



# Funding for sex worker rights

Opportunities for foundations to fund more and better

# Acknowledgements

---

This report is the product of a collaborative effort between Mama Cash, the Open Society Foundations and the Red Umbrella Fund. The research for this report was primarily conducted by Sam Avrett and Julia Greenberg of The Freemont Center. The report was drafted by Sam Avrett, Julia Greenberg, Annie Hillar, Esther Lever and Nadia van der Linde.

Many additional people contributed to the research and report. Most importantly, our special thanks go out to the 183 sex worker organisations and 20 grantmakers that took time to share their data and valuable experiences and recommendations through our survey. Many others contributed by encouraging groups to respond to the survey or by translating the survey into additional languages.

We also greatly appreciate the data, advice, and support throughout the process from the staff at the Foundation Center, International Human Rights Funders Group (IHRFG), Global Action for Trans\* Equality (GATE), Funders Concerned About AIDS (FCAA), and Funders for LGBTQ Issues.

Funders and activists provided valuable input in the initial stages of conceptualising the research as well useful feedback on draft versions of the report. We especially want to acknowledge John Barnes, David Barr, Heather Benjamin, Christen Dobsen, Heather Doyle, Miriam Edwards, Justus Eisfeld, Anne Gathumbi, Jane Hannon, Liz Hilton, Heidi Hoefinger, Anna Koob, Ray Lam, Steven Lawrence, Nicky McIntyre, Zohra Moosa, Ruth Morgan Thomas, Diana Stefanescu, Javid Syed, Ingrid Verver, and Dennis van Wanrooij.

“Funders should have courage. Be willing to listen to us and support us in our struggle to have our rights respected and our voices heard.”

**Sex worker organisation from  
Southeast Asia, survey response**

## What Do You Think?

Mama Cash, the Red Umbrella Fund, and the Open Society Foundations are committed to producing useful information for advocates and donors, and we welcome your feedback and ideas about this research and report. For more information or to provide feedback, please contact us at [info@redumbrellafund.org](mailto:info@redumbrellafund.org).



© Mama Cash/Red Umbrella Fund, 2014

---





Red umbrellas are carried in support of sex worker rights at a rally in Sonagachi, India in 2012. Photo: Dale Kongmont, APNSW

# Table of contents

---

1. Introduction	2
2. Mapping the funding landscape	4
• Who funds sex worker rights?	4
• Where does the money go?	8
3. Survey results: how sex worker organisations see the funding landscape	11
4. Conclusions and recommendations	15
 Annex A: Methodology	 20
Annex B: List of key foundations investing in sex worker rights	22
Credits	24

# 1. Introduction

---

Around the world, sex workers are confronted with widespread violations of their human rights. They face discrimination in legal, political, social and economic spheres. Stigma and marginalisation increases their exposure to violence and exploitation, including trafficking. In many countries sex work is criminalised, which further increases sex workers' vulnerability and decreases their access to basic services and protection<sup>1</sup>.

Against this contextual backdrop, sex workers are organising to claim their rights: to be free from violence and other abuse, to access adequate and respectful health care, to enjoy just and fair working conditions, and to define and lead their organisations and movements according to their own agendas and needs. Their struggles to organise for their rights need recognition and support.

In 2006, the Open Society Foundations commissioned the report *"Sex Worker Health and Rights: Where's the Funding?"*<sup>2</sup> to gauge the extent of funding available for organisations that address sex worker health and rights and to examine the implications for the grantmakers and groups around the world that work to protect and advance the human rights of sex workers. The research found that the global amount of grantmaking invested in sex worker health and rights organisations was minuscule, and that the vast majority of financial support came in the form of HIV prevention funding. The second largest source of funding for non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working with sex workers that was identified came from private and public grantmakers wishing to end human trafficking and forced labour. In the report it was recommended that sex worker issues and human trafficking should be treated distinctly, even if organisations work on both issues. In particular, donors were warned about 'raid and rescue' approaches – whereby organisations 'raid' brothels to forcibly 'rescue' the sex workers – of some NGOs "that do not appropriately address the rights and needs of sex workers themselves"<sup>3</sup>. Largely missing from the landscape in 2006 were consistent sources of *rights-based* funding, seeking to end the human rights abuses faced by sex workers.

The research identified a growing number of organisations led by sex workers themselves ('sex worker-led') and allied NGOs working on a range of health and human rights issues faced by sex workers. But it concluded that "the availability and provision of funds has not kept pace with the growth of these organisations." This was confirmed by a mapping of sex worker groups and organisations in 2010<sup>4</sup> for an international dialogue between sex workers and donors to better understand the funding priorities of sex worker rights groups. The mapping resulted in an analysis of survey results and interviews with 51 sex worker rights groups and networks, and found that organisations working for sex worker rights in four global regions operated on annual budgets averaging less than €30 000, with average organisational budgets in two of these regions below €10 000. Many organisations, in particular sex worker-led organisations, received no funding at all.

In 2014, eight years after the first donor mapping on sex worker health and rights, Mama Cash, the Red Umbrella Fund, and the Open Society Foundations commissioned an updated report. While the previous report focused on all funds available, including from government funding sources, this assessment specifically looks at the current state of funding by foundations and other non-governmental grantmakers in support of the human rights of sex workers.

## **The main objectives of this report are:**

1. To map foundation and other non-governmental grantmaking for sex worker organisations and programmes and provide information about what is being funded and where the gaps are.
2. To create a report that sex worker rights advocates and foundation staff can use to argue for increased and better resources.
3. To provide a basis for tracking changes and trends over time.

---

1. There is much evidence to support decriminalisation of sex work. Also the new guidelines by the World Health Organisation (WHO) published in December 2012 recommend decriminalisation of sex work. The guidelines are available here: [http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/77745/1/9789241504744\\_eng.pdf](http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/77745/1/9789241504744_eng.pdf). In July 2014, *the Lancet* published a series of seven papers on HIV and sex work which show the negative effects and harmful impacts of the criminalisation of sex work. These papers can be accessed here: <http://www.thelancet.com/series/HIV-and-sex-workers>.

2. This report is available here: <http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/sites/default/files/where.pdf>.

3. Open Society Institute (2006). "Sex Worker Health and Rights: Where is the Funding?", p. 17.

4. This report entitled "Sex Worker Organisations' and Projects' Funding Priorities" is available here: <http://ebookbrowse.net/sex-worker-organizations-funding-priorities-final-doc-d85531890>.

The following chapters provide an overview of the key findings and recommendations for grantmakers who want to support a more effective and sustained response to the human rights violations, including in relation to the lack of access to quality health, social and legal services, faced by sex workers worldwide. Chapter 2, on mapping the funding landscape, provides an overview of both the key foundations and other non-governmental grantmakers investing in sex worker rights, as well as a description of where the funding goes. Chapter 3 examines where sex worker organisations report receiving funding from, as well as areas of work for which they experience the most difficulty

## Glossary of terms

**Sex worker organisation:** For the purpose of this report, this term includes groups and organisations that are sex worker-led and run, as well as other groups and organisations that work with sex worker populations on rights and health issues. Organisations *led* by sex workers are differentiated and highlighted throughout this report to show the specific funding for that important subset of groups.

**Foundations and grantmakers:** This term includes foundations (private and public) and other grantmaking non-governmental organisations (NGOs with programme implementing partners or re-granting facilities). Private foundations (i.e. independent or family foundations and corporate foundations) usually derive their principal fund from a single source and do not solicit funds from the public. Public foundations, also known as grantmaking public charities, derive funding from numerous sources including individuals, government, and private foundations. For a more detailed explanation of the types of foundations referred to in this report, please see [http://foundationcenter.org/getstarted/tutorials/ft\\_tutorial/what.html](http://foundationcenter.org/getstarted/tutorials/ft_tutorial/what.html).

**Grantmaking:** This report mostly uses the term ‘grantmaking’, which others may also refer to as ‘charitable giving’ or ‘philanthropic giving’, to refer to the giving of funds for a worthy purpose, and not for any direct profitable return or contracted service or product.

**Human rights:** This term includes (as a partial list) the rights of free assembly, association and expression, rights to protection from unjustified arrest and to legal counsel in case of arrest, the right to protection from violence and discrimination, and the right to health. In this report, the phrases ‘human rights of sex workers’, ‘sex worker rights’ and ‘rights-based programming’ refer to those human rights. For a more detailed definition of human rights grantmaking, please see <http://foundationcenter.org/gainknowledge/humanrights/>.

accessing funding. Chapter 4 highlights key findings and makes the case for increased funding in support of sex worker rights and sex worker-led organisations. Recommendations are presented from sex worker organisations to foundations on how to better respond to the needs of sex worker organisations and make more effective grants in support of sex worker rights.

The methodology of the research is detailed in the annexes, together with a list of key foundations that have demonstrated their support to sex worker rights.

