

FINAL REPORT

CLUSTER EVALUATION OF LAUDES FOUNDATION'S COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

FOR LAUDES
FOUNDATION



PHILANTHROPY ADVISORS

Laudes ———
—— Foundation

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Acronyms

ASA	Action for Social Advancement
BLAST	Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust
CAMI	Centre of Support and Pastoral Care for Migrants
CEP	Center for Effective Philanthropy
CBO	Community-Based Organisation
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
C&AF	C&A Foundation
EF	Emergency Fund
EP	Effective Philanthropy
ER	Emergency Response
FASE	Federation of Organisations for Social Assistance and Education
FCRA	Foreign Contribution Regulation Act
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
FORGE	Funders Organized for Rights in the Global Economy
FPO	Farmer Producer Organisation
Fundo SAAP	Project Advisory and Analysis Service's Fund
GEI	Gender, Equity and Inclusion
GLJ	Global Labor Justice
GK	Gonoshasthaya Kendra
GOS	General Operating Support
KII	Key Informant Interview
MGNREGA	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
MRC	Migrant Resilience Collaborative
MT	Management Team
OECD-DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development - Development Assistance Committee
OHS Initiative	Occupational Health and Safety for Workers and Community Initiative
ONE	Organisational and Network Effectiveness
OSHE Foundation	Bangladesh Occupational Safety, Health and Environment Foundation

PA	Philanthropy Advisors
PFA	Psychological First Aid
PM	Programme Manager
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
RCRC	Rapid Rural Response to Covid-19
REDEH	Network of Human Development
RMG	Ready-Made Garment
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
SOPs	Standard Operating Procedures
ToR	Terms of Reference
ToT	Training of Trainers
TURC	Trade Union Rights Centre
USA	United States of America
WHO	World Health Organization

Executive Summary

Introduction

Laudes Foundation was launched in 2020 with the aim of challenging and inspiring industry to harness its power for good to address the climate and inequality crises. In March 2020, soon after the launch of the foundation, the Covid-19 pandemic hit. In response, the foundation developed an Emergency Response (ER) strategy based on internal discussions and requests from partners. The foundation also signed the [‘Philanthropy’s Commitment During Covid-19 Pledge’](#), which provided additional guidance.

The objective landed on, to “increase resilience of our partners and help them to get over the negative impact of the crisis” combined the idea of providing life-saving support with the desire to maintain a strong ecosystem of partners, seen as crucial for the systems change ambitions of the foundation and its governance. The strategy involved providing additional funds (to be spent on end beneficiaries’ basic needs, organisational costs related to the disruption of activities and the need to adapt to remote working), additional flexibility in existing grants, and a guidance and technical support package. A total of EUR 4 million was provided in two waves: EUR 3.3 million in 2020 and a second wave of support in 2021 of EUR 0.7 million.

The Evaluation

The evaluation was undertaken in order to generate learning for Laudes Foundation and its partners, as well as for peer organisations. It covered the entire ER from its inception up until the delivery of the second round of support to the foundation’s partners, including all types and rounds of support offered and all partners who were included.

A cluster approach was used, meaning learning is shared across the portfolio of grants and that the overall results of the cluster were evaluated, as well as looking into its constituent parts. The evaluation additionally used a case study approach in order to conduct more in-depth investigations into a portion of the portfolio.

The evaluation was carried out entirely remotely to protect the health of research respondents and to avoid international or local travel which may have contributed to the spreading of the virus. Please see Figure 1 below for an overview of the methodology employed.

The main limitations related to this evaluation are related to its scope and remote nature. Covering 61 partners in 6 countries/regions meant it was not possible to conduct a deep-dive into the experience of each grantee or to evaluate each response individually. Being carried out remotely (albeit with the support of consultants in Bangladesh, Brazil and India) meant only limited data collection was carried out with end beneficiaries and communities.

Figure 1: Evaluation Methodology Overview

(Source: Authors’ creation)



Desk and Literature Review

of over 400 resources, including strategy documents, proposals and final reports, as well as key literature on philanthropic practices and Covid-19.



Online Survey of Partners

with 53 key questions, sent to all partners having received ER support. The survey received 44 responses; a response rate of just over 73%.



Key Informant Interviews

with a total of 81 interviews carried out, including 7 with foundation governance and management, 12 with PMs, and 15 with partners.



Rapid Benchmarking

to provide a comparison with the efforts of similar foundations, including 8 interviews with other grantmakers and a review of relevant literature.



Case Studies

of the ER of 5 partners, to provide a deep dive into a representative portion of the portfolio. Case studies included remote interviews with PMs, partner management and staff and telephone interviews with community members and end beneficiaries where possible.

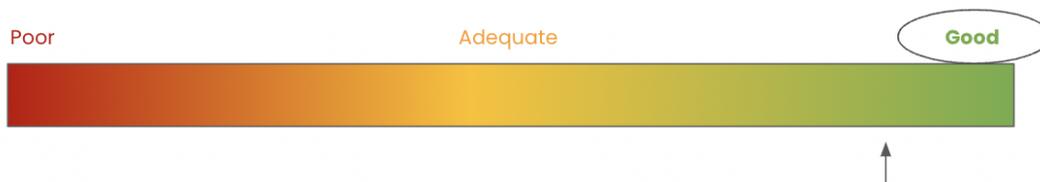


Sense-Making Workshop

with the EP team of the foundation, to ensure their participation in the finalisation of findings and recommendations.

Findings

Relevance (Alignment and Design)



Laudes Foundation’s response to Covid-19 was highly relevant overall, despite some assumptions not holding true

The ER strategy put in place by Laudes Foundation in response to Covid-19 is considered to be highly relevant overall, including in comparison to alternatives. The relevant design approach allowed for the rapid implementation of a strategy which catered to the needs of the foundation, its partners and their beneficiaries. The rapidity of the ER was crucial to its relevance, allowing for gap filling before other funds arrived. Although some assumptions held by the foundation (that partners would use funds for their organisations’ survival and that they would seize the opportunity to switch to General Operating Support (GOS), for example) were not later validated, the inclusion of Programme Managers (PMs) in the response design ensured that this did not negatively impact the overall response design. In this way, PMs have been central to the relevance of the ER. Differences in views on how relevant it is for a systems change focused foundation to provide emergency relief were revealed between the foundation’s governance and many of its staff.

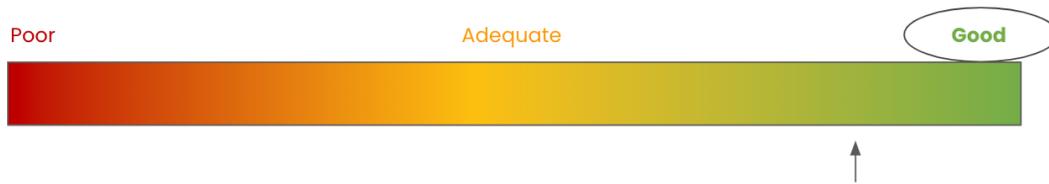
The ER was highly relevant to partners’ requirements during Covid-19, with the most accessed support being additional funds for beneficiaries (over 95% survey respondents). Additional funds for partners themselves and increased flexibility were also considered relevant and widely accessed. A focus on capacity building through the ‘Nonprofit Builder’ platform was not relevant for organisations operating under crisis conditions, which meant it was barely used during the ER.

Gender, Equality and Inclusion (GEI) issues were integrated by partners but this was not a specific focus of the ER design. This is considered a relevant strategy taking into account how rapidly it was designed and implemented.

Finally, the foundation’s response was found to be similar to that of other comparable organisations, being slightly more rapid than others interviewed but not as flexible as some. Examples of additional flexibility provided by other funders but not by Laudes Foundation include not requiring proposals, giving unrestricted or core funding which could be used as the grantee saw fit, and not requiring any

reporting on ER grants.

Efficiency



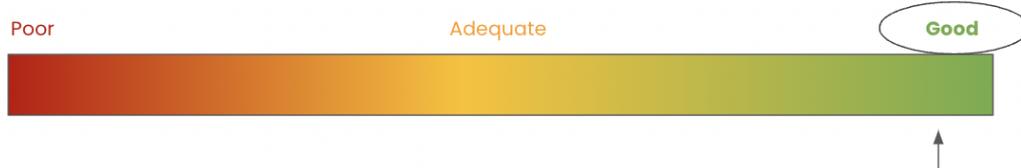
An overall efficient response based on timeliness and trust

The efficiency of the ER is rated as good overall based on a rapid and flexible response to the first wave of Covid-19, which in turn allowed partners to focus on swiftly implementing quick and efficient ERs themselves. This was enabled by Laudes Foundation’s collaborative partnership approach and excellent partner relationships, as well as its comparative advantage in having good regional presence with staff on the ground in some of the countries badly impacted by the pandemic. The ability of the foundation to take rapid decisions independently was also key to first wave efficiency, as was the existence of the Emergency Fund (EF) mechanism.

Factors undermining efficiency were mostly external, although internal factors (budget cuts and longer decision-making) compromised second wave efficiency to some extent, which has impacted the overall rating slightly.

The evaluation finds no evidence that the ER exposed the foundation to negative consequences despite minimum standards not being put in place systematically.

Effectiveness (Implementation and Results)

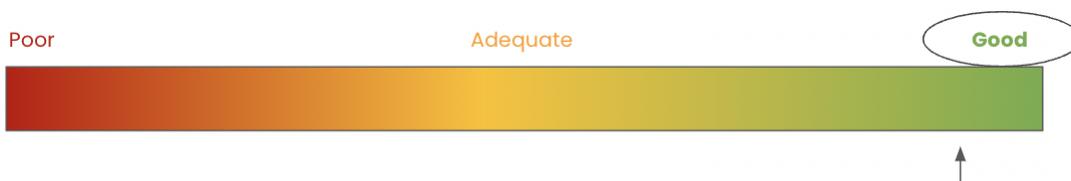


A highly effective ER with positive results despite external challenges

The ER achieved its objectives, supporting partners to cope with the pandemic and thereby maintaining its ecosystem of actors required to work on transforming systems. The ER has also allowed partners to provide a significant number of their vulnerable beneficiaries with life-saving support, which has maintained and built their community relations; a key factor in their ability to conduct their normal work. EUR 4 million in Laudes Foundation emergency funds were also leveraged to access an additional EUR 8 million, helping partners to support even more people.

There are signs that the ER has contributed to building the resilience of partners to future shocks, although direct attribution of this is not possible in all cases. The vast majority of grants are considered to have been effective in delivering planned outputs despite the general inexperience of partners in providing emergency relief and the challenging implementation contexts.

Likelihood of Impact (Long-Term Value)



A short-term response with some longer-term potential

The likelihood of longer-term impact and value being created by the ER is rated as good overall, taking into account the ultimately short-term nature of the response. As well as providing life-saving relief, the strategy put in place by the Laudes Foundation had the idea of resilience at its heart and was focused on sustaining partners and communities so that systems change work could continue post pandemic.

Recognising that expectations in terms of sustainability for an ER should be limited to maintaining sustainable partners and sustaining lives, there are also some early signs that potential for longer term value has been created by the foundation's response to Covid-19, both for the foundation and its partners. This includes strengthened partner relationships and reinforced ways of thinking at the foundation, and the development of new skills and capacities for partners. Some partners' responses to Covid-19 also have the potential to influence systems in line with Laudes Foundation's approaches. The rating is mitigated slightly because it is unclear to what extent changes made to streamline the foundation's grant-making processes during the ER will remain in place for regular programming.

Recommendations

Based on the evaluation findings and lessons learned, this evaluation presents recommendations for the foundation's future involvement in ER interventions, as well as for Laudes Foundation grant-making more generally.

Recommendations for Involvement in Emergency Response

- Maintain the EF mechanism, replenished with minimal funds (<EUR 100,000) so that the foundation is positioned to respond efficiently to crises which impact its systems change objectives, whether locally, regionally or globally.
- Based on the experience of this ER, define what constitutes a "crisis" for which the Laudes Foundation should provide temporary emergency support, and indicators to monitor the evolution of such crises.
- Capitalise on the good practices witnessed in this ER by creating Standard Operating Practices (SOPs) so that a process, including approval processes, will kick into place when/if crises arise and the foundation doesn't begin from scratch each time.
- Even in crisis planning, keep an eye on the post-acute phase. This could involve, for example, putting in place a "loose coupling" approach in which some buffer funds are held back until mid-term impacts can more effectively be assessed, and checking in with partners once the worst of the crisis has passed to monitor the situation and emerging needs.
- Ensure medium-term (recovery phase) interventions, such as technical support, are not only offered at the peak of crises but also as situations stabilise. These discussions should be integrated into mid-term plans and offered at various intervals or be an ongoing conversation.
- When crises which seriously impact partners hit, consider moving relevant grantees to GOS or accelerating grant payments proactively/automatically, so that partners can benefit from the advantages of this type of support without needing to make requests and negotiate. This will also help to lighten the load for grassroots and frontline organisations, who are likely to be the most busy dealing with community needs and to have fewer support functions.

Recommendations for Laudes Foundation Grantmaking

- Laudes Foundation should better define its understanding of the concept of “resilience”, and how this can be addressed through its ONE Programme, drawing up some key criteria based on its definition that can be used to assess the capacity levels of new and existing partners to cope with shocks and crises.
- The foundation should consider to what extent it can maintain and build on lighter ER practices in its usual grantmaking, to travel further in the direction of a trust-based approach by simplifying and streamlining paperwork, perhaps positioning the foundation as a sector leader in this regard.
- Unrestricted core funding is key to organisational resilience; consider how Laudes Foundation can accelerate moves in this direction, in line with emerging good practice in the sector related to increased flexibility and reduced oversight.

I. Introduction

Laudes Foundation, part of the Brenninkmeijer family enterprise, was launched in 2020 with the aim of challenging and inspiring industry to harness its power for good. In March 2020, soon after the launch of the foundation, the Covid-19 pandemic hit. With 76 grants active worldwide at this point, the foundation developed an Emergency Response (ER) strategy in response to internal discussions and requests from partners. The foundation concurrently signed the [‘Philanthropy’s Commitment During Covid-19 Pledge’](#) (hereafter “the Pledge”), which provided additional guidance.

The objective landed on for the ER, to “increase resilience of our partners and help them to get over the negative impact of the crisis” combined the idea of providing emergency support for partners to deal with the consequences of the pandemic (including by providing life-saving support to their communities) with the desire to maintain a strong ecosystem of partners, seen as crucial for the systems change ambitions of the foundation and its governance.¹

The ER fell into the ‘Resolve’ pillar of the foundation’s overall response to Covid-19: ‘Resolve, Return, Reimagine and Reform’, which covers the short, medium and long terms. The support provided in the response plan was structured in the three following areas:

1. Additional funds

Using the existing Emergency Fund (EF) structure created by the C&A Foundation (C&AF), funds were pooled from various sources to provide additional resources to be spent on end beneficiaries’ basic needs, as well as organisational costs related to the disruption of activities and the need to adapt to remote working. EUR 3.3 million was provided in 2020 and EUR 0.7 million in 2021. The amount made available in 2020 represented around 7.6% of Laudes Foundation’s programmatic grant budget for that year. 2021 ER commitments represented 1.1% of the grant budget.

2. Additional flexibility in existing grants

The foundation offered partners the possibility of loosening restrictions on existing grants in several different ways, such as converting project grants to General Operating Support (GOS), anticipating grant payments, removing grant requirements and extending reporting deadlines.

3. Guidance and technical support

Finally, Laudes Foundation offered partners a resource package and pro-bono organisational development support made up of the ‘Nonprofit Builder’ consultancy platform, as well as tools for remote work.

61 partners in total from the Labour Rights and Materials programmes accessed either one or two rounds of funds. 58 of the foundation’s active grant partners accessed a first round of support. 17 partners accessed the second round of funding (including three who didn’t receive funds in the first round).

Also a part of the ‘Resolve’ strategy were the following elements:

- EUR 1.5 million converted support to Save the Children to create safe and healthy spaces for children in various countries in Europe (which came from a previous year C&AF budget, not from Laudes Foundation’s budget)
- EUR 400,000 to a Covid-19 response fund for workers and families, created by an alliance of human rights foundations (FORGE)

Given the scale and varied nature of the support provided by the foundation to its partners, as well as the organisation’s prioritisation of learning, Laudes Foundation commissioned Philanthropy Advisors (PA) to conduct an independent cluster evaluation of its Covid-19 ER.

