencies (21%), or government (10%)
- Community** sources such as individual contributions (27%) or member dues (25%)
- Other** sources, such as the private sector (11%) or revenue

Groups face mental health or harassment risks more than other security issues

Organizations dedicated to advancing access to justice encounter various obstacles, including mental health, digital, physical, and legal security risks. The survey investigated these challenges, acknowledging their potential interconnectedness. Nearly two-thirds (61 groups) agree strongly or somewhat that staff or volunteers experienced mental health challenges in the past year. More than a third (39 groups) disagree strongly or somewhat that mental health was a challenge.

Security issue	Type of risk or threat	Responses
Physical	Harassment or threats to individuals	46% (46)
Digital	Online harassment or smear campaigns	38% (38)
	Stolen/compromised devices, hardware	25% (25)
Legal	Legal cases or other actions	21% (21)
	Restrictions to finances, banking services	14% (14)

EFFORTS TO PURSUE LEGAL EMPOWERMENT

Groups use various strategies to pursue their legal empowerment goals

Legal empowerment combines law with organizing to build power among people affected by injustice. Groups seeking to address such injustices may draw on a range of strategies in their work. The survey explored some of the most common strategies.

Types of legal empowerment strategies

- *Behavior change*: practices to shift social attitudes and behaviors
- *Connecting & organizing*: build networks or organize others for action
- *Protection*: prevent, mitigate, or respond to threats faced by specific groups of people
- *Rights advocacy (shape the law)*: influence legislation or policy
- *Rights awareness (know the law)*: educate others about legal rights and

In the past year, LEF grantees have employed diverse strategies to tackle justice issues within their communities. Efforts to help others know or shape the law are common as well as efforts to connect and organize others for action. The most common strategies selected by at least half or more of the groups are noted here (it was possible to select multiple strategies).

Rights awareness (know the law)

- Rights awareness raising or education (83 percent)

Rights advocacy (shape the law)

- Local or national advocacy (82 percent)
- Research and knowledge production (67 percent)

Connecting & organizing

- Community organizing or mobilization (78 percent)
- Civil society network building and collaboration (75 percent)

Rights response (use the law)

- Legal aid services (61 percent)

- Observation/documentation of human rights abuses (55 percent)

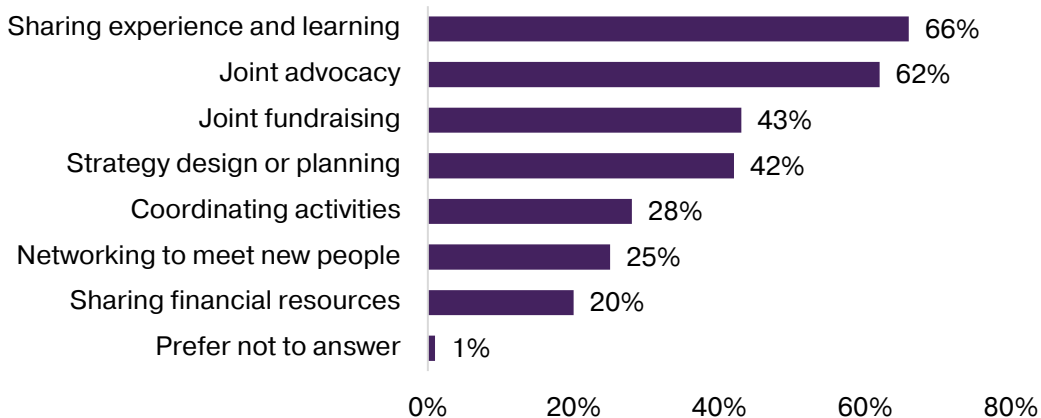
Community members design and deliver activities with grantee partners

Grantee partners report engaging individuals, groups, or communities they support in various aspects of their work, most often in conducting activities (88 percent), designing and planning activities (81 percent), and evaluation and learning efforts (70 percent). Less than half (46 percent) of respondents engage their respective communities in risk assessment or mitigation efforts.

Collaboration with others would benefit legal empowerment work

In the coming year, grantee partners would find it beneficial for their work to collaborate with others, primarily for learning and joint advocacy initiatives. Yet respondents note a variety of barriers to collaboration, most commonly a lack of financial or human resources (70 percent).

Collaboration interests

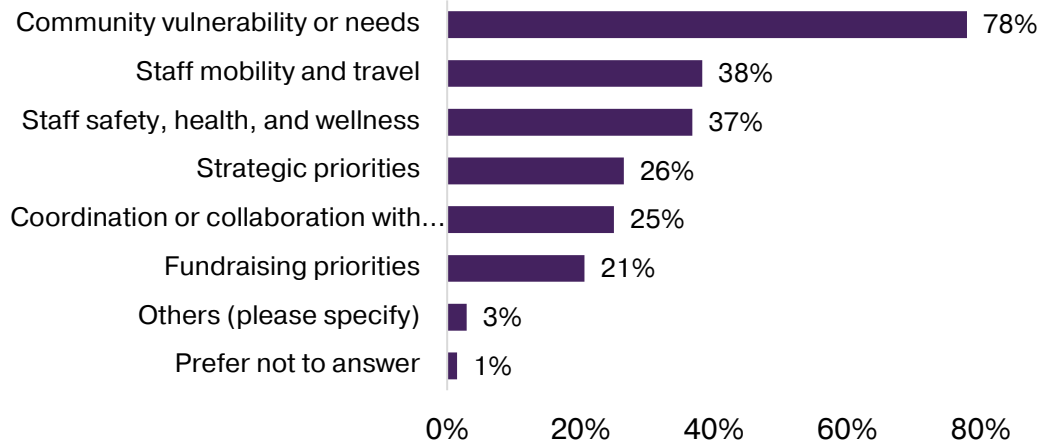


Groups report some effects of climate change

More than two-thirds of grantee partners report either direct or indirect effects of climate change on their work in the last year (68 groups). Among those groups experiencing some level of climate change effects, community vulnerability or needs was the primary aspect of their work affected.

