Sex workers in the lead

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 networks.

Sex workers participate in every aspect of the Red Umbrella Fund. One of the sex workers on the Programme Advisory Committee, the sex worker-led group that selects the new grantees, describes why this principle of participation is so important:

“It’s helpful having sex workers making funding decisions because we understand which projects or groups will really be effective towards positive change. Bottom line, it’s our bodies, our lives, and we should be at the forefront of all decisions affecting us.”

Grantmaking in 2013

The Red Umbrella Fund makes one-year grants of €4,000 to €40,000. In 2013, the Fund prioritised increasing the number of regional networks of sex workers in its grantee portfolio. Regional networks play a pivotal role in supporting and strengthening the sex workers’ rights movement.

The African Sex Worker Alliance (ASWA) represents African sex workers’ interests at regional and international meetings. With funding from the Red Umbrella Fund, the network is expanding its membership across the continent and increasing its power to secure the human rights of sex workers.

The Red Umbrella Fund grant has also enabled the International Committee on the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe (ICRSE) to hire a coordinator to develop strategies to influence policy and law-making in the European Parliament. These and other sex worker networks in the Red Umbrella Fund portfolio are leading international advocacy and media campaigns, facilitating the sharing of expertise and building the leadership and capacities of the sex workers’ movement internationally.

Global thought leadership

After only one year, The Red Umbrella Fund is already establishing itself in the global philanthropic community. Together with other funders, the Red Umbrella Fund hosted panel discussions on the need to support sex workers’ rights at two international funders’ meetings (both held in the US): the EDGE Funders Alliance ‘Just Giving’ Conference in May and the AIDS Philanthropy Summit in December.

In memory

Two inspiring leaders within the international sex workers’ rights movement are remembered and missed. Andrew Hunter and Gabriela Leite both contributed to the establishing of the Red Umbrella Fund and were leaders of our grantees APNSW and Davida, respectively.

Facts & figures 2013

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of grants</td>
<td>25</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Average amount per grant</td>
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AFRICA (SUB SAHARAN)

Kenya

African Sex Worker Alliance (ASWA)
This regional network unites sex workers’ groups from 11 countries and seeks to expand its membership to include all countries on the African continent. It provides strategic advice, networking opportunities, capacity-building tools and financial support to local sex workers’ groups that work to improve their access to health services and labour rights. Its membership includes groups working with women, men and trans sex workers. ASWA represents sex workers’ interest in regional and international processes and platforms.
€40,000

Health Options for Young Men on HIV/STIs (HOYMAS)
This organisation promotes the human rights of sex workers, including access to health services for male sex workers living with HIV in Kenya. It has a membership of 1500 sex workers, and organises trainings for and by sex workers on health and human rights. The group sensitises health workers and government officials to the needs of male sex workers, and conducts media campaigns to influence decision makers to improve national laws, policies and practices that impact on sex workers’ lives.
€25,000

Mozambique

Tiyane Vavassate
Created in 2011, this emerging group brings together sex workers of all genders from three provinces of Mozambique to improve the human rights of sex workers, and end violence and discrimination. The group builds sex workers’ knowledge in areas of sexual and reproductive health and human rights, and trains them to become advocates for their own rights. With the Red Umbrella Fund grant, the group will develop its organisational structures and capacities.
€13,000

Nigeria

Women of Power Initiative (WOPI)
This emerging group of sex workers includes many migrants in the capital city of Lagos. WOPI runs a nightly outreach programme, offering HIV testing and counselling services. The group also trains sex workers in leadership skills and builds their knowledge on sexual and human rights advocacy as a strategy to counter violence and abuse.
€10,000

ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

China

Shen Zhen Xi Yan Communication Centre
This group is based in the city of Shenzhen and promotes access to health care and legal services for highly mobile male and trans sex workers by operating a drop-in centre and an emergency hotline. The group advocates for ending police violence such as arbitrary arrests, extortion, and harassment, by participating in seminars and debates around sex work.
€20,000

Hong Kong

Hong Kong Transgender Migrant Service Workers’ Network
This emerging group in Hong Kong reaches out to migrant transgender sex workers with HIV and STI prevention information, legal support, and human rights capacity-building support, provided by peer educators. The group combats stigma and discrimination faced by transgender sex workers through public awareness campaigns. The ‘Don’t Cut my Hair Campaign’ addresses the humiliation faced by trans women in prisons in Hong Kong who are ordinarily placed in the men’s department and forced to cut their hair short.
€20,000