¹ Laudes Foundation Effective Philanthropy Group, MEMORANDUM: Further recommendations for Laudes Foundation’s response to Covid-19 outbreak (31 March 2020)

II. The Evaluation

Evaluation Objectives

The evaluation was undertaken in order to generate learning for Laudes Foundation and its partners, as well as for peer organisations. The objectives of the assignment were the following:

- A. Evaluating the **overall strategy** and **implementation** of the Covid-19 ER, including the results of the first and second rounds of support, investigating the following:
 - a. The **relevance, appropriateness and quality** of the response plan's design and strategy to the needs of partners, beneficiaries and the foundation.
 - b. The **overall effectiveness** of the implementation of the strategy, looking at whether the foundation did the right things in the right ways and identifying lessons learned during both the first and the second rounds of support for similar future efforts.
 - c. The **efficiency** of the roll out of the response plan, including its timeliness and proportionality.

- B. A focus on the **added-value** of the ER and its **contribution**, based on a representative sample of the portfolio, specifically looking at:
 - a. The **concrete results** of the intervention for partners and beneficiaries, looking at how the foundation contributed to their grantees' capacity to cope and to continue supporting beneficiaries during the crisis.
 - b. The **added-value** of the ER, investigating how funds were used as well as looking comparatively at the role of the complementary mechanisms offered.
 - c. The **potential long-term value or likelihood of impact** of the ER, including for partners, for beneficiaries, for the foundation.

Based on the findings at the two levels of analysis, this evaluation assessed the appropriateness of the strategy and identified drivers of effectiveness and missed opportunities. It generated lessons learned and recommendations to improve any future emergency engagements and to feed the strategy reflections of the foundation (or other like-minded organisations) in providing emergency assistance for partners in times of crisis. Recommendations for standard operations (resulting from lessons learned during Covid-19) have also been provided.

Evaluation Scope

This cluster evaluation covered the entire ER from its inception up until the delivery of the second round of support to the foundation's partners, including all types and rounds of support offered and all partners who were included.

The evaluation also touches on the contribution and wider spill-over effects of the ER on the foundation's overall ways of engaging with its partners, implementing programmes and strategic vision.

The evaluation does not, however, cover the other elements of the 'Resolve' part of the foundation's overall Covid-19 strategy (the Save the Children grant, fund for workers and families or funding of women's rights organisations), nor the medium and longer term strategy components. Due to the nature of the ER, which covered two of four key pillars of Laudes Foundation's work (Labour Rights and Materials, but not Built Environment or Finance and Capital Markets because their partners were not in need of support), the evaluation only includes those programmes covered by the ER. Looking into the wider impacts of Covid-19 on the foundation or its partners is also not within the scope of the evaluation.

Evaluation Users

The primary users of this evaluation are Laudes Foundation, specifically its governance and management, Effective Philanthropy (EP) and programmes teams. Secondary users include partners who have accessed support through the ER and other similar foundations and funds who have, or will, put in place ERs, including for Covid-19.

Evaluation Framework and Approach

This evaluation is a cluster evaluation, meaning learning is shared across a portfolio of grants and that the overall results of the cluster are evaluated, as well as looking into its constituent parts.

PA's approach to this assessment was highly participatory, involving a maximum number of stakeholders at all levels to arrive at (and challenge) findings, as well as frequent communication with the EP team of the foundation.

The evaluation additionally used a case study approach in order to conduct more in-depth investigations into a portion of the portfolio, focusing on concrete results of the response, Laudes Foundation's added value and any potential long-term value generated. Recognising the challenges of assessing attribution within the scope of this evaluation, "contribution" has instead been explored.

As with all PA evaluations, the evaluators were guided by PA's Evaluation Principles, which can be found in the Inception Report in Annex 1.

Evaluation Criteria and Questions

The evaluation was guided by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) criteria for evaluating development assistance integrated with the criteria established by the foundation in the Terms of Reference (ToR) for this evaluation (Alignment and Design, Implementation and Results, and Long-Term Value). The criteria of Timeliness and Proportionality, Quality, Equity and Accountability were also taken into account. The full set of evaluation questions can be found in the Inception Report in Annex 1.

Figure 1: Evaluation Criteria and Overall Guiding Questions

(Source: Authors' creation, amended from OECD-DAC, *Better Criteria for Better Evaluation, Revised Evaluation Criteria Definitions and Principles for Use*, 2019)

RELEVANCE

(Alignment & Design)

Has the response done the right things?
Was the strategy and design appropriate for the achievement of Response objectives?

EFFICIENCY

Was the rollout of the Response efficient, proportional and timely? Have Laudes Foundation processes helped or hindered the Response?



EFFECTIVENESS

(Implementation & Results)

Has the initiative achieved its intended objectives? To what extent? Why or why not? What have been the key results? What could have been done differently?

LIKELIHOOD OF IMPACT

(Long-Term Value)

What are the lessons learned? Are any results likely to be long lasting and sustainable?

Methodology

In line with Laudes Foundation's guidelines and PA's Covid-19 research protocols, this evaluation was carried out entirely remotely to protect the health of research respondents and to avoid international or local travel which may have contributed to the spreading of the virus.

The evaluation took place from March to November 2021, being put on hold between April and July 2021 due to the worsening of the Covid-19 crises in Brazil and India. The evaluation employed a mixed-methods approach which relied on both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis. An overview of the methodology is presented in Figure 2 below and full details can be found in the annexed Inception Report.

Figure 2: Evaluation Methodology Overview

(Source: Authors' creation)



Desk and Literature Review

of over 400 resources, including strategy documents, proposals and final reports, as well as key literature on philanthropic practices and Covid-19.



Key Informant Interviews

with a total of 81 interviews carried out, including 7 with foundation governance and management, 12 with PMs, and 15 with partners.



Case Studies

of the ER of 5 partners, to provide a deep dive into a representative portion of the portfolio. Case studies included remote interviews with PMs, partner management and staff and telephone interviews with community members and end beneficiaries where possible.



Online Survey of Partners

with 53 key questions, sent to all partners having received ER support. The survey received 44 responses; a response rate of just over 73%.



Rapid Benchmarking

to provide a comparison with the efforts of similar foundations, including 8 interviews with other grantmakers and a review of relevant literature.



Sense-Making Workshop

with the EP team of the foundation, to ensure their participation in the finalisation of findings and recommendations.

Kills and Case Study Selection

Laudes Foundation Programme Managers (PMs) were selected for interview based on a stratified random sampling which ensured representativity of the overall portfolio. Partners were selected using this method, cross-checked with any especially interesting or anomalous responses from the survey.

Other foundations were selected for inclusion in the rapid benchmarking exercise based on a purposive sampling which included organisations who had put in place an ER to Covid-19 and who were within the network of the Laudes Foundation and evaluation team, as well as being willing and able to participate within the timeframe. Interviews were completed by a rapid literature review.

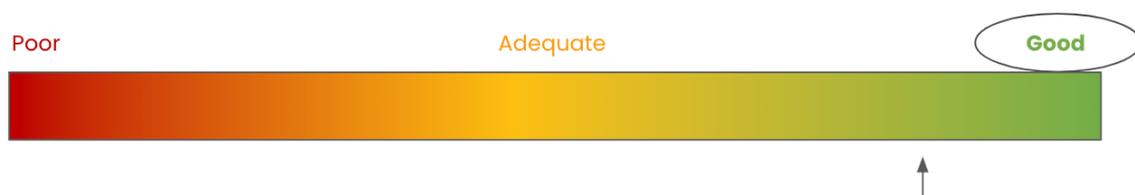
Case studies were selected using a two-step approach which aimed for representation of the overall portfolio as well as following up on interesting results and examples of good practice and longer-term value. In order to ensure representativeness, a first round of selection was undertaken based on location, programme, and the number of rounds of support received. In consultation with EP and programmes teams, cases which offered opportunities for learning and the showcasing of results were then selected. The final selection was then adjusted to ensure partners were available to participate in data collection. The methodology for each case study was tailored in coordination with partners, an overview of which can be found in each individual case study in Annexes 2 to 6.

Rating Rubric

This evaluation uses a simple sliding scale, as below, to highlight positive and negative effects or aspects of the ER and help the reader understand overall performance. The criteria rating, represented by the black arrow, is based on the qualitative appreciation of the evaluators. Please note that the scale's objective is geared towards learning and is used only as a visual indication to foster discussion and reflection.

Figure 3: Rating Rubric Example

(Source: Authors' creation)



Limitations

The main limitations related to this evaluation are the following:

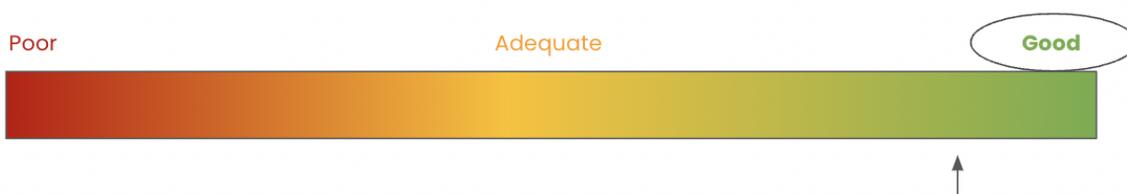
- The ER has covered a total of 61 partners working across 6 countries/regions. Although all partners except one (excluded because they only received a software subscription through

the ER) were covered by the survey, it was not possible to conduct a deep-dive into the experience of each grantee or to evaluate each response individually.

- The evaluation was conducted entirely remotely, meaning that only limited data collection was carried out with end beneficiaries. Nonetheless, the evaluation team worked with local consultants in Bangladesh, Brazil and India in order to conduct telephone interviews with community members or beneficiaries for all case studies, in order to ensure a minimum of these perspectives were included, as well as the contextualisation and comparability of results.
- Although the evaluation looks at reported changes in partners' organisational resilience, and the contribution of the foundation to this, baseline information is not available for partners on pre-response resilience levels meaning this is based on retroactive self-assessment. Criteria for the assessment and measurement of resilience were also not in place.
- Two of the originally selected case studies needed to be replaced for reasons not linked to this evaluation. Although these changes have not impacted the overall quality of data collection and have brought other value in terms of perspectives and experiences, a planned focus on the process of converting to GOS as part of the ER has not been feasible.

III. Findings

A. Relevance (Alignment and Design)



Laudes Foundation's response to Covid-19 was highly relevant overall, despite some assumptions not holding true

The ER strategy put in place by Laudes Foundation in response to Covid-19 is considered to be highly relevant overall, including in comparison to alternatives. The relevant design approach allowed for the rapid implementation of a strategy which catered to the needs of the foundation, its partners and their beneficiaries. The rapidity of the ER was crucial to its relevance, allowing for gap filling before other funds arrived. Although some assumptions held by the foundation (that partners would use funds for their organisations' survival and that they would seize the opportunity to switch to GOS, for example) were not later validated, the inclusion of PMs in the response design ensured that this did not negatively impact the overall response design. In this way, PMs have been central to the relevance of the ER. Differences in views on how relevant it is for a systems change focused foundation to provide emergency relief were revealed between the foundation's governance and many of its staff.

The ER was highly relevant to partners' requirements during Covid-19, with the most accessed support being additional funds for beneficiaries (over 95% survey respondents). Additional funds for partners themselves and increased flexibility were also considered relevant and widely accessed. A focus on capacity building through the 'Nonprofit Builder' platform was not relevant for organisations operating under crisis conditions, which meant it was barely used during the ER.

Gender Equality and Inclusion (GEI) issues were integrated by partners but this was not a specific focus of the ER design, considered a relevant strategy taking into account how rapidly it was designed and implemented.

Finally, the foundation's response was found to be similar to that of other comparable organisations, being slightly more rapid than others but not as flexible as some.

The ER was designed based on a relevant and coherent approach

Laudes Foundation's approach to designing the initial ER is considered to have been appropriate. The design strategy consisted of giving leadership to the EP team through its Organisational and Network Effectiveness (ONE) mandate, working rapidly while gathering inputs from programmes teams and other philanthropic actors, and gathering funds from various internal sources into the existing EF. This approach allowed the foundation to quickly design a response which catered to the main needs of the foundation, its partners and their beneficiaries.

The signing of "the Pledge" by Laudes Foundation is considered a relevant decision which provided a framework of guiding standards which was complementary to discussions within the foundation, as well as an element of accountability to sector best practices.² Despite working quickly, it was also relevant for the foundation to connect with other similar organisations in the design phase, to look for inspiration and generate a rapid benchmark, ensuring some minimum standards in terms of philanthropic practices were being met, and providing a sense-checking for Laudes Foundation ideas.

The initial ER strategy was appropriate for the achievement of objectives in comparison to alternatives

Compared to alternative response options, such as collaborating with other grant-makers to pool funds or contributing to a centralised Covid-19 fund, the strategy landed upon was the most appropriate for the newly-launched Laudes Foundation. Since humanitarian action was outside the scope of the foundation's new strategy, a donation to external humanitarian actors or a centralised/pooled emergency fund would not have fit easily with the foundation's fresh mandate and comparative advantage, being focused on systems transformation rather than service provision. It would also not have allowed the foundation to stand in solidarity with its partners and strengthen partnerships, supporting partners to support their beneficiaries.

The strategy of working directly through existing partners and not pooling funds was the most relevant of available options as well because it allowed the ER to be rolled out quickly.³ Indeed, the strategy was in place by the end of March 2020, only around 10 days after the World Health Organization (WHO) had declared the crisis a pandemic, with disbursements made in April 2020. The rapidity of Laudes Foundation's ER (discussed further in the efficiency section) was crucial to its relevance because it meant funding gaps were filled before funds from other donors or government arrived, providing the foundation's funding with a clear added value. For many organisations interviewed, the first emergency funds they received were from Laudes Foundation. With its focus on operational costs, the ER also covered costs that other funders did not necessarily, such as for technology expenses or cancelled events.

Considering the diversity of partnerships and programmes under Labour Rights and Materials, it was relevant to keep the overall support offer fairly broad, so it could be tailored to partners in conversation with PMs. The wide objective proved to be an added-value of the ER as it allowed PMs room for movement in recommending grants for approval. It is also considered a responsible and fair decision to include outgoing partners (or, in some cases, previous sub-grantees) in the ER so as not to leave these organisations devoid of support.

² "The Pledge" refers to the Council on Foundations' 'Call to Action: Philanthropy's Commitment During Covid-19', which made commitments to nonprofit partners, such as loosening existing grant restrictions, and which was signed by 805 organisations including Laudes Foundation.

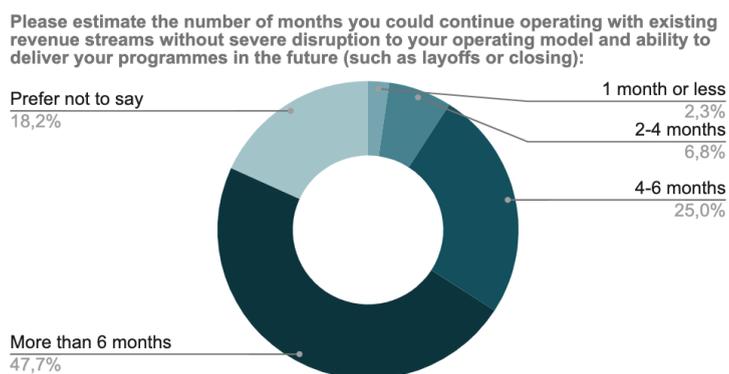
³ Funds were pooled as part of FORGE in response to Covid-19 but this is out of the scope of the ER and this evaluation.

ER objectives revealed tensions between the governors' view on systems change and service delivery, and that of many foundation staff

The objective decided on, to “increase the resilience of our partners and help them get over the negative impact of the crisis”, was born out of the tension between what many at the foundation considered were urgent support needs on the ground for partners and their communities, and the reluctance of the foundation’s governance to fund service delivery or humanitarian relief, believing this didn’t fit into their systems change objectives. Governors were open to building the resilience of partners to accelerate systems change, however, and so the framing of the ER built on this, as well as making provision for partners to support beneficiaries as one of four options for the use of funds. The other three options all focused on partners’ costs. On the surface, this made sense in a systems approach as it focused on protecting the ecosystem of partners through which the foundation planned to achieve industry transformation.⁴

However, resilience was not fully defined as a concept by the foundation further than maintaining salaries, rent, bills, utilities, internet, etc., being able to set up remote working infrastructure and to cover the costs of postponing events. The main factor identified as a threat to partners’ resilience was their availability of operating costs. The rationale for this focus was that over 50% of non-profits have less than 3 months of operating reserves on hand.⁵ However, survey responses reveal that partners may not have been as vulnerable in this aspect as assumed. Indeed, of those who responded, nearly 73% reported being able to continue operations for 4 or more months, with nearly 50% having more than 6 months’ financial security. Nearly 73% survey respondents said in August 2021 that they had not so far had issues with cash flow during the pandemic.

Figure 4: Survey Responses on Operating Reserves
(Source: survey of foundation partners who accessed the ER)



The survey results show that when partners were asked to retroactively report their main concerns at the beginning of the pandemic, needs were fairly varied but cash flow and budget issues were some of the areas partners reported being least worried about.

