

FIRE Journeys around the Globe

**FORD FOUNDATION BUILD COHORTS:
THE OUTLOOK SO FAR**

REPORT SUMMARY



SCOPE

We examined the journeys of **46 BUILD 1.0 grantee organizations and networks** who completed the Financial Innovation and Resilience (FIRE) program between December 2019 and May 2021, including:

- 14 from Brazil
- 13 from Indonesia
- 8 from the MENA region
- 11 from Southern Africa

Organizations ranged from 6 to 60 years old, with a volunteer/staff complement of 1-76+ and a 2019 income of \$242K - \$11M.

100% (41) of the organizations who completed close-out surveys* indicated that FIRE met/exceeded their expectations, and that they would recommend it to others.

**Data in this report in reference to the number of survey respondents. Note that not all respondents answered each question.*





1

FIRE shifted attitudes to build financial confidence across all cohorts: 93% (38) of groups are more confident that they will make a greater impact in the future.

2

Confidence is linked to trying new practices and policies that opened up new pathways for financial resilience:

- **Capital reserves:** 82% (31) improved their capital reserves through raising new funds, increasing allocations, planning and policies, and using reserves to generate investments.
- **Communications:** 49% (18) are communicating more effectively with donors.
- **Collaboration:** Internal cohesion, shared responsibilities and new ways of working have catalyzed success among those raising new funds.



3

New pathways are yielding **outcomes already:**

54% (22) are generating funds and up to 29% (12) are trying new revenue generation strategies.

4

FIRE tools and approaches are linked to **optimism among grantees:**

- 68% (28) of those who are very optimistic about the prospects for greater financial resilience and health are more likely to use the FIRE tools and approaches.
- Confidence, strategic competence and communications are essential ingredients for success.



ATTITUDE SHIFTS

- **25 groups became very much more aware of their relationship to money. Of these, 19 (76%) also indicated they were communicating better with donors.** Cohorts whose relationships were particularly impacted were MENA 86% (6) and Southern Africa 100% (9).
- **The majority feel more confident about their financial resilience,** rating their confidence a 7.9/10 as a result of FIRE.
- **Capital reserves:** attitudinal shifts are evident in grantees' success in area, including the need to discuss it more confidential with donors.

RESERVED



A note about capital reserves

Most non-profits believe donors do not support capital reserves, which are a luxury non-profits can't afford.

Improvements to grantees' capital reserves and donor communications suggest that most respondents are overcoming self-

defeating attitudes that hold organizations back from requesting and/or generating these funds.



SHIFTS IN PRACTICES

- **Over one-third (34%) are using all 6 FIRE tools often or regularly**, and three-fourths are using at least 4.
- **85% (35) use the strategic budgeting tool** often or regularly.
- **Key strategies/tools created or updated by the 54% (22) who have raised new funds:**
 - Strategic budget (19%)
 - Resource mobilization plan (18%)
 - Strategic plan (17%)
 - Communication plan (17%)

