

RESILIENCE FUND STRATEGIC REVIEW

Analysis of impact and lessons learned
for the period April 2019–April 2021,
and recommendations for the future



**GLOBAL
INITIATIVE**
AGAINST TRANSNATIONAL
ORGANIZED CRIME



**RESILIENCE
FUND**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This strategic review was produced through a consultative process between the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime (henceforth GI-TOC), the Resilience Fund's Advisory Council and the Fund's principal funder - the Government of Norway, to cover the first phase (2019–2021) of the Resilience Fund ('the Fund'). It should be recognized that the review has been compiled within only two years of the Fund's launch and during an unprecedented global public health and economic crisis. At the same time, the risks and harms of organized crime have continued to grow, while the ability of some authorities and communities to deal with it have diminished. The space for civil society to operate in, and engage and deliver support to communities is under grave threat. This review assesses and analyzes the impact that the Fund has had on civil society. The impacts of the Fund in local communities around the world vary widely according to circumstances and are difficult to aggregate but, taken together, the reporting and feedback from grantees indicate that the Fund is adding value at the local level.

The Fund is supporting agents of change from within civil society in communities that are hit hard by organized crime, and are also hard to reach. They are being supported to give hope and practical tools and networks to their communities as they try to build a better future. In a time when civil society space is under threat, and COVID exacerbates these inequalities, their ability to operate is hard to maintain. But they are not only operating, they are connecting with each other, informing public awareness and debate through improved research and journalism, and engaging with national governments and UN processes to increase global resilience to organized crime. To highlight a few examples, initiatives under the Resilience Fund have:

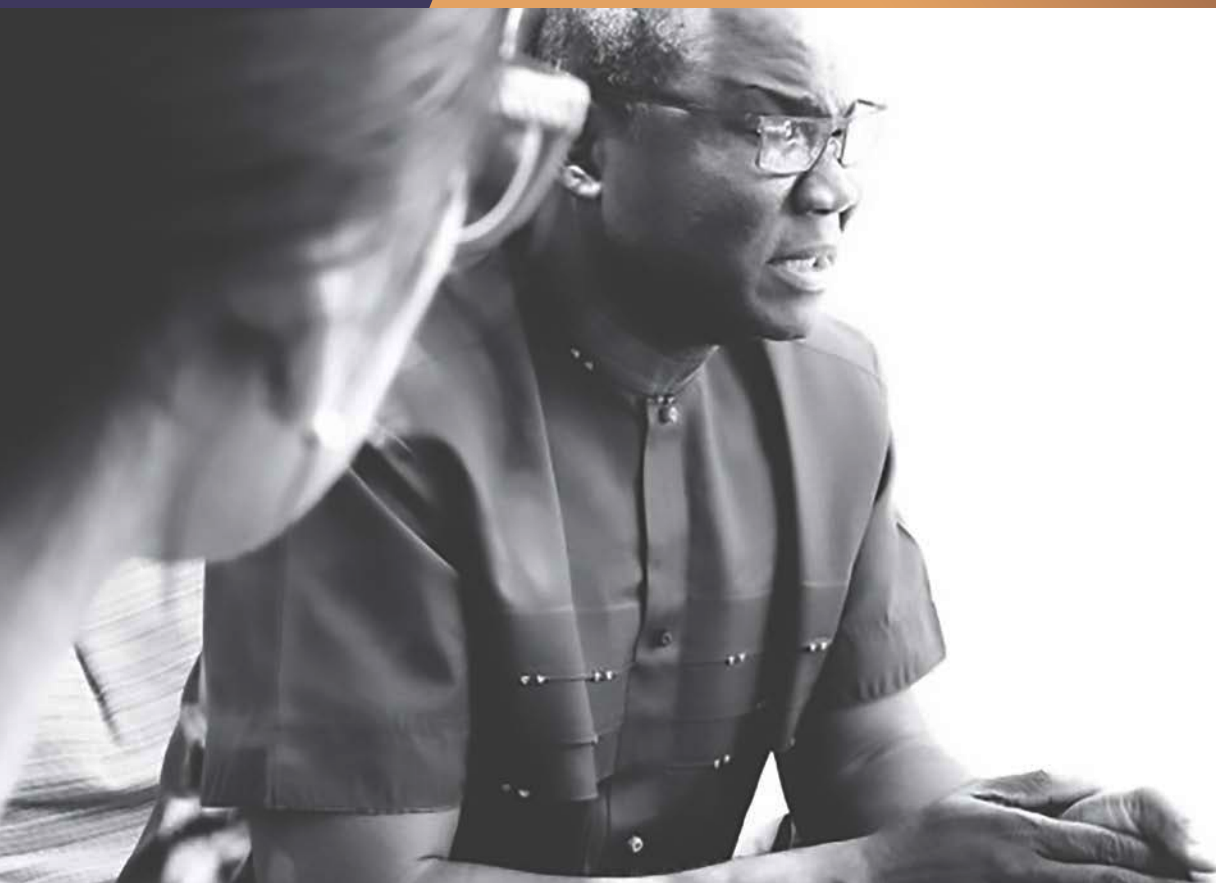
- Trained a group of community researchers in a conflict zone who are now providing evidence to the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in that country on collusion in illicit markets between criminal groups, armed groups and the army. The researchers are also providing evidence to a UN Group of Experts on their upcoming reports, specifically around minerals traceability and armed groups' collusion with the army.
- Created a joint platform with the UN Development Programme in Guinea-Bissau, which is jointly supporting a network of civil society organizations researching illicit markets and building community resilience to them.
- Created the first ever civil society platform dedicated to improving policy responses to organized crime in Pakistan, which is now engaging with its authorities and providing substantive research and recommendations, based on insights from local civil society.
- Supported a varied group of grassroots activists in violent communities, where state support is minimal or where the state is hostile to civil society. This means initiatives in communities such as the Cape Flats, Dar Es Salaam, the Philippines or Sinaloa have been able to continue their activities – interrupting violence, providing support to drug users, supporting victims of murder and disappearances, reclaiming public space, and bringing together different community leaders to build their common resilience.

This review also analyzes how these impacts at the local community level are translated into global action and experience sharing. The Fund's global networks and modus operandi have allowed new connections to be made and lessons to be shared, including through a new secure and tailored mobile-technology application, suited to engagement in times of COVID-19. The Fund's grantees have not only achieved results in their communities: there is also evidence that they have taught one another, and they also provide lessons to the international community about what it means to be on the front line of criminal governance and what is needed to turn the tide in the face of the organized crime risk. And in its formative years, the Fund has demonstrated its legitimacy, credibility and impact.

With increased funding and support, the Fund could do more to help create a truly global network of support among communities and have a more tangible impact on global organized crime and resilience.