## Additional resources

Many excellent websites and recent publications provide useful information and recommendations regarding sex work, human rights, and funding effective programmes in this area. The following is a list of some relevant global resources for further reading:

### Global Network of Sex Work Projects (NSWP)

- Briefing Paper: The Voices and Demands of Positive Sex Workers, 2013.
- Consensus Statement: On Sex Work, Human Rights, and the Law, 2013.
- Global Report: Good Practice in Sex Worker-Led HIV Programming, 2013.
- Global Briefing Paper: The impact of non-rights based HIV programming for sex workers around the world, 2013.

### UNAIDS

- UNAIDS Guidance Note on HIV and Sex Work, 2012.

### World Health Organisation (WHO)

- Implementing comprehensive HIV/STI programmes with sex workers: practical approaches from collaborative interventions, 2013.

### American Jewish World Service (AJWS)

- Sex Worker Rights: (almost) everything you wanted to know but were too afraid to ask, 2013.

### Levi Strauss Foundation

- Communications Toolkit: Donor Collaboration to Advance the Human Rights of Sex Workers, 2011.

### Open Society Foundations

- 10 Reasons to Decriminalize Sex Work, 2012.
- Laws and Policies Affecting Sex Work, 2012.
- The Global Commission on HIV and the Law: Sex Workers, 2012.
- Understanding Sex Work, 2013.

## 2. Mapping the funding landscape

The grants data collected and analysed in this research identified 56 foundations and other non-governmental grantmakers investing in programmes on sex worker rights during 2013.

### Who funds sex worker rights?

→ **Key finding:** Foundations are increasingly supporting sex worker rights but only a small number of funders are making big contributions to sex worker rights

Analysis of data shows that in 2013, 56 non-governmental grantmakers invested a total of €8 million in funding in sex worker rights by making 229 grants. The largest five grantmakers by amount of funding jointly invested €4.5 million<sup>5</sup>

in 113 grants for sex worker rights. This equals 56% of the total funding amount mapped. By comparison, previous research from 2005 found that the five foundations with the largest investments in support of “sex worker health and rights” in that year jointly gave less than €900 000 in total<sup>6</sup>. The top three grantmakers identified in this research, Open Society Foundations, Ford Foundation, and the American Jewish World Service (AJWS), were also identified as the key foundations supporting sex worker health and rights in 2005<sup>7</sup>.

The image below shows that only three foundations provided over €500 000 in grants. In total, just 12 grantmakers invested more than €10 000 in sex worker rights in any part of the world in 2013. The majority of non-governmental grantmakers identified in this research provided just one or two small grants, suggesting that supporting sex worker rights is not a core strategy in their grantmaking.

#### Top 5 foundations for sex worker rights by amount of money



#### Top 5 foundations for sex worker rights by number of grants



Source: analysis of 2013 grants data.

5. This amounts to approximately €4.4 million in unduplicated funding, which corrects for grants provided from one grantmaker (usually a private or corporate foundation) to another (usually a public foundation or non-governmental organisation) for the purpose of re-granting it to sex worker organisations.
6. Open Society Institute (June 2006), “Sex Worker Health and Rights: Where is the Funding?”, p.4.
7. Idem, p.11.



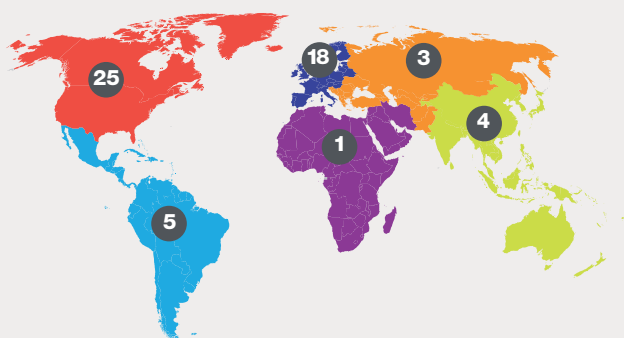


Sex worker organisation Sisonke marches in the streets on International Sex Worker Rights Day (3 March) in Cape Town, South Africa.  
Photo: Robert Hamblin

→ **Key finding: Funding for sex worker rights organisations is concentrated among a small number of funders based in the Global North**

Of all 56 funders identified as making grants for sex worker rights, 43 (77%) are based in the United States or Western Europe (see image below). Grantmakers based in other regions mostly include local or regional women's funds and regranting NGOs.

**Number of grantmakers supporting sex worker rights per region**



Source: analysis of 2013 grants data.

→ **Key finding: Public foundations are an important funder of sex worker rights**

Public foundations were the largest source of philanthropic support for sex worker organisations. Analysis of grants data shows that 70% of all grants and 54% of total funding was invested by organisations that publicly fundraise to make grants, indicating that they are also tasked with fundraising and making the case for sex worker rights among their donors and the public. A number of examples of such public foundations are provided on the next page.

"We strive to hear the voices of women engaged in prostitution; we support their demands to be recognised as workers in the sex industry, with full labor rights and protections, full access to health care and benefits, and equal treatment under the law. We oppose the criminalisation and stigmatisation of sex work because it makes sex workers more vulnerable to disease, exploitation, violence and fear."

**The Global Fund for Women<sup>8</sup>**

8. <http://www.globalfundforwomen.org/who-we-are/where-we-stand?start=5> (accessed 29 October 2014)

## Funders from allied movements: women's and LGBT rights

Women's funds were identified as "promising" in the 2006 mapping, particularly for providing small grants and technical support to local sex worker-led organisations. This underlying research confirms that women's funds play an important role when it comes to reaching many local sex worker-led organisations. The following foundations are examples of funders from allied movements that encourage individual donations to support sex worker rights as part of their mission to support women's rights and lesbian, bisexual and trans (LBT) rights.

### Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice

Founded in 1977, Astraea is a philanthropic organisation working to advance LGBTQI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, intersex) rights around the globe. It makes grants to organisations who address the root problems of economic exploitation and exclusion. Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice made 17 grants with an average grant size of €5 000 for sex worker rights in 2013.

### Central American Women's Fund

Founded in 2003, this is the first and only foundation in Central America dedicated to mobilising resources for grassroots women's groups and to providing tools, knowledge and opportunities to strengthen women's groups as organisations that defend and promote their human rights. Central American Women's Fund made 6 grants with an average grant size of €5 000 for sex worker rights in 2013.

### Global Fund for Women

Founded in 1986, Global Fund for Women advances the rights of women by increasing resources for and investing in women-led organisations and women's collective leadership for change. In 2013, Global Fund for Women made 10 grants with an average grant size of €10 000 for sex worker rights.

### Mama Cash

Founded in 1983, Mama Cash raises funds from individuals, corporations, foundations and governments and re-grants them to innovative organisations led by women, girls and trans people advancing their rights. A leading supporter of the sex worker rights movement, Mama Cash makes grants directly to sex worker-led groups and is also the administrative host organisation of the Red Umbrella Fund. In 2013, Mama Cash made 7 grants for sex worker rights, including a number of multi-year grants, with an average grant size of €50 000.

→ **Key finding:** Activist-led funds and networks provide new opportunities for foundations and other grantmakers to invest in sex worker rights

Over €1 million of donor funding is re-granted every year through activist or participatory funds and sex worker networks. The past few years have seen a number of international activist-led funds emerge, most of which rely on institutional fundraising, meaning fundraising from other foundations and grantmakers and not from individuals. These funds involve the community in their grantmaking decisions through participatory or peer review grantmaking processes<sup>9</sup>. Examples of such funds include the East African Sexual Health and Rights Initiative (UHAH-EASHRI), FRIDA – the Young Feminist Fund, HIV Young Leaders Fund and the Red Umbrella Fund.



Demonstration against criminalisation of clients of sex workers in Glasgow, the United Kingdom, organised by the Sex Worker Open University in 2013. Photo: Jannica Honey

9. See also: "Who Decides: How Participatory Grantmaking Benefits Donors, Communities and Movements" (2014) by The Lafayette Practice. <http://www.thelafayettepractice.com/reports/>



## The role of sex worker networks

The past years have seen a notable increase in the capacity of international sex worker networks like the Global Network of Sex Worker Projects (NSWP) and the Latin America and Caribbean Female Sex Workers Network (RedTraSex) to raise and manage large grants from foundations like the Robert Carr Fund for civil society networks and from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. Their member organisations have benefited directly from this increased capacity, by being supported through these networks – both technically and financially – for the implementation of programmes.

### Global Network of Sex Worker Projects (NSWP)

NSWP exists to uphold the voice of sex workers globally and connect regional networks advocating for the rights of female, male, and trans sex workers. It advocates for rights-based health and social services, freedom from abuse and discrimination, and self-determination for sex workers. NSWP has membership from regional networks and organisations across the globe. NSWP organises its work around communications and advocacy, building capacity and solidarity, and fostering good governance, accountability and management practices throughout its membership.

