The Red Umbrella Fund is a unique collaboration between sex worker activists and donor organisations. It is the first global fund guided by and for sex workers. Launched in 2012, the Red Umbrella Fund is hosted by Mama Cash.

A time of growth

2016 was a year of growth for the Red Umbrella Fund in many ways. At the organisational level, the Red Umbrella Fund expanded its list of funders and added a third dedicated staff person to its office. The International Steering Committee, responsible for the strategic and grantmaking decisions of the Red Umbrella Fund, welcomed new members on board. It now includes more community representatives than ever before.

Most importantly, the Red Umbrella Fund spent 75 per cent of its expenditures directly on grants. Its total grantmaking amount more than doubled compared to the previous year. Following a global community-led selection process, the Fund made 25 grants in 23 countries across five regions. Grant sizes ranged between €10,000 and €50,000. All grants provide multi-year core support to sex worker-led organisations and networks working at local, national or regional levels.

Strength in diversity

The Red Umbrella Fund aims to support diversity within sex workers’ rights movements. This includes ensuring that grants are awarded to groups representing different regions of the world, and that not only women, but also men and trans sex workers are reached and involved. Many grantees work specifically with migrant, mobile or refugee sex workers. The Organization for Gender Empowerment and Rights Advocacy (OGERA) in Uganda, for example, is organised specifically around refugee and lesbian, bisexual and trans (LBT) sex workers. Chilean sex worker organisation Fundación Margen de Apoyo y Promoción de la Mujer is working to address the double stigma and discrimination faced by migrant sex workers when they try to access health or legal services. The group is stepping up advocacy and communications with hospitals to address this problem.

Promoting participatory grantmaking

The Red Umbrella Fund moderates a funder working group on peer-led and participatory grantmaking, in partnership with other peer participatory grantmakers, the International Human Rights Funders Group (IHRFG) and the European human rights funders network Ariadne. In 2016 the Red Umbrella Fund co-organised an international meeting of participatory grantmakers and led a successful fundraising effort with the Foundation Center to develop a funders’ GrantCraft guide on participatory grantmaking.

Intersecting movements

The Red Umbrella Fund celebrated its fourth birthday with an activist fashion show organised with sex worker collective Daspu at the AWID Forum in Brazil. During the Forum, the Red Umbrella Fund initiated debates with women’s rights funders and feminist activists on effectively funding sex workers’ rights activism. The Red Umbrella Fund also shared key strategies of how sex workers are responding to and preventing human trafficking.

Special initiative
Red Umbrella Fund

Facts & figures 2016: Number of grants 25* Total amount granted €725,000 Average amount per grant €29,000

* Includes 7 first-time grants.

PROUD, a Dutch association by and for sex workers, not only offers support to sex workers, but advocates for their rights in politics, the media and in society. Photo: Red Umbrella Fund/Louise LaFleur
Grantees of the Red Umbrella Fund

Brazil
Asociação Mulheres Guerreiras
€25,000
Asociação Mulheres Guerreiras is a group of sex workers in Campinas, Brazil that aim to end police violence and tackle stigma and discrimination against cis and trans women sex workers. The group builds solidarity among sex workers, including sex workers living with HIV, in Jardim Itatinga, one of the largest urban sex worker zones in Latin America. Mulheres Guerreiras mobilises sex workers and supporters using arts and cultural events and engages directly with key decision makers to influence policy and law enforcement.

Cameroon
Association New Way+
€20,000
This organisation is run by and for sex workers on the outskirts of Douala, Cameroon. Association New Way+ works to increase access to quality health care, including HIV services, for women sex workers. Working primarily at the local level, New Way+ works to mobilise sex workers to stand up against stigma and discrimination and provides information, condoms, HIV services and referrals. The group coordinates home visits and nutritional support to people living with HIV.

Chile
Fundación Margen de Apoyo y Promoción de la Mujer
€35,000
Fundación Margen de Apoyo y Promoción de la Mujer is a group that promotes sexual and reproductive health and human rights of women sex workers in Chile. The group reaches around 2,000 sex workers across the country, including many migrant women, through condom distribution, peer education on HIV and human rights, accompaniment of sex workers to health centres and by organising informative workshops. The Red Umbrella Fund grant is enabling the group to expand its efforts to build leadership and advocacy skills of sex workers in different parts of the country.

China
Anonymous
€30,000
Working mainly at the local level, this anonymous organisation advocates for sex work to be recognised as work and decriminalised in China. In a context where condoms are used as evidence for prostitution charges and women sex workers are regularly detained, the group works to end the violence and discrimination experienced by sex workers and ensure sex workers’ voices are heard. Most sex workers involved in the organisation are migrants from other parts of the country with very limited access to available HIV and other services. The organisation raises awareness and builds confidence and solidarity among these diverse women through peer support groups, workshops, film production and karaoke.