This review looks at lessons learned in the first two years of the Fund, and what can be done to renew the Fund's strategy for its next phase (from 2022) with a suggested focus on five pillars. These can be summarized as follows:

- Continue to sustain the flexible, personal and tailored approach of the Fund
- Enhance the Fund's global networking and engagement model
- Diversify the funding and support base
- Enhance systems for measuring and demonstrating the Fund's impact
- Integrate security and safety support for grantees as a core of the Fund as they deal with the violence and threats associated with organized crime and criminal governance



In April 2021, Innocent Chukwuma, the renowned civil society leader and Chair of the Advisory Council of the Resilience Fund, suddenly and tragically passed away.

Innocent was a long-standing champion of civil rights and civil society, and dedicated his life to advocating for justice and public safety, and to serving the non-profit sector in West Africa. The Fund's grantees benefited from his time and commitment as the inaugural Chair of the Advisory Council, a position he assumed at the launch of the Resilience Fund in May 2019. He led an Advisory Council mission to South Africa in February 2020, where he met and shared his insights with Fund beneficiaries from all over Africa.

On Innocent's passing, GI-TOC Director Mark Shaw said: 'I have known and collaborated with Innocent since the 1990s, and I know that few have done more to champion civil society's role in achieving peaceful societies and justice on the African continent. He was a decent, principled and talented man, and his presence and advocacy will be sorely missed in West Africa and beyond. We were honoured that he served as Advisory Council Chair, and we hope that through the work of the Resilience Fund, we can play our part in ensuring that his legacy lives on.'

BACKGROUND TO AND HISTORY OF THE RESILIENCE FUND

With the support of the Government of Norway, the Fund was launched in May 2019 as an innovative solution, driven by the need – identified by the GI-TOC and the international community – for a new approach to support communities that are unprotected from, or vulnerable to, the violence and damage perpetrated by organized crime, especially when the state is unable or unwilling to protect them.

The Fund provides support to individuals and community groups doing their best, in dangerous and difficult circumstances, to support their communities. The Fund is a grant-making mechanism, initially financed with a major, multi-year grant from the Government of Norway, which finances, nurtures and assists local initiatives in their responses to organized crime. The Fund identifies and empowers key civil society actors and builds their operational capacity with the aim of creating resilience networks in communities impacted by organized crime and violence. The Government of Norway entrusted the GI-TOC to manage the Fund as a way of bringing the support of the international community to the grassroots civil society and non-state actors who need it. That support has been subsequently bolstered by others including the governments of Germany, New Zealand and the Netherlands who have joined as partners within the first two years of the Fund.

The Fund builds on the GI-TOC's ongoing work of reporting on and incubating resilience in communities harmed or threatened by criminal governance; it also draws from the GI-TOC's global network of experts, who, collectively, have a range of disciplines. The Fund equips individuals and group initiatives with the financial means, capacity, and skills-building tools to seek innovative approaches to citizen security and peacebuilding, and to help individuals and entities respond and adapt positively to adversity.¹

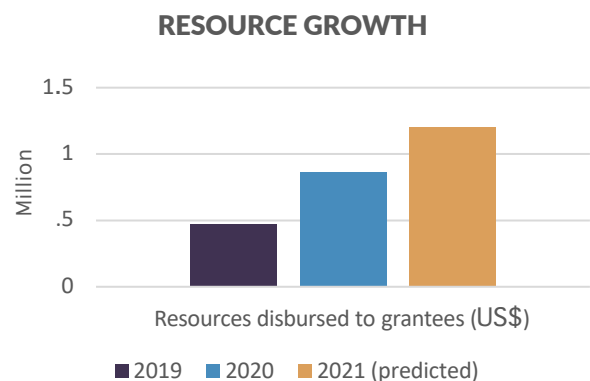
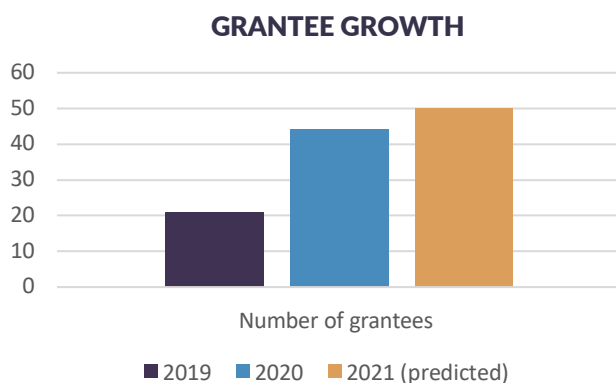
The Advisory Council of the Resilience Fund was convened to maintain oversight of the strategic direction, sustainability, and administrative and financial policies of the Resilience Fund. The Council includes the Government of Norway, a number of geographically and gender-representative eminent figures with proven commitment to the objectives of the Fund, and a representative from and liaison to the GI-TOC Board. The GI-TOC functions as the fund manager and the secretariat to the Advisory Council and is therefore responsible for the day-to-day management of the Fund and for making decisions on individual grant applications. Fiduciary responsibility for the Fund sits with the GI-TOC Board, and the Advisory Council reports to the Board through an appointed representative and liaison, who is also a member of the Advisory Council.

¹ This is set out in Advisory Council of the Resilience Fund, Terms of Reference.

NARRATIVE SUMMARY OF KEY ACHIEVEMENTS, 2019–2021

The Fund has been able to support a wide range of initiatives, from activists living in precarious situations to projects that challenge some of the most harmful aspects of criminal governance and broader damaging effects of organized crime. The Resilience Fund has achieved impact by identifying beneficiaries who are best able to improve their local situations. Beneficiaries include counter-crime advocates, investigative journalists and community resilience groups. The Fund also achieves impact by providing tailored support arrangements suited to each project – not only financial support, but also training and skills-building; and empowers local people to become first responders to organized crime in their communities.

Through its integration into the GI-TOC infrastructure, and with the guidance of the Advisory Council and through the original stakeholder workshop in May 2019, the Fund was able to swiftly start supporting communities. During the first year of operation, the Fund supported 21 grantees in 12 countries, disbursing US\$470 000 of financial support in small grants. In 2020, with increased resources, the Fund expanded its reach, supporting 44 grantees in 26 countries (36 new ones and eight continuations), with funding of US\$865 000. In 2021, the Resilience Fund is on track to disburse over US\$1.2 million to a growing number of new and existing grantees and fellows (more information on the fellowship programme follows) from an increasingly diverse funding base.



In 2020, the Fund launched a new initiative, the Resilience Fellowship. The aim of the fellowship programme is to have a platform for cross-sectoral, global and interdisciplinary collaboration around a selected theme that contributes to countering the effects of organized crime. The Resilience Fellowship was promoted as a strategic priority of the Advisory Council. This new programme began in March 2020 as the world prepared for lockdown and had to adapt to an online operating format. In its first year, the fellowship supported 10 individuals, or ‘fellows’, who implemented community-based projects on the theme of ‘disappearances’ related to organized crime. The fellows, along with other grantees of the Fund, attended 20 webinars through a partnership with the Global Investigative Journalism Network. Four of

these were open to the public and attended by 600 people in more than 60 countries. The webinars facilitated discussions and exchanges on varied topics – from digital security and international law on enforced disappearances to communication tools and building personal resilience. The second year of the fellowship, now under way in 2021, is focused on extortion and organized crime.

