



Strategic Plan and Learning Framework 2013-2016

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The Process of Developing this Strategy

This strategy is the result of a one and a half year process of dialogue and discussions predominantly between members of the International Steering Committee (ISC) and staff of the Red Umbrella Fund. The initial draft was prepared by Liz Firth, a consultant who also facilitated the ISC meeting in May 2013 which focused on strategic planning and learning.

The content is based on discussions and decisions at the 2013 ISC meeting on learning from the first year of operation, judging the success of the Red Umbrella Fund and setting priorities for the 2013–2016 period. It draws from the outcomes of earlier discussions with the Programme Advisory Committee (PAC) and ISC in 2012, the Red Umbrella Fund's Governance and Administrative Charter, and information from other background documents related to the creation, hosting and management of the Red Umbrella Fund.

This strategic plan and learning framework was approved by the ISC by e-mail following final discussions and adjustments at the ISC meeting in June 2014.

The Red Umbrella Fund

Who we are

The Red Umbrella Fund is the only global fund dedicated to supporting and promoting the rights of sex workers. We exist 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. Our groundbreaking vision places decision making in the hands of sex workers – both through our support for sex worker-led groups and networks, through decision making on grants awarded and within the governance of the Red Umbrella Fund itself. We want to demonstrate how more donors can embrace the social justice principle of 'nothing about us, without us'.

History

Formally launched in April 2012, the Red Umbrella Fund is the result of a four-year collaborative process between social justice donors and the Global Network of Sex Work Projects and nominated regional representatives. In February 2012 the International Steering Committee (ISC) was put in place and half a year later the first staff were hired for the Red Umbrella Fund. In December 2012, we made our first grants to 21 sex worker-led organisations from across the world.

How we understand the global sex workers' rights movement

The global sex workers' rights movement is a collective term reflecting a diversity of movements, networks, groups and individual sex workers around the world. What they all have in common is a focus on collaborative action to challenge the criminalisation, marginalisation and stigmatisation of sex workers of all genders, and to respect, protect and fulfil sex workers' rights.

How we work

The Red Umbrella Fund is led by a partnership of sex workers and donors, with a sex worker majority in both grant decisions and overall governance. Our decision-making structure consists of an International Steering Committee (ISC), which provides oversight and is responsible for making strategic decisions, and a Programme Advisory Committee (PAC), which is our peer review panel that advises the ISC on the groups to fund. The Red Umbrella Fund has a small secretariat and is hosted by Mama Cash, an international women's fund based in the Netherlands.