[www.nswp.org](http://www.nswp.org)

### Latin American and Caribbean Female Sex Workers Network (RedTraSex)

RedTraSex was founded in 1997 with the mission to support and strengthen organisations of women sex workers in the defence and promotion of their rights, locating the sex worker rights movement in the context of other popular struggles in Latin America. The network and its members place significant focus on ending violence and promoting access to healthcare among sex workers.

[www.redtrasex.org](http://www.redtrasex.org)

“Strengthening the voices of credible and progressive leaders that can effectively bring the issue of sex workers into other mainstream movements is critical. For instance, funding organisations who have a strong history with broader social movements is important as they can bring the issues of sex workers onto the agenda of the broader feminist, labour rights, human rights and health movements.”

**Javid Syed, American Jewish World Service, survey response**



Activists show signs in support of sex worker rights (such as “end poverty not sex work” and “no more police brutality against sex workers”) at the International Women’s Rights Day protests in Turkey in 2014. Photo: Red Umbrella Sexual Health and Human Rights Association

## Spotlight: Red Umbrella Fund

The Red Umbrella Fund is the global sex worker-led fund created through collaboration between a number of funders and the Global Network of Sex Work Projects (NSWP). Launched in 2012 with support from six foundations – American Jewish World Service, Comic Relief, Levi Strauss Foundation, the MAC AIDS Fund, Mama Cash, and Open Society Foundations – the fund strengthens and ensures the sustainability of the sex worker rights movement by catalysing new funding for sex worker-led organisations and their national and regional networks. Sex workers comprise the majority stakeholders in all Red Umbrella Fund decision-making processes, including grant allocations. In 2013, the Red Umbrella Fund made 25 grants with an average grant size of € 20 000 for sex worker rights.

“The Red Umbrella Fund puts decision-making and stakeholder engagement in the hands of highly capable and knowledgeable community members.”

**Daniel Lee, Levi Strauss Foundation, survey response**

## Where does the money go?

A review was conducted of the grant descriptions provided by funders and grantees for the 229 grants for sex worker rights identified in 2013 to determine funding patterns. These patterns are not mutually exclusive findings but rather show general trends in the funding landscape for sex worker rights. The maps on this page provide an overall visual of where the grants for sex worker rights are made geographically.

→ **Key finding: Funders have started to recognise the value of investing in sex worker-led organisations in order to improve sex worker rights**

Of the total €8 million funding for sex worker rights in 2013, 57% (or €4.5 million) was allocated to sex worker-led organisations in 40 countries. This demonstrates that sex worker-led organisations are an important constituent to funders identified in this research. The second map on this page provides a visual of where the funding invested specifically in sex worker-led organisations are made. This demonstrates that funders particularly recognise the value of investing in sex worker-led organisations in Latin America, Western Europe and Asia, while they are more inclined to invest in NGOs that are not sex worker-led in most of Africa and North America. The average grant size to sex worker-led organisations is €30 000, which includes grants to local sex worker groups as well as to larger national and international sex worker networks.

“Donors should consider building capacity in two ways when they fund sex worker rights. They can support the movement through core support, capacity building and peer-to-peer learning. But also, they can assist in building sex worker leadership within organisations through mentoring and other approaches.”

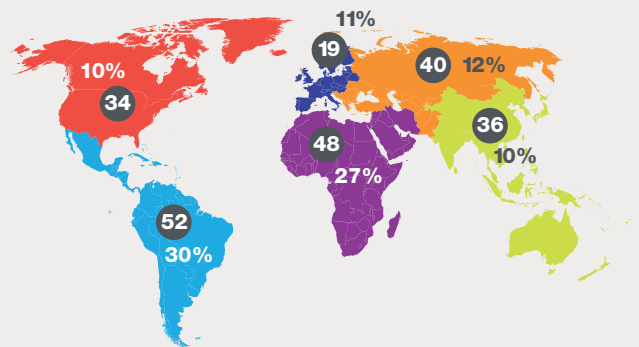
**Anne Gathumbi, Open Society Foundations, survey response**

→ **Key finding: Foundations play an important role in funding groups that are not registered**

Our data show that a few private foundations, such as the Ford Foundation, do successfully manage to fund sex worker organisations that are not formally registered. But in most cases, unregistered organisations depend on public foundations (such as the American Jewish World Service, Astraea, Central American Women's Fund, the Global Fund for Women, Mama Cash and the Red Umbrella Fund) for their grants.

### Where the money for sex worker rights goes

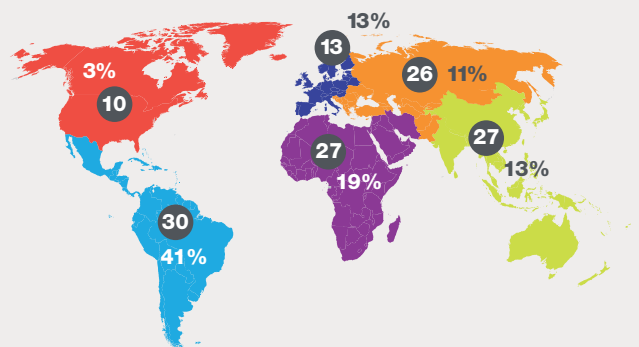
The regional distribution of the number of grants and the percentage of € invested in sex worker rights (out of a total of €8 million).



Source: analysis of 2013 grants data.

### Where the money to sex worker-led organisations goes

The regional distribution of the number of grants and the percentage of € invested specifically in sex worker-led organisations (out of a total of €4.5 million).



Source: analysis of 2013 grants data.

→ **Key finding: Most funding goes to organisations in low- and middle-income countries, in particular in Latin America and Africa**

Of the top 20 non-governmental grantmakers investing in sex worker rights, most focus their investments in low- and middle-income countries. This means there is less funding going from foundations and other non-governmental grantmakers to sex worker organisations in high-income countries. Almost one third (32%) of the grant amount received by sex worker organisations in Western Europe is grants with a global focus, as opposed to a focus on the region or countries within the region itself.

An example of the funding gap for sex worker-led organisations in the United States is detailed in the box below. No grants were identified in this research for sex worker rights in Northern Africa or the Middle East.

### **Mind the gap: Sex workers in the United States appeal for more funding**

“US based groups need more funding. Though this is a high income country, sex workers are majorly underserved and most of the services available are patronising and not informed by a harm reduction and human rights framework. Sex workers are treated as victims and criminals, and service delivery reflects that.”

**Sex worker organisation from the U.S.,  
survey response**

The United States is notable for a relative lack of funding for domestic sex worker-led organisations. Typically in global mapping of philanthropic giving, organisations in the United States account for over two-thirds of all grant dollars received, due to the relative strength of the domestically-focused philanthropic sector in that country. For example, in the most recent reporting of human rights-related giving, the International Human Rights Funders Group calculates that 69% of all global funding was awarded to U.S.-based organisations<sup>10</sup>.

→ **Key finding: Very little funding goes to sex worker organisations in the region with the largest population: Asia and the Pacific**

In 2013, sex worker organisations across Asia and the Pacific received less than €1 million or 10% of the total non-governmental funding identified for sex worker rights. This is a sharp contrast with the fact that the region accounts for 60% of the world's population. The majority of the grants in this region (75% of the number of grants and 70% of the amount of funding) were made to sex worker-led organisations.

According to our research, groups in the United States were the recipients of only 10% of identified global non-governmental grantmaking, distributed through 33 grants. Less than one third of these grants (27% or 9 grants) went to sex worker-led organisations in the United States. In other words, sex worker-led organisations in the United States received just over 1% of global non-governmental grantmaking for sex worker rights in 2013. The average grant size for investments in sex worker-led organisations in the United States was only €12 500 per year.

“Though we are based in the US, a high income country, the vast majority of US based sex worker led organisations are volunteer run. This means our capacity is always challenged, burnout rates are high, and in some cases, only more privileged folks are able to afford to do activism... With funding, organisations in the US would be able to build capacity and better participate in global sex worker rights work, challenge the terrible US legal system, and fight for our rights on a local basis.”

**Sex worker organisation from the U.S.,  
survey response**

Survey responses and additional interviews with sex worker organisations in the United States confirm this general finding of low funding levels, citing repressive laws, no State or Federal funding, an apparent lack of philanthropic donor interest, and a lack of access to many non-U.S. funding sources for sex worker organisations in the United States.