Supporting investigative journalism has been a core objective of the Fund since its inception. At its launch week of events in Vienna, several prominent journalists in the field of organized crime were invited to contribute to a stakeholder workshop, which informed the Fund's approach to supporting journalism initiatives. Nine media houses have been supported directly through the Fund, and the link between communities and journalists has been developed through several Fund initiatives.

As encouraged by the Advisory Council, in 2020, the Resilience Fund agreed on forming a strategic partnership with the Global Investigative Journalism Network, to provide support and networking opportunities for the journalists and media houses supported by the Fund. The partnership involved training on digital security, the need for which was heightened by the lockdown environment that our beneficiaries faced.


In light of the pandemic, the Resilience Fund has supported grantees as they adapted their programmes, including by supporting food distribution and other vital support programmes in vulnerable communities.

At the end of 2019, the GI-TOC began developing a mobile application called VIVA to activate the Resilience Fund's network. The app is intended to facilitate project-based learning and the production of video stories by activist grantees. After eight months of development, testing and modifications, the first users were onboarded in August 2020. Fellows from the Resilience Fellowship, as well as other grantees, have published videos with updates on projects incubated by the Fund. Simultaneously, they are collaborating with one another through planned activity guides to provide insights into organized-crime issues faced by their communities. In addition to its collaborative and storytelling functionality, VIVA is becoming an innovative tool for grant reporting.

From the onset, with a public launch held during the UN Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ) in 2019, raising awareness at the multilateral policy level has been a priority for the Resilience Fund – attempting to link actors on the ground to where decisions are made. In this respect, the Fund has provided networking and experience-sharing opportunities for its grantees, including through 15 international meetings, including UN events, and workshops, diplomatic gatherings and expert meetings. Beneficiaries have also become key contributors to the GI-TOC #COVIDCrimeWatch series and other outputs released this year, cementing their role as expert commentators on transnational organized crime policy issues.

In summary, by March 2021, the following key landmarks had been achieved:

- Over 80 Fund beneficiaries in 36 countries and five continents
- 103 projects supported
- Nine media houses supported
- Nine independent investigative journalists supported
- 27 individual activists supported
- 43 community-based NGOs supported
- Over US\$2million awarded in grants
- Over 14 000 community members supported through resilience dialogues, training and other initiatives delivered through grants to bolster community resilience to organized crime
- 30 active VIVA participants



The Fund has allowed me to carry out many activities with communities that without the Fund would not have been possible. Today the community is united with the interest of working together to overcome problems and difficulties, it has increased trust which is essential for resilience.



— Isabel Zuleta, community activist,
Colombia

ANALYSIS OF PERFORMANCE

The overarching goal of the Fund is to counter the strength and impact of organized crime worldwide by supporting civil society and non-state actors and to reduce violence and conflict, and promote safe and equitable societies. This review assesses how the Fund has performed against its goals. This information is used to inform the lessons learned and, in turn, help develop recommendations for the future strategic direction of the Fund.

PROGRESS INDICATOR: Fundraising

Targets:

- ✓ Several additional partners have joined the fund within 24 months.
- ✓ Since its launch in 2019, the Fund has acquired new direct funding partners including the German Federal Foreign Office, the New Zealand Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, and the Dutch Embassy in Albania.

The Fund also confirmed a partnership with the UN Development Programme in Guinea-Bissau. This amounts to a combined total of US\$980 000 from other donors (as broken down in the chart below). Taken together, the funds available for grants under the Fund have grown from US\$1.96 million to US\$3.26 million between 2019 and 2021.

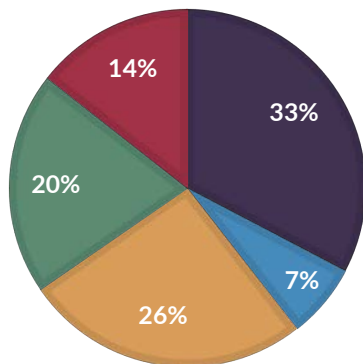
Despite the beginnings of a broader funding base, the Fund remains in need of substantial and sustainable support from its biggest supporters in order to continue its operations and ability to support civil society around the world.

PROGRESS INDICATOR: Grants disbursed in line with the strategic priorities set by Advisory Council

- ✓ The Fund has distributed grants in line with the Advisory Council's strategic priorities, which has promoted a broad geographic spread across varied countries and continents, as well as a spread across different types of initiatives, including local NGOs, individuals and journalism initiatives.

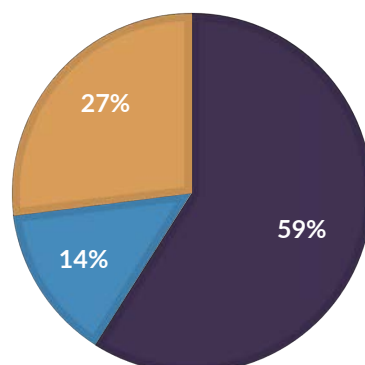
GRANT GEOGRAPHIC BREAKDOWN

■ Sub-Saharan Africa ■ MENA ■ Europe ■ Americas ■ Asia



GRANTEE TYPE BREAKDOWN

■ Resilience NGOs ■ Journalism Initiatives ■ Individuals/Fellows

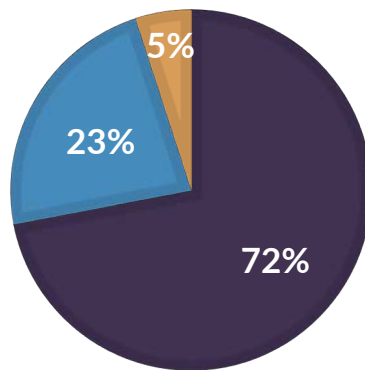


✓ **PROGRESS INDICATOR: Aggregated impact reporting by Fund beneficiaries, highlighting improvements in their quality of life at the community level as a result of the resilience activities funded**

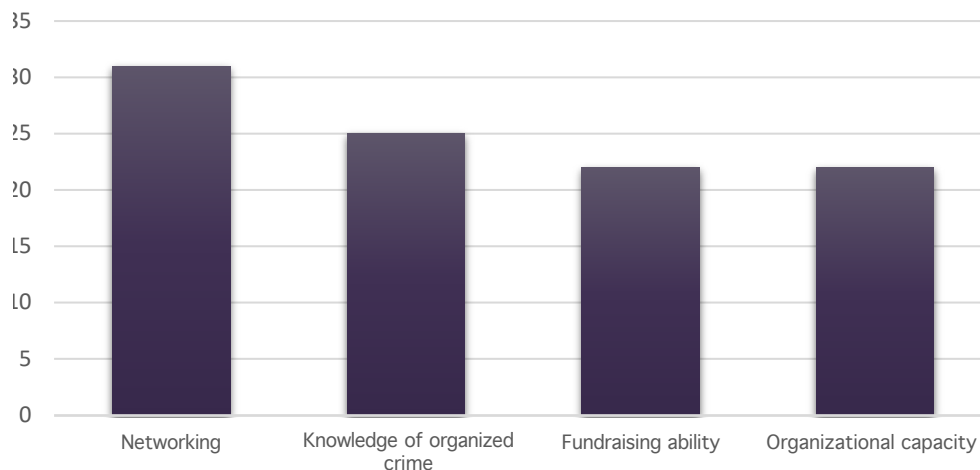
Reporting from grantees has indicated a variety of ways in which their work has improved and enhanced their responses, and based on the indicator we can see that the results from grantees show that the quality of life at the community level has been improved.