Why we are needed

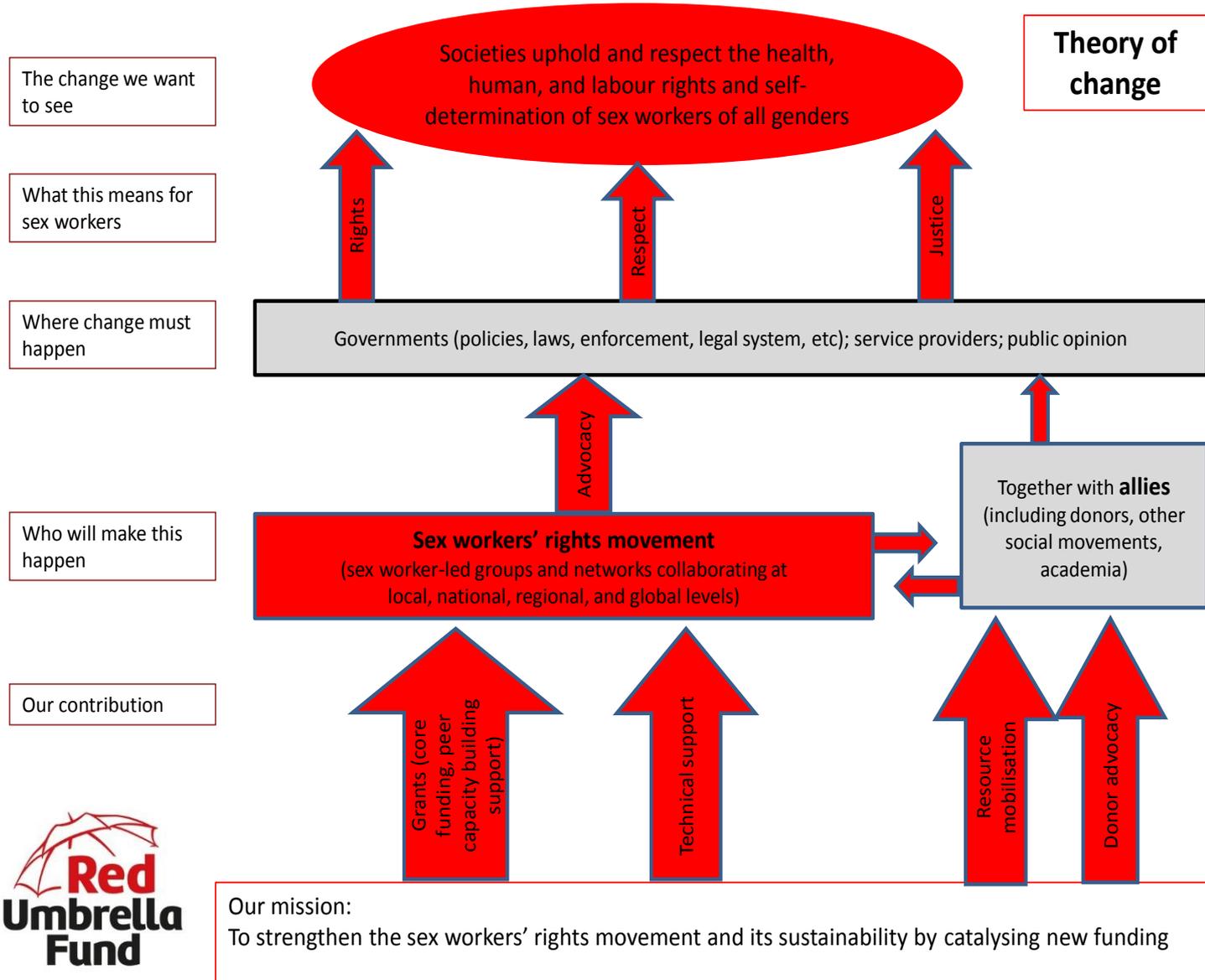
Sex workers all over the world face widespread violations of their human rights. Criminalisation and the severe stigma attached to sex work give licence to those who commit crimes of violence against sex workers and deny their humanity. It also makes it almost impossible for sex workers to access justice, healthcare, and social security systems. Sex workers would not be at such high risk of violence if they were respected as people and as workers, and if they felt free to seek help and protection without fear of being stigmatised, jailed, abused, and disregarded – in other words, if their human rights were respected.

Our first call for applications in 2012 resulted in 1,147 completed proposals, from which we were only able to fund 21 groups for a total grant amount of 425,000 euros for one year – a shocking illustration of mismatch between demand and current levels of donor support for

sex workers' rights organisations. Sex worker-led groups struggle to access funding for mobilisation around a rights-based paradigm. Many donors limit their funding specifically to initiatives that address the health (especially HIV) risks associated with sex work. Other programmes, often communicated as anti-trafficking initiatives, focus on 'rescuing sex workers' even when they do not want to be rescued. This approach is stigmatising and violates the rights of sex workers. It also drives many underground and away from essential services and mutual support. Our 2012 applicants wanted funding to support many actions. Countering violence, especially ending police brutality and harassment, was a common priority. So was addressing stigma and discrimination, including in healthcare settings. Many wanted to advance a decriminalisation agenda. There were also many requests for funds to build human rights expertise among sex worker activists.