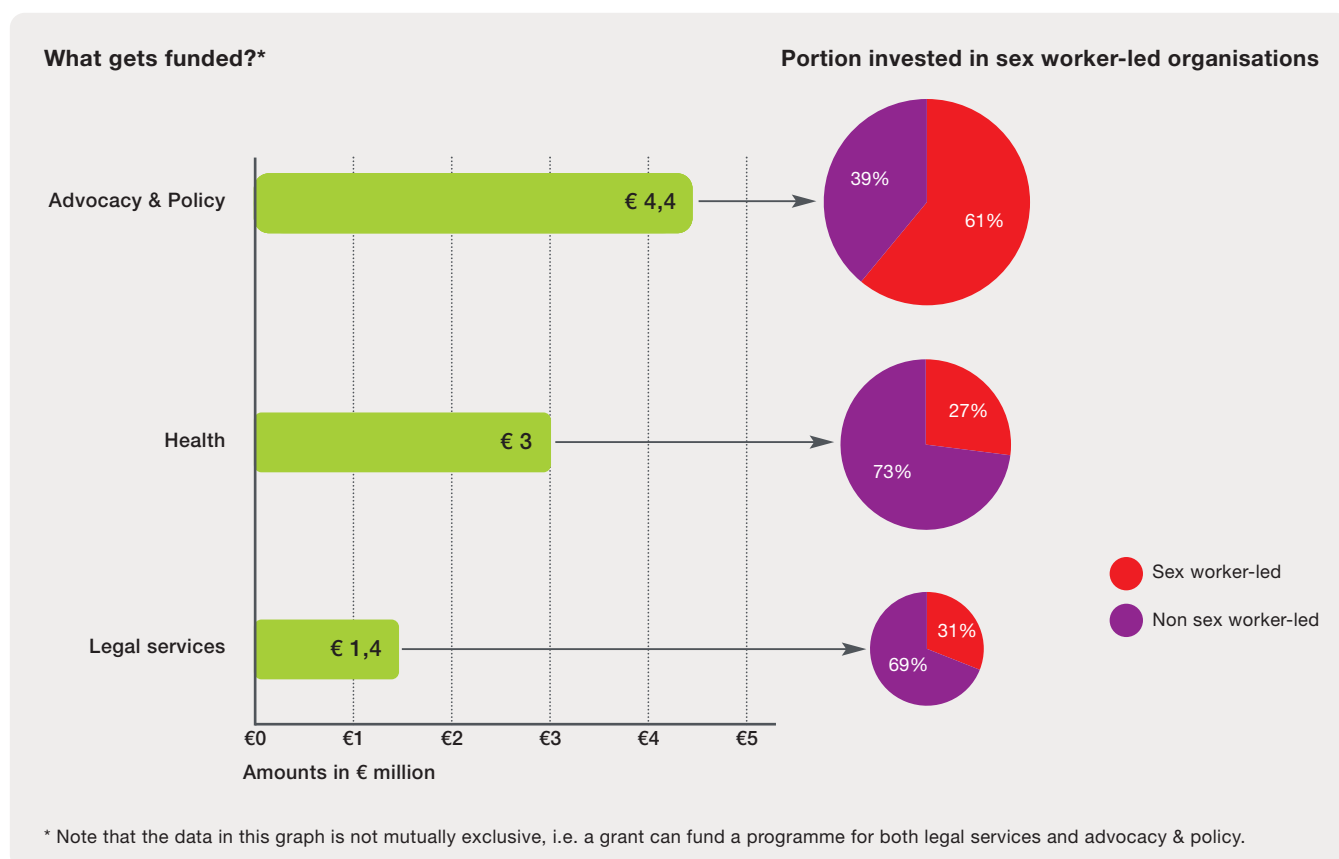
10. The Foundation Center and the International Human Rights Funders Group. Advancing Human Rights: The State of Global Foundation Grantmaking. 2013.



→ **Key finding: Funders are recognising the need to fund advocacy and policy work to advance sex worker rights**

A total of 80 grants worth €4.4 million in funding (55% of the total investment in sex worker rights) included support for some form of advocacy or policy work, such as public visibility or meetings with policy makers to argue for the rights of sex workers and argue for specific policy and legal change. Of this funding, 61% was allocated to sex worker-led organisations.

The bar chart provides an overview of how much funding is invested in three key areas of work: advocacy and policy, health (i.e. access to health services, HIV prevention and testing for sex workers) and legal services. For each of these areas, the relevant pie chart shows the percentage of that funding that is invested specifically through sex worker-led organisations.



→ **Key finding: Funding in the area of health is focused mainly on HIV/AIDS and related access to health care**

“There is a concerning re-direction of funding towards a ‘Treatment as Prevention’ approach to HIV, with a focus on increased testing. But less funding and attention for proven successful prevention strategies such as peer education, community development, and community-led peer education. Sex worker organisations are afraid that changes in the HIV landscape are creating funding for new testing technologies but detracting funding from prevention mechanisms that have proven successful.”

**Sex worker organisation from the Pacific, survey response**

A total of 83 grants worth approximately €3 million in funding (35% of the total investment in sex worker rights) included health-related activities, including provision of information, education, or services for sex workers. Around 90% of health-related grants included a focus on HIV and related access to healthcare. Only 27% of this funding was allocated to sex worker-led organisations.

# 3. Survey results: how sex worker organisations see the funding landscape

Sex worker rights organisations from all over the world were surveyed for this report, with 70% of the responses being received from organisations that identify themselves as sex worker-led. They were asked about the purpose of their group, the purpose of the funding that they had received, and the issues and areas of work that they perceived as the easiest and hardest for which to obtain funding.

The analysis of the 183 survey responses from 40 countries reveals that sex workers are organising around the world, but struggle to access funding for their efforts to advance their human rights.

→ **Key finding: Sex worker organisations are organising around the world and increasingly accessing foundation grants**

Most organisations that responded to our survey are formally registered but still lack access to funding. A total of 8% of the surveyed organisations (most of them sex worker-led) indicated not having had any income in 2013, while 72% of the surveyed organisations indicated having been able to get support from foundations or other non-governmental grantmakers in 2013. Of all the sex worker-led groups, 79% reported that they received support from one or more non-governmental grantmakers in 2013.

Most (77%) of the non-governmental grantmaking cited by survey respondents comes from private and public foundations. Examples of these foundations are shared in the previous chapter. Other grants are provided by non-governmental organisations like the International HIV/AIDS Alliance, FHI360, Population Services International (PSI), and Oxfam. Foundations and other non-governmental funders clearly play a key role in supporting sex workers to organise in defence of their human rights.

→ **Key finding: Most organisations working with sex workers have very small budgets**

75% of sex worker organisations surveyed had budgets of less than €100 000 per year, 53% had organisational budgets of less than €50 000 per year, and 35% less than €10 000. As confirmed through additional interviews with sex workers, in many countries sex workers have been working to protect and advance their human rights without any organisational income at all.



Demonstration for sex worker rights during the Sex Worker Freedom Festival in 2012 in Kolkata, India. Photo: Dale Kongmont, APNSW

→ **Key finding: Sex worker organisations rely on in-kind support and donations from their community**

Every sex worker organisation responding to the survey said that their organisation benefitted from people's volunteered time. This includes the volunteered time of sex workers as well as from allied lawyers, law students, doctors and nurses, translators, and community organisers.

Over half of the organisations surveyed said that they raise local funding contributions from individuals, including from organisation members, income generating activities, and fundraising events. This local fundraising is done from within even those communities facing high levels of poverty.

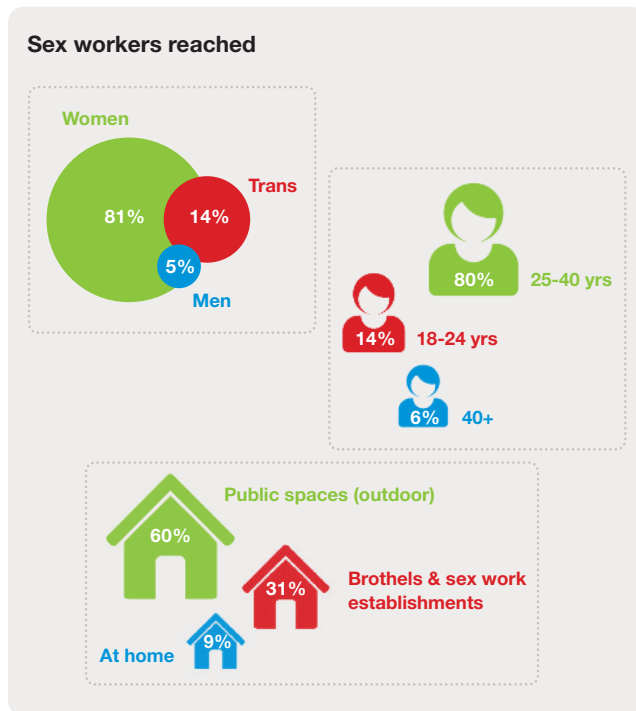
"All of our funding is from community based fundraisers. All of our policy and advocacy are self funded."

**Sex worker organisation from North America, survey response**

A few sex worker organisations, especially from Canada and the U.S., mention having had success raising funds through crowdfunding. Crowdfunding refers to the practice of raising money from people via the internet, most often through a moderating organisation known as a crowdfunding platform.

→ **Key finding: Sex worker organisations represent and serve a broad community**

Sex worker-led organisations that responded to our survey typically said that they represent and serve sex workers of all ages over 18 years, all genders and sexual orientations, and a range of working venues. The data below show how sex worker-led organisations themselves, when prompted to do so, describe who they *most* represent and serve.



