In 2012, Mama Cash has had the privilege of supporting and closely collaborating with two special initiatives: the Red Umbrella Fund and the Mesoamerican Initiative of Women Human Rights Defenders.

Special initiative
Red Umbrella Fund

The Red Umbrella Fund is the first global grantmaking structure guided by and for sex workers. It is the result of a unique collaboration between sex worker activists and donor organisations. Mama Cash was chosen to host the Fund in the fall of 2011.

In 2008, the Global Network of Sex Work Projects (NSWP), the Sexual Health and Rights Project (SHARP) of the Open Society Institute (OSI) and CREA initiated a dialogue on sex work and trafficking. Over a three-year period, sex worker activists and donors from countries around the world engaged in further discussions, including two international meetings held in Amsterdam in December 2009 and 2010 and organised by SHARP and Mama Cash. The work of this group of activists and donors led to the launch of the Red Umbrella Fund in April 2012. The name ‘Red Umbrella Fund’ was chosen because a red umbrella is a recognised symbol of the international sex workers’ rights movement.

Facts & figures 2012

| Number of grants | 21 |
| Total amount granted | € 425,000 |
| Average amount per grant | € 20,238 |

Mission

The Red Umbrella Fund aims to strengthen and ensure the sustainability of sex workers’ rights movements by catalysing new funding specifically for sex worker-led organisations and national, regional, and global networks.

How does the Red Umbrella Fund work?

Its main strategies are grantmaking, capacity building, advocacy and resource mobilisation. One of the Fund’s core beliefs and commitments is that sex workers must be at the heart of the design, implementation and evaluation of programmes that affect them. For too long, the voices of sex workers were not heard in policy discussions. The Fund is governed by an International Steering Committee (ISC) consisting of sex workers (at least 51%) and donors, who provide strategic policy and programmatic oversight. A Programme Advisory Committee (PAC), consisting of sex workers (at least 80%) and allies, reviews funding proposals and makes grant decisions. Two dedicated Red Umbrella Fund staff members manage activities, and Mama Cash provides administrative support and raises funds. In 2012, Mama Cash secured €611,650 for the Red Umbrella Fund. This amount includes a contribution of €143,737 from Mama Cash: a cash contribution of €125,000 and an in-kind donation of €18,737. The Red Umbrella Fund made €425,000 in 21 grants to sex workers’ rights organisations in 2012.

What does the Fund support?

The Red Umbrella Fund funds sex worker-led organisations and networks. Almost 1,200 applications were received from 110 countries in response to the first Call for Applications in August 2012. Grants were distributed in December 2012. The PAC selected applications based on criteria such as being self-led and working from a rights-based perspective, in addition to regional and gender diversity.

The first 21 grantees work at local and national levels to advance the human rights of sex workers. Their strategies include building the skills and self-esteem of women, men and trans sex workers; strengthening sex worker networks and building partnerships with allies; providing legal services; documenting and addressing violence against sex workers; and advocating for the decriminalisation of sex work.

Ana Luz Mamani Silva, member of the Fund’s International Steering Committee, at the launch of the Red Umbrella Fund in Istanbul.
Interviews with two members of the International Steering Committee of the Red Umbrella Fund

**Miriam Edwards**, Executive Director and founding member of the Guyana Sex Work Coalition and co-chair of the Caribbean Sex Work Coalition, explains why the Red Umbrella Fund is of vital importance to sex workers.

‘The Red Umbrella Fund will help sex worker activists and sex workers to actually be able to speak for themselves in terms of having money, having advocacy meetings, and building sex workers’ strengths. So that we can have a voice and we can have a movement. It will help strengthen us and the work that we are doing.

Despite sex workers’ vulnerability to HIV in the Caribbean, less than one percent of HIV funding goes to work with sex workers. Sex worker-led organisations really do not benefit from this funding because the grants go to organisations that work with sex workers, to programmes set out for sex workers rather than organisations we lead ourselves. Often we have to dance to the tune of the persons handling the funds, but we don’t get a chance to speak.