6 FIRE Tools



Scenario
budgeting



Financial health
indicators



Income
diversification



Resource
mobilization and
communication
budget lines



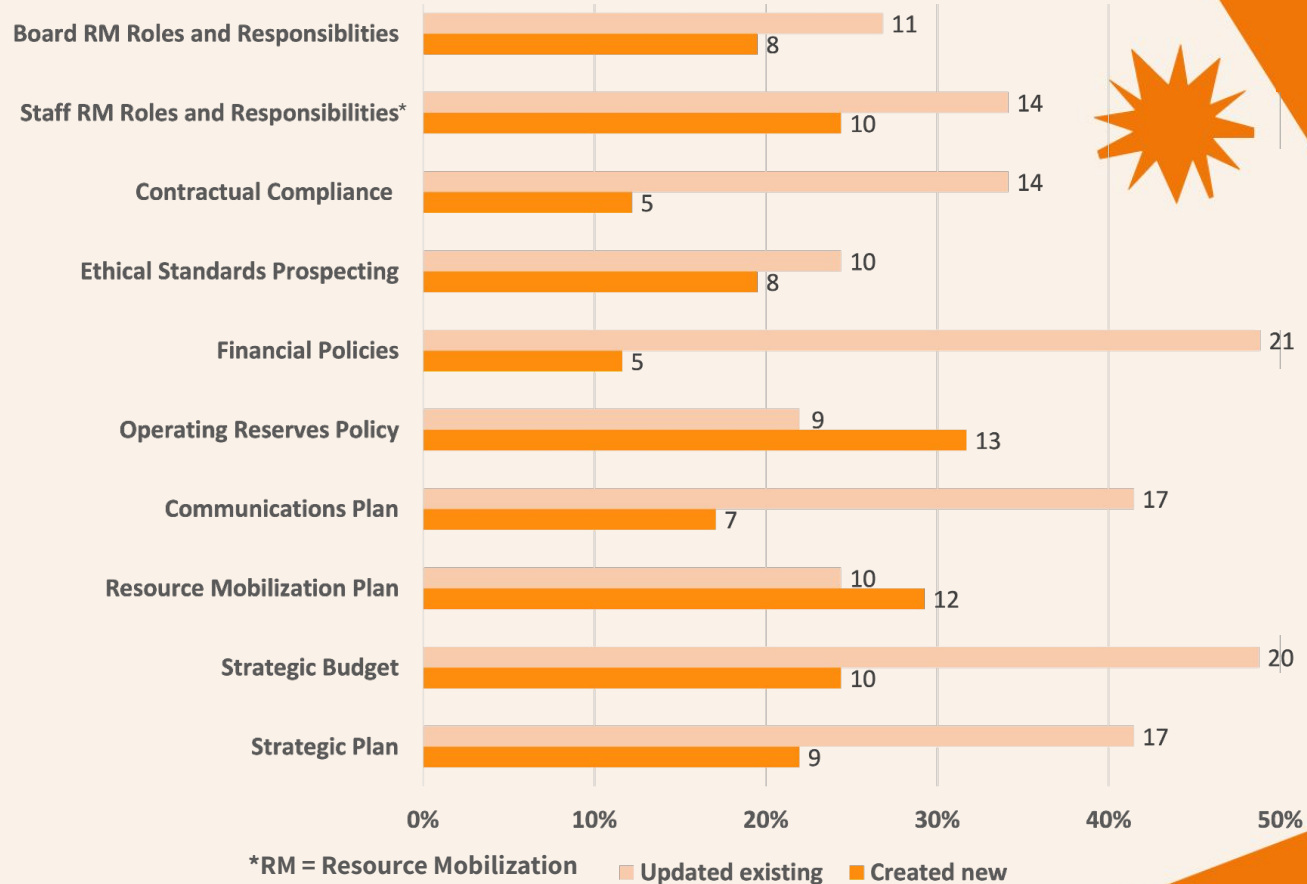
Capital
reserves



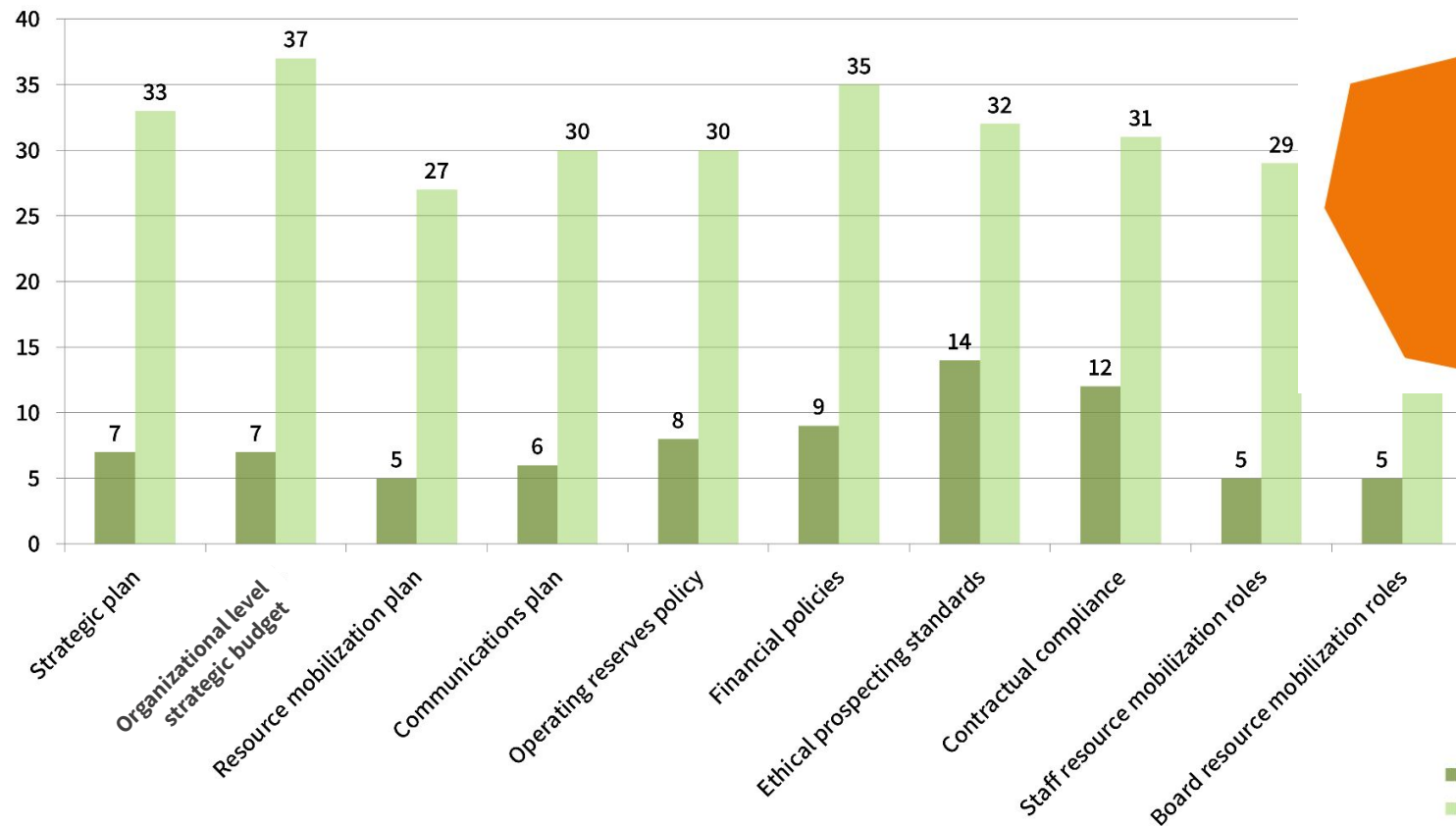
Strategic
budget



Policies, plans and practices updated since FIRE



Policies, plans and practices before and after FIRE



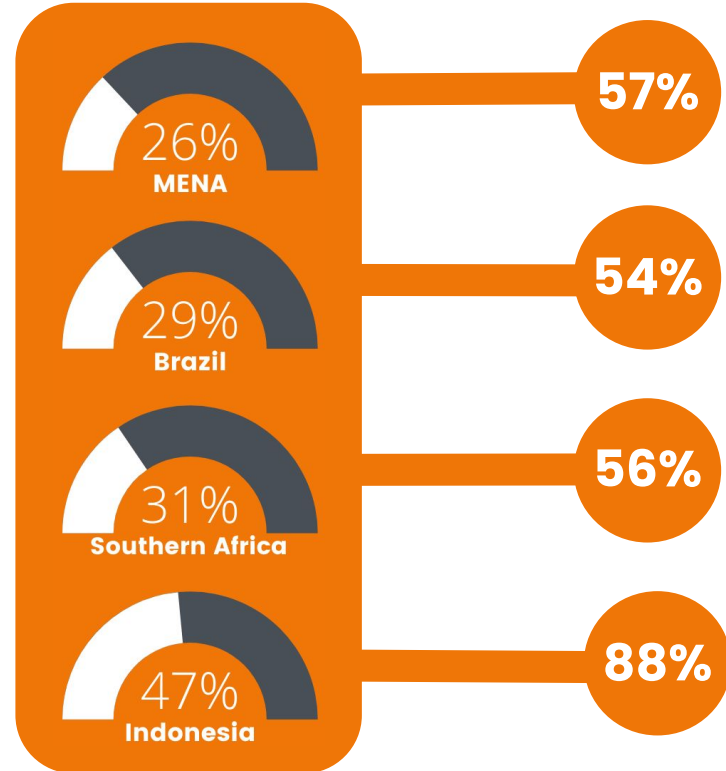
OUTCOMES

In addition to new funds raised, we saw notable shifts in **donor relationship outcomes**, which could positively impact donor dependence. These include:

- More than 79% (30+) communicated their needs for core support, fewer restrictions and multi-year grants.
- 32% (12) discussed the needs of the field (systemic).
- 30% (11) established more dynamic partnerships.
- More organizations are negotiating capital reserves 67% (26) and true cost recovery 56% (22).

Rate of dependence on
Ford Foundation
(at program start)

% of cohort believing
They will **reduce
dependence** in the
next 2-3 years...