- 81% of organisations surveyed said the sex workers they reach are mostly women, 14% said mostly trans people and 5% said mostly men.
- 80% of organisations surveyed said the sex workers they reach are mostly between the ages of 25 and 40, 14% mostly between the ages of 18 and 24, and 6% mostly older than 40.
- 60% of organisations surveyed said the sex workers they reach work mostly from public places (streets, parks, train and bus stations), while 31% described a community working from brothels or other sex work establishments, and 9% described the sex workers they reach as working most from home.

"This is the first time male sex workers have been able to really organise separately. There was no space for us to participate and voice our concerns before. [Our funder] has made us feel proud of ourselves and value our life. There is more recognition for us now."

**Sex worker organisation from Asia, survey response**

→ **Key finding: Sex worker organisations report that funding for 'rehabilitation' projects and 'exit' is easier to obtain than human rights-based funding**

Many sex worker organisations from different parts of the world mention in the survey that funding for initiatives focused on getting sex workers to quit their job – whether mandatorily or voluntarily – seems more readily available than funding that supports sex workers' labour rights and other human rights. Such 'exit' funding is regularly provided by religious charities but also by state departments in many countries.

"No one wants to fund sex workers, except the Women's Ministry but they only focus on social support i.e. job placement... Our success story for them is when sex workers stop doing sex work and go back to 'normal life'."

**Sex worker organisation from Asia, survey response**

→ **Key finding: Sex worker organisations need support for all areas of their work but particularly highlight a need for funding for policy & advocacy, legal services and organisational development**

**Most difficult to get € for:**



**Policy & advocacy**



**Legal services**



**Organisational development**

The survey results show that 63% of sex worker organisations experience fundraising for their work in the area of health, including medical services and HIV prevention and testing, the least difficult area of work for which to raise money. Policy development, rights-based advocacy, legal representation and legal services, on the other hand, stand out as the hardest areas of work to access funding for while work in these areas is imperative for addressing the human rights violations experienced by sex workers and achieving lasting change. In order to contribute to long term social change, organisations require sufficient sustainable income and an opportunity to build their organisational structures and capacities.

"A foundation grant gave us the funds to be able to start challenging municipal laws under which sex workers are arrested. We have represented sex workers charged with loitering and intention to commit prostitution and we have won in over 80% of these cases and the sex workers were found not guilty."

**Sex worker organisation in Africa, survey response**



→ **Key finding: Sex worker organisations report a need for funding to counter violence and discrimination**

Sex worker organisations surveyed indicated a need for increased funding for programmes to combat physical and sexual violence and counter stigma and discrimination. This includes support for self-organising, organisational capacity building, and leadership building in this area of work.

“Our biggest issues are prevention of violence and homelessness, and no one wants to fund this.”

**Sex worker organisation from Eastern Europe, survey response**

## Governmental and multilateral funding is scarce

Though the research focused on funding from foundations and other non-governmental grantmakers, sex worker organisations who responded to the survey were also asked if they received government or multilateral funding.

According to data compiled from the survey, the total amount of grants from any governmental or multilateral source to sex worker organisations is roughly equivalent to the amount of funding by non-governmental grantmakers, even though this sector has just a fraction of the resources of governments. Fewer than one in five sex worker groups surveyed reported accessing government or multilateral funding. The survey findings illustrate that funding from governments and multilateral agencies tends to focus mostly on health and HIV-specific services and interventions.

Government and multilateral funding for the sex worker organisations identified by the survey results adds up to approximately €8 million. This is a fraction of overall spending on development and human rights. In comparison, approximately €140 billion was spent across all areas of international development aid by governments in 2013. More than €1 billion of this is specifically spent every year to help low- and middle-income countries to advance the rule of law, justice sector development and legal aid to help protect and fulfil human rights.

### Domestic government funding

A total of 18% of organisations and groups in our survey reported accessing domestic funding from local or national governments. Most of the domestically funded groups were in five countries: Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, and the Netherlands. Sex worker organisations report that funding from their own national, provincial and municipal governments will remain limited until they can overcome barriers such as the criminalisation of their work or of aspects of their work, and institutional and social discrimination.

### International government funding

A total of 16% of organisations reported receiving international funding from embassies and bilateral aid programmes. The international donor countries mentioned by survey respondents were Australia, the European Union, Germany, Norway and the United States.

### Multilateral funding

17% of organisations in our survey reported receiving funding from multilateral funding sources, with the leading sources identified as the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). Both organisations are mandated to work on the health and rights of sex workers: the GFATM through its key populations action plan and human rights strategy, and UNFPA as the lead organisation in the UN system addressing sex work.

“Obviously being financed by governmental institutions means that you have to really think hard about what you can express publicly and what will be regarded as offensive. Politicians regarded us as a pain in the ass because of the activist image we’d had in the first 2 decades. After this we moderated our tone and became more politically sensitive. But we still had this image of being ‘angry women’... We wished we would have had opportunities with different funders, but that was not available to us.”

**Sex worker organisation from Western Europe, survey response**

# Do we invest enough?

An analysis of the current state of philanthropic funding for **sex worker rights**. New evidence from 229 grants (2013), 56 funders and 183 survey responses worldwide.

## Who funds

**€8 MILLION**

for sex worker rights per year by **56** foundations and other non-governmental grantmakers



Just **5** foundations give **56%** of the €:

- Open Society Foundations
- Ford Foundation
- American Jewish World Service
- Red Umbrella Fund
- Mama Cash

Public foundations give **70%** of the grants

## Who's funded

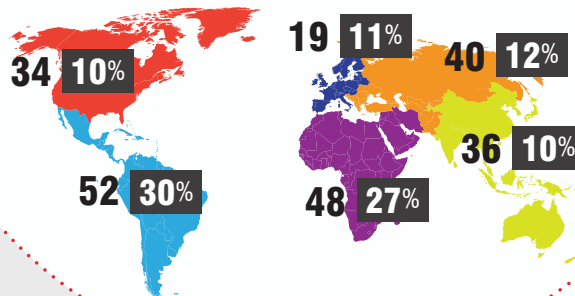
**157** organisations working on sex worker rights in

**53** countries

**75%** have budgets < €100 000

**47%** are sex worker-led

## Number of grants and percent of € worldwide

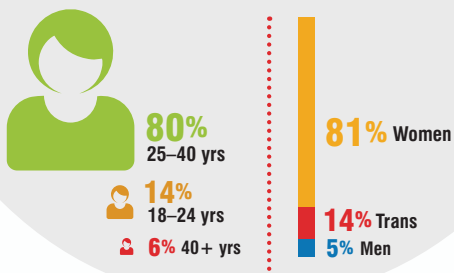


## What's funded

Most difficult to get € for:



## Sex workers reached



**"The political struggle against criminalisation, the battle against violence done to us, the work of building organisational structures to link us and support us better — these are long-term efforts that need sustained steady financing."**

Sex worker rights organisation participating in the survey

# 4. Conclusions and recommendations

“The political struggle against criminalisation, the battle against violence done to us, the work of building organisational structures to link us and support us better – these are long-term efforts that need sustained steady financing.”

**Sex worker organisation from South America, survey response**

Sex workers of all genders, sexual orientations, racial identities and ages face regular human rights violations in every country. Especially in countries where sex work is criminalised, harassment, arbitrary arrests and exclusion from basic health and social services are common. **Sex workers are organising to claim their rights but funding for these initiatives, critical to these groups’ ability to increase their effectiveness, has been minimal.** To understand today’s funding landscape Mama Cash, the Open Society Foundations and the Red Umbrella Fund partnered to conduct an analysis of grants awarded in 2013 in support of sex worker rights.

Although the focus of this mapping is on foundation and other non-governmental grantmakers (NGOs or charities), the results of the survey of sex worker organisations provide information on government and multilateral funding as well. The research findings indicate that while important work is being funded by governments, whether domestically, as bilateral aid or through multilateral organisations, most governmental funding focuses on health and HIV-specific services and programmes. Sex workers report that in many settings, governments cannot or will not fund services for sex workers, much less their advocacy and mobilising efforts to secure their human rights. In addition, sex worker organisations in high-income regions such as Western Europe and North America rely heavily on foundation support for their rights based work. **Foundations and other non-governmental grantmakers provide critical resources that sex worker organisations do not get from other donors.**

Important shifts have taken place in the funding landscape since the last mapping of funding for sex worker rights was conducted in 2006. Grants analysis shows that funders are making more grants to support the rights of sex workers. **There are new rights-based funders and new opportunities for funding through activist-led funds like the Red Umbrella Fund.** Nevertheless, the existing funding efforts are still too small and too few. The 2013 total of €8 million in annual grantmaking towards sex worker rights worldwide – of which 57% is received by sex worker-led organisations – is a tiny fraction of the billions spent every year by foundations on issues such as health.