Our theory of change

The Red Umbrella Fund believes that sex work must be recognised as work. Sex workers, like all other workers, are entitled to safe and secure working conditions, good labour practices, and fair wages. Sex work must be decriminalised and actions must be taken to end the discrimination, harassment and violence many sex workers face. Change will only be achieved through strong, collaborative movements of sex workers advocating for their rights, with the support of their allies. They are the best positioned to know what is needed for them, and best placed to do something about it. It is sex workers' voices that must be heard, sex workers' priorities that must be addressed and sex workers who must be in control of their own destinies. To achieve this, groups and networks led by sex workers need flexible core funding and opportunities to develop and share their skills, experience and knowledge, and collaborate for change. The Red Umbrella Fund exists to mobilise resources for sex worker-led organisations and networks to help strengthen and sustain the global movement in achieving human rights for sex workers.



Vision, mission and principles

The Red Umbrella Fund’s vision, mission and operating principles as stated below guide our strategies and operations:

Our vision

Societies uphold and respect the health, human, and labour rights and self-determination of sex workers of all genders.

The mission of the Red Umbrella Fund

To strengthen and ensure the sustainability of the global sex workers' rights movement by catalysing new funding specifically for sex worker-led organisations and national and regional (international) networks.

Our values and operating principles

1. We recognise the self-determination of sex workers.
2. We believe that sex workers must be at the heart of the design, implementation, and evaluation of programmes.
3. We oppose the criminalisation, legal oppression and all other forms of stigma and discrimination against sex work and recognise that sex work is work.
4. We embrace the gender, sexuality, and all other types of diversity of sex workers.
5. We commit to learning and using what we learn to inform our interventions and demonstrate the value of working collaboratively.
6. We commit to supporting actions that catalyse advocacy for rights-based policies, laws and practices that are based on evidence of what works, as analysed from sex workers' perspectives.
7. We commit to advocacy and funding processes that are transparent and accountable.

What we do to achieve our mission

The Red Umbrella Fund has four key strategies in support of our mission. They are:

Grantmaking

Our funding is entirely for sex worker-led groups and networks engaged in rights-based work. We do not tell grantees what they should spend their money on, or what kind of work they should be doing to improve the rights of sex workers. We provide core funding that is flexible to the needs of each group. This can be used for any kind of expense, for example rent, salaries, training, capacity building, registration, networking activities or organisational development. Although all our initial grants were for one year only, we are working towards multi-year grants during this strategic planning period to support sustainability.

We aim to offer grants in all regions of the world and to sex worker groups spanning all genders. Our grants go to groups and networks with inclusive attitudes that work to include those sex workers who are most marginalised or face additional discrimination. We do not support groups who deny the rights of other sex workers.

Our aim is to strengthen and sustain the global sex workers' rights movement. This means thinking not just about individual groups or networks but about how our grantmaking increases opportunities for sex workers to support each other, share experiences and knowledge and work together for change. We want to be sure that our funding reaches local, national and regional levels. We look for grantees who are committed to connecting with the global sex workers' rights movement. As with all our grantmaking, we do not prescribe how this should be done. Although we want our funds to help make the sex workers' rights movement more visible, we respect the fact that anonymous action is sometimes essential for reasons of safety.

Capacity building and technical assistance

Few donors are supporting sex worker-led groups and networks to develop their own organisational capacity, particularly within a human rights framework. In line with our commitment to a sex worker-led, participatory approach, our focus is on developing peer-led capacity building, including the use of community consultants. This values the existing skills within the movement and enables sex worker-led organisations and networks to share and benefit from the expertise of their peers. Our core funding grants can include costs for capacity building and technical assistance as identified by grantees as their priority.

The Secretariat of the Red Umbrella Fund also provides technical support to grantees, if needed, on preparing for, managing and reporting on their grant. We can also support strategic thinking, organisational priority setting, planning, fundraising or other issues of priority to them as relevant. We aim to use and create opportunities – especially online – for our grantees to learn from and share knowledge with other sex worker groups and allies.

