



Strategic Plan 2020-2025

INTRODUCTION

The Red Umbrella Fund is the first and only global fund dedicated to supporting the rights of sex workers. It was established in 2012 to respond to the lack of funding available for sex workers' rights organizing. In line with its core values of autonomy and ownership, the Red Umbrella Fund is a sex worker-led, participatory fund.

In preparation for our second strategic plan, we reflected on our work to date: what have we accomplished, what have we learned, and how can we use these lessons to plan for the future. To understand the impact of our work, we gathered feedback from grantees, other activists, funders, members of the International Steering Committee (ISC) and Programme Advisory Committee (PAC) and staff. The next section summarizes the reflections that fed into this strategic plan that will guide our work from 2020 to 2025.

Following intense discussions at the annual meeting of the ISC in April 2019 in Kathmandu, Nepal, this strategic plan was approved by the ISC by consensus in February 2020 in Amsterdam.

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REFLECTIONS

Between 2012 and 2018, the Red Umbrella Fund made 157 unrestricted grants to 104 sex worker-led organizations in over 60 countries. Many of those organizations were new, unregistered and the Red Umbrella Fund was often their first funder. With financial support and accompaniment from the Red Umbrella Fund, sex workers' rights activists all over the world have built stronger organizations and alliances and brought small and big changes to our communities, from reducing violence to pushing through better laws. Today, the global sex workers' rights movement has become more visible, more diverse and more connected than ever before.

Since the inception of the Red Umbrella Fund, we have seen shifts among the funders. Some social justice funders now have a more nuanced understanding of sex workers' rights and have translated their learning into funding to sex workers' organizations. "We changed our position when we heard sex workers speak powerfully on behalf of the Red Umbrella Fund at funder meetings", one of those funders told us in an interview.

We are humbled by the courageous and crucial work of sex workers' rights groups and networks and take pride in the support we have been able to give. But many challenges remain. In most parts of the world sex work remains criminalized and stigmatized and as sex workers we are still denied our human rights. There is still not enough funding available for sex workers' rights organizing and the funding that is available is often not attuned to the communities' needs.

Our new strategy re-affirms our commitment to supporting a strong, diverse, and collaborative sex workers' rights movement globally. We commit to holding human rights values and principles central in all our grantmaking and accompaniment work. Recognizing that social change takes time, we aim to provide longer term support to organizations that are well placed to make lasting change. Building on the momentum, we will expand our funder advocacy work to mobilize more and better funding for the movement. Last, but not least: we commit to strengthening and promoting our participatory model, both as a better way to do grantmaking and as a way to shift the power and support community leadership.

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when we heard sex workers
speak powerfully on behalf of
the Red Umbrella Fund”**

OUR MISSION

The Red Umbrella Fund works to strengthen and ensure the sustainability of the global sex workers' rights movement by catalyzing new funding specifically for sex worker-led groups and national and regional networks. We support community-led groups and networks that work to ensure sex workers' rights are respected as human beings and as workers, so that all sex workers can live lives free from criminalization, stigma and violence.

OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

The Red Umbrella Fund believes that sex work must be recognized as work and that the human rights of all sex workers must be respected. Sex workers, like other workers, are entitled to safe and secure working conditions, good labor practices, and fair wages. Sex work must be decriminalized and actions must be taken to address all norms that perpetuate stigma and discrimination against sex workers, that create barriers to accessing services, and that contribute to violence against sex workers.

Our theory of change is rooted in the recognition that sex workers are experts on our own lives and the needs of our communities and must be in charge of setting our own priorities and strategies for meaningful change. This change can only be achieved through strong, collaborative, diverse and sustainable movements of sex workers advocating collectively for recognition and protections of our rights, with the support of our allies.

Sex worker-led groups need flexible funding, including for core organizational costs, to grow our capacities and organizations, develop effective strategies, and collaborate for change. The Red Umbrella Fund exists to mobilize new resources for sex worker-led organizations and networks to help strengthen and sustain the global movement in achieving human rights for all sex workers.

