COVID-19 is more than a pandemic, it is a multi-dimensional crisis which has disrupted the functions of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and therefore affects the most vulnerable within our societies.

- The survey reported support for the response of the government to COVID-19 and for the implementation of State Of Emergency (SOE) and Public Health Emergency powers as a means of limiting the spread of COVID-19. However, it was revealed that some civil liberty concerns existed and there was not much support for the SOEs beyond six months.

- A vast majority of the survey participants expressed great concern about the local economy. They opined that the effects on the economy could have major impact on the region post COVID-19. A prime concern noted is the uncertainty surrounding job security over the near future.

- COVID-19 has directly affected many of the NGOs’ beneficiaries and the sector is concerned about the lasting impact on them.

- Most notable challenges quoted by NGOs include; loss of income, cessation of projects undertaken and the inability to provide services for beneficiaries. The top three needs of beneficiaries in the next 12 months are financial support, health care and food security.

- The sustainability of these organisations are a major concern as three quarters of the respondents indicated they were concerned their NGO might not survive. The impact of COVID-19 will be characterised by loss of income, inability to provide services and uncertainty in planning and hosting events.
In response to the situation being faced by many NGOs across the region, Caribbean Policy Development Centre (CPDC) sought feedback from our members, partners and the broader NGO community about the impact that COVID-19 has had on their beneficiaries, operations, and programmes. This report seeks to improve access to planning information for Caribbean Governments and NGOs' leaders.

The main objectives of the study are to determine:

- The level of confidence in the Governments’ response to COVID-19;
- The perception of social and economic concerns of COVID-19;
- The impact of COVID-19 on the NGO sector and its beneficiaries; and
- The concerns of NGOs and their key challenges post-COVID-19.

The Caribbean Policy Development Centre conducted the COVID-19 Impact Survey over a one-week period (April 23rd to 30th) via an online platform.

There were a total of 86 surveys completed representing 13 CARICOM countries. CPDC believes that this sample size provides an indicative understanding of the NGO sentiment.

This report is a summary with concise charts intended to help Caribbean leaders understand the impact of COVID-19 on NGOs and their beneficiaries.
86 NGOs participated from 13 CARICOM states

**DEMOGRAPHICS**

- **BARBADOS**: 23%
- **TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO**: 15%
- **JAMAICA**: 13%
- **GUYANA**: 12%
- **BELIZE**: 8%
- **SURINAME**: 7%
- **ST. LUCIA**: 6%
- **DOMINICA**: 5%
- **BAHAMAS**: 3%
- **ST. KITTS & NEVIS**: 2%
- **ANTIGUA & BARBUDA**: 2%
- **GRENADE**: 2%
- **ST. VINCENT & THE GRENADINES**: 1%
ROLE OF NGO

72% OPERATE BOTH AS ADVOCACY AND SERVICE PROVISION
17% OPERATE AS SERVICE PROVIDERS SOLELY
11% OPERATE AS ADVOCACY AGENCY
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of Thematic Focus</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CAPACITY BUILDING</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUCATION</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENTREPRENUERSHIP/JOB TRAINING</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GENDER (WOMEN’S RIGHTS)</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GOVERNANCE</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENVIRONMENT MANAGEMENT / CLIMATE CHANGE</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHILD RIGHTS, PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEALTH (PHYSICAL)</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEALTH (MENTAL)</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**COVID-19 & GOVERNMENT**

**RESPONSE TO COVID-19 MEASURES IMPLEMENTED BY GOVERNMENT**

- **Satisfied**: 55%
- **Dissatisfied**: 21%
- **Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied**: 24%

**CONFIDENCE IN GOVERNMENT’S ABILITY TO LIMIT THE SPREAD OF COVID-19**

- **High Level of Confidence**: 44%
- **Somewhat Confident**: 33%
- **Not Confident**: 23%

**REASONABLE TIMEFRAME FOR STATE LOCKDOWNS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>NGOs Agreeing with the Timeframe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 - 2 Months</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 - 4 Months</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 - 6 Months</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 - 12 Months</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- 23% of NGOs agree with 1 - 2 months timeframe.
- 45% of NGOs agree with 3 - 4 months timeframe.
- 23% of NGOs agree with 5 - 6 months timeframe.
- 8% of NGOs agree with 7 - 12 months timeframe.

**PERCEPTION OF GOVERNMENTS’ MEASURES**

- 64% of NGOs are concerned about the possible violation of civil liberties.
- 23% of NGOs are not concerned about potential violations.
- 13% of NGOs reported a neutral position.