Communications and donor advocacy

We actively promote the existence and purpose of the Red Umbrella Fund. We want sex worker-led organisations and networks across the world to know about our distinctive approach to funding and feel encouraged to apply. We also report back through our website

on both successful grantees (unless anonymity is essential for safety reasons) and on learning from our grant rounds.

The Red Umbrella Fund's advocacy role is focused firmly on the donor community. We want to see sex worker-led organisations being given greater priority by donors and a human rights approach in all funding for sex workers. We also aim to inform donors about our innovative, participatory, grantmaking model and encourage them to do more to put communities in the driving seat.

The Red Umbrella Fund does not speak for the global sex workers' rights movement. Where appropriate, it acts as an amplifier for key messages from the movement with its donor audiences. We are committed to sex workers being in the lead in our influencing work with donors. We also ask our donor members to be strong advocates for the rights of sex workers, the Red Umbrella Fund and its participatory approach in their discussions with peers.

Resource mobilisation

The Red Umbrella Fund exists both to attract more funds for our grantmaking work and to encourage donors to fund sex worker-led groups and sex workers' rights work directly. We think carefully about the balance of our funding portfolio. Geographical or other donor conditions must not be allowed to compromise our principles and values. We want to be sure we can continue to provide core funding and to fund across the world. Our aim is to raise two million euros in direct support of the work of the Red Umbrella Fund by 2016. We are committed to spending at least 70% of our total annual budget directly on grants to sex worker-led groups and networks. The remaining 30% covers the costs of managing the fund, including our participatory governance and grant decision-making structures, resource mobilisation work, staffing and overhead costs.

In addition to these four key strategies, the Red Umbrella Fund is committed to **participatory governance** where a majority of the ISC will always be comprised of sex workers in accordance with our principles.

Key activities per strategy 2013-16

Participatory Governance			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop, pilot and implement regional programme advisory groups (at least 80% of which to be comprised of sex workers) for grantmaking; • Implement new planning and communication ideas to support good decision making between meetings; • Hold regular, quarterly teleconferences of the International Steering Committee (ISC); • Hold annual face-to-face ISC meetings; • Capacity building for ISC and recruitment of new members; • Review hosting arrangements. 			
Grantmaking	Capacity Building	Communication & Advocacy	Resource Mobilisation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement learning from previous calls for applications – including further developing criteria and improving operations of programme advisory committees • Run calls for applications and make grants • Conduct an external grantmaking review • Implement collaborative monitoring & evaluation system with grantees • Develop multi-year grants • Explore provision of emergency grants • Document and share learning and progress with the movement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support capacity building through grantmaking • Offer technical support and advice as requested and relevant for grantees • Support peer-to-peer capacity building 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articulate funding principles and portfolio balance • Advocate with other donors for human rights approach to sex work • Develop website and use other available media channels (including social media) to share our principles, experiences, and increase the visibility of the sex workers' rights movement • Outreach to sex worker-led organisations to raise awareness of the Red Umbrella Fund and the type of funding available 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retain existing donors and attract new donors for the Fund

What success looks like

The Red Umbrella Fund wants to see a world in which societies uphold and respect the health, human and labour rights and self-determination of sex workers of all genders. Fundamental to this is the recognition that sex workers' human rights are being denied and that this must change. We believe that the most powerful agents for change are sex workers themselves, working through strong and sustainable sex worker-led organisations and movements, to achieve their own agendas and priorities. Sex workers' rights allies have an important role in supporting this self-determination approach. The Red Umbrella Fund exists to mobilise new funding in support of sex workers' rights so that groups and their networks have both money and capacity to achieve the changes that are needed. We believe this too must be a self-determined process, with sex workers and donors working as partners to a sex worker-led agenda.