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' rights activists around the world. What sex worker activists have in common is a focus on collaborative action to challenge criminalization, marginalization and stigmatization of sex workers of all genders and identities and to advance the human rights of sex workers.

THEORY OF CHANGE

The change we want to see

A world where sex workers' rights are respected as human beings and as workers, so that all sex workers can live lives free from criminalization, stigma, and violence.

What this means for sex workers

Rights

Respect

Justice

Where change must happen

Governments, service providers, society

Who will make this happen

Stronger sex workers' rights movement

Together with allies

Red Umbrella Fund's contribution

Grants & accompaniment

Sex workers' leadership in grantmaking

Funder advocacy

OUR MISSION:
To strengthen the sex workers' rights movement and its sustainability by catalysing new funding

OUR VALUES AND PRINCIPLES

All our work is guided by these values and operating principles:

- **Autonomy:** We respect self-determination of sex workers.
- **Sex work is work:** We oppose criminalization and all forms of stigma and discrimination against sex workers. We recognize that sex work is work.
- **Rights-based:** We commit to supporting advocacy for rights-based policies, laws and practices that are rooted in evidence of what works, as analyzed from sex workers' perspectives.
- **Ownership:** We believe that sex workers must be in charge of design, implementation, and evaluation of programs and policies that affect them.
- **Diversity:** We embrace the diversity of sex workers and support sex workers of all genders, sexualities, and life experiences. We also recognize that some sex workers are particularly impacted by intersecting forms of marginalization and commit to including them in all our work.
- **Accountable:** We commit to advocacy and funding processes that are transparent and accountable to the sex workers' rights movement.
- **Learning:** We commit to learning and using what we learn to inform our grantmaking and advocacy and to demonstrate the value of working collaboratively.

WHAT WE DO TO ACHIEVE OUR MISSION

The Red Umbrella Fund pursues three mutually-reinforcing strategies:

1. Grantmaking & accompaniment activities
2. Funder advocacy
3. Sex workers' leadership in grantmaking

1. GRANTMAKING AND ACCOMPANIMENT

GRANTMAKING

Our ambition is to fuel a strong, diverse and collaborative sex workers' rights movement that can bring a real change to our communities. We reaffirm our commitment to funding sex worker-led groups and networks that work to advance the human rights of sex workers. This might include advocating for better laws and policies, but also ending stigma, violence, and discrimination.

Diversity and inclusion remain core values in our grantmaking. We support sex workers of all genders and prioritize those who are most marginalized or face

multiple forms of discrimination. This includes supporting emerging groups that have the least access to resources yet are well positioned to make change, while also recognizing the important role of groups with more experience and capacity. Our grants support groups in all regions of the world.

We understand that change is rarely achieved by isolated efforts. We support our grantees in building strategic alliances with others, where they see the need. We recognize that international networks play an important role in building capacity of their members and amplifying their messages. We fund international sex worker-led networks that work collaboratively with their members and allies and increase opportunities for collaboration and advocacy.

Social transformation takes time and does not follow a linear path. All our grants are unrestricted and flexible. We trust our grantees to set their own priorities and determine their own strategies based on their needs and vision. We continue to provide two-year grants but aim to also offer opportunities when possible for longer-term support to organizations who are best placed to contribute to lasting change for their communities.

ACCOMPANIMENT ACTIVITIES

Strong movements are made of strong organizations and activists, working together. We want to see our grantees grow their capacities, skills, leadership and partnerships for change and to feel supported on this journey. Grantees can use our grants to set their own priorities for growth and identify appropriate resources and opportunities, including by sharing knowledge and working together with others.

We accompany our grantees with flexible and personal technical assistance in the form of guidance, mentorship and introductions. This includes constructive feedback on grant applications and reports, help with planning, budgeting and financial reporting, as well as connections to (peer) learning or funding opportunities. Where relevant and desired, we contribute to the visibility of our grantees by publishing about their work. Our accompaniment activities are always tailored to the specific needs of our grantees.