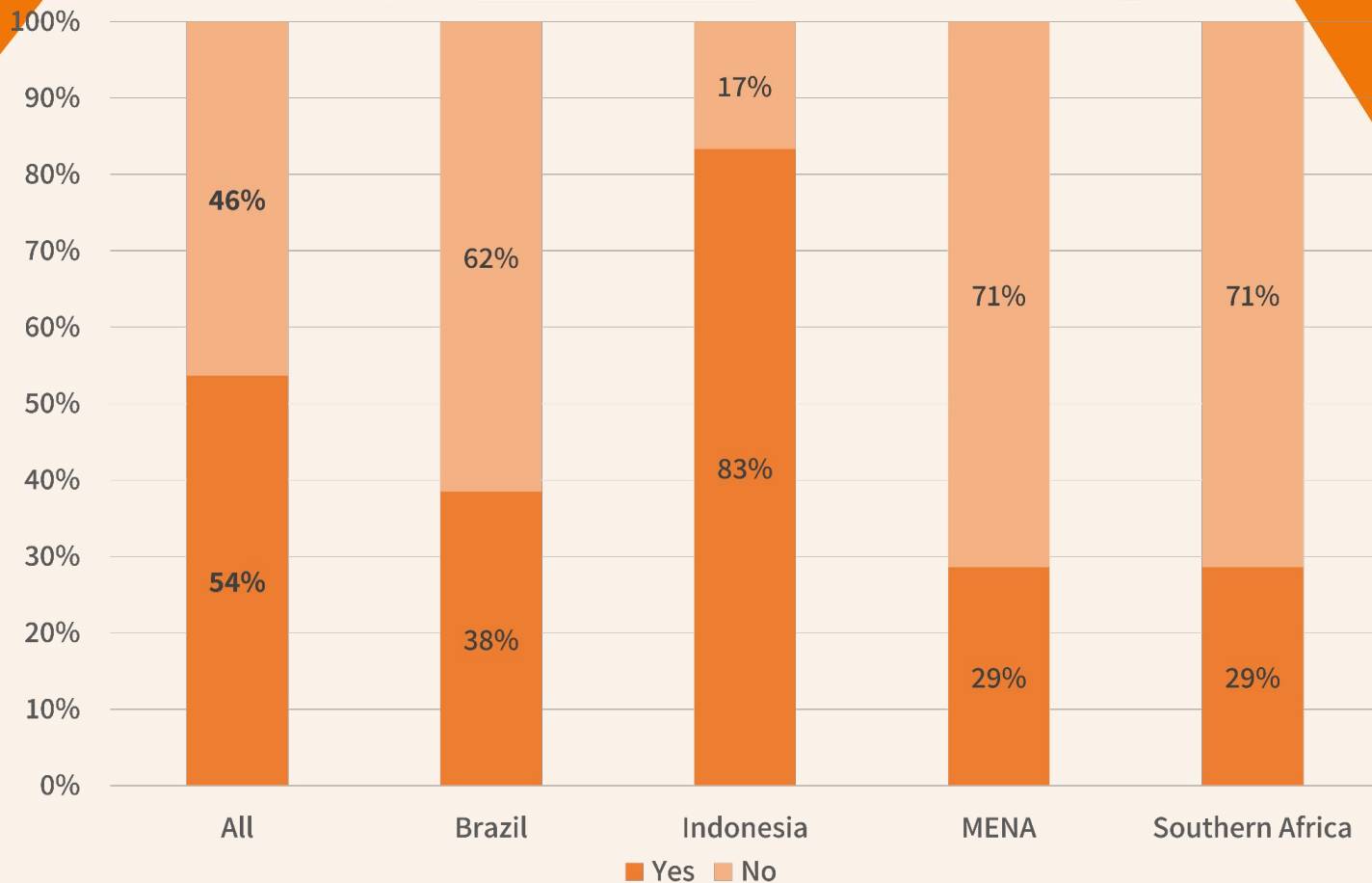


Revenue generating strategies tried since FIRE

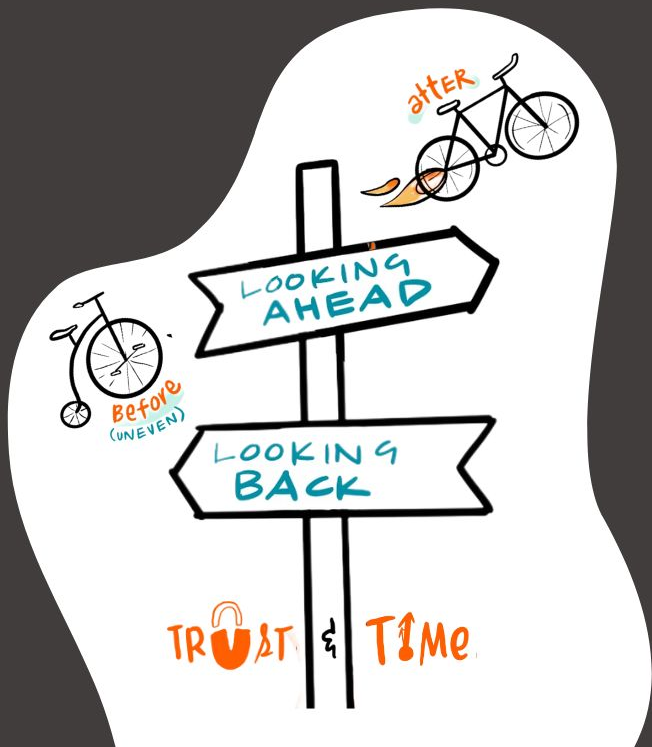
STRATEGY TRIED	ORGANIZATIONS WHO TRIED		SUCCESS RATE*	
Joint proposal with other organizations	12	29%	9	75%
Individual donors, small gifts	11	27%	9	82%
Online fundraising	8	20%	6	75%
Income-generating service or activity	6	15%	5	83%
Corporate contributions	6	15%	5	83%
Membership dues	4	10%	3	75%
Individual donors, large gifts	3	7%	1	33%
Impact investing	2	5%	2	100%