Although the focus on the resilience of partners was partly based on the need to gain governance buy-in, some in executive management had thought most funds would be used by partners to support their organisations. This assumption that partners would focus on “keeping the lights on” was not shared by most in the programming teams, who were closer to the reality on the ground and had been in contact with partners to understand their needs, and who had reported back community concerns. Based on the survey responses, the issues of most shared concern among partners were related to continuing programming, creating social distancing in operations and accessing beneficiary populations. Staff care and mental health was also a significant concern for several of them, considering many partners were themselves based in the countries and communities worst affected and uncertainty was universally shared.

⁴ Laudes Foundation Effective Philanthropy Group, MEMORANDUM: Further recommendations for Laudes Foundation’s response to Covid-19 outbreak (31 March 2020)

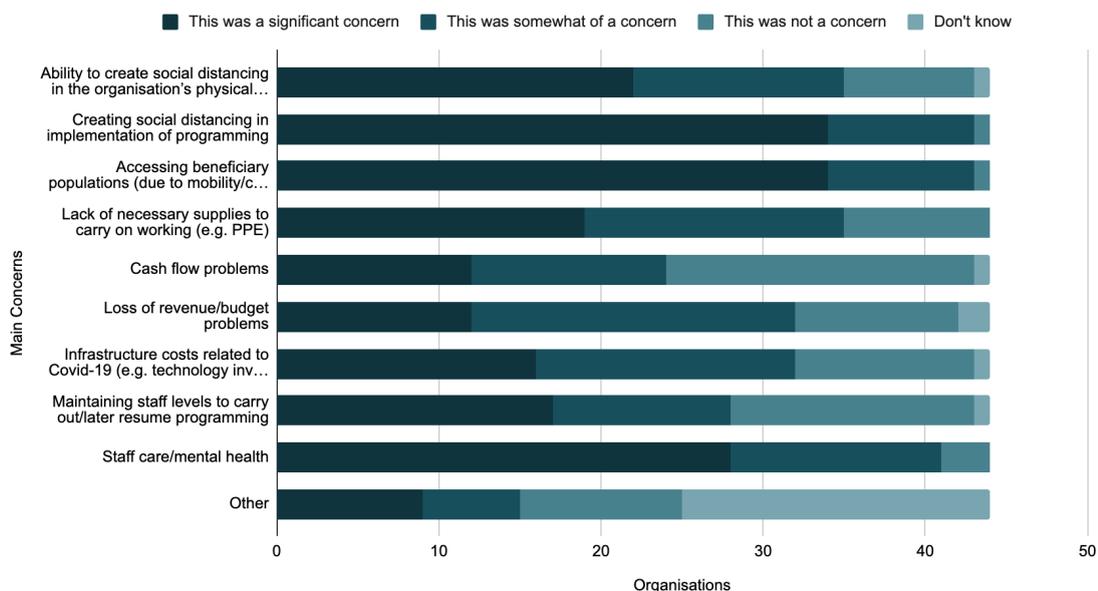
⁵ Ibid

*“I expected the funding to be used by partners for themselves. It was really surprising to see how much went to direct beneficiary support.”
(Interview with a member of the Laudes Foundation Management Team (MT))*

*“It was driven by partner needs eventually. But at the start, the management team felt that the needs were going to be more in general operating support, or grant modifications.”
(Interview with a Laudes Foundation staff member)*

When asked about their organisations’ main areas of need in dealing with the Covid-19 crisis, selecting all that applied, nearly 82% selected additional funds for beneficiaries’ needs, just over 36% chose additional funds for the organisation/operational costs, nearly 32% selected additional flexibility and just under 17% selected guidance and technical support. Only just under 7% survey respondents selected ‘other’ when asked about their organisation’s needs, suggesting very few partners had needs which fell outside of the offer proposed. Laudes Foundation figures show that, in the first round of support, 67% of the total funds available was spent on beneficiaries’ needs, compared to 23% on working capital, and 10% on workplace adaptation, cancelling or postponing events and other expenses combined.

Figure 5: Survey Results on Partners’ Main Concerns at the Beginning of the Pandemic
(Source: survey of foundation partners who accessed the ER)



The inclusion of feedback from PMs in the final implementation memo was therefore crucial to the design’s relevance and meant that partner and beneficiary needs were ultimately integrated. Most PMs reported that the final response strategy reflected the conversations they had had with their partners well, although there was a fair amount of back and forth before direct beneficiary support was integrated.

The overarching focus on resilience was an important and relevant compromise between providing for needs on the ground in response to partner requests, while maintaining the support of a governance focused on systems change. The process of designing the ER and setting an objective highlighted apparent difference in definitions of systems change and resilience in the foundation, with operational teams seeing partners being able to provide necessary support to their communities in times of crisis as directly linked to their ability to maintain their position and therefore future systems change work, and governance seeing service delivery and humanitarian aid as disconnected from systems change. This is discussed further in subsequent sections.

“They said they can’t really give direct relief but we kept saying we really needed it. It was a lot of back and forth and we finally came up to the point that the direct fund cannot surpass EUR 100,000 for emergency direct support.”
(Interview with a Laudes Foundation staff member)

“The final memo that came reflected what the partners had expressed.”
(Interview with a Laudes Foundation staff member)

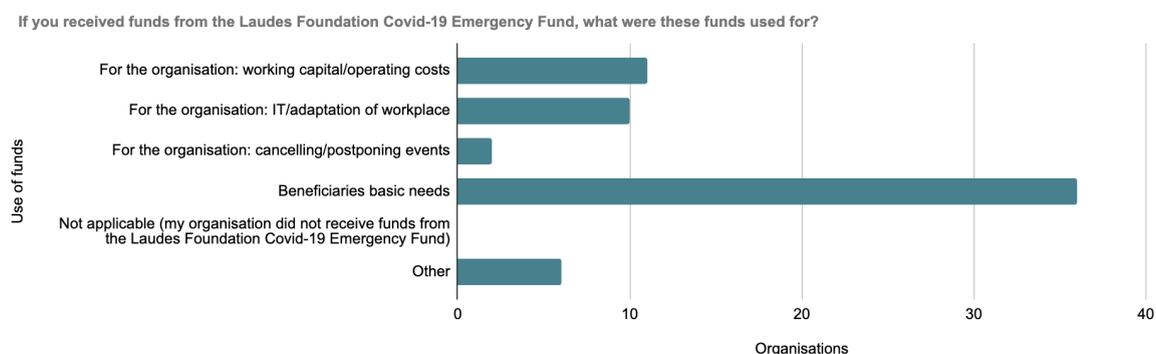
The ER design was highly relevant to most partners’ needs during Covid-19 due to prior consultations through PMs

Results from the survey show that 95.5% of partners who responded were contacted by the foundation prior to the Covid-19 ER initiative being put in place, to understand their situation and needs during the crisis. Nearly 98% partners learnt of the ER through their PM. This rapid needs assessment fed back to the foundation by PMs, has positively impacted the relevance of the final support offer to partners’ requirements. Feedback from partners who completed the survey is positive: nearly 78% said the foundation’s offer responded to all or most of their needs during Covid-19. For most partners interviewed, the only additional thing which would have helped in terms of the offer was more available funds, which is to be expected considering the scale of needs.

Additional funds for beneficiaries and flexibility were the most relevant support offers for partners

Unsurprisingly for an ER, additional funds were the support offer most requested by partners (over 95% survey respondents). In line with the findings above which show the extent to which partners prioritised beneficiary needs, over 93% of those who received additional funds from the ER used it for this purpose. Additional flexibility in grants was the next most popular form of support, requested by 43% respondents.

Figure 6: Survey Results on Use of Funds Received as part of the ER
 (Source: survey of foundation partners who accessed the ER)



Additional flexibility was appreciated but the GOS offer was less relevant than originally assumed, especially at a time of crisis

Almost all partners interviewed as part of this evaluation mentioned their appreciation of the foundation’s flexibility during Covid-19, which allowed them to focus on their emergency operations. Even if they didn’t apply formally for additional flexibility in existing grants, for example by extending project timeframes or reporting deadlines, partners benefitted from PMs’ flexible and approachable manner of working with them.

The majority (56%) of partners who did not apply for flexibility said this was because their grant conditions were flexible enough; a positive reinforcement of the way the foundation works more generally. Some (16% respondents) were not aware additional flexibility was an option, although PMs say it was communicated widely, suggesting maybe that the parameters of the offer were not fully

understood. To date, only 3 partners have requested a conversion to GOS. 2 of these applications were granted at a total value of around EUR 2 million.

Like the focus on beneficiary needs, several members of the MT were surprised that more partners had not requested to convert their programme grants into GOS. Again, the same was not true of many in the programming teams who were aware that partners were prioritising beneficiary support.

Interviews with partners demonstrated a nuanced set of reasons for not using the GOS offer. For several, there was little added value in switching to GOS during Covid-19 because although their work during the ER might differ in terms of the specific activities, the focus on some of the most marginalised communities would be the same. It was not clear to them what they would have done with GOS that they couldn't have done with flexibility in timelines and objectives. However, several also expressed that they didn't have the time to consider such a change while trying to deal with the crisis, demonstrating that times of acute crises are not necessarily a good moment to have strategic conversations with future repercussions for the organisation. Several PMs thought it was a missed opportunity for their partners and that they could have pushed harder for them to think about the advantages in the longer-term, with some suggesting grantees were not used to this type of offer and others that their partners might have been shy about asking.

Figure 7: Survey Results on Reasons for Not Making Additional Flexibility Requests
(Source: survey of foundation partners who accessed the ER)



The onset of the crisis did not prove to be the right time for capacity support offers

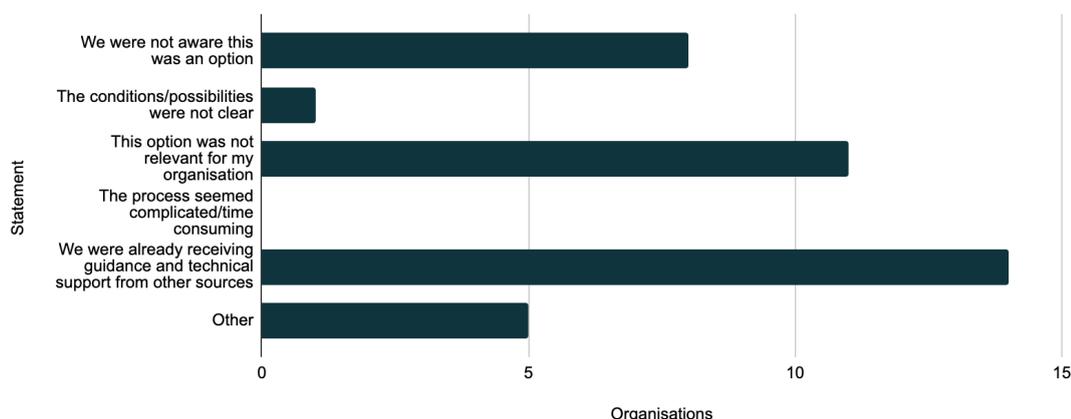
Guidance and technical support was the least requested option with 18.2% of survey respondents having applied for this (also reflected in interview data). The most common reason not to have requested this option according to survey responses was that partners were already receiving this elsewhere, that it was not relevant or that they were not aware of this option. Interviews with partners who were aware of the option showed that while they appreciated the offer, they lacked time and resources to take the foundation up on it and didn't consider this sort of action a priority at the time. The resources and pro-bono organisational development support offered through the 'Nonprofit Builder' platform are not considered to have been a relevant offer for grassroots partners operating in crisis mode and focused on sustaining their communities. Perhaps because of this, PMs also appear to have communicated less clearly about this option than the other support types as 8 (18%) respondents say they were not aware of the possibility.

Interestingly, some of the other foundations interviewed as part of this evaluation reported that non-financial support such as capacity building and leadership forums had been amongst the most relevant of their ER offers. However, this assessment was often based on their perception rather than evaluation of partners' feedback, and also came from foundations whose portfolio of partners was made up of fewer grassroots and frontline organisations.

Figure 8: Survey Results on Reasons for Not Applying for Guidance and Technical Support

(Source: survey of foundation partners who accessed the ER)

If you did not apply for guidance and technical support (for example through the Pro Bono Consultants Platform), why was this? (please select all that apply)



The second wave strategy, once in place, was also relevant considering available resources

Second and often more deadly waves of Covid-19 took the foundation by surprise to some extent. This revealed a gap in the original strategy which was focused on the immediate term and lacked some longer-term monitoring plan of the evolution of the emergency and how its potential subsequent phases would require action. This was to be expected to a large extent considering that the whole world had been caught unprepared for such an event and very few people were able to put in place adapted mechanisms to monitor the length and evolution of the crisis. Other philanthropic funders spoken to also planned for the very short term, prioritising getting funds out quickly, and so Laudes Foundation's response does not compare unfavourably in this sense.

The strategy which eventually emerged is considered to have been relevant given resource constraints (a further EUR 600,000 was released), although the more limited financial support meant the second wave was less proportionate than the first, especially considering the scale of needs. The strategy limited further support to partners in Brazil and India where the situations were the most extreme and where many of the foundation's grassroots partners were based. During this second round of support, a general announcement about the possibility of support was not made but instead grants up to EUR 25,000 were provided to those who made additional requests and were in need of further funding⁶. The second round of funding also built from lessons from the first phase and was almost entirely focused on beneficiary needs.

With the benefit of hindsight, an opportunity was missed between the two phases in which the foundation could have reached out to co-funders and partners to assess needs and prioritise funding those partners receiving less from others. Laudes Foundation could also have been following up with partners and monitoring their evolving needs, to have been better prepared for the second wave. This would have enhanced the relevance of the overall strategy. However, given the circumstances under which the ER was being implemented (worldwide pandemic as well as ongoing strategic development at the foundation), this would have been a heavy lift. Ideally, these types of relationships with co-donors should be built outside of crisis contexts, which would ease collaboration in case of any emergencies.

GEI issues were integrated by partners but this was not a specific focus of the ER design

The ER strategy did not include a specific focus on GEI issues, which were not mentioned in the internal memorandum. However, interviews, final reports and the survey demonstrate that these

⁶ Some grants to Indian partners were considerably higher (over EUR 100,000) due to the extent of needs and outreach potential of partners.

issues were widely taken into account on the ground as part of operational strategies since most partners were already working with specific vulnerable groups such as women and migrant workers. A number of partners in Brazil and Mexico were already working on gender and inclusivity issues as a core part of their regular programming, for example.

Nearly 93% respondents to the survey said they had adapted emergency support taking into account relevant GEI concerns. This was confirmed by available reporting which shows many partners provided sanitary items as part of emergency kits, or ensured that health interventions included women medical professionals and volunteers as well as men. In some projects, pregnant women and female-headed households were prioritised for aid and provided additional support. Several partners included attempts at tackling the increased levels of sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) as part of their emergency programmes, for example through psychological support, legal hotlines or assistance in reporting abuses. Available reporting also frequently provides sex-disaggregated data. Interviews with PMs suggest GEI issues were part of the conversations held by some, although not all, with their partners.

*“The partners work with very specific groups such as female and migrant workers, and support the GEI definition. Several partners were quite clear on how they would treat the question when designing the projects supporting the communities.”
(Interview with a Laudes Foundation PM)*

A small minority of PMs interviewed held concerns around the lack of due diligence on GEI and safeguarding matters, while the majority believed their partners were experienced enough with community interventions to tackle these issues. It should also be noted that the foundation was still putting in place its safeguarding processes in 2020. The risk in terms of safeguarding was mitigated by the fact that partners had already undergone due diligence processes and were organisations well-known to the foundation. The strategy (explicit or otherwise) to leave partners to integrate GEI considerations into their programming is therefore considered relevant given the trust-based philanthropy approach the response was based on, as well as the necessary rapidity of the ER.

A slightly more rapid, but less flexible, ER than other similar grantmakers

As part of this evaluation, a rapid review of how other foundations responded to Covid-19 was carried out by conducting interviews with peer organisations. This qualitative exercise was complemented by a benchmarking against the Center for Effective Philanthropy (CEP)’s quantitative and qualitative research, published in late 2020, which followed up on Pledge commitments by surveying over 230 grantmakers, including Laudes Foundation.⁷ The evaluation finds that Laudes Foundation comes in somewhere towards the higher end of average, having implemented a solid ER in line with minimum standards, but not one that was pioneering or among the most flexible.