With the Red Umbrella Fund, I feel like the work that I’ve been fighting for over the years has started to manifest in a good way. I feel real excited that at last sex workers have a place at decision-making tables and that I am a member of the International Steering Committee. With this fund we are able to make decisions for ourselves and to sit and talk with donors.

I feel the work that I am doing, as an activist, being a sex worker, fighting for sex workers’ rights over the years, I feel good that it’s not going unheard.’

**Anne Gathumbi**, Programme Manager at the Open Society Initiative for Eastern Africa, Kenya, outlines why she is proud to be part of the Red Umbrella Fund.

‘The Red Umbrella Fund is the first fund of its kind. It seeks to increase the money available for sex workers’ rights and get more donors interested in this area. My organisation was involved in the preliminary discussions about what possibilities there could be for setting up a fund that would catalyse new funding and that would put more money towards addressing the rights of sex workers. I participated in the initial discussions, went on to serve on the Interim Committee, and now I am on the International Steering Committee. It is very exciting to see the fund grow from an initial idea to a reality.

When we did a mapping and analysis of what money is available and what money is going towards supporting groups of sex workers to self advocate, it was very minimal. There were very few donors that were putting money into this sort of initiative. That’s what makes the Red Umbrella Fund so important. The large number of funding applications received by the Fund also shows the great interest and the great need for a fund like this. There’s a huge demand from sex workers’ rights organisations that donors are not meeting. We must step up and increase the money for these groups to advocate for their rights.

I’m really excited to be part of this process. This is a significant achievement and I will always feel proud to be associated with it. It’s been a good learning experience. Having a fund that has sex workers on its governing structure has educated us. It has been very humbling, and it has provided the greatest learning I could ever get as a funder.’
Grantees of the Red Umbrella Fund

AFRICA
(SUB SAHARAN)

Benin
Association Biowa
This is a new organisation which aims to mobilise and educate women sex workers in urban and rural areas of Benin, using peer learning and outreach to other sex workers as a key strategy. The organisation advocates for improved access to health care and for the decriminalisation of sex work.
€15,000

Democratic Republic of Congo
Action Humanitaire pour la Santé et le Développement (AHUSADEC)
The Bukavu branch of AHUSADEC is a sex worker-led group that operates in Kivu province. It provides a safe space for sex workers where it offers health information and documents cases of violence which it brings to police and court. Through radio shows the group aims to promote its work and educate the public about human rights.
€20,000

Sierra Leone
Movement for Vulnerability and Empowerment (MOVE)
Led by sex workers who are women, this recently established organisation advocates for improved access to health care, particularly in relation to sexual and reproductive health. MOVE has a focus on combating violence, and engages political and religious leaders to educate them about the experiences of sex workers.
€8,500

South Africa
Sisonke - National Sex Worker Movement of South Africa
Operating in seven provinces of South Africa, the organisation is building an independent and self-led movement of sex workers. Sisonke provides information to sex workers on accessing social services, such as health care, and on working with the police and court system. The group offers workshops on sexual health, leadership and human rights.
€27,000

ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Bangladesh
Sex Workers Network Bangladesh
This network has 29 member organisations, representing sex workers of all genders from all over Bangladesh. The group aims to strengthen its member organisations through building their leadership capacities, and also works with community leaders and the media to raise awareness about the human rights of sex workers.
€25,000

Burma
Myanmar National Network of Sex Workers (MNNSW)
This national network promotes the sexual and reproductive rights and health of sex workers using outreach and peer learning. It supports sex workers in rural areas who are HIV positive to access treatment. MNNSW also provides services and support to sex workers in prison and their families.
€13,000

Cambodia
Women’s Network for Unity (WNU)
This sex workers’ collective documents rights violations as part of its campaigns for changing legislation and policy so that the human rights of sex workers can be protected. Through the Community Legal Service, WNU offers direct legal assistance to sex workers including counselling, legal advice, and representation.
€7,000

China
Anonymous
This anonymous group is led by women sex workers who raise awareness among sex workers of their rights. It documents cases of violence against sex workers by officials and advocates against violence and exclusion. The group also offers information on sexual health and other support services.
€7,000