Climate change effects on strategic or operational work

n=68



CONTRIBUTIONS TO CHANGE

Groups are working locally and connecting across borders to pursue change

The LEF aims to support organizations that come from, are led by, and are accountable to the people most impacted by the justice problem in their context. LEF grantee partners report a heavily localized geographic scope for their work. With the option of selecting multiple responses, 50 percent or more of respondents reported working at the national, subnational (state, province, or district), and/or local community levels. Fewer than 6 percent of groups indicated working in multiple countries, whether in the same or different regions.

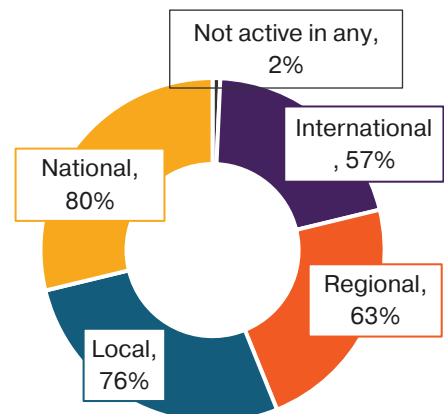
Despite this localized focus, many grantee partners are active in networks or coalitions both locally and internationally. This could be a signal of efforts to connect community-based issues with global movements or agendas.

Grantee groups report a variety of organizational assets that they draw on to create change in their contexts. Among the 100 respondents, these are the more and less common assets selected.

More common areas of strength:

- Knowledge and learnings – 92 percent

Current network or coalition participation





- Relationships with others – 71 percent
- Ability to influence policy – 52 percent
- Storytelling or communication practices – 50 percent
- Intersectional identities of staff and/or partners – 49 percent
- Ability to influence issue message or framing – 48 percent

The least common areas of strength included access to external decision-making processes (26 percent) and financial resources (22 percent).

FEEDBACK FOR THE LEF

All 100 survey respondents offered feedback on values and strategies they appreciate most about the LEF; most also shared recommendations to improve LEF practices.

Grantees appreciate flexible and trust-based resourcing for legal empowerment initiatives

When asked what aspect of LEF support is most valuable to their work, grantee partners most commonly appreciated the financial resources. They particularly noted the flexibility to decide how the funds are used. Many described a sense of trust or respect for their organization. Collectively, the feedback highlighted appreciation for these practices and values:

- **Financial resources** to help groups fulfill their organizational missions by carrying out legal empowerment strategies and activities with and for various populations, and to support staff to do this work.
- **Respect** for organizational independence in resource allocation for programmatic or operational priorities.
- **Sustainability** and continuity of activities and legal services, the ability to support work related to longer-term capacity and goals, and autonomy over their work.

“Our experience with the Fund is relatively recent but we greatly appreciate its recognition of the need for flexibility and minimal administrative requirements.”

-Grantee partner in Africa

“Funding allowing us to maintain and build capacity of long-term team.”

-Grantee partner in Europe

“Financial resources . . . allows us to gain autonomy and not depend on the interests of the private sector to finance those activities.”

-Grantee partner in the Americas

“Core funding and [the] flexibility it offers allows organizations like ours to continue our work on ground without interruptions and work towards financial stability.”

-Grantee partner in Asia

“LGBTQIA legal empowerment often requires specialized knowledge, advocacy efforts, and outreach initiatives that demand funding for staff, legal experts, and awareness campaigns. The fund's financial support allows us to allocate resources effectively and sustain our efforts over time.”

-Grantee partner in Africa

Grantees recommend longer-term funding and deeper connections with the LEF and peers

Groups offered a variety of recommendations to help the LEF improve its practices. Beyond quantity of funding, they offered feedback on the quality of financial resources offered. Many groups noted interest in beyond-the-grant support, particularly communication with LEF staff and connections with peer organizations. This feedback surfaced suggestions related to these practices and values:

- **Sustained, financial resources** to build relationships with the LEF and to pursue longer-term legal empowerment goals, as well as more flexibility to cover some operational costs.
- **Connections** with other grantee partners working on similar issues or in the same region to share knowledge and experience and potentially to collaborate with others.
- **Accompaniment beyond the grant** to establish more regular communication and build deeper relationships with LEF staff, including through visits to experience grantee partners' work.
- **Technical assistance** to support expertise development around legal empowerment or organizational capacity.

“Increase resource allocation, support long-term programmes or projects for greater impact.”

-Grantee partner in Africa

“[Regular] meetings would be useful to strengthen our relationship with the Fund, and would also serve as a space for learning and exchange.”

-Grantee partner in the Americas

“Build alliance between the partners working on similar activities across the regions to improve their collective/ solidarity campaigns. Also, to build collaborative actions.”

-Grantee partner in Asia

“Continue supporting local grassroots work and also consider bringing together different grassroots organization from around the world to share experiences, create networks and work together, thus strengthen the grassroots movements.”

-Grantee partner in Europe

“ . . . further help us strengthen strategic alliances and generate spaces for exchange to develop joint and collective strategies for strategic litigation and legal empowerment.”

-Grantee partner in the Americas