2. FUNDER ADVOCACY

The Red Umbrella Fund aims to catalyze more and better funding for sex worker-led organizations and networks from public and private funders. We want to see more resources available to community groups and for those resources to be better attuned to the movements' needs and priorities. This means funding that is accessible, unrestricted, flexible, multi-year, and human rights based.

We do this by raising the visibility of the sex workers' rights movements among funders. By actively sharing our knowledge and experiences and contributing to funder dialogues, we encourage and support funders to develop a nuanced

understanding of what sex workers' rights are and how they intersect with other social justice issues. We also serve as a resource on the best ways to support community-led organizations for change.

We participate in relevant funder convenings and networks and strategically collaborate with allied funders to increase our effectiveness and reach. We believe there is power in sex workers' participation in funder spaces as peers and grantmakers and we commit to further advancing sex workers' leadership in our advocacy work.

Since our creation in 2012, we have seen several funders commit to supporting sex workers' rights. Building on this momentum, we will expand our funder advocacy workplan and budget during this strategic plan period.

3. SEX WORKERS' LEADERSHIP IN GRANTMAKING

A strong sex workers' rights movement needs not only better funding, but also power and autonomy in making decisions about how to use this funding to fuel change. Only when sex workers have a real seat at the table in funding decisions can real change be achieved. Our participatory and activist-led model, which was designed by sex workers and which has sex workers in the majority in our strategic decision making and grants selection bodies, is central to making this vision a reality.

Sex workers' leadership in strategy and grants decisions promotes transparency and accountability to the sex workers' rights movement, and makes sure our funding is well directed. We facilitate sex workers' leadership by providing language support to sex workers who are not English speakers, conducting one-on-one orientation sessions, offering (peer) mentorship and learning opportunities, and respecting community activists' lived experiences and expertise.

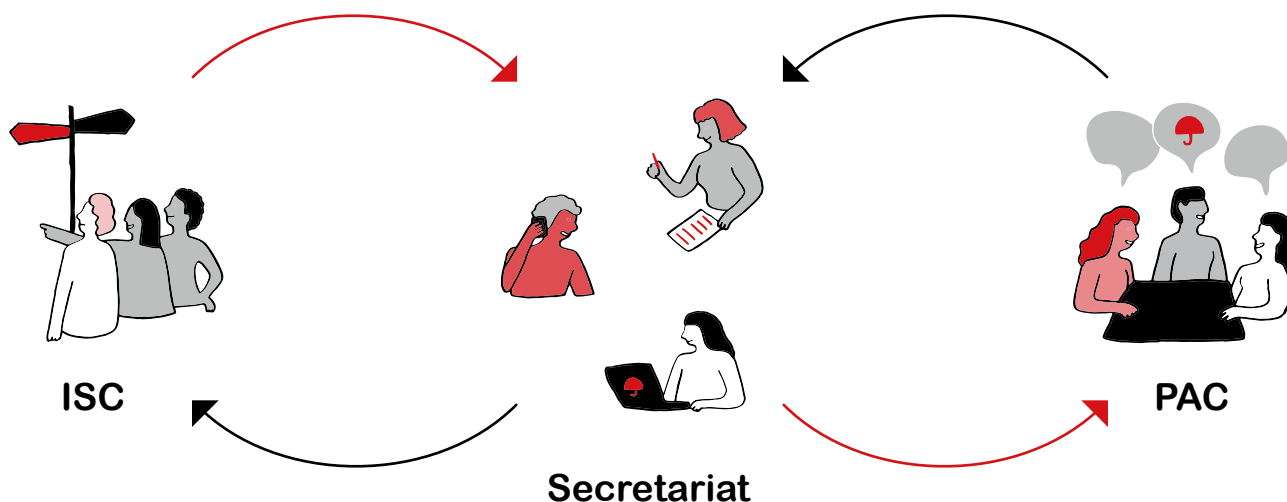
We encourage funders to learn from our innovative, activist-led and participatory model and to embrace the principle of "nothing about us without us". This means engaging sex workers in funding decisions and enabling sex workers' meaningful leadership.