This research further suggests that the lack of sufficient

funding for sex worker rights is not justified by a lack of quality groups to support. In fact, sex worker-led groups and networks have made enormous advances in organising to improve the human rights of sex workers. In some regions, existing networks of sex workers have significantly increased their reach, visibility and capacities over the last eight years, while in regions where there were none, groups and networks have been created. An increasing number of sex worker-led organisations have registered and opened bank accounts, creating opportunities to receive domestic and international funding. Sex worker-led groups worldwide are also increasingly working together to more effectively advance their advocacy and policy objectives. **The sex worker rights’ movement’s success hinges on catalysing additional, appropriate, and sustained funding.**

**Few foundations and other non-governmental grantmakers have a specific mandate or portfolio dedicated to supporting sex worker rights, but sex worker rights can and should be supported from many programme areas.** Women’s rights, civil society strengthening, poverty reduction, health and HIV, prevention of violence and exploitation, LGBTQI rights, sexual and reproductive health and rights, labour rights, movement building and social justice are just a few examples of approaches that foundations can take to supporting sex worker rights.

**There is a vast opportunity for foundations and other non-governmental grantmakers to invest more and better, and make a significant difference in the lives of sex workers in every region of the world.** Providing direct funding to programmes that protect and promote the human rights of sex workers is a first step. Foundation effectiveness in funding sex worker rights initiatives, and the sustainability of these efforts in the long run, depends on bringing the voices of sex workers to the table and engaging them in a meaningful way in developing the policies and structures that affect them.

“My main words would be of gratitude to those funds and donors who chose to be supportive of sex worker rights and interests. Please, keep on doing the great job!”

**Sex worker organisation from Eastern Europe, survey response**



## Recommendations to funders

"Funding has increased our power, our voice, our ability to provide self-help services, our confidence, our effectiveness."

**Sex worker organisation from Western Europe, survey response**

Sex worker organisations surveyed described their experiences of requesting and receiving funding and, based on this experience, provided recommendations for funders on how to improve their work. The themes that emerged centre on the funding gap experienced, as well as methods and quality of grantmaking.

### → Recommendation 1: Increase funding for sex worker-led organisations

Sex workers are organising around the world for their rights but lack access to funding. Of the €8 million invested in sex worker rights in 2013, just over half was allocated to sex worker-led organisations while 21% of the sex worker-led organisations in our survey report not having received any non-governmental grants in 2013. Most sex worker-led organisations rely heavily on volunteer work and other in-kind contributions from within their community, while social change can only be achieved through sustained investments and long-term strategies that often require additional external funding.

"Non-peer organisations are funded to provide exit training and rehabilitation services for sex workers much more readily than sex worker organisations are funded to mobilise our communities and advocate for human rights. It is distressing to see funds that should be going to sex worker organisations going to large NGOs to then spend as they see fit, without sex worker input into programming directions or input at a decision making level."

**Sex worker organisation from the Pacific, survey response**

Sex work is criminalised in many countries and sex worker organisations have very limited opportunities to access government funding. Private and public foundations as well as non-governmental organisations (NGOs) play a key role in enabling sex workers to organise for their rights, develop and strengthen their organisations, and take action according to their self-determined agendas to address the human rights violations they experience and improve their well-being. Funders should increase their investments in sex worker rights in general and their grantmaking to sex worker-led organisation in particular.

## Learning from what hasn't worked

Many of the sex worker organisations surveyed described their experiences of funding and provided comments that revealed common grantmaking practices that are considered potentially damaging to their organisations and movements. These include:

- Small grant amounts that don't adequately support a project or organisation and therefore drain time and attention away from core programmatic work because other funds need to be found to supplement them.
- One-time non-renewed grants over a very short time period, putting programmes and people through harmful start-stop changes.
- Funding that is too restricted to one activity or purpose, such as HIV prevention or health services
- Funding that comes with extensive proposal writing and reporting requirements.
- Funding that is allocated only to well-written proposals and well-established organisations, thereby investing where there is already capacity and depriving new groups, new leaders, new ideas, and new ways of working or opportunities.
- Too much funding given all at once without sufficient support and guidance followed by punishment and blame when something goes wrong.

"Funders are our customers. They can be good long-term customers. They can be short-term good customers many times. They can be a fussy rude kind of customer we don't want to see again. Funders provide the money and we provide the service. Some funders get confused and want to be part of providing the service too – they forget this is what they pay us to do because we do it best as professionals."

**Sex worker organisation from Asia, survey response**

"We understand that we are less literate but we are not ignorant. Funders should provide grants to the real sex worker communities and not to the organisations and individuals who can write proposals."

**Sex worker organisation from South Asia, survey response**

→ **Recommendation 2: Include priorities and perspectives of sex workers when setting funding priorities**

“Fund us for who we are. Don’t force us to moderate our tone and divide our work into projects. We need funders who will back us.”

**Sex worker organisation from Western Europe, survey response**

Sex workers in our survey emphasised that when a grant is intended to benefit sex workers, those sex workers should be involved in the allocations and use of funding according to their priorities and needs. Bringing those who would benefit into the funding process, especially the decision making, adds expertise about the context, as well as the proposed interventions and prospective grantees, and ensures the funding is allocated effectively, based on identified needs, and is responsive to changing circumstances

“Funders should provide funds to organisations according to the work plans and strategic plans of those organisations instead of imposing their own objectives and needs on us. They should be fitting into our plans and not us fitting into theirs.”

**Sex worker organisation from East Africa, survey response**

→ **Recommendation 3: Offer funding that is flexible and sustained**

Sex workers and funders noted the complexity and long-term nature of social change, and urged funders to provide flexible, core, rather than project-based, funding over multiple years to enable sex workers to achieve lasting change. A number of organisations had experience with funders pulling out at the last minute causing much difficulty for the organisation. Instead, funders should eliminate gaps between grants and ensure timely communication if the expectation is to discontinue funding in the future. Funders should also not impose unrealistically low ceilings for overhead costs.

“Funders typically want to fund a product that they can hold in their hand and have their logo on it and can be complete in just 12 months. Good funding carries very few restrictions or directions about where and when to go, so that our organisation can choose our priority based on what we know.”

**Sex worker organisation from Central Asia, survey response**



Demonstration for sex worker rights in Arequipa, Peru, in 2013. Photo: Asociación de Trabajadoras Sexuales Mujeres del Sur

“[Our] donor had the guts to ask us to propose “innovative” rather than “routine” activities and seemed extremely surprised when we told them that innovation meant risk and that their general attitude to risk, as expressed through their quarterly budgeting policy, was deterring innovation.”

**Sex worker organisation from South Asia, survey response**

→ **Recommendation 4: Offer funding to smaller, newer and/or unregistered organisations**

“Simply having some international funds to gain legal registration and an office space has given us an identity as an organisation of sex workers. This gives us more strength to continue fighting for our rights.”

**Sex worker organisation from Central America, survey response**

In many settings around the world, sex workers face barriers in their struggle to organise for their rights. Those barriers include criminalisation of their work and systematic discrimination and violence against those who try to organise and advocate for their rights. To nurture and sustain a vibrant and dynamic movement, sex workers recommend that funders provide grants to groups that are not formally registered and that may still be in the early process of developing formal structures, governance, and registration, where possible.

Funders that are not in a position to fund unregistered and small groups can support larger sex worker-led networks and existing public and community-led intermediary funds that are able to support or grant directly to these groups.

“Funders should consider ways to fund youth and grassroots groups that have less power than established organisations to communicate and bargain.”

**Sex worker organisation from East Africa, survey response**

“We received small support from [a non-governmental grantmaker] to improve the administrative and financial management of our organisation. This allowed us to better manage the small grants that we had received, acquire skills, become more professional and accountable.”

**Sex worker organisation from West Africa, survey response**

→ **Recommendation 5: Fund simply and efficiently to reduce the burden on sex worker organisations**

“It is terrible to fill out forms over and over again and then receive a rejection. In one case we waited six months, got a positive response, then a delay of eight months, and then a rejection. The amount of effort, delay, and changing expectations was very destabilising.”

**Sex worker organisation from South America, survey response**

Sex worker organisations describe burdensome application and reporting processes that are not manageable for small groups run largely by volunteers and with limited time, energy, and skills to devote to paperwork. Funders are encouraged to use innovative methods for communications – such as verbal (skype) or video reports and facilitate translations – so that English literacy is not necessary to connect and report.

“Our funders have demonstrated great commitment to attending our public events. That way, they are able to hear first hand what participants get out of our programmes.”

**Sex worker organisation from North America, survey response**



Street art in Soho in support of sex work as work in London, United Kingdom. Photo: Toni Mac, Sex Worker Open University (SWOU)

“The belief that audits and paper trails are the solution against corruption is not evidence-based and is just costing too much, in the form of large amounts of admin staff pushing papers to meet donors compliance requirement. I have a donor... who requests us to report per quarter, and funds not used in Q1 cannot be used in next quarter. This leads to crazy inflexibility.”