Over the long term, the success of the Red Umbrella Fund will be judged on how far a strengthened and sustainable sex workers' rights movement has advocated for greater rights for sex workers and on the changes this has achieved for sex workers across the globe. In the medium term, we will judge our progress in supporting this overall aim through the following three key outcomes:

1. **Stronger sex worker-led organisations**
2. **A stronger sex workers' rights movement**
3. **Living and sharing our values**

Outcome 1: Stronger sex worker-led organisations

More groups and networks that are effectively led by sex workers, have clear organisational structures and decision-making mechanisms, sufficient capacity, sustainable funding streams, and a rights-based advocacy strategy.

Key indicators:

- 1) Amount of funds allocated by new and existing donors to sex worker-led organisations;
- 2) Number of grantees that have strengthened their organisations by developing clearer organisational structures and capacity;
- 3) Number of grantees that have built their organisations' rights-based advocacy capacity;
- 4) Number of sex workers reached through membership, outreach, services, and other activities organised by grantees.

Outcome 2: A stronger sex workers' rights movement

A strong global sex workers' rights movement which is diverse and visible, and maintains strong connections with other groups and networks within and beyond the movement in order to more effectively advocate for sex workers' rights in line with their self-determined agendas.

Key indicators:

- 1) Strong grants portfolio in terms of geographic areas, type of grantee, and diversity of sex workers;
- 2) Visibility of our grantees as part of the global sex workers' rights movement;
- 3) Number of new connections of our grantees with other sex worker-led organisations, allies, and funders.

Outcome 3: Living and sharing our values

The Red Umbrella Fund is a successful global model of a participatory, inclusive, transparent, and – most importantly – sex worker-led funder, and we actively share our experiences. We are a learning fund committed to developing and implementing effective learning, monitoring and evaluation processes. Our values of collaboration and participation are fundamental to our theory of change and to judgements of our success.

Key indicators:

- 1) Level of participation and leadership of sex workers in making Red Umbrella Fund decisions;
- 2) Number of requests to share our sex worker-led model (in media, philanthropic spaces, etc);
- 3) Documentation of the process through which the Red Umbrella Fund came into existence;
- 4) Evaluation of the Red Umbrella Fund's progress that captures 'ingredients' and lessons for successful participatory grantmaking.

Learning principles and framework

The Red Umbrella Fund recognises the self-determination of sex workers and believes that sex workers must be at the heart of everything we do. We strive to engage in learning, monitoring and an evaluation approach that is:

- **Participatory and peer-led** – involving sex workers in all levels of evaluation. Doing this well means being mindful of individuals’ time and capacity and making sure that sex worker participation broadly increases learning and capacity for the benefit of the movement.
- **Flexible and adaptive** – the Red Umbrella Fund exists to respond to the agendas of sex worker-led groups and networks, not to direct them. Our monitoring systems must be flexible and adaptable so that they make sense to a very diverse group of grantees, with different capacities and levels of experience, and so that they realistically reflect the complex nature of change and how it is achieved.
- **Learning-oriented and actionable** – producing information that we can use to guide our strategies and decision making in order to more effectively achieve our mission. We want to learn from our donor partners and other experienced donors about the particular challenges of demonstrating impact as a Fund – as well as to share our own learning about the distinctive participatory way in which the Red Umbrella Fund is working.
- **Focused on contribution, not attribution** – we recognise that social change comes about as a result of a large number of actors and interventions. The Red Umbrella Fund focuses on understanding the contributions grantees make to change rather than expecting them to prove they – alone – caused it.
- **Continuous** – learning, monitoring and evaluation needs to be embedded in all our planning and implementation; it is not a one-time separate event at the end of a grant or programme.

Key learning questions for the Red Umbrella Fund

We wish to contribute to the following critical learning objectives:

- i. Increasing knowledge and expertise about and within sex worker-led organisations in different regions of the world;
- ii. How to work effectively as a participatory, sex worker-led fund and how this approach might be adopted by other funds;
- iii. Successful strategies for influencing the philanthropic community so that donors shift their approach to embrace a model of supporting sex workers’ human rights more broadly.