HOW WE WILL WORK TOWARDS OUR MISSION

OUR STRUCTURE

The Red Umbrella Fund is led by a partnership of sex workers and donors, with significant sex worker majorities in both grant decisions and overall governance. Our decision-making structure consists of an International Steering Committee (ISC), which is responsible for making strategic decisions, and a Program Advisory Committee (PAC), which is our grants review panel that selects the groups to fund. Both the ISC and the PAC have sex workers in the majority.

The Red Umbrella Fund has a small Secretariat that is responsible for the daily operations and financial sustainability. In line with our values, the Secretariat prioritizes hiring sex workers for staff positions. The Red Umbrella Fund is hosted by Mama Cash, the oldest international women's fund, which has been a champion for sex workers' rights since 1983. Mama Cash is based in the Netherlands.



OPERATIONAL PRIORITIES

In order to effectively bring our strategy to life, the Red Umbrella Fund has outlined the following operational priorities:

- **Resource mobilization:** as a public fund with an ambitious mission, we seek to continue increasing our budget to expand and accelerate our impact.
- **Communications:** a communications plan will be developed to guide our communications with the sex workers' rights movement and with funders, as part of the implementation of our strategies, and also to share our lessons learned.
- **Learning, monitoring and evaluation:** the Red Umbrella Fund is a learning organization. We are committed to documenting and learning from our processes, experiences, and progress and to sharing our lessons with others.

WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

The Red Umbrella Fund wants to see a world where sex work is recognized as work and where all sex workers enjoy health, labor and other human rights. We believe that the most powerful change-makers are sex workers themselves. Our role is to support community groups and networks in accessing the resources they need to pursue their priorities.

Over the long term, the success of the Red Umbrella Fund will be measured by the changes that the strengthened and better-resourced sex workers' movement has been able to achieve. Our detailed operational learning, monitoring and evaluation framework will help keep us on track in implementing this strategy and guide us in documenting, sharing, and learning from our progress.

Below we outline the key outcomes that we will measure our progress by.

Goal 1: MOVEMENT BUILDING

We will contribute to a strong, diverse, and more sustainable sex workers' rights movement that is effective in bringing about the change that sex workers want.

We have succeeded if our grantmaking has contributed to:

- **Stronger and more resilient sex workers' rights organizations, networks, and movements.** This includes progress that our grantees have made in developing their organizations, building their skills and capacities, and strategically collaborating with others.
- **Introducing better laws and policies and resisting the introduction of harmful ones.** Our grants have enabled our partners to change laws and policies that affect them and to influence how those laws are enforced or implemented.
- **Ending stigma, violence, harmful attitudes, and changing perceptions of sex workers in society.** This might include increasing visibility of sex workers as human rights defenders, countering stereotypes through creative activism (or artivism), and other strategies.

Goal 2: CATALYZING FUNDING

We will catalyze more and better funding for sex workers' rights organizing by engaging diverse public and private funders on rights-based approaches to sex work.

Our advocacy is effective when:

- We have contributed to a more nuanced discourse among private and public funders on the human rights approach to sex work and the harms of conflating sex work with trafficking.
- Our philanthropic partners are more willing to be vocal about their support for sex workers' rights in funder spaces.
- New or increased commitments are made by public and private funders to fund sex workers' rights organizations directly.

Goal 3: SHIFTING THE POWER

We will sustain and strengthen our sex worker-led, participatory funding mechanism and share our model and values with other funders.

We have been successful in sustaining and elevating sex worker leadership and promoting the value that participatory grantmaking brings when:

- At least 8 of the 11 members of our governance (ISC) and 80% of our advisory (PAC) bodies are sex workers.
- At least 60% of our Secretariat is sex workers and the Coordinator(s) is a sex worker.
- Our participatory funding mechanism enjoys the trust of our communities and funders.
- We have welcomed and supported community leaders to effectively participate in our decision making processes.
- There is increased interest of other funders to involve communities in decision making.