GRANTEE SURVEY RESPONSE ON WHETHER CAPACITY TO RESPOND TO ORGANIZED CRIME HAD IMPROVED DUE TO RESILIENCE FUND SUPPORT

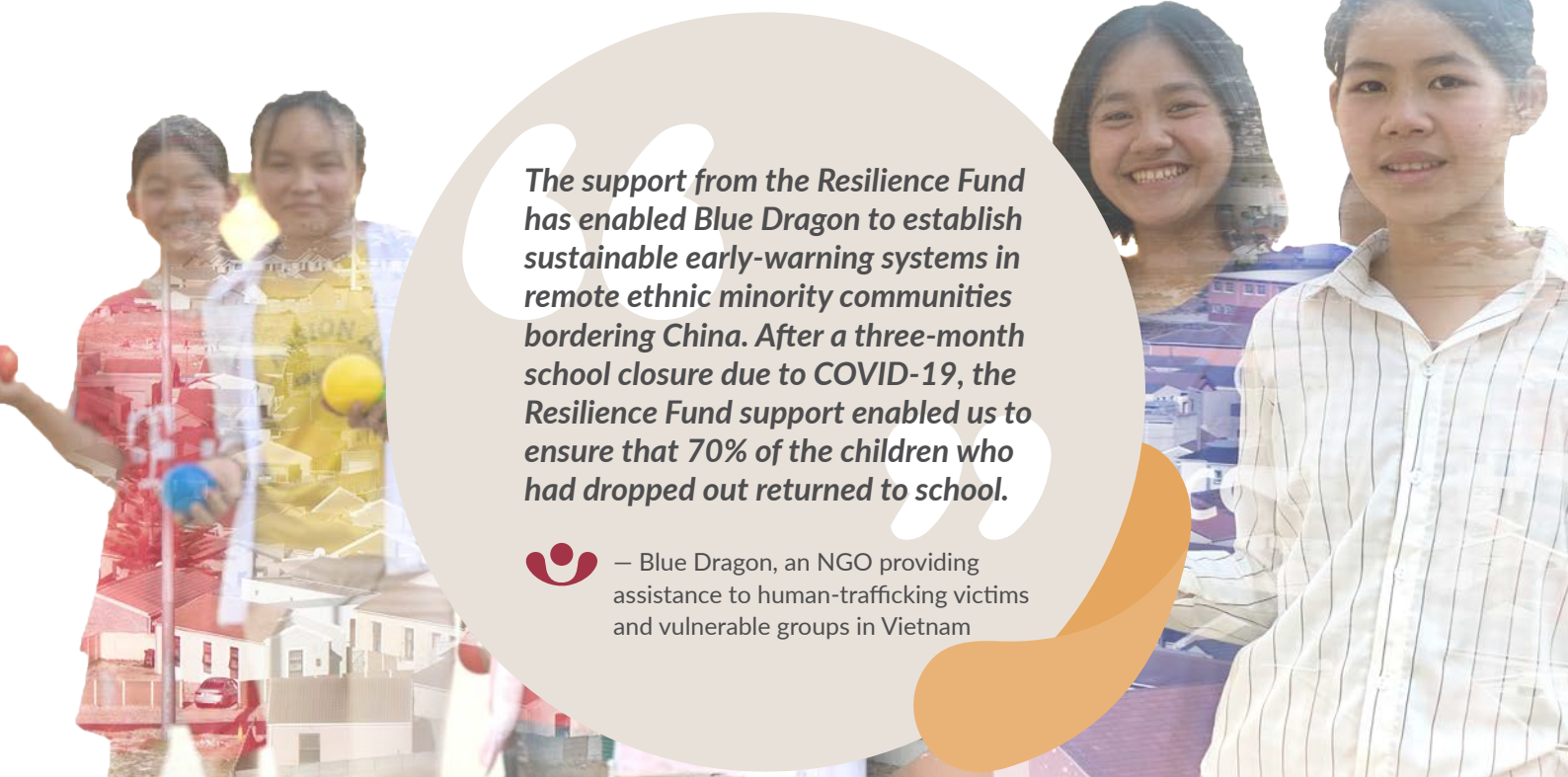
■ Certainly improved ■ Somewhat improved ■ Only maintained



GRANTEE SURVEY RESPONSE ON WHICH AREAS THEIR CAPACITY HAD BEEN BUILT DUE TO RESILIENCE FUND SUPPORT



The following are a selection of responses from grantees who took part in the impact survey in preparation for this strategic review. Forty grantees took part and answered questions on the impact of the funding on their work and communities.



The support from the Resilience Fund has enabled Blue Dragon to establish sustainable early-warning systems in remote ethnic minority communities bordering China. After a three-month school closure due to COVID-19, the Resilience Fund support enabled us to ensure that 70% of the children who had dropped out returned to school.



— Blue Dragon, an NGO providing assistance to human-trafficking victims and vulnerable groups in Vietnam

'The security of having this grant in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and its numerous knock-on impacts on funding is also not to be underestimated. There is also the value of this support beyond the financial – that it demonstrates to our team on the ground that there are international parties that are expressly concerned with this issue and are channelling resources to support their front-line efforts.'

LOCAL NGO, DRC

'It had been almost two years since Rapha has identified the need to engage with survivors of sexual exploitation and trafficking resulting from organized criminal activities in gang-controlled communities. The support of the Resilience Fund enabled Rapha to launch this project, which has had both humanitarian and developmental impact on the beneficiaries. Rapha also now has the capacity to support beneficiaries in the training, launching, and monitoring micro-enterprises without third-party involvement.'

LOCAL NGO, PORT-AU-PRINCE, HAITI

'Our work has become more visible and, during the work on this project, the team of the LUPA organization has acquired new skills, which will surely be useful for us in our further work, especially younger colleagues. On the other hand, organizing capacity building and networking events enabled the LUPA team to connect not only with colleagues from Montenegro, who are engaged in the research of organized crime and corruption, but also with colleagues from the region.'