The ER strategy was largely similar to that of its peers in terms of the support offered. All foundations interviewed who put in place a comparable ER provided additional funds and flexibility in existing grants, along with most providing some form of technical assistance or non-financial support. In terms of budget allocation, little information has been made public but Laudes Foundation seems to compare favourably to others based on available data. The only foundation for which relevant financial data is published, Oak Foundation, allocated a very similar percentage of their 2020 grant budget on Covid-19 responses: 7.5% compared to Laudes Foundation’s 7.6%. PA’s calculations suggest that Mava Foundation allocated around 2.5% of their 2020 budget to ER. They had no fixed envelope or cap on the total amount they could give, however, and grants ranged from CHF 50,000 to CHF 300,000; slightly higher than Laudes Foundation’s EUR 250,000 maximum. Most comparable foundations’ purpose in implementing an ER was building the resilience of their partners and maintaining their ecosystem, although support to beneficiaries was often included.

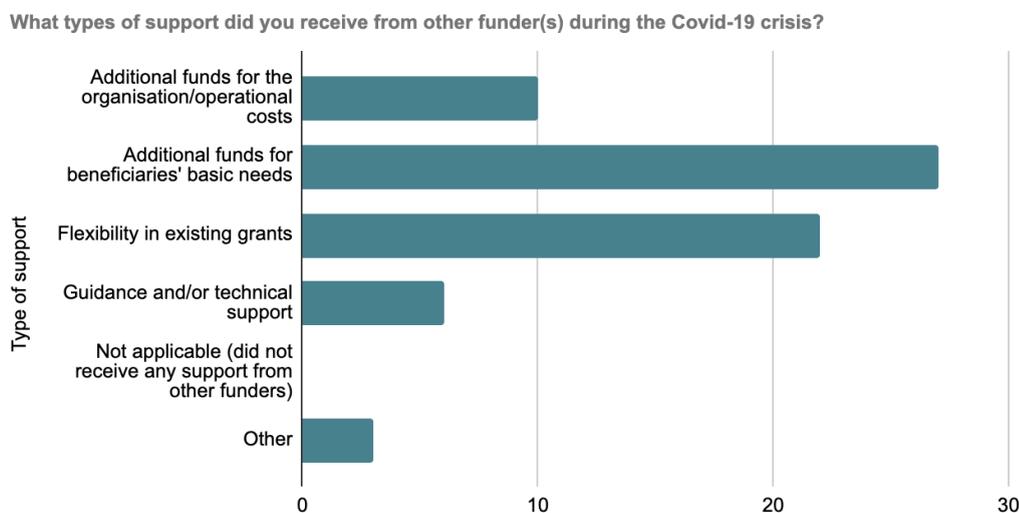
Although the Ford Foundation used a similar approach to Laudes Foundation in its immediate response, it then put in place an ambitious strategy of pooling funds and engaging with other funders, as well as issuing a social bond. The Lemann Foundation, based in Brazil, took a different

⁷ Centre for Effective Philanthropy (2020): “Foundations Respond to Crisis”, available [online](#).

approach to its ER by supporting new emergency education initiatives and trying to support vaccine production, rather than supporting its network of partners. L'Oréal (the group rather than the foundation) released a first round of emergency Covid-19 funding and then set up a new EUR 50 million fund, the L'Oréal Fund for Women, to help tackle gender inequalities more widely.

Confirming the similarity of Laudes Foundation's approach to others, the survey of Laudes Foundation partners shows 84% also received emergency support from other existing donors. A majority (65%) of these said the support received from Laudes Foundation was equally relevant to that received from others. 32.4% said Laudes Foundation support was more relevant (interview feedback suggests this is because funds were received more quickly), whereas only 2.7% said it was less relevant. The support provided by others followed a similar pattern to the support provided by Laudes Foundation, albeit with more partners receiving flexibility from other donors than they did from Laudes Foundation.

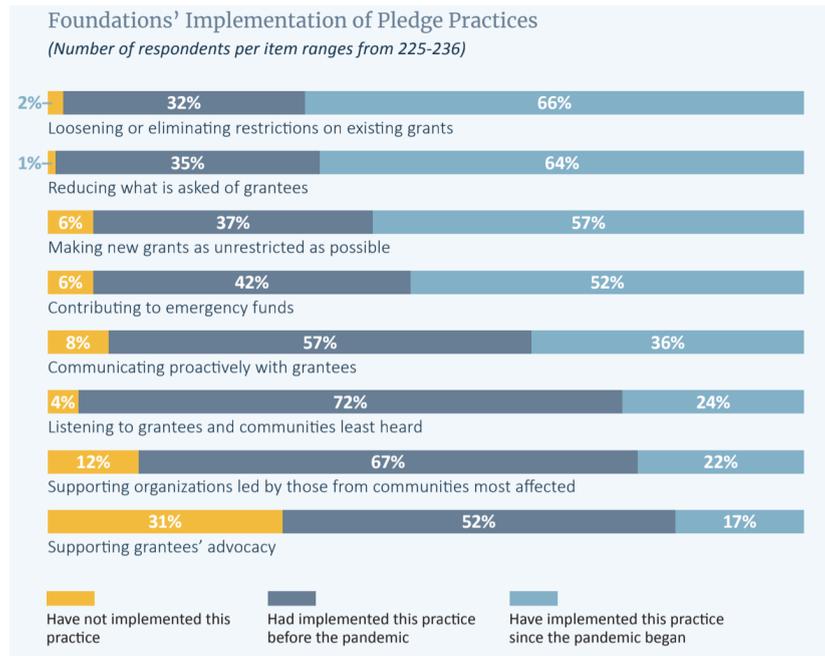
Figure 9: Survey Results on Partners Receiving Funds from Other Donors
 (Source: survey of foundation partners who accessed the ER)



Laudes Foundation's ER was slightly less flexible than other comparable grant-makers interviewed. All loosened processes for proposals and reporting as a minimum. However, Oak Foundation, Mava Foundation and the Ford Foundation all provided unrestricted or core funding which could be used as the grantee saw fit, unlike Laudes Foundation whose funding was restricted to certain uses. Oak Foundation also did not require any reporting on their ER grants. Fondation Chanel did not require proposals and made grants on the basis of short email requests.

The CEP research showed that Laudes Foundation had implemented several of the more popular measures advised by the Pledge, including loosening or eliminating restrictions on existing grants, contributing to emergency funds and proactively communicating with grantees. However, some of the measures which went further, such as making new grants as unrestricted as possible or supporting grantees advocacy were not implemented by Laudes Foundation, putting them somewhere near the middle of the pack in terms of flexibility.

Figure 10: CEP Results on Foundations' Implementation of Pledge Practices
 (Source: CEP (2020), "Foundations Respond to Crisis: A Moment of Transformation? The First in a Series of Three Reports, p.4)



Similarly to Laudes Foundation, other funders relied on their PMs' close partnerships with grantees to discuss needs and tailor support. Like Laudes Foundation, most foundations wrote to their partners early on, to reassure them they would be supported. Fondation Chanel and the Ford Foundation reached out to every partner individually and adapted their ER to them accordingly. Fondation Chanel offered two rounds of financial support, in 2020 and 2021. Oak Foundation had various rounds of funding available and Mava Foundation had no cap and refused no requests, leaving its funding open.

Although the Laudes Foundation ER was moderately less flexible than that of other grant-makers, it was slightly quicker than most other foundations included in this evaluation. The Ford Foundation reacted quickly, partly due to having a presence in Beijing which alerted them to the situation early, writing to grantees on March 16th, 2020 with their support offer and mobilising "within the first weeks". Mava Foundation's strategy was in place by mid-April 2020, Oak Foundation had the funding approved in April 2020 with disbursements happening two weeks later and Fondation Chanel spoke to partners in April 2020, releasing funds in April and May 2020. Laudes Foundation was therefore among the first to make disbursements, in early April 2020. Oak Foundation put in place a vulnerability assessment before offering funds, which seems to have slightly slowed down their response compared to Laudes Foundation. All family foundations interviewed required the approval of their boards to release additional funds, although all state this process was rapid and the families involved were keen to put in place an ER to Covid-19.

As well as being a little quicker, Laudes Foundation is the only funder spoken to who is evaluating their ER. While some funders are informally reviewing their ER internally, such as Fondation Chanel, Laudes Foundation is the only grant-maker externally evaluating their Covid-19 support strategy. Laudes Foundation has also communicated more transparently on the strategy and results than any other grant-maker looked at for this evaluation.

Lessons Learned: Relevance (Alignment & Design)

- In times of crisis, partners are likely to prioritise supporting immediate needs for their beneficiaries and communities over organisational resilience. Grassroots partners' resilience is, in any way, closely tied to their strong relationships and trust with communities, which allows them to carry out their work.

- Additional funds, including for communities, and flexibility are the most useful support offers during a crisis. Partners are best placed to design and implement relevant response strategies.
- PMs at the foundation have generally built excellent relationships with their partners which allow them to understand needs on the ground. They are crucial stakeholders in the design of any response strategies.
- Times of acute crisis are not ideal for discussions about providing capacity support or to have conversations with strategic repercussions, for example on the potential to convert project grants to GOS.
- Despite the need to work rapidly, ER strategies should keep in mind the post-acute phase, noting that many crises end up being protracted, or having subsequent waves and/or secondary effects which may be as important as the original event.
- Even in an emergency situation, it is useful to quickly consult other funders to benchmark minimum sector standards and to see if there is room for collaboration. Aligning with philanthropic sector pledges helps to provide an overall framework and accountability.

B. Efficiency

Poor

Adequate

Good



An overall efficient response based on timeliness and trust

The efficiency of the ER is rated as good overall based on a rapid and flexible response to the first wave of Covid-19, which in turn allowed partners to focus on swiftly implementing quick and efficient ERs themselves. This was enabled by Laudes Foundation's collaborative partnership approach and excellent partner relationships, as well as Laudes Foundation's comparative advantage in having good regional presence with staff on the ground in some of the countries badly impacted by the pandemic. The ability of the foundation to take rapid decisions independently was also key to first wave efficiency, as was the existence of the EF mechanism.

Factors undermining efficiency were mostly external, although internal factors (budget cuts and longer decision-making) compromised second wave efficiency to some extent, which has impacted the overall rating slightly.

The evaluation finds no evidence that the ER exposed the foundation to negative consequences despite minimum standards not being put in place systematically.

A rapid and flexible response to the first wave

The strategy of the ER captured the need for rapidity and flexibility in times of crisis as Laudes Foundation focused on making sure processes would not hinder the timeliness of the response on the ground. This allowed Laudes Foundation to place itself as one of the first responders to the crisis which was highly appreciated by partners and allowed the foundation to fill gaps.

*"We work with 35-40 donors, the Laudes Foundation was one of the first few foundations to realise the problem was going to be larger than expected and one of the quickest in providing a response."
(Interview with a grassroots partner in India)*

*“With the Laudes Foundation, we made the request and the response came quickly, without having even made the agreement, they had already sent us the resources.”
(Interview with a grassroots partner in Brazil)*

*“It was very quick. The formalities were very short and they understood the critical situation on the ground. Even for the second wave they were very reactive.”
(Interview with a grassroots partner in India)*

Laudes Foundation provided additional flexibility for existing grants and loosened application requirements. The proposal template of one-page was reported to be considerably lighter than usual proposals and payment procedures were also made quicker and easier (for example only requiring grant letters with no counter-signature needed and removing the need for payment approval). Changes were made to internal administration systems to facilitate these process modifications. PMs frequently played a significant role in supporting partners' applications, helping to identify their needs and budget them in a co-creation exercise which allowed for the tailoring of support.

The one-pager application was processed within two weeks, compared to the standard 1-2 month period for regular grants. Although some Laudes Foundation staff wondered if even the one-page proposal was too heavy, especially since many partners provided more details than necessary and spent longer on it than was intended, no partners reported having a problem with the application process. Over 90% survey respondents said the process of applying for support from Laudes Foundation was clear and easy during Covid-19, with the remaining partners saying it was mostly clear and easy.

For reporting, partners were able to use their own templates and provide only short and simple reports; a relevant compromise which allowed PMs to receive an account of what was done without placing an inordinate burden on grantees. No partners, except for those in Mexico (who, due to Laudes Foundation exiting the country report a different experience from other grantees) opined that ER reporting procedures were unreasonable.

*“The process for the ER was a lot lighter, something like one percent of the normal procedure.”
(Interview with a Laudes Foundation staff member)*

The first wave ER efficiency was enabled by Laudes Foundation's collaborative approach and regional presence

A key enabler of the efficiency of the ER in the first wave was PM's close partnerships with grantees. The accelerated move to incorporate some trust-based philanthropy practices, in terms of simplified and streamlined paperwork, discussed further in likelihood of impact, was facilitated by the trust which had already been created with these established partnerships, many of which were inherited from C&AF. 75% survey respondents rated their relationship with Laudes Foundation prior to Covid-19 as excellent, with the remaining 25% reporting it to be good. This allowed Laudes Foundation to provide additional flexibility and funds with little reporting with minimal risk. Additionally, Laudes Foundation's presence in many of the regions affected meant it was better able to access information and grasp the local context and needs, allowing PMs to feed into the ER and advise partners from an informed position.

*“We moved faster than others, our comparative advantage or strength is that we can move quickly and have teams on the ground that can help shape the response, making sure that it's really relevant.”
(Interview with a member of Laudes Foundation's MT)*

Executive management's ability to take rapid decisions independently and the existence of the EF mechanism were also key to first wave efficiency

Another factor which enabled a rapid ER in the first wave was the decisiveness with which Laudes Foundation acted. After internal discussions, executive management was ready to respond at around the same moment PMs were reaching out and receiving requests from partners, which they were

feeding back to the Heads of Programmes. Internal funds were pooled without the involvement of the governance in the initial stages, which also helped to facilitate a rapid response.

The existence of the EF mechanism (set up under C&AF in response to an all-partner meeting in Milan, where it was realised the foundation needed to do more to keep partners safe) meant that an administrative structure was already in place which facilitated the collection of funds. Decision-making efficiency was created through the fund, with PMs recommending grants or modifications to Heads of Programmes, who then efficiently communicated those requests to the EP team and the Director of Industry Transformation for quick action. This channel was effective and led to quick actions.

The governance member interviewed for this evaluation reported they would prefer to keep any further ER interventions as a dynamic conversation with foundation management, rather than integrating a mechanism such as the EF in the system, believing Covid-19 was a very specific situation and that this approach allows for a clear and unequivocal focus on systematic change. They did suggest the Board understands the need to act in some circumstances but that these should be clear and limited.

Some foundation interviewees also felt that such mechanisms might not be necessary given the rarity of events such as Covid-19. However, recent research shows that while global pandemics on the scale of Covid-19 are frequently perceived as being rare, statistically, such extreme events aren't as rare as many have perceived them to be.⁸ Climate-related disasters and weather events are also likely to increase as temperatures rise, threatening to deepen already wide inequalities, resulting in consequences felt by the world at large, including instability, violence and displacement. Vulnerable populations in Brazil, India and the rest of Asia are and will be especially exposed to these threats.

Since crises which threaten the resilience, ongoing operations and lives of the foundation's partners and target communities are likely to occur again, many foundation staff interviewed felt it would be wise to maintain the existing mechanism, along with the process developed for Covid-19, which has proven to deliver an efficient and effective response. Working through the EF also has the benefit of not disrupting the foundation's grantmaking indicators (for example on the average size of grants), by processing funds separately.

Factors undermining efficiency were mostly external...

Organisations who reported delays in receiving the funds attributed this to external factors such as changing laws on foreign funding in India, delays in receiving the necessary approvals in Bangladesh, or lack of access to the banking system for some very grassroots organisations in Brazil. In the case of India, organisations were required to have a license under the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) in order to receive transfers from abroad.⁹ This new law slowed down some of the transfers although the government announced that they would ease this procedure.¹⁰ In Brazil, organisations were required to have a tax number in order to receive funds for the purchase of food and hygiene products. As many of these organisations were in the process of registering when the pandemic hit, several of them didn't have it and Laudes Foundation's partners had to seek alternatives to ensure the funds could access the organisations. This created a lot of confusion for both the partners and the PMs, but the flexibility of the ER allowed for solutions to be co-created in an effective manner.

⁸ For example: "Intensity and frequency of extreme novel epidemics", Marco Marani, Gabriel G. Katul, William K. Pan, Anthony J. Parolari, Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences Aug 2021, 118 (35) e2105482118; DOI: 10.1073/pnas.2105482118

⁹ "Foreign aid regulations, donor fatigue stymie India COVID-19 response", Catherine Cheney, Amruta Byatnal, 29/04/2021, Devex, available [online](#).

¹⁰ "Govt likely to relax foreign funding rules for NGOs amid Covid", Koustav Das, 29/04/2021, crisis, India Today, available [online](#).

...although internal factors (budget cuts and longer decision-making) compromised second wave efficiency

The original emergency funds were mostly approved and disbursed in April 2020, but it became apparent that the crisis was worsening and impacting certain areas of the globe especially badly, including in two of the foundation's strategic programming countries: Brazil and India. Budget cuts meant that although the need to replenish the EF was flagged early in 2021, this had not been done. Although some within the foundation were raising the alarm that situations on the ground in these countries were worsening and further support might be needed, the same level of urgency does not seem to have been present as for the first phase of the crisis, which meant a clear strategy took time to come to fruition.