**COMMENTS**

- 64% of NGOs are concerned about the possible violation of civil liberties.
- 23% of NGOs are not concerned about potential violations.
- 13% of NGOs reported a neutral position.
This pandemic has revealed our strong reliance, as a region, on tourism. Our economies cannot absorb the shock. We must make deliberate efforts to diversify our economies and build resilience into our economies and systems. Ensuring food security is an obvious start. Broadening our use of technology as a tool to support resilience is also recommended.

- Bahamas
### NGOS' BENEFICIARIES

93% of NGOs worked with various vulnerable groups over the last 12 months.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vulnerable Group</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>At-risk children and youth</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women and girls</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons with disabilities</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victims of sexual exploitation and/or abuse</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elderly</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous populations / tribal communities</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGBTI</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individuals and households affected with HIV/AIDS</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex workers</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
AN OVERWHELMING MAJORITY OF 97% OF NGOs EXPRESSED CONCERN ABOUT THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THEIR BENEFICIARIES

Very Concerned: 2%
Concerned: 69%
Neutral: 28%
Unconcerned: 1%
Very Unconcerned: 1%

A SIGNIFICANT MAJORITY OF 87% OF NGOs HAD CONTACT WITH THEIR BENEFICIARIES DURING THE LAST TWO MONTHS.

87% Yes
13% No

CONCERNED ABOUT THE IMPACT ON BENEFICIARIES

Our NGO is especially concerned about the impact of COVID-19 on poor persons, children and the elderly. Thousands of poor persons who live generally from hand to mouth (with no savings) may not be able to survive this pandemic. Children are in need of necessary resources so that they can learn remotely. Elderly people are in need of special assistance to facilitate social distancing. At this time there is little or no help being given to these vulnerable groups.

- Dominica

ABILITY TO CONTACT BENEFICIARIES

ABILITY TO PROVIDE SERVICES

58% Able to assist beneficiaries
42% Unable to assist beneficiaries
The COVID-19 Virus has created an environment of fear and uncertainty for all. The pandemic has deepened pre-existing inequalities of men and women, exposing vulnerabilities in the social, economic and political systems which in turn increases the impact of the pandemic. Across every sphere, from health to the economy, security to social protection, the impacts of COVID-19 are exacerbated for women and girls.

- Guyana

**TOP THREE NEEDS OF BENEFICIARIES**

**FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE**
- Grants/Cash
- Rent Waivers/Debt Waivers
- Debt Forgiveness

**HEALTH CARE**
- Individual Counselling
- Coach and Monitoring
- Teaching of Coping Techniques
- Access to Medication
- Sexual and Reproductive Health Care
- Sanitizers and Cleaning Supplies

**FOOD SECURITY**
- Food Care Packages
- Water
- Food/Nutrition Tips
- Hygiene Products

**OTHER CHALLENGES OF BENEFICIARIES**

- Difficulty Adapting to the ‘New Normal’
- Uncertainty Around Their Future
- Increase in Physical Health Concerns
- Increase in Abusive Behaviours
- Lack of Access to Online Education
- Access to Government Support
- Access to Internet and Information Communication Technologies.
The majority of the region’s NGO’s have been forced to temporarily close their doors and adopt innovative strategies to reach their beneficiaries, while experiencing uncertainty about the status of their current projects.

The pandemic created new challenges while amplifying current challenges for the NGO sector. From the sample, the top six reported challenges are listed below:

1. LOSS OF FUNDING & INCOME
2. CESSATION OF PROJECTS UNDERTAKEN
3. INABILITY TO PROVIDE SERVICES
4. UNCERTAINTY AROUND PLANNING AND HOSTING OF EVENTS
5. UNCERTAINTY AROUND BUDGETS AND THE PAYING OF SALARIES
6. A LACK OF INCLUSION IN THE POLICY RESPONSE (ON EACH LEVEL: NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL) TO COVID-19

Other concerns indicated by NGOs were:

- Reduction in productivity for NGOs
- Difficulty in organizing people or having a system to enable remote work
- Continued exposure to COVID-19 while serving beneficiaries
- Inability to provide for the needs of staff
- A shrinking enabling environment for NGOs.

“COVID-19 is reducing many gains that have been made economically, politically, socially and culturally over the years. There is now increased stress, fear and anticipation, not knowing what the next day will bring. However despite this, NGOs has seen an increased demand for its services and a cohesion among the NGO sector in Barbados like never before.”

- Barbados
SURVIVAL OF NGOS

NGOs have lost a major part of their funding through the reallocation of funds by donors which has ultimately resulted in an increased risk to their organisation’s sustainability.