LOCAL NGO, PODGORICA, MONTENEGRO

'The grant is allowing the consolidation of a community model for the intervention of social violence, based on the development of capacities that a group of community leaders previously developed when implementing and adapting the Cure Violence model to the context of Cali.'

LOCAL NGO, CALI, COLOMBIA


✓ **PROGRESS INDICATOR: Sustainability and expansion of activities of the Fund**

The Fund has disbursed grants to beneficiaries in 36 countries across 5 continents, and currently has grants active in 28 countries across 5 continents.

Other progress relevant indicators

Number of stories published in local media supported by the Fund

In the Americas, 15 grantees have produced 62 stories, short publications, videos, blogs and posts in social media and media platforms. Western Balkans grantees were also highly active on social media, where at least 10 of the 13 grantees had constant engagement in social media, reaching up to 400 000 visualizations per campaign for some of them (other organizations reported 237 000, 110 000 and 18 000 visualizations of social media posts). A documentary, a series of radio shows and a series of articles were also published by organizations.



It has allowed me to be stronger and more aware of what I have lived [through]. Despite the normal relapses in a process like mine, I can feel proud of what has been achieved. The fight for the search for justice is exhausting, but knowing myself strong, accompanied and glimpsing a new horizon pushes me to keep going.



— Griselda Triana, journalist and wife of murdered journalist Javier Valdez, Mexico

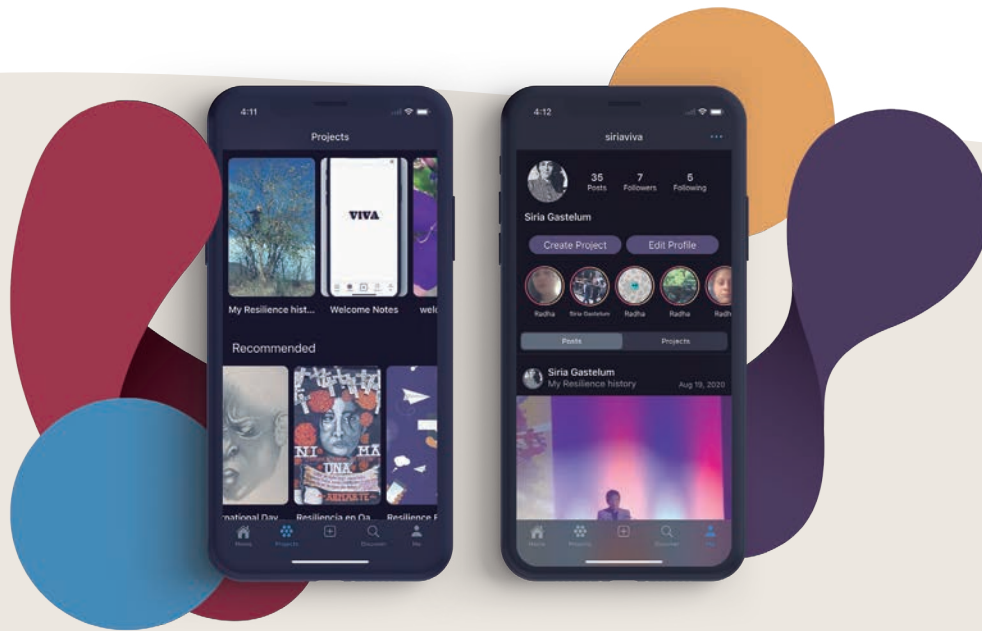


Resilience Fund partners and beneficiaries dialoguing through the virtual platform

Building connections between grantees and with policy stakeholders is a key priority of the Fund, and this is enabled by the VIVA app. While in-person gatherings are important, following priorities of the Advisory Council, the Fund has also focused on building a virtual platform to connect grantees. The Fund had to find an approach that considered the privacy and security risks, and built its own platform through a new tailor-made app, VIVA, which was piloted with the fellowship grantees but with a view to extending its use among all grantees.

The app currently has 30 active users, including fellows and grantees, with an increased number of grantees being added this year. The Fund's next step is to expand use of VIVA to all grantees and for use on

Android systems. Feedback has shown that many VIVA users (the grantees) appreciate having a platform to spontaneously talk about their work with other grantees and the GI-TOC Fund team.



CROSS-CUTTING AND EMERGING ISSUES

COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has been the most comprehensive challenge to the Resilience Fund programme since its inception. Grantees and GI-TOC Fund staff have experienced various degrees of lockdown, which has disrupted daily activities, the ability to work together, and engagements for grantees to network and collaborate. This review therefore must recognize that COVID-19 has fundamentally changed reality on the ground and posed challenges to the Fund. At the same time, development funding is being squeezed. The Fund grantees have also had to reckon with risks that were exacerbated by the emerging economic realities brought on by the pandemic – such as the presence of gangs and other criminal entrepreneurs exploiting the pandemic, and increasing opportunities for criminal governance.

The physical events and engagement elements of the newly launched Fellowship had to be quickly recalibrated into a virtual networking and engagement model. Major UN events, where grantees would normally have had an opportunity to network, were cancelled or held in online formats, such as the UN Crime Congress in March 2020, the UN General Assembly in September and other events where we would have brought grantees to engage with the international policymaking and development community. As mentioned, the Fund introduced VIVA to allow grantees to connect, especially in light of global travel

restrictions. The virtual exchanges that were held resulted in information exchange, but in a virtual format. The role of GI-TOC liaisons was adapted as the Fund adapted to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Reaching civil society in difficult circumstances

In 2020, the Government of Norway supported the Fund by providing an additional 'accelerator' grant to support the goals of the Fund in LDCs, where the level of capacity and coordination of civil society around the illicit economy is lacking. The scope of activity changed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the related shifts to the local (criminal) governance landscape in communities. Criminal groups in some cases have started delivering assistance to local communities; in others, they are exploiting the diversion of attention caused by the pandemic to settle scores with local activists, threatening their lives.