Colombia
Asociación Nacional de Mujeres Buscando Libertad (ASMUBULI)
€20,000
ASMUBULI unites women sex workers in Colombia in their struggle against injustice, inequality and discrimination. The group builds the capacity of sex workers to engage in advocacy, governance and human rights work and works to improve sex workers’ access to health, education, housing and legal services. The group is building a national labour union for sex workers and advocates for the human rights of sex workers at the national level. At the international level, ASMUBULI works with the regional sex worker network RedTraSex.

Ecuador
Coalición de Organizaciones de Trabajadoras y Trabajadores Sexuales de Quito
€20,000
Known also as La Calle en DisPuta, this new strategic coalition joins together four sex worker organisations that have existed for many years in Quito. The coalition unites sex workers of all genders and gives visibility to sex workers’ struggles against police violence and for the protection of their human rights. The coalition advocates for the labour rights of sex workers at the local and national level and aims to create a labour union for sex workers. At the regional level, La Calle en DisPuta is connected to the Plataforma Latinoamericana de Personas que Ejercen Trabajo Sexual (PLAPERTS).

El Salvador
Organización de Trabajadoras del Sexo (OTS)
€20,000
This national sex worker organisation aims to end the discrimination, abuse and violence experienced daily by sex workers at work, within their families, and in society in general. The group provides peer support and information to women sex workers working on the street and in parks, with particular attention to sex workers living with HIV, young sex workers, mothers and elderly sex workers. OTS reaches out to media and builds partnerships with feminist organisations and others to more effectively influence policymakers at local and national levels to improve laws and practices to protect the human rights of sex workers.

Germany
Berufsverband erotische und sexuelle Dienstleistungen e.V (BesD)
€10,000
Berufsverband erotische und sexuelle Dienstleistungen e.V unites sex workers from all backgrounds and regions of Germany. The group engages in public debate around fair and dignified working conditions in sex work. Operating as a professional union, BesD not only amplifies the voices of sex workers in the media and with policymakers, but also fights for improved access to information, training and greater solidarity among the sex worker community.

Guyana
Caribbean Sex Work Coalition (CSWC)
€25,000
Caribbean Sex Work Coalition (CSWC) is a network that brings together sex workers from organisations across the Caribbean with the aim to promote the health and human rights of sex workers of all genders in the region. CSWC trains its members to become peer educators on HIV and human rights, and builds leadership and advocacy skills.

Hungary
Sex Workers’ Rights Advocacy Network (SWAN)
€40,000
Sex Workers’ Rights Advocacy Network is a regional network that unites sex workers and their allies from 18 countries in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia. It provides a
and policy debates. Shah-Aiym documents and amplifies the voices of sex workers in public countries to build peer support structures against sex workers. Group aims to reduce stigma and violence to local stakeholders such as police officers, peer education and distributes condoms and is active, the HIV rate is high. BSSG conducts area of Kenya and Uganda, where this group provides health services and advocates for human rights of sex workers. In Kyrgyzstan, Shah-Aiym works to protect existing legislation that decriminalises sex work, while speaking out against police violence against sex workers.

Malawi
Malawi Sex Workers Alliance (MASWA) €20,000
This group of women sex workers was formed in 2014 to advocate for the health and human rights of sex workers. Malawi Sex Workers Alliance reaches out to law- and policymakers and enforcers to improve the way sex workers are perceived and treated in the country. The group documents human rights violations, provides training on human rights to sex workers, and supports sex workers to access justice.

Myanmar
Aye Myanmar Association €40,000
Aye Myanmar Association is a national membership-based network of sex workers of all genders. The network advocates for legal reform to increase recognition of sex work as work and to protect sex workers from police harassment and other kinds of violence and discrimination. The group supports sex workers in prisons to maintain contact with family and friends, provides legal support, and works with service providers to increase access to treatment and support for sex workers living with HIV. By speaking out in media and organising public events, the group challenges public stigma and discrimination against sex workers.

South Africa
Sisonke - National Sex Worker Movement of South Africa €40,000
This national network of sex workers strives for the decriminalisation of sex work and for all sex workers to be treated with respect and dignity. Sisonke fosters solidarity among sex workers and advocates for better access to health services and protection from violence. The group provides HIV and human rights information through peer outreach work, builds capacity of sex workers through training and provides legal services. Sisonke strategically works in partnership with allied organisations to strengthen its influence and participates in relevant government spaces.

Thailand
Asia Pacific Network of Sex Workers (APNSW) €45,000
This regional network has 36 active organizational members in 28 countries that work together to promote the human rights of sex workers of all genders in Asia and the Pacific. APNSW conducts advocacy with regional intergovernmental bodies and the United Nations. The network provides training and technical support to its members on human rights, quality HIV and health services, setting up sex worker-led legal services and developing advocacy strategies.