Fiji
Pacific Rainbow$ Advocacy Network (PRAN)
This sex workers’ organisation operates in Lautoka, a popular tourist destination in western Fiji. Committed to advocating for the rights of all sex workers, the group organises safe space meetings and mobilises sex workers using peer education. PRAN builds relationships with NGOs, government ministries and UN agencies to campaign for legal and policy reform.
€20,000

India
Adarsha
Established less than three years ago, this organisation advocates for the rights of sex workers who are men and trans, working to reduce stigma and building alliances with human rights organisations. Adarsha supports sex workers to access health care and other social services.
€7,000

All India Network of Sex Workers (AINSFW)
This network brings together sex workers of all genders from all over India to campaign for the decriminalisation of sex work and advocate for improved government HIV prevention and treatment programmes and policies. AINSFW promotes participation of sex workers in political decision making spaces through advocacy, partnerships, and leadership building.
€35,000

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LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Argentina

Asociación de Mujeres Meretrices de Argentina delegación Córdoba (AMMAR Córdoba)

Led by women sex workers, this is a network in the province of Córdoba that combines community services for sex workers – like offering daycare, literacy courses, and health services – with political activism, such as advocating for the protection of sex workers’ labour rights and for the legal recognition of sex work as work.

€20,000

Brazil

Grupo de Mulheres Prostitutas do Estado Pará (GEMPAC)

Founded over 20 years ago, GEMPAC works in the state of Pará in northern Brazil, mobilising women sex workers to confront violence and to challenge the stigma surrounding sex work. The group partners with artists to organise cultural events and uses visual arts as part of its fundraising and awareness-raising campaigns.

€25,000

Dominican Republic

Comunidad de Trans, Travestis y Trabajadoras Sexuales Dominicanas (COTRAVETD)

Working at the national level and led by sex workers who are trans, the group provides health and HIV services and information to sex workers. COTRAVETD makes use of the media to address stigma and discrimination and educate the public about sex workers’ rights.

€30,500

Peru

Asociación de Trabajadoras Sexuales Mujeres del Sur

This group, based in Arequipa, is led by sex workers who are women. Mujeres del Sur challenges police violence through awareness-raising among local communities and leaders, and works to combat police violence through strategic litigation. The organisation advocates for the recognition and protection of the labour rights of sex workers.

€12,000

EUROPE AND THE COMMONWEALTH OF INDEPENDENT STATES

Russia

Silver Rose (Serebryannaya Roza)

Supporting an expanding network of self-help initiatives throughout Russia, Silver Rose works with diverse groups of sex workers – including migrants, those who are HIV positive and those who engage in substance abuse – to advocate for changes in policies which marginalise sex workers. Silver Rose also uses peer support groups and legal volunteers to engage in strategic litigation.

€30,000

Serbia

Sloboda Prava

Based in Belgrade, this group offers support to sex workers of all genders and ethnic backgrounds. Sloboda Prava uses visual arts to campaign for changing legislation and policies which criminalise sex work. The organisation operates a centre for sex workers which offers information on sexual health and the legal rights of sex workers.

€20,000

Ukraine

Kirovograd Regional Department of All-Ukrainian League “Legalife”

This group is a regional branch of the national sex workers’ organisation All-Ukrainian League “Legalife”. Committed to unifying sex workers in the region to advocate for their human rights, the organisation uses peer education and support to build the capacities of individual sex workers. The group also documents cases of police violence against sex workers.

€20,000

United Kingdom

Sex Worker Open University (SWOU)

This collective brings together sex workers of all genders and sexual orientations, and works closely with sex workers who are migrants. SWOU organises public events such as film festivals and public debates to educate people about stigma and violations of sex workers’ rights, and uses research to challenge people’s stereotypes about the sex work industry.

€15,000

Tajikistan

Initiative Group Dignity

Founded less than two years ago, this self-led group works with sex workers of all genders and sexual orientations. Initiative Group Dignity operates a community centre for sex workers in Dushanbe, advocates against police violence, and offers support services to the children of sex workers.

€25,000

One grant of €30,000 was cancelled in January 2013 after additional information was received that indicated that the group did not meet the Red Umbrella Fund’s criteria.