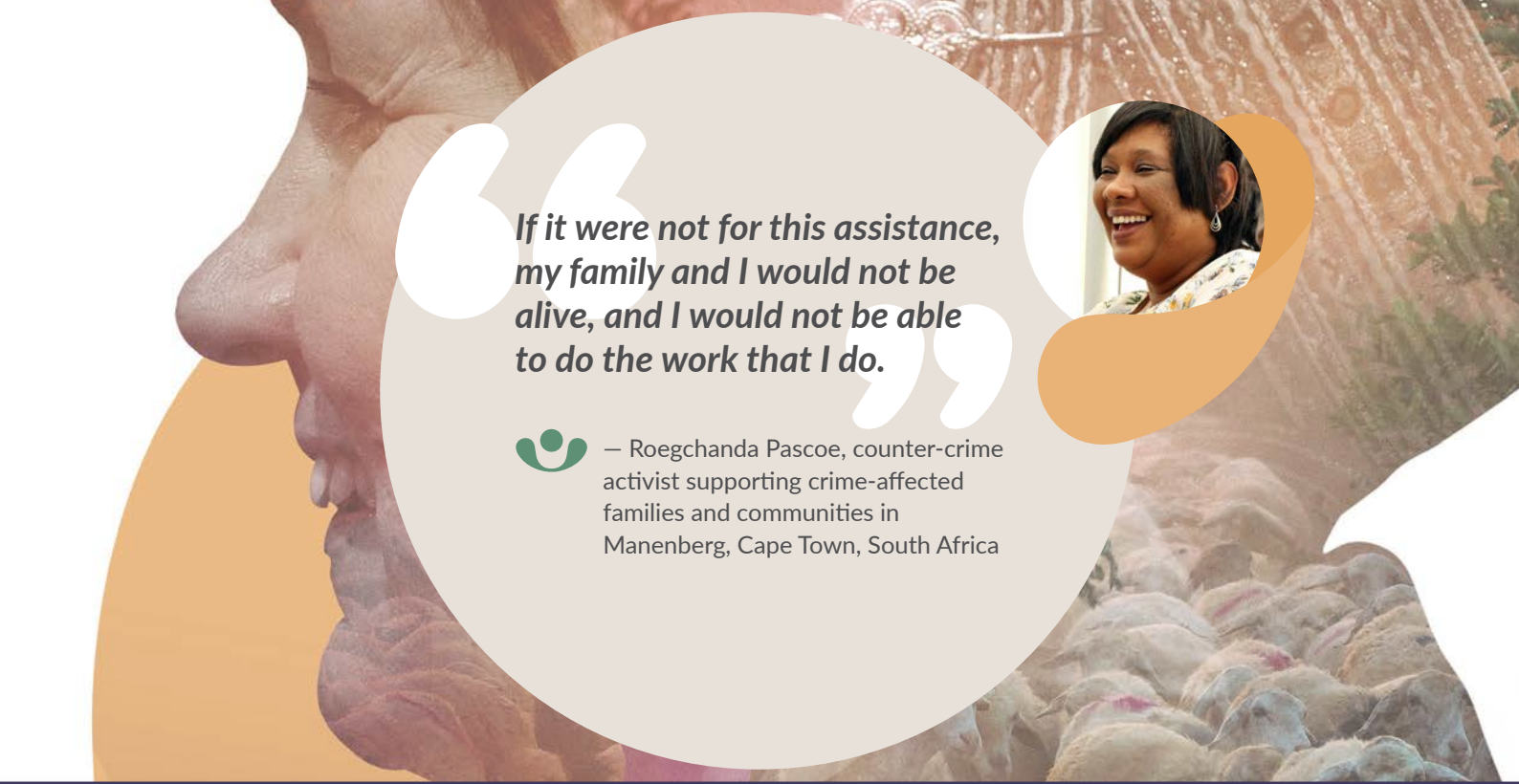
Despite the challenges presented by COVID, the LDC model of support for communities has been implemented, primarily in Guinea-Bissau, where a new partnership with the UNDP has been agreed. This country is particularly difficult to access for international NGOs, and the space for local civil society to operate independently is very brittle. Therefore, the partnership with UNDP allows the Fund to gain more access in the country, and allows for donor funds to be coordinated. Conversely, the UNDP is able to provide organized-crime-specific support and networking through its association with the Resilience Fund. The LDC model has also been used in Liberia and Mozambique. In Liberia, a youth gang violence prevention initiative has been supported, building links and capacity in particularly hard-to-reach gang run areas in Monrovia. In Mozambique, a diverse group of organizations have been supported in the midst of the growing insecurity caused by the insurgency in the north of the country, and the linked growth of illicit markets. These efforts have supported independent journalism and reporting, youth resilience, and efforts to investigate the links between environmental damage and illicit markets.

Although the LDC Accelerator support from Norway has been a time-limited programme of support, it has allowed the Fund to direct resources at particularly challenging communities and therefore has informed the overall approach of the Fund – which is reflected in the lessons learned in this strategic review. In particular, it has taught the Fund about the importance of maintaining flexibility in how to support local communities, and has also taught the Fund what closing civil society space looks like in reality.

In practical terms, the Fund scaled back some original elements of the LDC accelerator focused on convening, physical dialogues and engaging with new partners. Instead, the LDC accelerator has repurposed those resources, shifting them towards boosting the capacity of our existing Fund grantees and a selected group of new beneficiaries in a range of LDCs to serve as catalytic hubs in their communities, and to clearly amplify the role that civil society can play.

Safety and security

Another critical challenge has been ensuring the safety of grantees. The safety and security of the grantees is the biggest responsibility for the GI-TOC as the fund manager, and central to the challenge of working at the nexus of organized crime and violence. In the case of a safety or security breach, the Fund supports beneficiaries and staff, using established channels with experience in the field. In one case, a



If it were not for this assistance, my family and I would not be alive, and I would not be able to do the work that I do.



— Roegchanda Pascoe, counter-crime activist supporting crime-affected families and communities in Manenberg, Cape Town, South Africa

grantee was subjected to incessant cyber harassment and espionage. The Fund carried out a security assessment of her equipment, such as her laptop, and provided her with new equipment. The Fund also found a local NGO to consult with her on security issues. In another instance, a journalist reporting on illegal mining was served a lawsuit by an alleged criminal organization threatening imprisonment. Her newspaper was seized and team members were harassed. The Fund helped her to relocate to a safer location abroad. One grantee has been under constant threat of death since testifying against a gang who carried out a murder that she had witnessed. The Fund has supported her and her family by relocating them to a safer area, purchasing security equipment, and liaising with state and community actors on her behalf. It is inevitable that situations like these will continue to arise for the Fund given the nature of the interventions that it undertakes.

Communications and public engagement

During the pandemic, Twitter became more important as a communications tool for Fund fellows and grantees. However, the social media space also makes them more vulnerable, as it exposes their individual lives, and attacks can turn personal and violent. Criminal actors also use social media, which adds challenges and threats. And there is a need for evidence and clear information, for communities that follow this medium as a source of information and to trust community leaders supported by the Resilience Fund, who therefore need to be able to protect their reputation and promote trustworthy information online. During a targeted smear campaign of one grantee on social media, the Fund recognized the need to stand up for the fellows and grantees online when needed. The grantee was supported with institutional messages of support from GI-TOC and the Fund team also reached out to relevant stakeholders to show support for her until the campaign stopped.