By the time the MT requested a second round of support from the foundation's governance, their operational teams had already granted some organisations a second round of support out of their programmatic budgets (EUR 400,000), rather than through the EF mechanism. This interfered with overall foundation figures on grant amounts and created some minor administrative issues, as well as causing uncertainty for programmes teams about if and when additional funds would be approved. A clear crisis monitoring plan and fund allocation strategy had not been put in place after the first wave of support which would have supported a more efficient second wave disbursement.

*"There was a bit of scrambling around in the second phase that could have been avoided, it could have been quicker."
(Interview with a Laudes Foundation staff member)*

The slower second wave response meant that the funds arrived slightly after the peak of the second wave crisis in India, although no partners in India contacted by the evaluation expressed that this unduly impacted their ERs, since they already had the original funds from the foundation and additional finance raised (additional funds leveraged by Laudes Foundation funding are described in Box 1).

An ER which did not expose the foundation to any identifiable negative consequences despite minimum standards not being put in place systematically

This evaluation finds no evidence that the ER resulted in any major negative financial, legal or programmatic consequences for the foundation. This is despite the fact that, similarly to GEI issues, Laudes Foundation did not provide minimum standards for provision of services in a systematic manner. Some PMs provided guidance on this, while most decided partners were best placed to make decisions (for example on food basket content). Partners also adapted to global standards as they emerged (e.g. WHO guidelines on masks).

The lack of a clear set of minimum standards is reflected in the mixed survey responses; 51.2% respondents said Laudes Foundation did put standards in place, 29.3% said they did not and 19.5% said they didn't know either way. Although the strategy of minimum standards was ad hoc, this is not considered to have adversely affected the ER since partners were closer to communities and able to assess their needs which were fairly basic, focused on food, medicine and hygiene kits. The inclusion of prescriptive guidelines would have slowed down the ER and not been in line with the relevant trust-based approach Laudes Foundation adopted. Additionally, despite not being a specific requirement of Laudes Foundation, a majority (61%) of partners who responded to the survey reported that they had put accountability mechanisms in place to collect feedback and complaints from beneficiaries (including telephone helplines, feedback forms, door-to-door and telephone checks on support received, random interviewing and Focus Group Discussions), demonstrating that partners were well-placed overall to run these types of interventions, despite often lacking specific emergency relief experience. These figures are self reported and so risk being inflated but the foundation has received no reports of any issues encountered.

In terms of funding, in 2020 the emergency fund only represented 7.6% of the programmatic budget of the foundation (9% from the Labour Rights programme and 5.9% from the Materials programme). As such, the amounts provided to partners were not large enough to compromise the financial

viability of the programmatic teams' portfolio or the regular grant funding with each partner. Furthermore, as thorough due diligence processes had already taken place with all the partners taking part in the ER when they became regular grantees of Laudes Foundation, another round of due diligence processes was irrelevant for the ER. As per programmatic risks, the ER plans clearly did not overlap or impact negatively the implementation of the regular grant activities. Between the first and second rounds of support, partners modified and reviewed the regular grant activities, based on discussions with their PMs, the contextual conditions and their capacity to resume operations.

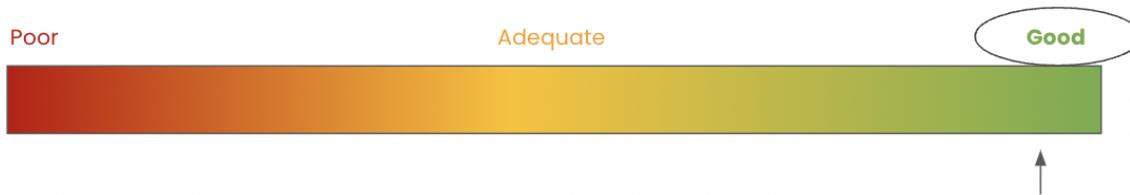
Interview respondents at the foundation did raise the potential risk of Laudes Foundation providing a confusing brand image as supporting service provision in the contexts where it operates, and not necessarily as a stakeholder promoting and supporting systems change. Although this is particularly relevant for a newly launched foundation, Laudes Foundation was far from being the only philanthropic stakeholder that went beyond its regular mandate during the pandemic and the evaluation finds no signs that partners have been confused about this. However, the consensus among Laudes Foundation respondents was that the foundation would have faced greater risk in *not* implementing any type of ER, than it did in putting in place this response.

In other words, Laudes Foundation's risk exposure while implementing the ER has proven to be minimal, despite loosening grant conditions considerably. Laudes Foundation's partners were able to respond to the needs on the ground without prescriptive guidelines and standards, reinforcing the trust-based approach Laudes Foundation adopted for its ER.

Lessons Learned: Efficiency

- Providing a rapid ER is crucial, filling gaps before other funders arrive and allowing partners to leverage the support from Laudes Foundation to access additional funds.
- The existence of the Emergency Fund supported a rapid response by facilitating the collection of funds, as well as helping to foster streamlined decision-making by creating a clear and efficient communication process for accessing those funds.
- Even if it seems like a crisis situation is over, it is useful to capitalise on learning from a first phase, and follow up with partners to foresee potential second waves/secondary impacts, allowing Laudes Foundation to react more quickly and negotiate additional funds if necessary.
- Laudes Foundation staff may also be impacted by the crisis, and implementing an ER is likely to increase workload; things which may be neglected during an urgent situation. While supporting partners when needed is a source of pride, the wellbeing of foundation staff should also be considered.
- It was not always clear to partners what can and cannot be included in an emergency grant. Especially since partners are acting under increased pressure when applying for these, it should be made clear that overheads can be included.
- In situations where partners have already been through due diligence processes and where grant amounts make up a small proportion of the overall budget, the risks involved in making application and reporting procedures lighter are minimal.

C. Effectiveness (Implementation and Results)



A highly effective ER with positive results despite external challenges

The ER achieved its objectives, supporting partners to cope with the pandemic and thereby maintaining its ecosystem of actors required to work on transforming systems. The ER has also allowed partners to provide a significant number of their vulnerable beneficiaries with life-saving support, which has maintained and built their community relations; a key factor in their ability to conduct their regular work. EUR 4 million in Laudes Foundation emergency funds were also leveraged to access an additional EUR 8 million, helping partners to support even more people.

There are signs that the ER has contributed to building the resilience of partners to future shocks, although direct attribution of this is not possible in all cases. The vast majority of grants are considered to have been effective in delivering planned outputs despite the general inexperience of partners in providing emergency relief and the challenging implementation contexts.

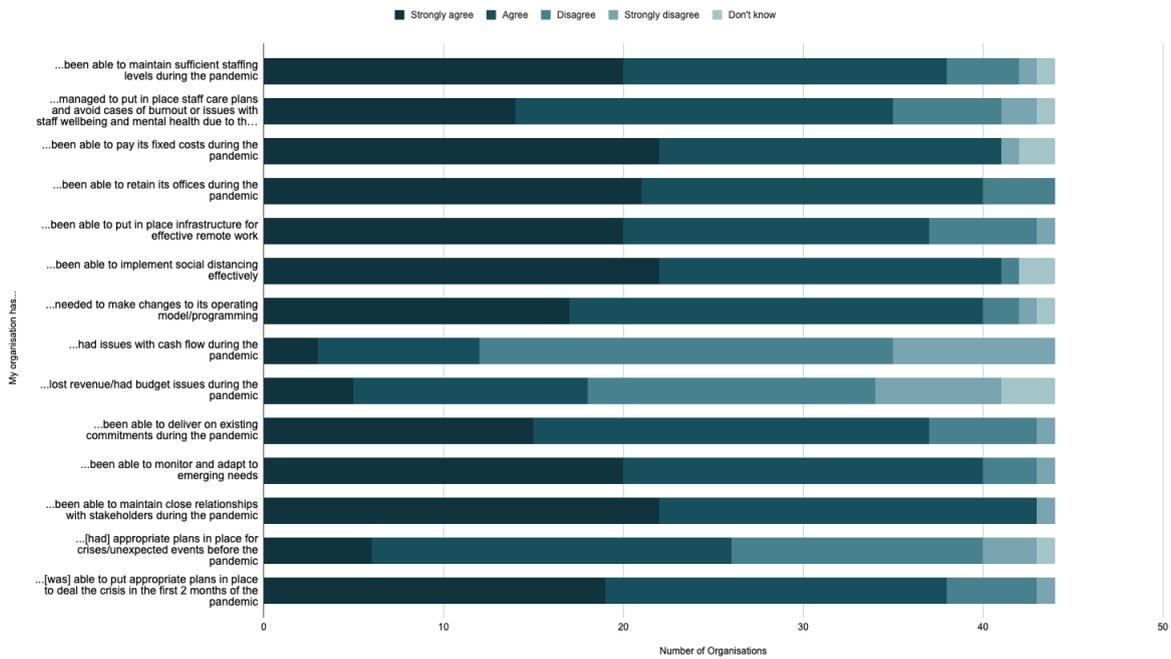
The ER contributed to partners being able to cope with the crisis

As discussed previously, part of the objective of the ER was to protect Laudes Foundation's network of partners, helping them address the negative impacts of the crisis and build resilience so they could continue working to build better systems post-pandemic. The assessment of the achievement of this goal is complicated by its loose definition by the foundation, with no specific objectives related to resilience having been set. In the broadest sense, this objective has been fulfilled; none of Laudes Foundation's partners were forced to close due to the pandemic and the majority have now been able to resume previous programming.

More specifically, looking at key indicators related to organisational survival, the vast majority of partners surveyed said (in August 2021) that they had been able to maintain sufficient staffing levels, pay their fixed costs and retain their offices, and that they did not lose revenue or have cash flow or budget issues during the pandemic. Most partners also reported that they had been able to avoid widespread issues with burnout and staff wellbeing and that they had been able to implement social distancing effectively and put in place infrastructure for remote work. In terms of programmes, the majority of respondents had been able to monitor and adapt to emerging needs, maintain close relationships with stakeholders and deliver on the majority of existing commitments.

Figure 11: Survey Results on Partner's Situations in August 2021

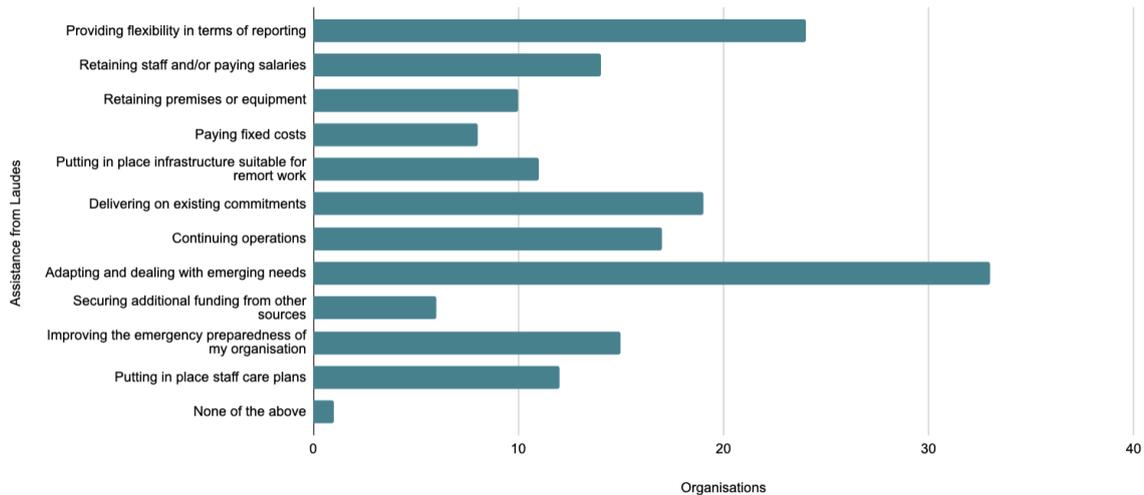
(Source: survey of foundation partners who accessed the ER)



Although the maintenance of these indicators during the pandemic cannot solely be attributed to Laudes Foundation’s funding since most (84%) of those surveyed also received funding from other donors, 69% of respondents who used funds for their organisations (around 38%) said Laudes Foundation’s support had significantly contributed to their organisation’s ability to cope. Nearly 30% said the foundation’s support had moderately contributed. Figure 12 below presents the ways partners report Laudes Foundation supported their organisations during the crisis.

While only 8% respondents said they would not have coped during the pandemic without Laudes Foundation’s support, 64% said they would have struggled to cope without these funds, meaning they were considered fairly crucial by the majority of the portfolio. The other 28% reported that they would have been more or less able to cope without Laudes Foundation’s support, demonstrating again that not all partners were as vulnerable as assumed.

Figure 12: Survey Results on Ways Laudes Foundation Support Assisted Partners
 (Source: survey of foundation partners who accessed the ER)



The ER allowed partners to provide life-saving support to vulnerable communities

Beyond supporting partners themselves to survive the crisis intact, the ER provided partners with the resources to deliver vital services to communities in need. According to survey data, the four most common forms of support provided were fairly basic but essential in nature: food packages, hygiene kits or cleaning supplies, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), and education and awareness raising.

Based on the broad calculations of this evaluation, the ER supported between 600,000 and 850,000 direct and indirect end beneficiaries with basic food, hygiene and health provision, as well as cash and/or in-kind support.¹¹ Except for a few exceptions, the vast majority of grants were considered to have been a success by PMs and partners, especially considering the difficult circumstances of their implementation. Although support was focused on short-term relief, its impact should not be underestimated as many of these beneficiaries were part of communities hardest hit by Covid-19. Please refer to the case studies for more in-depth reviews of outputs provided by the Laudes Foundation funding and partner efforts on the ground.

SPOTLIGHT ON OHS INITIATIVE (OSHE FOUNDATION)¹²

A grassroots Bangladeshi coalition made up of six labour, public health and women's organisations, The OHS Initiative for Workers and Community was focused on building capacity to advocate for improvements in workplace health and safety before the pandemic. The initiative's target population, Ready-Made Garment (RMG) worker communities, were among the worst affected by the Covid-19 pandemic in Bangladesh. The initiative put in place a multi-pronged ER strategy which involved providing food, medicine and hygiene kits, setting up mobile clinics and raising awareness of protection measures. As well as primary health care, the initiative identified a need for psychosocial support due to the impact of uncertainty and financial hardship on workers. A Training of Trainers (ToT) was put in place as a means of reaching more workers using the Psychological First Aid (PFA) method, and a 24/7 telephone hotline was set up that workers and their families could call to access health and PFA support (with one male and one female doctor).

"People were frightened during the crisis, there were problems of domestic violence and a general increase in vulnerability. So we realised we could provide psychosocial support and decided to implement the PFA method because we didn't have enough resources to do one-to-one support." -

¹¹ This rough calculation is based on beneficiary numbers provided by partners in their final reporting if available, or predicted numbers in proposals if not. The estimation is based on average household sizes, for example a family size of 5 for rural Indian partners, 3 for Brazilian partners, 3.6 in Mexico and 4.6 in Nepal. The evaluation team makes no claim of absolute accuracy but provides this figure to give a broad idea of the ER's outreach.

¹² The full case study on the OHS Initiative can be found in Annex 4.

The emergency response funded by Laudes Foundation resulted in:

- 5,000 flyers with information about Covid-19 and protection measures being distributed
- Nearly 500 of the most in-need worker households receiving food packages, medicine and hygiene kits, along with BDT 1,000 (around EUR 10), monthly for a period of three months
- Nearly 250 being provided with support for a fourth month
- Over 11,000 workers or family members receiving primary health care, including free basic medicine and referrals to government services where necessary
- Nearly 900 workers accessing medical and PFA support through the telemedicine hotlines
- PFA support being provided indirectly to over 1,000 workers (through 18 trained trainers)

... despite having to overcome various challenges

Although some factors affected the implementation of the ER, these did not majorly impact the effectiveness of the response. At the foundation level, the ER was taken on by PMs in addition to their usual work. As such, the ER workload came on top of the regular programmatic work and no managerial decision was made to put regular grant activities on standby or to assign specific time to the ER. The ER also came at a time when everyone at the newly-launched organisation was involved in the strategic planning and shifts which were happening concurrently. Despite this, none of the staff taking part in the evaluation saw this as a problem or raised a concern about their capacity to perform on both fronts and, on the contrary, many were proud of the support provided during Covid-19. Furthermore, the workload from the regular grant management also evolved as national policies to contain the spread of the virus in the different countries impacted the possibility to pursue the implementation of activities.