India

National Network of Sex Workers (NNSW)
This network of sex workers’ organisations and allies in the south of India lobbies for changes in laws and policies to improve the lives of sex workers. It has successfully campaigned to ensure that the 2013 amended anti-rape law in India does not include prostitution as a form of exploitation. The Red Umbrella Fund grant will be used to strengthen the organisational structures and set up a sex worker-led governing board with skills to run the network.
€10,000

Zambia

Engender Rights Centre for Justice (ERCJ)
This group works to protect the rights and interests of sex workers through outreach and capacity building of sex workers of all genders in the capital city Lusaka and surroundings. Three out of four members of the group are HIV positive and one of the priority areas of the group is access to HIV prevention and treatment services for sex workers. The group also trains health care workers and police on the needs and rights of sex workers.
€12,500

Meet grantees of the Red Umbrella Fund

Shen Zhen Xi Yan Communication Centre joined the Global Flash Mob for Sex Workers’ Rights on International Women’s Day in Shenzhen.
APNSW members from across the region demonstrate for sex workers’ rights at the International Congress on AIDS in Asia and the Pacific (ICAAAP) in November 2013 in Bangkok, Thailand.

Malaysia
Pertubuhan Advokasi Masyarakat Terpinggir Kuala Lumpur dan Selangor (PAMT)
Established in 2011, this organisation supports sex workers’ access to health care through peer education, condom distribution and referrals to health and social services. The group supports sex workers in setting up their own support groups, and aims to improve the living and working conditions of sex workers in the country. With the Red Umbrella Fund grant, PAMT will set up a crisis response team to support sex workers who face violence, exploitation, and arrest.

€20,000

Thailand
APNSW (Asia Pacific Network of Sex Workers)
This regional network unites 54 sex workers’ organisations in 22 countries with the aim to improve the health and rights of sex workers of all genders in the region. APNSW trains its members on human rights and advocacy strategies, and lobbies regional inter-governmental bodies and UN agencies for improved policies and programmes that affect sex workers. This grant enables the network to strengthen its organisational financial systems and skills to enable it to grow and increase its future fundraising opportunities.

€10,500

Vietnam
Vietnam Network of Sex Workers (VNSW)
This network unites female sex workers who are organised in peer support groups in 16 provinces. It aims to represent the voice of sex workers at the national level to improve laws, policies, and practices that impact on sex workers’ lives. Sex workers benefit from the trainings in computer, fundraising and management skills organised by the network. Established in 2012, the network is developing its first strategic plan with support from the Red Umbrella Fund.

€20,000

EUROPE AND THE COMMONWEALTH OF INDEPENDENT STATES

France
STRASS (Syndicat du Travail Sexuel)
This national union represents the interests of sex workers of all genders and backgrounds, and from all branches of the sex industry in France through public education, advocacy and strategic litigation. The group campaigns for the legal recognition of sex work as work, and counters discrimination and stigmatisation with the aim to create an environment of respect and inclusiveness towards sex workers. Self-organisation of sex workers is encouraged through the creation of local federations in different cities.

€25,000

Hungary
SWAN (Sex Workers’ Rights Advocacy Network)
This regional network unites sex workers and their allies from 18 countries in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia in the struggle to promote the human rights and improve the quality of life of sex workers. It provides a joint advocacy platform for sex workers’ voices in regional and national debates on health, labour rights, and safety for sex workers of all genders and exposes violence against sex workers.

€15,500

Kyrgyzstan
Civil Union Shakh-Alym
This emerging network aims to strengthen the voice of sex workers in public and policy debates in Kyrgyzstan by uniting sex workers from across the country. The network documents and speaks out against police violence. It also works to ensure that the existing law – which criminalises sex work – is not undermined by new policies and programmes which are aimed at ending sex trafficking, which often have a negative effect on the rights of sex workers.

€15,000

Netherlands
ICRSE (International Committee on the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe)
This network of individuals and organisations in Europe and Central Asia campaigns against the criminalisation of sex work, and the conflation of sex work and human trafficking. It serves as a platform to share experiences and solidarity, and to create alliances between sex workers’ rights organisations and allies from other movements who support sex workers’ rights. The Red Umbrella Fund grant will enable the network to hire a coordinator to strengthen the network and develop strategies to influence the European Parliament.

€40,000

United Kingdom
SCOT-PEP
Founded in 1989, this is the oldest organisation that is led by sex workers in Scotland. It campaigns for sex work to be recognised both socially and legally as work, and for sex workers’ voices to be included in public debates. SCOT-PEP lobbies the Scottish parliament for the decriminalisation of sex work and against the “Safer Lives, Changed Lives” policy strategy which aims to eradicate violence against women and defines sex work as exploitation, irrespective of the opinion of the women involved.