**Sex worker organisation from South Asia, survey response**

→ **Recommendation 6: Fund intermediaries who can directly re-grant to sex worker-led organisations, if it is not possible to fund them directly**

Funding intermediaries can be an effective alternative to directly funding sex worker-led organisations. The research demonstrates that public foundations and non-governmental organisations that have established grantmaking programmes provide 70% of funding for sex worker organisations. These funders have developed expertise and networks to be able to make effective grants decisions, and manage them in ways that are supportive rather than burdensome. They have built close relationships with sex worker organisations that help them understand the challenges and opportunities these groups have in achieving their goals.



“We received funding from [international foundation] through [a sex worker network]. The funding was to support the participation of sex workers in meetings and conferences related to sex work. What made it good funding was that it carried very few restrictions or directions about where and when to go, and so our organisation was able to choose our priority activity.”

**Sex worker-led organisation from Central America, survey response**

→ **Recommendation 7: Provide additional non-financial support**

“Capacity building support would be greatly appreciated. There is very little awareness about how to interact with funders, and many regard this support as a waste of time because it is not fruitful.”

**Sex worker organisation from North America, survey response**

Foundations and other non-governmental grantmakers have the privileged position of being able to take a bird’s eye view on issues across grantees and regions. They can strengthen their grantees’ strategies and practice by encouraging them to reflect on the impact their programmes may have on sex workers in their community as well as provide opportunities for effective partnership and movement building with other sex worker organisations in other places. Sex worker organisations especially request capacity building and contacts in the field of fundraising.

“More than any specific grant, it is the whole political framework of funding that is important to us. Having an international funder contact us, support us with funding, and support us in having a website and support us in having contact with other organisations, has supported the integrity of our strategies and actions and has allowed us to strengthen and deepen our struggle for labour rights and not falter.”

**Sex worker organisation from South America, survey response**



In 2013 Grupo de Mulheres Prostitutas do Estado do Pará (GEMPAC) campaigned for the legalisation of sex work in Brazil.

→ **Recommendation 8: Speak out and invite more donors to join and sustain the effort**

Sex workers recognise the important role of funders as allies and supporters of their organisations and advocacy. They ask that the philanthropic community do more. Sex worker organisations ask funders to show courage and publicly speak out in support of the human rights of sex workers. And to encourage other funders to do the same.

“It is very helpful and encouraging when a donor organisation speaks openly about their support of sex workers, this approach can take some stigma off sex work and encourage other potential donors to look into supporting sex work related projects.”

**Sex worker organisation from Eastern Europe, survey response**



# Annex A:

# Methodology

---

In January 2014, Mama Cash, in partnership with the Open Society Foundations and the Red Umbrella Fund, contracted with consultants at The Fremont Centre to conduct a six-month research project to report on global philanthropic funding to protect and advance the human rights of sex workers. The project was funded largely by the Open Society Foundations and coordinated by the Red Umbrella Fund.

The data collection and analysis for this project spanned two consecutive years, 2012 and 2013, to smooth out reporting inconsistencies and facilitate increased understanding of the funding trends and dynamics. **This report presents the findings specifically for 2013.**

## Scope of the research

This mapping of grants focuses on international and domestic grantmaking by foundations. This includes private (i.e. independent, family, or company-sponsored) foundations as well as public foundations worldwide. Grantmaking by non-governmental organisations (NGOs or INGOs for those working internationally) and grants passing through regional networks to their member organisations are also explored to gain a more comprehensive picture of the funding landscape and flow. These funders together are referred to as foundations and other non-governmental grantmakers – or simply as non-governmental grantmakers – in this report.

## Data collection process

Data about funding in the area of sex worker rights was collected from the U.S. Foundation Center's global grants database. This data was cleaned and expanded on through online research, updated and corrected grants data provided by funders through individualised surveys and data provided on grants received by sex worker organisations through an online survey. To verify data collected, experts from foundations and funder affinity groups, including the Foundation Center, Open Society Foundations, and Funders Concerned About AIDS, reviewed specific subsets of data runs.

To gain an understanding of the experience of accessing funding to protect and advance the human rights of sex workers, the project also surveyed sex worker-led organisations and organisations with sex worker programmes about the grants they received and their fundraising experience.

These survey respondents are jointly referred to as 'sex worker organisations' in this report. Survey respondents were asked to share their observations about what was easiest and hardest to obtain funding for, and specific recommendations to funders. To reach a large diversity of organisations, the survey was distributed in six languages: Chinese, English, French, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish. This yielded 183 responses, of which 70% were from sex worker-led organisations.

## Data management and analysis

Detailed grants information was recorded including the full grant amount and recipient organisation name and country. As much as possible, information was also recorded per grant on whether the recipient was legally registered; year of founding; whether the recipient was led by sex workers; the predominant gender, age group, and working locations of the community of sex workers represented and served by the organisation; and whether the grant funded any of the following areas of work: policy and advocacy, legal services, health services, or HIV. This information was not available for all grants because many grant descriptions lacked this level of detail.

Grants made from a foundation to another foundation or NGO for re-granting purposes were indicated as such to identify double counting (duplication) of funding invested in support of the human rights of sex workers.

The data was collected, analysed and summarised into a draft report by researchers from the Fremont Center. A number of feedback rounds, seeking feedback both from sex worker activists, funders and other experts, were organised to improve the analysis. Mama Cash and the Red Umbrella Fund drafted the final version of this report.

## Data alignment and transparency

From the start, the project was designed with several core methodological approaches that would facilitate data sharing in the future and contribute to improving available data and grants coding of grants databases available at other philanthropic institutions like the European and U.S. Foundation Centers. As a result, where possible, grants information is aligned with the terms and data fields used by the European Foundation Centre and the U.S. Foundation Center.

Where relevant and possible, and while fully respecting confidentiality of respondents, the data from this research is shared with the European Foundation Centre, the U.S. Foundation Center, other funder affinity groups, and sex worker groups and organisations. This will enable those institutions and organisations, and those working with their data, to incorporate, compare, and contrast information with the findings reported in this report.

## Biases and limitations

As described above, this project collected data from a number of different sources and involved a number of experts to verify the information. However, the quality of the data analysed depends largely on the self-reporting of the information by funders and sex worker organisations and programmes. For example, survey respondents are identified as sex worker-led in this report when the group themselves identify as such.

This research is about funding of the work rather than about the work itself. Thus this report is not a review of the state of the sex worker rights movement or an account of the programme efforts or impacts of the work of sex worker organisations and programmes.

The research collected grants with a specific mention of sex work, sex workers, prostitute or prostitution in their grant descriptions. Thus, while sex workers might benefit from a wider range of foundation funding, for example that focuses on gender equality, community development, health, human rights, social welfare and related themes, the intention was to focus on funding that specifically names sex workers as (one of) the intended beneficiary population(s). On the other hand, grants are included in the mapping that have sex workers as one of the beneficiaries, but not necessarily as the only beneficiary of a grant. The full grant amounts are included in this research, even though in some cases only a portion of the grant may actually be spent on sex worker rights.

The survey of sex worker organisations and programmes was distributed primarily through the foundations involved in this research and regional and global sex worker networks. Both Mama Cash and the Red Umbrella Fund only fund sex worker organisations that are led by sex workers. As a result, sex worker organisations and programmes that are known to these funders, connected to sex worker networks, that are led by sex workers, and that already receive funding are likely to be overrepresented in our survey sample.

It is likely that there are grantmakers and sex worker organisations and programmes that do not respond to surveys or report their information externally to research projects such as this. Responses were more likely to come from a subset of organisations that are more willing to participate in globally-oriented work, or are more optimistic about or in need

of foundation funding. As an example of identified respondent bias, one interview was conducted with a U.S. advocate who stated she had decided not to respond to the survey and not to disseminate it because of her perception of the futility and lack of return on the time invested. Among the 183 organisations responding to the global survey, many volunteered their time, information and opinions in the hope of mobilising more and better funding for the field.

This project does not specifically examine funding from governments, whether spent domestically, as bilateral aid or channelled through multilateral agencies, although some information is included in the report based on the survey responses from sex worker organisations. It is recognised that many governments and multilateral agencies do provide important investments in the area of sex worker health and rights and a mapping of this funding landscape would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of financial support for the protection and advancement of sex worker rights.

As a six-month endeavour, the researchers needed to triage what was essential versus only desirable. The research focused on fixing and addressing major biases and gaps in the data that could be readily addressed and that if not fixed would compromise the validity and reliability of the total picture. The results are believed to be largely accurate, reflecting a valid story about the patterns and amounts of funding in the field. The resulting mapping of funding flows invested in support of the human rights of sex worker are the basis for further investigation and advo-

## Key numbers

A summary of the key numbers of funders and organisations reached and grants included in the research.