74% of the NGOs in the sample expressed a high level of concern about the survival of their NGO as a result of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

17% of the participants indicated they were ‘concerned’.

9% collectively indicated they were ‘not very concerned’ and ‘not at all concerned’ with the survival of the organisation after the impact of COVID-19.
CPDC probed the sustainability of the NGOs within the context of Post-COVID-19. The top three expected challenges to the sustainability of NGOs are:

- Loss of income (64%),
- Uncertainty around planning and hosting events (63%) and
- Inability to provide services to their beneficiaries (57%).

1. These results reflect the proportion of the sample selecting the options.

**SUSTAINABILITY OF NGOS**

**OTHER PERCEIVED CHALLENGES TO SUSTAINABILITY OF NGOS POST COVID-19 OF NGOS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenge</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Substantial loss of human resources</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of inclusion in policy response to COVID-19</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inability to pay rent for offices</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inability to adapt to online methodologies</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessing advocacy spaces to initiate lobbying initiatives for their beneficiaries</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of access to online methodologies</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Throughout the region, many NGOs face unprecedented difficulties and reported the need for:

- Inclusion in the policy response to COVID-19;
- Human resources in the form of volunteers;
- An enabling environment, such as support from government through the provision of passes to access resources to provide services to beneficiaries;
- Access to funding and innovative funding strategies with donors; and
- Technical assistance to facilitate adaptation and access to online methodologies.

There is a blatant lack of involvement of NGOs and CSOs in the policy decisions and interventions that are being made for COVID-19. Such lack of engagement erodes the vital structures in society and the trust of the people.

- St. Lucia

**KEY NGO NEEDS**

**NGO ADVOCACY ISSUES**

- Social protection for vulnerable groups
- Poverty Alleviation strategies
- Inclusion in policy and decision making on the national and regional level
- Policy to mitigate Gender-based Violence.
- Transparency in Government responses to COVID-19
- Proper dissemination of information to population
- Inclusion in the development of Government Emergency Preparedness Plans
- Increased funding for the sector and its beneficiaries

**NGO SERVICE PROVISION PRIORITIES TO BENEFICIARY**

- **CAPACITY BUILDING SUCH AS ADAPTABILITY/ENTREPRENEURSHIP/SKILLS TRAINING**
- **HEALTH (MENTAL AND PHYSICAL) SUCH AS PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT AND PROGRAMMES FOCUSING ON COMMUNITY HEALTH CARE**
- **INCREASED FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES TO PROPERLY SERVICE BENEFICIARIES**
- **STAKEHOLDER ASSESSMENT SUCH AS IDENTIFYING AND EVALUATING IMPACT ON THE MOST VULNERABLE**
- **VOLUNTEERING**
The multi-dimensional nature of COVID-19 has created several problems in the NGO sector and among the vulnerable groups they serve. The restrictions implemented by governments to limit the spread of COVID-19, has limited the ability of NGOs to provide the services their beneficiaries require. There is currently no timeline on the proposed end to these restrictions and in this period many NGOs may become unsustainable.

- NGOs stand ready to assist Governments in identifying and implementing a road map to recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

- The increased unemployment is leading to the perpetuation of social inequality across the region.

- NGOs being aware of the specific needs of their beneficiaries and the increased social inequalities within society require partnerships with donors to effectively attend to the needs of the most vulnerable.

- It is evident that among the various challenges caused by COVID-19, NGOs need to continue to monitor government mandated restrictions and voice their concerns when needed on any human rights and good governance violations that may occur.

- NGOs have experienced several challenges from the loss of income, cessation of projects and inability to provide services to their beneficiaries. The severity of these challenges has been notable enough to cause concern about the long-term viability of the sector.
RECOMMENDATIONS

• Donors should consider targeting financial support for NGOs to re-establish and maintain the urgently needed services to beneficiaries, who have been significantly impacted by government’s mandated emergency restrictions in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

• NGOs must adapt to the present environment and include online models of operation in their core work. This will require capacity building initiatives to be undertaken aimed at conducting online seminars or low-cost seminars, workshops and training sessions that will assist in the preparation of tools and guidelines on effective service delivery and advocacy on behalf of their beneficiaries.

• Governments must be transparent and inclusive in their decision-making around COVID-19 policies. At this time there is not much support for civil liberty restrictions to remain in place for long periods of time.

• There should be a holistic approach to building the capacity of the NGO sector. Some NGOs may benefit from CPDC’s online capacity building resources, providing technical assistance to NGOs and the coordination of a regional response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
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