*“I have partners who were frontline activists while I was sitting at home, with more work, sure, but still I felt very privileged.”
(Interview with a Laudes Foundation staff member)*

For partners, external factors made the implementation of the response more challenging as many of them acted as frontliners. Indeed, their contexts of implementation became very volatile and uncertain, which required significant flexibility and resourcefulness from the organisations and their teams. Access to beneficiaries became increasingly difficult as government measures to stop the spread of the virus were put in place and constantly modified, and mobility became limited. The increase of prices and scarcity of basic goods and hygiene products, as well as the lack of experience of several of the partners in providing emergency relief, brought additional challenges.

As survey results show, only 12.2% of the respondents reported not having faced any challenges during the implementation of the ER, the majority of them being international organisations working in India (suggesting a less direct contact with communities than grassroots organisations). Over 70% respondents reported facing some challenges, and 17% faced significant challenges. This is likely linked to the fact that only 36.6% of respondents declared having substantial experience in providing emergency support.

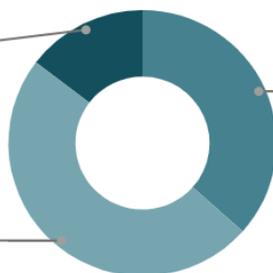
Figure 13: Survey Results on Experience in Providing Support in Terms of Immediate Relief/Emergency Needs to End Beneficiaries.

(Source: survey of foundation partners who accessed the ER)

Does your organisation have previous experience in providing support in terms of immediate relief/emergency needs to end beneficiaries?

No experience

14,6%



Yes, substantial experience

36,6%

Yes, limited experience

48,8%

The timing of the pandemic was a challenge for partners working with farmers in India and Brazil. Indeed, for most of these, the crisis started at crucial moments of the season, like the beginning of cropping or harvest periods, so the funds needed to reach the farmers quickly in order for them to mitigate the impact of the crisis in their longer-term economy. This was not anticipated by the foundation in the establishment of the ER strategy, but PMs were conscious of the situation and Laudes Foundation's first wave funds arrived in time, before the government schemes to support these populations.

SPOTLIGHT ON ACTION FOR SOCIAL ADVANCEMENT¹³

Action for Social Advancement (ASA) is a grassroots Indian organisation which supports small and marginal farmers. During the first wave of Covid-19 in India, rural and farming communities were heavily impacted financially due to uncertainty, a lack of access to markets and few income generating activities. ASA foresaw that should smallholders miss the impending crop season, they would be facing a dire food security situation further down the line. They also saw that farmers were "distress selling" at low prices, and that family members returning from India's cities were placing further economic pressure on communities.

They provided subsidised agricultural inputs, composed of a dozen different seeds, to approximately 6,000 farmers, which allowed them to cultivate their monsoonal crops in June as initially planned and ensure food security for their families. The organisation also supported 1,000 families with low interest loans to help them absorb the financial shock brought on by the first lockdown. They additionally facilitated 200,000 households' access to employment through the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA).

As mentioned before, accessing beneficiaries was a major concern for most organisations. In all countries, lockdowns made it challenging for organisations to pursue needs assessment and field monitoring visits and to organise distributions. However, most organisations showed excellent capacity for adaptation, establishing strategies to counter these challenges such as obtaining special mobility permits, migrating their communications with beneficiaries and community-based organisations (CBOs) to virtual means, and working in networks with local leaders to ensure effective communication with their beneficiaries.

The ER has contributed in part to reported improvements in partner resilience

Over and above sustaining partners and helping them to provide crucial emergency relief to sustain communities, there is some evidence that the ER contributed to building future partner resilience. The majority (88.6%) of partners who responded to the survey reported that their preparedness and capacity to deal with shocks and crises has improved since Covid-19. Interviews reveal that the most common action taken was to put in place contingency plans. Although, as shown earlier, partners were less financially vulnerable than expected overall and the majority (58%) report they had plans in place for crises/unexpected events before the pandemic. Like the organisational indicators

¹³ The full case study on Action for Social Advancement can be found in Annex 5.

above, improvements cannot be directly attributed to Laudes Foundation's support, with some exceptions, since most partners also received support from other donors. Laudes Foundation was not specifically involved in developing preparedness with partners and the uptake of technical support was low.

Partners reported that even though the ER contributed to the increase of their resilience, it was not the only factor. Their ability to leverage Laudes Foundation funds to access other complementary finance, (see Box 1 below) and the capacity to work in networks with other stakeholders were some of the other key factors contributing to this increase. However, preparedness measures put in place by organisations were also based on learnings gathered while implementing responses at least partially funded by Laudes Foundation.

Box 1: Leverage of Laudes Foundation Funds

LEVERAGE OF LAUDES FOUNDATION FUNDS

The EUR 4 million provided by the foundation as part of the ER leveraged around EUR 8 million in additional funds, a leverage rate of 200%. These funds were secured by the following partners:

- EUR 100,000 early contribution to Freedom Fund's Emergency Response Fund to offer immediate small-scale funding to nearly 100 frontline partners helped catalyse EUR 2 million in additional funding.
- EUR 245,000 support to ASA in India enabled their staff to help smallholder farmers access EUR 4.8 million in wage funding via the MGNREGA, unlocked EUR 165,000 from other donors, and catalysed EUR 1 million from financial institutions in working capital loans. The total leverage of Laudes Foundation funds was therefore nearly EUR 6 million.
- EUR 80,000 early contribution to GoodWeave's Child and Worker Protection Fund helped unlock another EUR 165,000.

One such exception where more direct attribution is possible is in the case of the Centro de los Derechos del Migrante, based in Mexico. The organisation's fundraising strategy was heavily impacted when the pandemic forced them to cancel their main fundraising event, for which previous investment had already been made. By covering some of that income loss with general support and funding the organisation's transition to remote work, Laudes Foundation emergency support was a game changer for the organisation to avoid bankruptcy and build its resilience transitioning to a "new normality".

Another is the case of Global Labor Justice (GLJ), based in the USA, who had brought trade union leaders from across the world to the United States for a conference just as Covid-19 struck, meaning that Indian participants were not able to return home for several months. GLJ had to cover the costs of the event cancellation as well as stranded participants' living costs using personal credit cards until Laudes Foundation stepped in to cover 100% of these expenses. Until Laudes Foundation proactively reached out and covered these costs (amounting to tens of thousands of dollars) that other donors were not supporting, GLJ was seriously concerned about the organisation and how it would absorb the financial shock.

The overall result is that Laudes Foundation now has many partners who consider themselves to be better prepared for future shocks, which is a long-term value for the foundation and its strategy. However, while partners state their capacity to deal with shocks and crises has improved since dealing with Covid-19, nearly 98% partners reported that they were still concerned about some (61.4%), most (27.3%) or all (9.1%) of the same things as at the beginning of the pandemic. The primary reported concern was around lost revenue and budgets, and the second on cash flow, suggesting that while many organisations have coped well during the height of the pandemic, and actually received additional funds in many cases, they are feeling the effects of a drop in funding now. This also demonstrates that while partners assess their organisational resilience to have

improved, there is room for further amelioration and that this is a conversation the Laudes Foundation could now be having with its partners.

SPOTLIGHT ON JAN SAHAS¹⁴

A grassroots Indian organisation focusing on migration, workers' protection and the prevention of SGBV, Jan Sahas realised during the Covid-19 pandemic that they had not previously focused enough on their organisational resilience, being concentrated on their work with communities across the country.

"We were not very concerned about the organisation at first but we realised how our resilience was also important" - Jan Sahas Director

Jan Sahas therefore decided to put plans in place which would support the sustainability of the organisation in the short- and longer-terms. To deal with a potential third wave, they held funds back in case they would be required later. Jan Sahas also moved to protect its staff, putting in place a new staff insurance policy and Covid-19 relief policies. They created an employee support scheme through which staff could borrow money at a 0% interest rate and a fund for the families of their employees who had died of Covid-19. The organisation developed business and operational plans and hired fundraising and partnerships staff.

Overall, the ER achieved meaningful results for all stakeholders involved; beneficiaries, partners and the foundation itself

A key result for the foundation is that it has maintained its ecosystem of partners in order to sustain its work and mandate. The foundation has been able to prove itself as a trustworthy and reliable funder to its partners by positioning itself as a first responder. This has positively impacted the foundation's relationships with its partners under the Labour Rights and Materials programmes, discussed further in the section on likelihood of impact.

All foundation stakeholders interviewed were aligned in believing they had no choice in implementing a response to Covid-19, despite the tension with the foundation's mandate, in order to show they were standing with partners and to preserve the ecosystem of actors. At a time when Laudes Foundation was still finalising its strategy, Covid-19 appears to have confirmed the need to focus on systematic change for many at the foundation, exposing more than ever the cracks in global systems and demonstrating that when these fail, the poorest are worst affected and inequality worsens.

For Laudes Foundation partners, the ER allowed the organisations not only to cope with the crisis but also to adapt to the contextual changes in order to provide assistance as needed. Indeed, all partners were able to ensure continuity of salaries for their staff but some also reinforced their internal employee protection, by improving or temporarily availing social security schemes for employees.¹⁵ Almost all partners interviewed expressed that the ER had allowed them to maintain and build trust with the communities they work in, thereby maintaining or improving their positioning in their contexts, which will facilitate their future programming. In this way, they saw their service delivery work during the pandemic as directly related to their regular programming and objectives.

"Beneficiaries realised that in difficult times we supported them so our relationship improved and we got closer."

(Interview with a grassroots partner based in India)

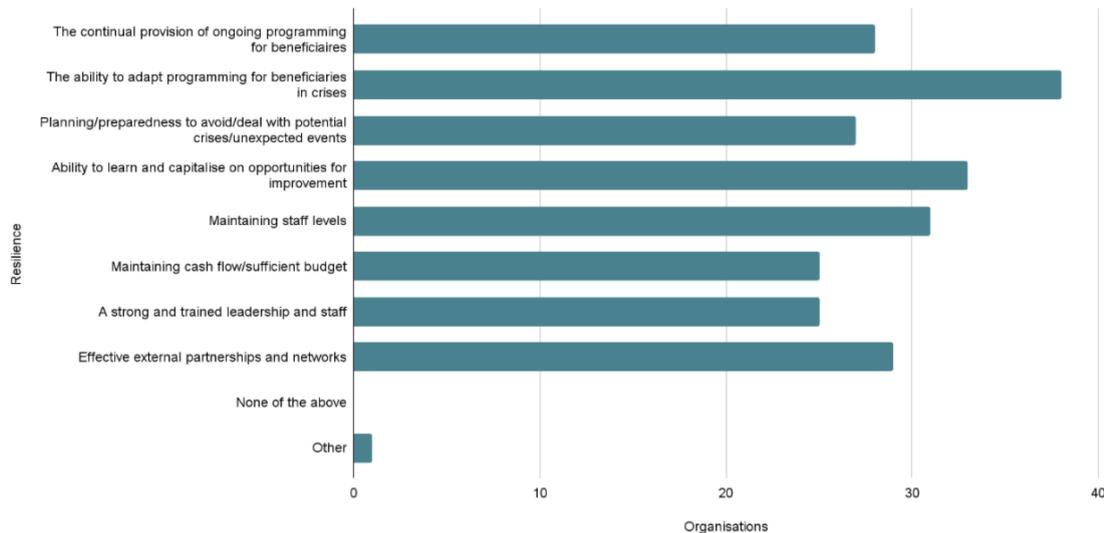
¹⁴ The full case study on Jan Sahas can be found in Annex 6.

¹⁵ The full case study on Jan Sahas can be found in Annex 6.

Interestingly, when asked to define their organisations’ priorities in terms of resilience, the most popular response was “the ability to adapt programming for beneficiaries in crises”. This chimes with the fact that partners prioritised beneficiary needs and service delivery in their use of funds. Interviews reveal that for most partners their ability to provide the necessary support to their communities, and therefore retain their position within the community, is central to their idea of resilience.

Figure 14: Survey Results on Partner Priorities in Terms of “Resilience”

(Source: survey of foundation partners who accessed the ER)



Importantly, the ER also helped partners leverage additional funds from other donors, including government schemes. As described in Box 1, around EUR 8 million in additional finance was leveraged from Laudes Foundation emergency funding, a leverage rate of 200%. This has amplified the potential of partners to provide for beneficiaries and maintain their organisations.

For beneficiaries, while the results are diversified and remain largely short-term, the ER meant that vital and appropriate aid came when most needed and was provided with dignity by organisations who understood their needs. The ER contributed to standing in solidarity with these communities and helped to ensure they were not completely left behind as lockdowns forced societies online and inequality increased.

SPOTLIGHT ON FASE – FUNDO SAAP¹⁶

FASE acts in two important apparel production hubs in Brazil to strengthen women’s rights groups and conduct local advocacy campaigns aimed at influencing public sector programmes and policies. Before the pandemic, the organisation created the Fundo SAAP, an institutional fund to support formal and informal groups of domestic seamstresses, collectives and other grassroots organisations through organisational development, the pursuit of gender justice, the expansion of access to and enjoyment of women’s rights, as well as the confrontation of racism and sexism.

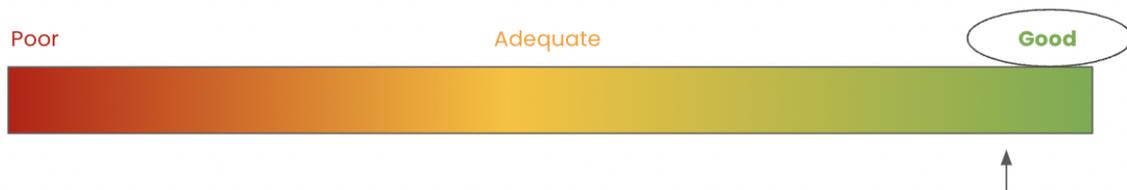
In Brazil, FASE supported 570 families of home-based seamstresses and/or community leaders with food and hygiene and protection supplies. Each basket was adapted to the specific needs of each family because they were distributed through 19 groups of women who were part of the community.

¹⁶ The full case study on FASE - Fundo SAAP can be found in Annex 3.

Lessons Learned: Effectiveness (Implementation & Results)

- A broad objective for an ER allows for flexibility and gives PMs room for movement in adapting and recommending grants. However, a lack of a clear definition of the term “resilience”, with no key indicators associated with the idea, undermines the measurement of success.
- Trust-based philanthropy works on three layers: trust between the foundation and its partners, trust between the foundation’s executive management and its PMs, and trust between the CEO and executive management team and the foundation’s governors. Partners on the ground with close community ties are the best placed actors to understand needs and design interventions, even with limited experience in emergency assistance initiatives. In turn, PMs with existing relationships with partners are best placed to discuss needs with grantees and approve applications. Governors ultimately make the call on any funding and so need to be able to trust executive management to recommend the right course of action based on interaction with their staff.
- Partners rapidly generating reliable data on needs, working within networks and connecting to available government welfare schemes and are key amplifiers of impact in crises, which should be encouraged where possible and relevant.
- While collaboration with other funders offers the potential to amplify impact, if the foundation is not already implementing collaborative philanthropy, putting this place in an emergency context will be a challenge and threat to efficiency. Co-funders and peer organisations need to be identified and communication lines opened ahead of crises, so that trust is already built and areas of shared interest and potential synergy are clear. Although outside the scope of this evaluation, Laudes Foundation did put in place collaborative funding through FORGE, the lessons of which may be useful to the foundation going forward.

D. Likelihood of Impact (Long-Term Value)



A short-term response with some longer-term potential

The likelihood of longer-term impact and value being created by the ER is rated as good overall, taking into account the ultimately short-term nature of the response. As well as providing life-saving support, the strategy put in place by the Laudes Foundation had the idea of resilience at its heart and was focused on sustaining partners and communities so that systems change work could continue post pandemic, as well as providing life-saving relief.

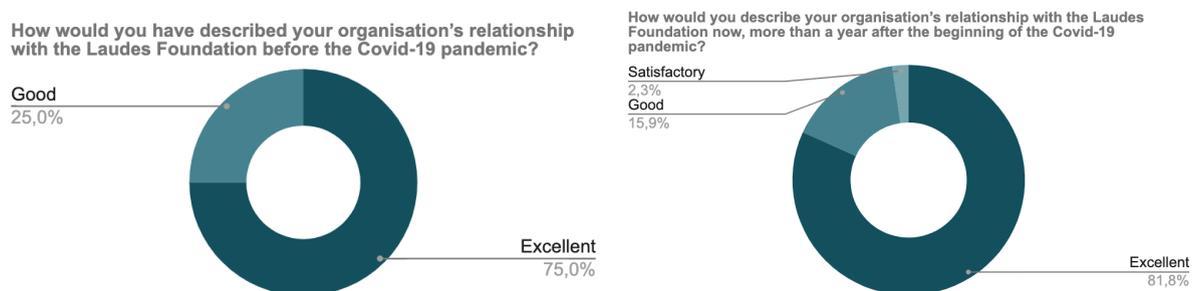
Recognising that expectations in terms of sustainability for an ER should be limited to maintaining sustainable partners and sustaining lives, there are also some early signs that potential for longer term value has been created by the foundation’s response to Covid-19, both for the foundation and its partners. This includes strengthened partner relationships and reinforced ways of thinking at the foundation, and the development of new skills and capacities for partners. Some partners’ responses to Covid-19 have the potential to influence systems in line with Laudes Foundation’s approaches. The rating is mitigated slightly because it is unclear to what extent changes made to streamline the foundation’s grant-making processes during the ER will remain in place for regular programming.