### Data collection:

- 140 funders were contacted for this research with individualised surveys
- 10 funder affinity groups (networks or platforms of funders) were contacted
- 183 sex worker organisations responded to the online survey
- 128 (70%) of these survey respondents are sex worker-led organisations

### Summary of 2013 grants data collected:

- 56 funders (foundations and other non-governmental grantmakers) made one or more grants on sex worker rights
- 229 grants by these funders were identified that address sex worker rights in 2013
- €8 million in total was provided by these funders for sex worker rights in 2013

## Annex B:

# List of key foundations investing in sex worker rights

The following foundations invested €100 000 or more in the protection and advancement of the human rights of sex workers over the course of two years (2012 and 2013) through grants to sex worker organisations.

### Aids Fonds – The Netherlands

[www.aidsfonds.nl/about/organisation](http://www.aidsfonds.nl/about/organisation)

Aids Fonds, which is part of an organisation together with STOP AIDS NOW! and Soa Aids Nederland, works to end AIDS in a world where all people affected by HIV and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) access prevention, treatment, care and support. Aids Fonds is also the lead agent for several programmes funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs on sex work like Bridging the Gaps and Stepping Up, Stepping Out (SUSO), both of which include partners in numerous countries. In 2012, Aids Fonds provided a round of grants specifically targeted to the health and rights of sex workers. Aids Fonds made 11 grants in 2012 and 2013 in support of sex worker rights totalling over €660 000.

### American Jewish World Service – United States

[www.ajws.org](http://www.ajws.org)

Inspired by the Jewish commitment to justice, American Jewish World Service (AJWS) works to realise human rights and end poverty in the developing world. AJWS's grantmaking supports grassroots communities in 19 countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, with a focus on organisations led by women and working in marginalized communities. AJWS provides about 25 grants each year of an average size of €15 000 to organisations working to promote the rights of sex workers.

### amfAR – The Foundation for AIDS Research – United States

[www.amfar.org/gmt/](http://www.amfar.org/gmt/)

The amfAR GMT Initiative (formerly the MSM Initiative) provides financial and technical support to community organisations working to reduce the spread and impact of HIV among gay men, other men who have sex with men, and transgender individuals (collectively, GMT) in low- and middle-income countries. GMT Initiative uses a peer review mechanism to select the groups to be awarded with a grant. In 2013, GMT Initiative provided 19 grants to groups working to promote the health and rights of male and trans\* sex workers with an average grant size of €13 000.

### Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice – United States

[www.astraeafoundation.org](http://www.astraeafoundation.org)

The Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice is a philanthropic organisation working to advance LGBTQI rights around the globe. It makes grants to organisations that challenge oppression, seed change and promote racial, economic, social and gender justice. Astraea supports organisations led by and inclusive of sex workers that fight against criminalisation and work for economic justice. Astraea provides about 13 grants each year of an average size of €15 000 to organisations working to promote the rights of sex workers.

### Comic Relief – United Kingdom

[www.comicrelief.com](http://www.comicrelief.com)

Comic Relief's grantmaking aims to bring about real and lasting change by tackling the root causes of poverty and social injustice. According to its international grants strategy, Comic Relief supports sex workers through its goals to support people affected by HIV and women's and girls' equality. In 2012, Comic Relief invested almost €400 000 in sex worker rights through a three-year grant to the Red Umbrella Fund.

### **Elton John AIDS Foundation – United States**

[www.ejaf.org](http://www.ejaf.org)

Elton John AIDS Foundation supports evidenced based HIV treatment and prevention programmes that address the human rights issues that fuel the HIV epidemic. In 2012 and 2013, the Elton John AIDS Foundation gave seven grants to organisations working in the United States to promote the health and rights of sex workers, for a total investment of roughly €130 000.

### **Ford Foundation – United States (and regional offices)**

[www.fordfoundation.org/issues/sexuality-and-reproductive-health-and-rights](http://www.fordfoundation.org/issues/sexuality-and-reproductive-health-and-rights)

The Ford Foundation's Gender, Sexuality and Reproductive Justice programme is dedicated to strengthening sexual and reproductive health and rights, and encouraging comprehensive sexuality education and evidence-based public discourse on sexuality. In 2012 and 2013, the Ford Foundation provided 11 grants to organisations working to promote the health and rights of sex workers, for a total investment of €900 000.

### **Global Fund for Women – United States**

[www.globalfundforwomen.org](http://www.globalfundforwomen.org)

Global Fund for Women works to advance the rights of women and girls worldwide by increasing the resources for and investing in women-led organisations and women's collective leadership for change. In 2012 and 2013, Global Fund for Women gave 24 grants averaging €10 000 per grant to organisations working to advance the human rights of sex workers.

### **Hivos – The Netherlands**

[www.hivos.org](http://www.hivos.org)

Hivos is an international development organisation investing in civil society initiatives for human rights and democratic societies. Hivos supports sex workers and their rights globally in programmes as women leadership building, women and human rights movement building, LGBT safety and security, access to safe abortion, HIV/AIDS and advocacy programmes to stop violence, social exclusion, and discrimination. During 2012 and 2013, Hivos made four grants for a total investment of €100 000 to organisations working to advance the rights of sex workers.

### **Levi Strauss Foundation – United States**

[www.levistrauss.com/levi-strauss-foundation/](http://www.levistrauss.com/levi-strauss-foundation/)

The Levi Strauss Foundation advances the human rights and well being of underserved people touched by its business. Levi Strauss Foundation aims to support progressive leaders and organisations that take risks and innovate as they address the most pressing social issues of our time: from HIV/AIDS and human rights, to promoting long-term assets among low-income people and improving the lives of apparel workers in its supply chain. In 2012 and 2013, Levi Strauss Foundation made five grants focused on sex worker health and rights, totalling just over €300 000.

### **Mama Cash – The Netherlands**

[www.mamacash.org](http://www.mamacash.org)

Mama Cash works to fund and support women's rights initiatives around the globe that challenge the root causes of injustice, aiming to advance social change that starts with gender equality and respect for the human rights of everyone. Mama Cash made 16 grants to sex worker rights organisations in 2012 and 2013, totalling €700 000.

### **Open Society Foundations – United States**

[www.opensocietyfoundations.org/topics/sex-worker-rights](http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/topics/sex-worker-rights)

The Open Society Foundations work to build vibrant and tolerant democracies whose governments are accountable to their citizens. The Open Society Foundations works to ensure that people who are stigmatised because of their sexual practices, sexual orientation, or gender identity have access to quality health and social services and can effectively advocate for their rights. The Open Society Foundations is the world's largest grantmaker for sex worker rights, and makes approximately 30 grants each year to organisations working to promote the rights of sex workers, in collaboration with foundations across its network.

### **Red Umbrella Fund – The Netherlands**

[www.redumbrellafund.org](http://www.redumbrellafund.org)

The Red Umbrella Fund is a sex worker-led fund created in 2012 through a collaboration of donors and sex worker activists. The Red Umbrella Fund supports sex worker-led groups in any country of the world – without geographic limits and open to unregistered organisations – and grants are unrestricted core funding meant to respond to the actual needs of sex workers. The Red Umbrella Fund provided 46 grants in 2012 and 2013 of an average size of about €20 000 to organisations and networks led by sex workers.

### **Robert Carr civil society Networks Fund – The Netherlands**

[www.robertcarrfund.org](http://www.robertcarrfund.org)

The Robert Carr civil society Networks Fund (RCNF) aims to support global and regional civil society networks in addressing critical factors for scaling up access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support and to protect the rights of inadequately served populations (ISP) across the world. In its first round of funding in 2012, RCNF made two grants related to sex worker health and rights totalling approximately €300 000.





Sex workers demonstrate for their labour rights at the International Congress on AIDS in Asia and the Pacific (ICAAP) in November 2013 in Bangkok, Thailand. Photo: Dale Kongmont, APNSW

## Credits

Design report: WAT ontwerpers

Design infographic: Lomangino Studio

Cover photo: Artwork created by Jenneke and Els ter Horst





(she changes the world)

#### **Mama Cash**

Founded in 1983, Mama Cash works to fund and support women's rights initiatives around the globe that challenge the root causes of injustice, aiming to advance social change that starts with gender equality and respect for the human rights of everyone.

[www.mamacash.org](http://www.mamacash.org)



**OPEN SOCIETY  
FOUNDATIONS**

#### **Open Society Foundations**

The Open Society Foundations work to build vibrant and tolerant democracies whose governments are accountable to their citizens. The Foundations seek to ensure that people who are stigmatized because of their sexual practices, sexual orientation, or gender identity have access to quality health and social services and can effectively advocate for their rights.

[www.opensocietyfoundations.org](http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org)



#### **Red Umbrella Fund**

The Red Umbrella Fund is the only global fund led by sex workers and dedicated to supporting and promoting the rights of sex workers. Launched in 2012, the Red Umbrella Fund exists to mobilise new funds to support a strong and sustainable global sex workers' rights movement that can create the changes sex workers want to see.

[www.redumbrellafund.org](http://www.redumbrellafund.org)