* As a percent of those who tried the new strategy

Percentage of cohorts raising more funds as a result of FIRE



OPPORTUNITIES



- **Time & Perseverance:** The experience of the cohorts suggests that the length of time participants are on the FIRE journey gives them more time to try out what they learned, yielding more results. Indonesia, for example, began earlier and had more time to try and successfully implement many learnings.
- **Tackling key sustainability issues such as true cost recovery and capital reserves with donors.** Consider the relevance and opportunities to bring sector-wide issues to the table, including the starvation cycle - something all cohorts are reticent to broach with donors.
- **Engaging Pivot Teams:** While 87% (34) of organizations have introduced at least one measure to ensure learnings are passed on, few are meeting regularly with their Pivot Teams (executive director, senior finance officer, fundraising and communications officers) .
We've seen that having a cohesive team and whole-of-organization approach is “pivotal” for moving from learning to sustained implementation to transformative impact.

Resource mobilization strategies to be tried in the near future

REVENUE GENERATING STRATEGIES PLANNED	BRAZIL*		INDONESIA*		MENA*		SOUTHERN AFRICA*		ALL COHORTS**	
Joint grant proposal with partners	12	100%	9	82%	6	86%	8	100%	35	85%
Income-generating service, activity or product sales	8	80%	11	100%	5	100%	7	78%	31	76%
Individual donors, small gifts	10	77%	8	73%	6	100%	6	75%	30	73%
Individual donors, large gifts	9	82%	8	73%	4	80%	7	88%	28	68%
Corporate contributions	7	70%	8	80%	5	83%	7	78%	27	66%
Membership dues	4	50%	4	36%	2	33%	1	13%	11	27%
Online fundraising	8	89%	6	67%	4	67%	5	63%	23	56%
Impact investing	8	80%	8	80%	3	75%	4	80%	23	56%

*Percentage calculated excludes "Don't Know"

**Percentage calculated includes "Don't Know" (Total=41)

Strong interest in **collaboration for financial resilience across cohorts coming out of FIRE.**

FIRE Phase 2

Spring will be providing support in the form of:

- Annual cohort sessions for graduates.
- FIRE Leadership Conversations and functional exchanges.
- Options for additional group or one-on-one accompaniment.
- Option for an updated diagnostic at the three-year mark.
- Access to an updated FIRE Learning Lab and community engagement platform.

... and updating FIRE in response to BUILD grantees feedback:

- Increasing customization and in-country delivery capacity, noting the importance of local coaches in program success.
- Continuing and deepening opportunities to peer learning.
- Increasing leadership coaching and support.





MENA Participant

"Having this process of being together and in touch with each other and others outside the region was soothing, felt that we're not alone in this drama."



Brazil Participant

"Since the nature of the organization involves supporting rights-defending organizations, including movements, collectives and grassroots organizations, we intend to relay FIRE knowledge to the entities we support."



Indonesian Participant

“FIRE learning has encouraged us to involve everybody, not just people from finance, but people in communication and programs, so everyone is alert, which is a plus point.”



Southern African Participant

“As a team we have learned to reflect and plan together about our finances. We have also gained an appreciation of how each staff member has a stake in ensuring that the organization is financially resilient.”

FiRE

Financial
Innovation &
Resilience

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FORD
FOUNDATION



This research is based on an external report: Younis, Mona. Ph.D., Evaluation Consultant, *The FIRE Journey: Ford Foundation BUILD cohorts and the outlook so far* (July 2021). The data comes from FIRE pre-intensive and close-out surveys, diagnostics, as well as from the CampFIRE close-out sessions.