The fact that grantees are associated with the GI-TOC and the Fund in policy and international forums – such as Fund events in the margins of UN meetings – lends them credibility. Through VIVA, photos and videos were uploaded by Fund civil society actors, contributing to the creation of insightful and meaningful stories that were showcased at the 14th UN Crime Congress in Kyoto. In the era of COVID, policymakers are interested in ideas on how to ‘build back better’ across the policy space, and grantees are well placed to show examples specific to community-level responses to organized crime. Although COVID-19 disrupted planned in-person convenings, prior to the outbreak of the pandemic the Fund hosted workshops for grantees and convened grantees at several GI-TOC-hosted or co-hosted events (e.g. the

Development Dialogue, March 2019, the Drugs and Development Hub in Bogotá, January 2020, and the Advisory Council meeting in Cape Town, February 2020).

Since the launch of the new Resilience Fund website in February 2020, the webpage has generated almost 50 000 views. Direct traffic was the biggest referral source for the Fund's website. This figure involves people accessing the website directly, being sent a link by email from a friend or colleague, as well as through sources Google Analytics cannot quantify. An additional 10 000 page views of Fund content were generated by the GI-TOC website over the period May 2019 to February 2020. The GI-TOC website is a consistently strong referrer to the Resilience Fund's own site.

SWOT ANALYSIS

Based on this review's assessment of the Fund's activities and impact so far, the table below provides a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) of the Fund.

<p>STRENGTHS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Able to deploy funds quickly and operate with low administrative bureaucracy. ■ Global reach has been successful so far and is expanding. ■ Flexibility for grantees to drive project development. Projects targeted at their needs and determine what is appropriate for them in their communities. ■ Global expertise informing local interventions. 	<p>WEAKNESSES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Grantee dependence on the Fund as primary and sole partner limits some grantees' ability to advance from incubation stage. ■ Partner preferences for earmarked funds limit flexible decision making and global reach. ■ Identifying a system across all grantees to systematize grantee impact reporting.
<p>OPPORTUNITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ There are relevant points that fit with the Fund's agenda in current global policy debates: shrinking civic space, police reform, resilience and 'building back better'. ■ Being part of GI-TOC allows us to build integrated programming around the Fund. ■ Technology: with the VIVA app, Fund is well positioned to provide networking for grantees, which grantees request. 	<p>THREATS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Safety of grantees is a constant concern and threat taken seriously. ■ The shrinking space for civil society at the multilateral level is a threat to bringing the ideas and voices of grantees to policy spaces. ■ Development funding under threat in general, and in particular since COVID-19.

LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Fund was conceptualized as an innovative and new concept when it was created, and it remains a unique development vehicle focused on community responses to organized crime in a wide range of settings. Fund staff have paid close attention to the ongoing learning process involved in setting up and implementing the work of the Fund. The operational period 2019–2021 was a relatively short timeframe to have created and implemented the range of activities under the Fund, and it is difficult to fully appreciate the impact and the lessons learned. Nevertheless, this strategic review presents a positive overview of the impact the fund is having, as well as what the Fund needs to consider to better support grantees and communities, and what the shape of the future strategy should be. Below are lessons learned and recommendations, grouped thematically.

Fundraising and policy engagement

In the first year of operation, it was difficult to raise additional funds because partners wanted to see the results, which were not yet apparent. Into the second year, the Fund found it easier to pitch and bring in new partners, as it was able to show results and concrete examples of how the Fund operates. The second challenge relates to expanding the global reach of the Fund. Partner preferences to focus on specific regions, themes and countries limited the Fund's ability to be flexible in grant giving, as have internal restrictions. A third challenge was the COVID-19 pandemic and resultant economic crisis, which has led to constraints on government funding due to reprioritization. The Fund's integration into the GI-TOC lends the Fund credibility and trust, and we have found that it is attractive to partners to have integrated processes with the broader programming, staff and networks of the organization. On an international level, the Fund has been able to tap into a growing policy interest in building back better, due to the COVID pandemic.


The baseline for the Fund's continuing operation and success is another injection of funding of a similar amount and mandate as delivered by the Government of Norway for the first three years. In addition, we make some more recommendations.

Recommendations:

- The Fund needs a more diverse and flexible funding base, and should therefore seek partners with different regional priorities, preferably including some with the ability to offer 'core' contributions, as well as those with specific priorities.
- The Fund should diversify from solely government agencies to also engage private foundations as partners.
- The Fund should ensure that resilience stories are presented and amplified in a broader set of international policymaking settings, and not just those related to organized crime, to align with the groundswell of 'building back better' and the notion of resilience as part of development discourse.

Global engagement and connecting grantees

The intention of the Fund is to achieve a global reach, but this goal came up against the regional priorities of partners, which have directed new resources at specific geographic areas. The Fellowship model has been vital to ensuring the global ethos of the Fund is reflected and provides lessons to apply to the Fund at large. The Fellowship was created because the Advisory Council and the GI-TOC felt there was a need for a programme that focuses on connecting grantees through a global and interdisciplinary platform. The Fellowship has allowed the Fund to promote discussion on a globally relevant issue across multilingual, cross-cultural groups, including with multilateral processes around their issues of expertise. Specific initiatives under the Fund have also supported and worked with existing UN processes, such as the UNDP in Guinea-Bissau. Feedback from Fellowship grantees has indicated the importance of developing new contacts and nurturing new bonds, much of which has been facilitated by the VIVA app. All grantees benefit from opportunities for shared learning, and the Fellowship model has been a pilot approach that could be expanded.



The Fund has helped me to look at the focus of my work in a more global and transnational way, has illuminated the root of the problem and has helped me to exchange ideas with colleagues to solve problems or highlight expressions of resilience that were not previously recognized. In general, I feel guided, supported and safer doing my job.



— Clavel Rangel, community activist, Venezuela

Recommendations:

- The Fund should ensure that all grantees benefit from the global experience-sharing platform enjoyed by the fellows.
- The Fund should ensure it has the resources and capability to invite all grantees to join capacity-building and networking opportunities through the Fund, and that all grantees can engage through VIVA.
- The Fund should prioritize ensuring that VIVA has the resources to be rolled out across the Fund, as a central component of its global model and networking platform – particularly as the pandemic means travel will continue to be restricted for the foreseeable future.

Identifying grantees and grantee sustainability

In its first round of grant giving, the Fund benefited from the reach and connections of the GI-TOC and its networks to identify grantees in several regions. The purpose of the Fund is to identify appropriate grassroots actors who are not necessarily known to the international community, and the Fund has found that identifying potential grantees around the world takes time, requiring outreach efforts and resources, as does the process of due diligence and needs assessment. Where the space for civil society to operate is constrained, it is even more important for connections to be made personally in a spirit of iterative trust-building. But despite the challenges, the Fund has made contact with a growing number of people wanting to work with the Fund. This further amplifies the need for GI-TOC staff and networks to pinpoint the most appropriate potential grantees, and nurture relationships and engage with their projects.