€13,500

LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Brazil
Davida
This organisation focuses on HIV/AIDS prevention and improving the legal status and labour conditions of sex workers in the country. A draft bill to decriminalise and regulate sex work has been named in honour of the founder of the organisation, the late Gabriela Leite. In 2005, Davida launched the fashion line Daspu, which serves as an income-generating activity and also an advocacy strategy. Davida’s magazine, Beiji da Rua, reaches thousands of sex workers, allies and decision makers around the country.

€25,000
APROSMIG (Associação das Prostitutas de Minas Gerais)
This group reaches over 2000 women sex workers in the Brazilian state of Minas Gerais through language classes, condom distribution, HIV awareness messages, seminars, and public demonstrations to bring attention to the citizenship and rights of sex workers. This group organises special meetings for new sex workers as well as for older (50 plus) sex workers. The Red Umbrella Fund grant will contribute to strengthening the organisational capacities through regular meetings and trainings for its staff and members.
€20,000

Chile

Fundación Margen de Apoyo y Promoción de la Mujer
This group promotes the sexual and reproductive health, including HIV/AIDS, and human rights of women sex workers in Chile. The group reaches around 700 sex workers, most of them in the capital city, through outreach by peer educators, handing out condoms, accompanying sex workers to health centres, and informative workshops. The Red Umbrella Fund grant will enable the group to build leadership and advocacy skills of sex workers in different parts of the country.
€15,000

El Salvador

Organización de Trabajadoras del Sexo (OTS)
This group was created in 2004 by sex workers to confront and prevent the discrimination, abuse and violence experienced daily by sex workers at work, within their families, and in society in general by educating the general public about sex workers’ rights. The group reaches women sex workers working on the street and in parks with HIV prevention information and peer support. The Red Umbrella Fund grant will contribute to a field study of the needs of sex workers in 15 municipalities.
€16,000

Guyana

Guyana Sex Work Coalition (GSWC)
This group provides peer-to-peer support and training to sex workers in Guyana and the wider Caribbean region to build their knowledge and confidence to stand up for their rights, including the right to be protected from police violence, to access HIV/AIDS and other health services, and for their work to be recognised as work. The group trains health providers, police, and the military as a strategy to reduce stigma, discrimination and violence against sex workers.
€20,000

Nicaragua

Asociación de Mujeres ‘Las Golondrinas’
Founded in 2004, this organisation works with 12 local groups of female and trans sex workers in different municipalities in central and northern Nicaragua. The group uses mass media to promote labour rights of sex workers and address stigma and discrimination. The Red Umbrella Fund grant will contribute to core costs of the organisation and enable it to conduct trainings on sexual health and human rights for sex workers, and launch a campaign to end violence against sex workers.
€20,000

Middle East and North Africa

Turkey

Red Umbrella Sexual Health and Human Rights Association
This group in Ankara documents violence and other human rights violations against sex workers and provides legal assistance to sex workers of all genders to seek justice. The data that is collected by the group is also used in public awareness raising activities targeting civil society, media and academia and in its lobbying with government officials to improve the legislation that affects sex workers in Turkey. The group also provides training for sex workers on human rights.
€10,000

North America

Canada

Projet L.U.N.E.
This organisation of sex workers operates in the city of Quebec. The group reaches mostly women sex workers who use drugs and those working on the streets with practical support and advice, including peer-led trainings about condom use, accessing health services, self-defence, and human rights. Through their journal ‘Les voix de la RUELES’ (The Voice of the Streets) sex workers are able to speak out and share their experiences and demands.
€16,500

United States

Red Umbrella Project (RedUP)
This New York-based group organises theatre, storytelling and memoir writing programmes in which sex workers of all genders share experiences with a wide audience to reduce stigma and fight discrimination. The group campaigns or improvements in legislation, such as the ‘No Condoms as Evidence’ campaign, which aims to ban the use of condoms as evidence of prostitution-related offences. The group builds the leadership skills and capacity of sex workers through trainings that enable them to run their own advocacy campaigns.
€10,000

In addition, one grant of €30,000 was made to Aids Acodev in Cameroon in February 2013 to replace a grant awarded in 2012 that was canceled.

Meet grantees of the Red Umbrella Fund

The Red Umbrella Sexual Health and Human Rights Association demonstrated in response to the brutal murder of Dora, a trans* sex worker in Turkey, in July 2013. The large banner reads: “Don’t stay silent! Don’t become part of the crime!”.