The ER has strengthened already strong partner relationships

Despite launching just before the outbreak of Covid-19, Laudes Foundation inherited many of its partners from the C&AF, meaning that many solid partnerships had been created before the pandemic. As demonstrated previously, partners rated their partnership with Laudes Foundation before the pandemic very favourably. After the ER, an increase of nearly 7% in partners rating the relationship as “Excellent” is witnessed, demonstrating the positive impact of the ER on Laudes Foundation’s partnerships, despite starting from a high baseline. 84.1% of partners rated Laudes Foundation’s communication during the pandemic as “Excellent”, with 13.6% rating it “Good” and 2.3% (one partner) saying it was “Satisfactory”. There were no significant variances in feedback between regions, countries, Laudes Foundation programmes or partner types.

*“We had strong relationships already with partners, and this strengthened it.”
(Interview with Laudes Foundation staff)*

Figure 15: Survey Results on the Strength of the Relationship with Laudes Foundation pre- and post-Covid-19
(Source: survey of foundation partners who accessed the ER)



This was confirmed in interviews with partners, the majority of whom expressed their gratitude for Laudes Foundation’s partner-centred approach during Covid-19, appreciating that Laudes Foundation often reached out to them first to provide reassurance that they would be supported and requested for their analysis on how the ER should be shaped in their context. Laudes Foundation PMs also felt a sense of pride that they had been able to support partners, and that Laudes Foundation was able to evidence its trust-based approach, implementing concrete actions which have shown solidarity with partners. As a newly created foundation with a clear mandate focused on systems change, the ER allowed to put in evidence that a more holistic perspective of the contexts where Laudes Foundation is operating is necessary in order to achieve real impact.

Figure 16: Selection of Partners’ Views on Laudes Foundation Support During Covid-19
(Source: Authors’ creation based on transcripts of interviews with Laudes Foundation partners)



"It (the ER) was perfect. They did not give us any instructions but listened to us, they trusted us. They were super responsive to whatever we asked and proposed. I would like to thank them so much on behalf of all of the workers we supported."
(Interview with a grassroots partner in India)

"With LF, the relationship is one of the calmest that I know, it has always been very easy. There is no kind of obstacle, it is a very fluid relationship with the Programme Managers. LF has an approach of acting with the ones they support, they are very good."
(Interview with a grassroots partner in Brazil)



"We have the trust that LF would help us with any emergency support, especially because they are flexible. Not only providing funding support to implement activities, but also for capacity building activities. We trust each other."
(Interview with a grassroots partner in Bangladesh)

"I really enjoyed seeing this type of ER done in a way that was respectful, prompt and attentive, we really appreciated it. It felt really good to know that we were supported."
(Interview with an international organisation based in USA)



"They accommodated timelines and supported on methods. The LF really supported us and tried to understand our challenges during the pandemic. We have four donors and only LF gave us the opportunity for the emergency fund. Otherwise we wouldn't have done anything, we don't have enough organisational funds to support this type of work."
(Interview with a grassroots partner in Indonesia)

Less positive comments (a small minority) came from grantees based in Mexico and Brazil who, due to strategic changes as C&AF transitioned to Laudes Foundation, were being phased out as partners. The management of transitions was reported to have complicated the efficiency of the ER and, therefore, perceptions of Laudes Foundation.

However, overall, Laudes Foundation positioned itself as a first responder who stands with its partners in times of crisis, positively impacting its partnerships. Although many partnerships had already been built, they had not been tested to this extent previously. This result is likely to sustain, contributing to maintaining and building strong trust-based relationships that are rooted in this shared experience, especially if Laudes Foundation can continue to nurture these relationships by retaining some of the practices used during the pandemic.

Laudes Foundation's relationships in the philanthropic sector have not been enhanced

In contrast to the positive impact in funder-grantee relationships, the evaluation finds no evidence that the ER strengthened relationships with other philanthropic actors, since Laudes Foundation engaged in little collaboration after the design phase. While this is somewhat of a missed opportunity for networking, exchange and developing partnerships which could further leverage Laudes Foundation's outreach and impact, the evaluators recognise the foundation had limited capacity to coordinate with other philanthropic stakeholders as it was under pressure to put the ER in place rapidly while also managing existing grants and developing the new strategy. Foundations interviewed for the purpose of this evaluation were interested in its results and in the approach of Laudes Foundation, suggesting an opportunity for future connection now the peak of the crisis has passed.

Ways of thinking at Laudes Foundation have been confirmed and reinforced, and the connection between basic needs and systems change made more evident

While not directly related to the ER, but rather to the pandemic in general, discussions about the interconnectedness of risks including climate change, inequality and food insecurity have shaped Laudes Foundation's strategic thinking and led to medium- and long-term strategies being put in place in addition to the ER. These reflections also resulted in social protection being included as a focus for the Labour Rights programme. Additionally, several respondents said Covid-19 had brought into sharp focus the fact that business is not always a force for good, and that industry and governments couldn't necessarily be relied on to support workers in times of crisis. This helped in structuring the foundation's wider strategy in calling for obligatory rather than voluntary initiatives to improve labour conditions.

*“There is no systems change if there are no partners; we needed to do the ER.”
(Interview with a Senior Laudes Foundation employee)*

The onset of Covid-19, and the foundation’s response to it, also appears to have put in evidence for many staff across the organisation that systematic change and “building back better” can only occur if people’s basic needs are met and there is a strong ecosystem of civil society actors who are well connected to communities at the grassroots level. This was a reflection made almost unanimously by foundation staff across geographies and seniority levels. There was fair consensus at the foundation that it needs to retain enough flexibility to support partners and communities in times of crisis, without integrating ER into the wider strategy since this was something purposely left behind with C&AF.

*“There is a tension between trust-based philanthropy and being a good funder, and keeping your mandate.”
(Interview with a Senior Laudes Foundation employee)*

A minority felt that any future support in crises should be limited to promoting organisational resilience (for example through capacity building or covering operational costs). The foundation’s governance reportedly sees the type of life-saving support provided by the ER as service delivery, and so as palliative care which is unsustainable and not in line with systems change objectives.

In the original conceptualisation of the Laudes Foundation, service delivery wasn’t considered as a strategy which might ever be part of its systems change approach. However, Covid-19 shook some of the societal systems the Laudes Foundation is part of and wishes to focus on, meaning that the crisis altered the ecosystem the foundation and its partners were working in. This made the crisis a factor that needed to be dealt with by the foundation, which hadn’t been thought about previously as part of the wider strategy.

In order to shore up partner resilience within this context, the foundation had no choice but to support partners in “keeping the lights on” but also in remaining credible and legitimate to the communities they work in by showing up for beneficiaries when needed. Many partner organisations function only with the trust and consent of the workers and communities they work with, and their resilience is inextricably tied to the strength of these relationships. This was demonstrated by grassroots partners being so focused on supporting beneficiaries through the pandemic. It was these strong community links that in many cases allowed them to understand needs on the ground, to move quickly to collect data and to reach the most vulnerable. It was also for these reasons that they received donor funding, which then supported their financial resilience. In this way, providing emergency beneficiary support was also directly linked to the resilience of organisations by proving their credibility and legitimacy as community actors, which will allow them to continue their work post-pandemic.

Some partners were able to see this as an opportunity and use the ER support to put in place strategies which are likely to bear fruit in terms of the systems change Laudes Foundation is trying to achieve, described in more detail below. For others, although they were not able to directly work towards systems change objectives during the pandemic, the ER allowed them to remain linked to the systems (for example labour/migratory/agricultural systems) which Laudes Foundation wishes to change, even if this was through service delivery for a short time. When partners were able to return to normal programming, emergency support was no longer required; service delivery was used as a stop gap measure to ensure the foundation could maintain its ecosystem of partners, who in turn were able to contribute to maintaining their own ecosystems within communities.

*“Our partners are successful because the communities trust them. It takes time to build trust. And hence for them to respond to the needs of the populations is critical to keep the trust going, and that is what they did with our support. We need to mobilise grassroots level action to change the current system, not have bottom down systems only. We learnt that everything in the system has to work in harmony for it to work as a whole. Bottom up AND top down.”
(Interview with a Senior Laudes Foundation employee)*

“Covid-19 made us reflect on the philosophy of systemic change. It’s important for Laudes Foundation to realise that it can’t happen if people are not surviving and if organisations are not there.”

(Interview with a Laudes Foundation employee)

Not all crises which occur will touch on Laudes Foundation’s operating spaces and the systems they focus on in the same way the Covid-19 crisis did. These emergencies will therefore not require the same type of involvement as the foundation had during the pandemic. However, as discussed previously, it is likely that crises which impact Laudes Foundation’s systems change work will occur again at some point. In these circumstances, when the foundation’s ecosystems and ability to be operational are affected, short-term service delivery interventions which maintain partners and communities are coherent with systems change objectives in that they preserve the field and allow partners to shift roles as necessary to retain community trust, important in preserving trust in civil society as an agent of change in general. Future emergencies may also not be global, but affect only regions or localities, meaning the foundation could maintain a capacity to react in some countries and not others.

The ER has accelerated Laudes Foundation’s implementation of some trust-based philanthropy practices but whether these will be preserved remains unclear

The flexibility of the ER represented an important shift in Laudes Foundation grant-making practices but did not go as far as the Pledge encouraged or as some other leaders in the philanthropic sector. However, this streamlining of processes was appreciated by partners and PMs alike for its improved efficiency and concretisation of the idea of “trust”, in terms of the trust placed in partners but also in PMs to approve proposals.

“The ER brought along some more efficient ways of doing philanthropy; fast disbursement, less strings attached, more trust in partners (even though we already did due diligence anyway so should definitely trust them). What can we learn from the way we did philanthropy and implemented it in our mainstream ways of working?”

(Interview with a Laudes Foundation employee)

Trust-based philanthropy, which seeks to address the inherent power imbalances between foundations and nonprofits, involves six key practices (as defined by the Trust-Based Philanthropy Project): giving multi-year, unrestricted funding, doing the homework to get to know (prospective) grantees, simplifying and streamlining paperwork, being transparent and responsive, soliciting and acting on feedback, and offering support beyond funding.¹⁷ Although the ER cannot be said to have brought in a fully trust-based approach at the Laudes Foundation which includes all of these elements, it has resulted in reduced bureaucracy and paperwork requirements, at least for the duration of the ER.

The evaluation has found no evidence that any of these looser practices have resulted in additional risk for the foundation and no suspicions related to the misuse of funds have been reported. No significant delays in reporting were recorded. As described previously, the ER is considered to have been highly effective, suggesting that the future grant-making processes of the foundation could be lightened with less risk than was previously anticipated (at least for proven partners who have been through due diligence). However, the extent to which these lighter practices will remain in place is unclear, as is the longer term impact they could have on fostering a stronger trust-based approach at the foundation.

The CEP reports that among foundations that began implementing more flexible practices in response to the pandemic, more than half said that they will continue them in the future, although to a lesser degree.¹⁸

¹⁷ Trust-Based Philanthropy Project: Practices. Accessed at: <https://www.trustbasedphilanthropy.org/practices>

¹⁸ Center for Effective Philanthropy (2021), ‘FOUNDATIONS RESPOND TO CRISIS: Toward Greater Flexibility and Responsiveness? The Final in a Series of Three Reports’, p. 12

Pro-bono expertise platform made permanent

An impact of the ER on the foundation's ways of working which has long-term value is the 'Nonprofit Builder' platform which was launched in May 2020 in collaboration with Oak Foundation and the David and Lucile Packard Foundation to connect partners with consultants specialised in areas of need including strategy design, leadership, management, IT and communications. Although the platform was under-utilised during the Covid-19 crisis, due to partners prioritising emergency operations, its pro-bono technical support in organisational development areas has now been made a permanent feature of Laudes Foundation's grant-making offer. 18 partners have since accessed services through the platform, including 6 partners who have accessed it more than once. This focus on capacity building (and the development of an innovative mechanism through which to provide it) is in line with good practices and guidelines on providing non-financial support. The platform also has the potential to increase partners' future resilience by improving their capacity in key organisational development areas.

"Spillover" impacts witnessed for partners beyond resilience: development of new capacities

Nearly 90% of partners agreed (43.2%) or strongly agreed (43.2%) that they had been able to put appropriate plans in place to deal with the crisis in the first 2 months of the pandemic, despite nearly 60% partners reporting they had no previous experience or only limited previous experience of providing immediate relief support to end beneficiaries. Since most partners were acting outside of their usual expertise areas, almost all said that they had developed new capacities in terms of emergency relief such as procurement, logistics and distribution skills, as well as remote communications skills. Some had developed new methods for data collection or remote monitoring and training.

*"A whole logistical system was created, we became an institution that distributed hope with food."
(Interview with a grassroots partner in Brazil)*

Most partners expressed that they felt much more capable of putting in place an effective relief intervention than before their implementation of ER activities funded (or co-funded) by Laudes Foundation. These competencies are likely to be useful for any future emergency operations but also to provide transferable skills to other programming areas. Although service delivery will not continue as funding depletes, the knowledge will remain and can be replicated in future as necessary.

*"We saw improvement between phases one and two already. We learned a lot on the field about how to handle the situation. A new thing we did was a lot of counselling because people were really in panic."
(Interview with a grassroots partner in India)*

As well as new skill-sets in ER, several partners also built capacity and experience in areas which they plan to integrate into their normal programming. Partners appear to have been astute in identifying innovations and solutions used during Covid-19 which could be replicated and add long-term value to their approaches. As well as new activity areas, several partners have also developed new ways of doing activities, moving them online (or through the telephone) as much as possible. Occasionally these tools were already in place (portals or hotlines, for example) but their utility was only fully realised during their Covid-19 operations. They have taught their field staff and beneficiaries how to use online communication tools and software and adapted working methodologies in sometimes drastic ways. Many have seen the benefits of this work in allowing them to access communities more easily and will maintain some elements of it post-pandemic.

*"They (the women's groups leaders) have learned to communicate through whatsapp, especially the older ones. But today that's it, they exchange audio messages, they dialogue, they make videos and so on. They did it and learned. They mobilized themselves through whatsapp and managed to reach the women seamstresses."
(Interview with a grassroots partner in Brazil)*

SPOTLIGHT ON **OHS INITIATIVE (OSHE FOUNDATION)**¹⁹

The crisis brought into sharp focus the need for mental health awareness within this demographic and the gap which exists in the community in terms of psychological support. OSHE Foundation has now used its experience during Covid-19 to design programmes which integrate PFA into their approach, advocating for the importance of mental health. OHS Initiative partner Gonoshasthaya Kendra has also used their experience implementing telemedicine during Covid-19 to design a similar response for Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar.

Sustainability enablers have been longer-term thinking when adapting to crisis and working in networks

Although not designed as a sustainable response, the case studies have revealed some strategies that have been key to fostering durable elements which are likely to sustain. The first of these is the ability to plan for the mid-term while adapting and putting in place an immediate response which deals with emergency needs. Partners such as ASA and Jan Sahas, who have been able to think about future threats and opportunities related to Covid-19, have implemented strategies which have contributed to building the resilience of their communities using mechanisms and approaches which remain in place.

Another enabler has been partners who have worked in collaboration with others, creating new partnerships and networks with a wide range of stakeholders. This has usually provided partners with better data and increased outreach potential in the short-term, along with partnerships and networks which will remain in the longer-term, bringing new opportunities for collaboration and influence at higher levels. It has also supported some partners (for example Jan Sahas in India and Diaconia in Brazil) in cementing their positioning within the national ecosystem, which has the potential to increase organisational resilience by improving visibility and therefore fundraising potential, as well as their influence in systems changing matters.

SPOTLIGHT ON **ACTION FOR SOCIAL ADVANCEMENT**²⁰

ASA put in place a three-pronged strategy using Laudes Foundation funds, which helped farmers in the immediate term while also building resilience for the next growing season, to avoid further disaster. This involved providing agricultural inputs, since farmers were unable to procure them from usual sources, facilitating Farmer Producer Organisations' (FPO) access to low-cost credit so they could buy from farmers at pre-pandemic prices and avoid "distress selling", and connecting those in need of work to the government's rural employment scheme.