Subsequently, the Fund is a first step for many into the world of international funding. Some are wary of engaging with international partners and the constraints that come with it. Through the feedback that this review has received, the recipients like the approach of the Fund, which they see as open, flexible and community-centred. Due to the challenging circumstances in which they live (which have only been exacerbated by COVID-19), a small number of grantees rely heavily on the Fund and it is very unlikely they would find other financial sources or supporters in the foreseeable future. For them, the Fund gives them the strength and resources to continue living and working. Overall, the Fund and its partners aim to see grantees diversify their funding sources for sustainability. However, in these cases, it is unrealistic to expect all grantees to become self-sustaining within the lifetime of a grant. However, the Fund is well placed to provide guidance and support for fundraising and becoming sustainable. In some cases, the impact of the Fund is simply to support a grantee's ability to continue working or improve his or her security. At a higher level, some small and mid-size organizations are using the Fund as an incubator and are more stable but benefit from the capacity building that the Fund offers. Meanwhile, a third group of grantees do not need capacity building, but, with the Fund's support, are pioneering new work and innovating. Therefore, the approach to sustainability needs to be different.

Recommendations:

- The Fund should continue to use and leverage the networks of the GI-TOC, the Advisory Council and other GI-TOC and Fund stakeholders to identify and nurture relationships with civil society working in relevant communities that need support, and should prioritize this approach over open calls for applications.
- The Fund should develop a toolkit for identifying resilience actors, to be used by the GI-TOC primary grant liaisons, Advisory Council members and other stakeholders, so that potential partners can be identified in hard-to-reach places, where the space for civil society is shrinking.
- The Fund should recognize the special circumstances of some grantees and not expect them to become sustainable in the short timeframe of a grant. One option is to create categories of grantees and set expectations accordingly. This could be conceptualized along the following lines:
 - Group 1: New grassroots initiatives focused on staying afloat
 - Group 2: New initiatives that need seed funding but have clear potential to spin away from Fund
 - Group 3: Existing initiatives that are doing something new and innovative.
- Percentage of grantees becoming independent should be based on category. For example, some category 1 grantees should envisage staying with the Fund over a longer period than the other grantees.

Measuring impact

This review has found that there is a need to continue to improve and update the Fund's impact reporting systems as the Fund develops. The reporting system is not based on simple numerical outputs – such as number of meetings held – but rather encourages grantees to submit substantive reports on the actual impact of their work on their community (for example, in terms of improving conditions, opening up opportunities or providing protection for at-risk people) – see the Annex, which outlines impact reporting for each grantee. While recognizing the need for a stronger monitoring and evaluation (M & E) model to make it easier to demonstrate impact, the nature of impact for grantees varies significantly. Impact reporting depends on the grantee, and there is a need to take into consideration the different reporting capacities of different grantees and to tailor impact reporting to how individual grantees work.

Recommendations:

- As the Fund grows, and in line with its innovative origins, the Fund should pioneer new M&E models to measure impact. VIVA could be expanded from just networking and engagement functions to incorporate reporting as well. There is potential for VIVA to fit grantees' needs as a flexible, time-efficient and tailored reporting tool, possibly substituting a large part of written reports, depending on partner requirements.

Safety and security

As has been repeatedly prioritized by the Advisory Council, and proven by experience, the Fund will always have to deal with safety and security issues of grantees, and take responsibility for providing or facilitating assistance and advice. Thus far, the Fund has been able to respond by protecting certain activists supported by the Fund. The Fund has learned that cyberspace is now a key battleground where the safety of grantees can come under threat, and it is often in the online space where there is a first warning or confirmation of a threat. The digital environment is also where communities are increasingly relying on local leaders to provide communication, evidence and engagement, in the face of threats from criminal groups or others.

Recommendations:

- The Fund should ensure expert input and resources are included in the development of the Fund as it expands, to prioritize prevention and mitigation measures as well as reactive support measures for grantees.
- The Fund should boost its capacity for its staff and grantees to engage online with a security perspective in mind – to ensure threats are spotted, that online engagement does not expose grantees to danger, and to promote positive engagement to better inform communities.

CONCLUSION

Since launching in 2019, the Fund has achieved a great deal in communities under criminal governance facing extremely challenging circumstances – circumstances that have been exacerbated by COVID-19. By helping to sustain the work of over 80 individuals and organizations to prevent and counter the impacts of organized crime at a local level, the Fund has already made a difference in a wide variety of ways tailored to local communities. Responding to local challenges has meant approaches have not been uniform, but highly specific with significant support from the grant liaison systems used by the Fund. Even with COVID-19 complications, Fund staff have been able to scale up the number of grantees, increase regional diversity, and provide networking among grantees and the types of programmes it offers. It is positioned to take on more grantees, approach more partners, increase networking among grantees and fellows, and develop innovative approaches based on grantees' needs and changing circumstances. In the next phase, the Fund will have to address challenges related to M & E, as well as balancing partner needs with the flexible and global ethos of the Fund. But it is ready to scale up its work and its impact around the world. Firstly, the foundation upon which our future strategy can be sustained is secure funding from the Fund's core supporters. With this secure funding base, the lessons learned and recommendations provided in this review should help the Advisory Council shape a renewed strategy for the Fund, based on the following five pillars:

- **Continued flexible, personal and tailored approach of the Fund**, which ensures grantees are largely identified through existing networks and relationships are nurtured, utilizing the networks and resources of the GI-TOC, the Advisory Council and other stakeholders. This approach also ensures that community interventions are relevant and beneficial to local needs, and not just the needs of funding partners. It also ensures that those grantees needing long-term support receive that, and those ready to become self-sufficient can do so.
- **Enhanced global networking and engagement model**, building on the experiences of the Fellowship – to ensure that all grantees have access to capacity building and engagement opportunities, through the full rollout of the VIVA app.
- **Diversified funding and support base**. To maintain its flexible approach and global model, the Fund needs a diverse funding base, including some with the ability to provide core donations, and with a broad range of perspectives and priorities. More diversity can be achieved through more diverse engagement on the policy level, including 'building back better'.
- **Enhanced systems for measuring and demonstrating impact**. The grantees' individual efforts are difficult to aggregate due to their diversity, but diversity is inherent to the Fund's nature and to civil society working on these issues. The Fund therefore needs to develop new and innovative methods for reporting and demonstrating impact, including through the VIVA app.
- **Integrate security and safety support for grantees as a core of the Fund as they deal with the violence and threats associated with organized crime and criminal governance**. The security

dangers associated with community work on organized crime must remain front of mind for the Fund and its partners. Based on the experience it has gained so far, the Fund should develop an enhanced package of support and advice for grantees as they face the violence and threats associated with organized crime.



EMAIL

secretariat@globalinitiative.net

PHONE

+41 227308635

PHYSICAL AND MAILING ADDRESS

The Global Initiative Against
Transnational Organized Crime
Schwarzenbergplatz 1, 1010
Vienna, Austria



**GLOBAL
INITIATIVE**
AGAINST TRANSNATIONAL
ORGANIZED CRIME