EMPOWER Chiang Mai €30,000
The sex worker organisation Empower Chiang Mai builds leadership capacity among Thai and migrant sex workers and advocates for safe and healthy work conditions. Created in 1985, the group is well-connected nationally and internationally and known for its creative activism. Empower has produced books and films and runs a museum called “This is Us” aimed at educating the public. The group facilitates exchanges between sex workers in the region and campaigns for the decriminalisation of sex work.

Turkey
Red Umbrella Sexual Health and Human Rights Association €40,000
This organisation works locally and nationally to improve the human rights and well-being of sex workers in Turkey. Red Umbrella Sexual Health and Human Rights Association supports access to sexual health and prevention services for sex workers of all genders and increases visibility and awareness of human rights violations they experience. Red Umbrella monitors and documents violence against sex workers, collaborates with bar associations to train lawyers and provides legal services to sex workers. The group builds alliances with community groups, NGOs, service providers, the United Nations, academia and media to strengthen lobbying towards key decision-makers to improve laws and practices that affect sex workers.

Uganda
Organization for Gender Empowerment and Rights Advocacy €20,000
Created in 2013, Organization for Gender Empowerment and Rights Advocacy (OGERA) is an organisation of sex workers who are refugee women and lesbian, bisexual and trans women (LBT). OGERA advocates for sex

India
Adarsha €30,000
This organisation aims to increase social acceptance for men and transwomen sex workers and to secure their fundamental rights as citizens of India. Adarsha works primarily at the local level and contributes to national and international advocacy efforts. The group supports sex workers to access health and general social services through peer outreach work and referrals and builds sex workers’ leadership skills.

Kenya
African Sex Worker Alliance €40,000
Created in 2009, this regional network unites 75 sex worker groups from 28 countries and aims to expand its membership to include all countries in Africa. It provides strategic advice, networking opportunities, capacity-building tools and financial support to local groups that work to improve sex workers’ access to health services and labour rights. Its membership includes sex workers of all genders. ASWA represents sex workers’ interests in regional and international processes and platforms.

Busia Survivors Self Help Group (BSSG) €20,000
Busia Survivors Self Help Group is an organisation of women and men sex workers that provides health services and advocates for the human rights of sex workers. In the border area of Kenya and Uganda, where this group is active, the HIV rate is high. BSSG conducts peer education and distributes condoms and lubricants among sex workers. By reaching out to local stakeholders such as police officers, health care workers and religious leaders, the group aims to reduce stigma and violence against sex workers.

Kyrgyzstan
Shah-Aiym €40,000
This network unites sex workers from across Kyrgyzstan and, increasingly, from neighbouring countries to build peer support structures and amplify the voices of sex workers in public and policy debates. Shah-Aiym documents rights violations and builds the capacity of sex workers in leadership, advocacy and safety and security. In Kyrgyzstan, Shah-Aiym works to protect existing legislation that decriminalises sex work, while speaking out against police violence against sex workers.
workers’ health and human rights and an end to violence. The group adds a critical voice to the sex workers’ rights movement in Uganda because of the marginalised groups they represent. Through peer outreach services and psychosocial counselling, the group works to reduce HIV infections and increase access to treatment for refugee and LBT sex workers.

**Ukraine**

**Legalife Ukraine**
€20,000
Formerly known as Legalife Kirovograd Branch, this organisation mobilises sex workers and allies in different parts of the country with the aim to protect and promote sex workers’ health and human rights. Legalife Ukraine works to end gender-based violence, organises self-support groups of sex workers, and provides free legal support to sex workers through a free phone hotline. The group works to improve sex workers’ access to sexual and reproductive health services, including HIV prevention, testing and treatment services. Legalife works at local and national levels and is well-connected internationally.

**United Kingdom**

**International Committee on the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe (ICRSE)**
€50,000
This sex worker-led network unites 85 organisations and 150 individuals from 30 countries with the aim to increase the visibility and influence of sex workers at the European level. ICRSE advocates against the criminalisation of sex work and conducts research and advocacy on rights violations against sex workers. The network organises training opportunities for sex workers on advocacy and human rights, and builds partnerships with other movements.

**United States**

**Best Practices Policy Project (BPPP)**
€25,000
Best Practices Policy Project is an advocacy organisation led by sex workers and dedicated to supporting sex workers’ rights across the United States. BPPP produces materials for use in policy advocacy, addresses research and academic questions, provides organisations and advocates with technical assistance and engages in rights-based campaigns for sex workers’ rights.

**Vietnam**

**Vietnam Network of Sex Workers (VNSW)**
€20,000
This national network unites sex workers who are organised in peer support groups in 25 cities and provinces of Vietnam. Vietnam Network of Sex Workers (VNSW) aims to represent the voice of sex workers at the national level to improve laws, policies and practices that impact sex workers’ lives. The network builds capacities of women and men sex workers in the area of HIV harm reduction, community work, management, and advocacy through trainings and mentoring.