This strategy leveraged Laudes Foundation funds, which were the first received, in order to access additional funding and to hedge the risk for FPOs. It has resulted in FPOs having access to diversified and inexpensive capital, which will improve their future viability and ability to support marginalised farmers.

ASA were active members of the Rapid Rural Response to Covid-19 (RCRC) network, a coalition of around 60 civil society organisations (CSOs). ASA contributed to, and benefited from, exchanges of information and expertise between members. The network is now one of the largest bottom-up coalitions in India with a voice at the national level and the potential for impact outside of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The capacity to adapt to the contextual challenges in each territory is also a key sustainability enabler of the ER with a high potential for future impact. As mentioned before, during the first year of

¹⁹ The full case study on the OHS Initiative can be found in Annex 4.

²⁰ The full case study on Action for Social Advancement can be found in Annex 5.

the pandemic, most partners put on standby certain regular grant activities and implemented temporary changes in their ways of working to provide service delivery. Lessons from the first round of support were capitalised and fed into the planning processes for the second round of support provided in India and Brazil. Laudes Foundation's partners' capacity to adapt to the evolution of the crisis in their contexts and the needs of their beneficiaries ensured a relevant and tailored ER in both rounds.

This same capacity to adapt spilled-over into some partners' regular grant activities and, more broadly, their ways of working as organisations and positioning in-country. In the case of Brazil, FASE-Fundo SAAP extended their support in the second round to other vulnerable groups that were not part of the beneficiaries of their regular Laudes Foundation project. This allowed FASE-Fundo SAAP to be known by more farmer families who expressed their wishes to join the regular grant cotton project, but also allowed Laudes Foundation to become better known by other stakeholders like UNESCO, and start discussions for potential partnerships on non-pandemic related activities.

SPOTLIGHT ON **FUNDO ELAS**

Fundo ELAS is the main independent feminist fund for women empowerment in Brazil. They support initiatives and provide funding, through calls for proposals, to social movements and grassroots organisations throughout the country to fight against gender violence in the apparel industry. In other words, Fundo ELAS functions as a platform to provide guidance, advocacy work and redistribute support to grassroots militant system changing actors across Brazil.

Laudes Foundation's regular grant "Elas na moda" (Women in Fashion) focused mainly on the call for proposals which relied on in-person activities and physical means before the pandemic hit. Indeed, the project selection process was completely in-person, applications were sent via printed documents, the screening system in place included the work of a selection committee that would assess physical packages of project documents and then deliberate via face-to-face meetings.

With the ER, Laudes Foundation provided flexibility in terms of deadlines and the use of financial resources from the regular grant, but most importantly provided the organisation with emergency funds that were used as an 'adaptation resource': adaptation not only of the regular program activities and processes, but of all the programs that Fundo ELAS had in place. As such, during the first year of the pandemic, the organisation made a complete shift of its working methodology to virtual means. Laudes Foundation support also included the mentorship for doing the risk analysis for this transition, identifying gaps and good practices in terms of data management and user experience and obtaining recommendations to make a successful migration to virtual work. The large scale of Fundo ELAS's outreach and the type of beneficiaries it dealt with was particularly sensitive as the organisation engages with civil society groups in a strong context of criminalization of these actors.

With Laudes Foundation support, Fundo ELAS created an adapted platform on which organisations could share their project proposals through an application process that was also simplified, provided hotline support to organisations struggling to apply, and adapted their follow-up protocols with candidates to ensure inclusivity and the safety of the data being collected. This strategy not only allowed Fundo ELAS to maintain their support to organisations despite the challenging context, but it also made it possible to go from 700 proposals received the year before to 1500 in 2020. The organisation also hosted an online sustainable fashion show which made it possible to reach "people that nobody had thought possible".

In a digital exclusion scenario that followed the first stages of the pandemic, Fundo ELAS managed to create comprehensive and inclusive spaces and means for vulnerable groups and their organisations to maintain their militant work in the new virtual arena.

Some partners' responses have the potential to influence systems in line with Laudes Foundation's approaches

Case studies also show that some partners' responses have the potential to influence systems, where this has been translated into new programming/advocacy at higher levels. Indeed, in most of the current contexts in which Laudes Foundation partners operate, the pandemic only increased and enhanced the structural problems of the existing systems the foundation wishes to tackle. By providing its partners with the capacity to participate and implement an ER in their territories in a very flexible manner, the foundation contributed to building the muscle for most of these CSOs to pursue advocacy efforts with a wider outreach in the virtual arena.

“The pandemic has not passed for the informal sector, they will be the last ones to receive any money for their work. (...) As a lesson we learned to be migrants with the migrants and to adapt to their situation. (...) The migrant adapts, and that is what we did.”
(Interview with a grassroots partner in Brazil)

In the case of Mexico, the Fondo Semillas was able to start working strategically with public institutions, unions and community organisations and create a feedback loop from workers to officials to access and provide reliable information on health and access to rights legislation. The pandemic created a significant gap and left many unrepresented but Laudes Foundation grantees made it possible for workers to share their stories with policy makers and leverage the tools available to continue advocating for their rights. The Centro de los Migrantes organised a virtual meeting with the US Senate and five Mexican workers, which would have not been possible in the past. These are just some examples of how Laudes Foundation partners seized the opportunity of virtual means to create bridges with decision makers. In the case of Brazil, Laudes Foundation grantees provided a voice to stakeholders at the community level to interact and express their demands to local and federal governments and request for accountability, in a context that made it more difficult to participate and increased exclusion from the political and social arena.

By managing to keep the networks of CBOs and informal groups alive, and provide them with platforms to engage with public institutions, the Laudes Foundation partners in the country pursued their collective action work and gave new meaning to their programmes. Fighting fake news and providing reliable information was another major success of the Laudes Foundation grantees. Organisations like Reporter Brasil played a major role in keeping the local and national governments accountable to the population on the sanitary crisis management.

“Our team has really strengthened our ability to communicate virtually, create multimedia content and build relationships with the communities. I'm excited to do outreach in person but we're still going to use this online space.”
(Interview with a (former) grassroots partner in Mexico)

SPOTLIGHT ON **FASE - FUNDO SAAP**²¹

In a context like Brazil, FASE is a strategic partner for Laudes Foundation as systems changing work requires a strong component of grassroots political work. Indeed, the Fundo SAAP project sought to strengthen women's groups working in the fashion industry as a large part of the fashion industry benefits from the unequal structure of gender relations. As they work in their homes or in “backyard factories”, home-based seamstresses live in situations of isolation, which constitutes a major obstacle for the exercise of their rights. Fundo SAAP's work seeks to contribute to filling this gap by raising awareness about the serious situation of social and economic vulnerability of home-based seamstresses.

When the pandemic hit, the living conditions of these women had considerably worsened and most of them were unexpectedly unemployed. With the Laudes Foundation support, the Fundo

²¹ The full case study on FASE - Fundo SAAP can be found in Annex 3.

SAAP planned the distribution of food and hygiene baskets to 19 groups with an approach that actively involved them in the overall process. By doing so, spaces for dialogue were created where the women had the opportunity to reflect about leadership, strategy and roles. As many of the groups were still new, the Fundo SAAP adapted their participation in the ER to their capacity while still providing space for them to play a major role in the process which increased mutual trust.

The women's groups took this opportunity to keep advocating for their rights and counter misinformation, which was an important challenge in the Brazilian context. The pedagogy done by Fundo SAAP around the use of virtual tools also ensured the women's participation in the ER and has now integrated the groups' regular ways of working.

SPOTLIGHT ON JAN SAHAS²²

By August 2020, Jan Sahas had put in place a longer term strategy based on its learnings in responding to Covid-19. The organisation saw, for example, that the Indian government had little data on migrant workers and that labourers who migrated were challenged in accessing available government aid because of problems registering with banks outside of their home states. They therefore pivoted to include a greater focus on migrant workers in their strategy, taking advantage also of increased attention on the issue nationally and internationally, and designed a comprehensive programme, the Migrant Resilience Collaborative (MRC), to respond to needs. Laudes Foundation agreed to provide 20% of initial funds to the MRC.

MRC is a grassroots-led multi-stakeholder collaborative to ensure the safe and responsible recovery of migrant families and their livelihoods in India post Covid-19. The MRC proposes a strategy to transition from relief to focusing on core needs of migrant workers to build medium- and long-term resilience. This large-scale programme aims to impact 10 million migrants in 3-5 years, ensuring safety, security, and mobility for vulnerable migrant families across India, by mobilising funding, building systemic infrastructure and facilitating implementation/research, and driving government and private sector advocacy. This type of strategy has the potential to transform migrant labour systems in India, being implemented in 100 districts and cities across both source and destination locations, and including a focus on advocacy and building of infrastructure.

Lessons Learned: Likelihood of Impact (Long-Term Value)

- Crises also represent moments of learning and opportunity; to tackle cracks in current systems, to rethink strategies and to test new ways of working. Time for reflection on learning after a crisis response is necessary and important to ensure that any productive lessons can be capitalised on.
- When given flexibility to respond to crises, some partners will put in place strategies which have the potential to influence systems in line with the foundation's approach, for example through advocacy. This underlines the need to support partners with shared goals and that partners are best placed to find solutions in the contexts in which they operate, including in times of crisis.
- Capacity building does not always need to be driven by the foundation, but can also occur organically by supporting partners to work in new areas when the opportunity or need arises.

²² The full case study on Jan Sahas can be found in Annex 6.

IV. Recommendations

Based on the evaluation findings and lessons learned, this evaluation presents recommendations for the foundation's future involvement in emergency response interventions, as well as for Laudes Foundation grant-making more generally.

Recommendations for Involvement in Emergency Response

- ***Maintain the EF mechanism, replenished with minimal funds (<EUR 100,000) so that the foundation is positioned to respond efficiently to crises which impact its systems change objectives, whether locally, regionally or globally.***

The Covid-19 pandemic has demonstrated that the foundation's partners and the communities they work in are vulnerable to shocks and disasters which undermine grantees' capacity to work towards systematic change. There can be no systems change in the longer term if people's lives and basic needs are not sustained in the shorter term during crises, and if civil society organisations are not able to function. The foundation has seen that flexibility is required in times of crisis in order to help preserve the communities its partners work in, without focusing on humanitarian support as a distinct programmatic area. The evaluators recognise Laudes Foundation has transitioned away from C&AF and left behind its humanitarian programme and dedicated humanitarian partner in order to focus on a new strategic direction. However, maintaining an EF would not represent a return to this strategy, but rather a recognition that limited emergency support may be necessary in future, and that the ability to provide this rapidly is key to its relevance, efficiency and effectiveness.

- ***Based on the experience of this ER, define what constitutes a "crisis" for which the Laudes Foundation should provide temporary emergency support, and indicators to monitor the evolution of such crises.***

Qualifying criteria should be based on threats to the foundation's mandate, for example events which severely impact Laudes Foundation's ecosystems and ability to remain operational or grave threats to partner survival and resilience. When these criteria are met, emergency support might be required.

As such, Laudes Foundation will need to assess the potential added value of its support to partners in the crisis, based on informed assumptions about how the crisis will affect the systems the foundation is trying to influence. The foundation will also need to consider the risks for its partners and the foundation itself when engaging in a response (particularly reputational, and safety and security risks) and to define mitigation measures. Another important element to consider is that as with Covid-19, the ER to future events might require Laudes Foundation to temporarily provide a type of support that is not foreseen in its regular grant management mechanisms (such as service delivery) in order to reinforce its ecosystems.

It is important to note that Laudes Foundation will not necessarily have a role in responding to all crises which impact partners, for example those related to high political instability and conflict, if little added value of Laudes Foundation support is identified and risks are considered to be high. In these cases, regular grant activities could be put on hold while the crisis indicators are monitored and until normal programming can resume, an emergency response becomes necessary, or a longer-term change to planned activities is required. Laudes Foundation will also not have a financial role to play in all crises, and in some cases providing more flexibility to existing grants as partners tackle the issue on the ground will be sufficient.

Defining crisis phases and indicators to monitor these is a key to supporting Laudes Foundation in decision-making. Example phases:

1. Warning phase - signs are being received of a potential/imminent crisis

2. Acute crisis/response - significant impacts of the event are being felt, strategies are put in place to minimise negative consequences
3. Recovery - the acute phase has passed and normal operations begin but some impacts may remain
4. Learning - evaluation of the effects and response

Actions should be reviewed as the crisis moves between the phases. Any involvement of the foundation should be time-bound and linked to the progression of defined indicators, rather than indefinite. Support does not necessarily need to be provided until critical indicators go back to “normal”, which may never happen, but until opportunity to resume activities, perhaps with modifications, is available.

This ER has shown that Laudes Foundation has an important role to play in phases 2 and 3. Therefore, it is recommended that the foundation monitors and assesses when the critical event is progressing into a new phase, and when recovery efforts such as resuming regular grant activities are possible. If so, the ER will come to an end. At that point, it is recommended that the LF’s teams engage in discussions with their partners to potentially adjust their regular grant activities to the new contextual situation in order to ensure these are still feasible with their expected outputs regarding systems change.

- ***Capitalise on the good practices witnessed in this ER by creating Standard Operating Practices (SOPs) so that a process, including approval processes, will kick into place when/if crises arise and the foundation doesn’t begin from scratch each time.***

When the crisis threshold as previously defined is reached, the SOPs would be triggered, involving:

A certain emergency amount, pre-decided for local/regional/global crises or along a scale of gravity, held by governance, is automatically approved when the threshold is reached for each category, and is released on demand to the EF. Funds over and above this pre-agreed amount would need to be agreed in discussion with governance.²³

A crisis group is activated to oversee the ER and gather feedback from relevant teams on needs to rapidly design an intervention strategy.

Specific time for involved PMs is assigned to ER follow up and other responsibilities are unloaded to enable this.

As discussed previously, the evolution of the crisis is monitored by the crisis group so that next steps can be decided (e.g. a timely end to ER support once the crisis has moved into the recovery phase, or a possible replenishment and circling back to earlier actions should subsequent crisis waves move it back to the acute phase).

- ***Even in crisis planning, keep an eye on the post-acute phase . This could involve, for example, putting in place a “loose coupling” approach in which some buffer funds are held back until mid-term impacts can more effectively be assessed, and checking in with partners once the worst of the crisis has passed to monitor the situation and emerging needs.***
- ***Ensure medium-term (recovery phase) interventions, such as technical support, are not only offered at the peak of crises but also as situations stabilise. These discussions should be integrated into mid-term plans and offered at various intervals or be an ongoing conversation.***

²³ Since in the current system certain grants can already be approved without governance being involved, and a mechanism already exists (the EF), the recommendation is to build on this existing way of working by agreeing clear criteria for the automatic replenishment of the fund with the governance so that in case of future crises, resources can be mobilised rapidly and efficiently.

- ***When crises which seriously impact partners hit, consider moving relevant grantees to GOS or accelerating grant payments proactively/automatically, so that partners can benefit from the advantages of this type of support without needing to make requests and negotiate. This will also help to lighten the load for grassroots and frontline organisations, who are likely to be the most busy dealing with community needs and to have fewer support functions.***

Recommendations for Laudes Foundation Grantmaking

- ***Laudes Foundation should better define its understanding of the concept of “resilience”, and how this can be addressed through its ONE Programme, drawing up some key criteria based on its definition that can be used to assess the capacity levels of new and existing partners to cope with shocks and crises.***

Partners report increased resilience but also that they have some or many of the same concerns for their organisations and operations as they did at the beginning of the pandemic. Using the resilience assessment tool, PMs should follow up with partners now the crisis is no longer in its acute phase, to discuss what preparedness measures they have put in place, whether they are more prepared now for shocks and crises and, if not, how they can be supported to be.

Acting as a needs assessment, partners will be asked to help self-identify capacity support needs, so Laudes Foundation can offer solutions through existing mechanisms (Nonprofit Builder platform, peer learning fund) where relevant, or look for tailored solutions as necessary.

- ***The foundation should consider to what extent it can maintain and build on lighter ER practices in its usual grantmaking, to travel further in the direction of a trust-based approach by simplifying and streamlining paperwork, perhaps positioning the foundation as a sector leader in this regard.***
- ***Unrestricted core funding is key to organisational resilience; consider how Laudes Foundation can accelerate moves in this direction, in line with emerging good practice in the sector related to increased flexibility and reduced oversight.***

V. List of Annexes

Annex 1: Inception Report

Annex 2: Case Study on DIACONIA - Brazil

Annex 3: Case Study on FASE (Fundo SAAP) - Brazil

Annex 4: Case Study on OHS Initiative/OSHE Foundation - Bangladesh

Annex 5: Case Study on ASA - India

Annex 6: Case Study on Jan Sahas - India

Annex 7: Survey Results

Annex 8: Key Informant Interview List

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