The Red Umbrella Fund is a unique global fund operated in a participatory way by and for sex workers. Launched in 2012, the fund is hosted by Mama Cash.

**Money to the movement**

The Red Umbrella Fund disbursed over seventy per cent of its annual budget through direct grants to sex worker-led groups and networks active at local, national and international levels. Red Umbrella Fund grantee‐partners come from all regions of the globe and include sex workers of all genders. Almost half of 2018 grants were made to new grantee‐partners.

In 2018, all Red Umbrella Fund grants provided flexible, multi-year, core funding. This type of funding allows community organisations to determine their own priorities and strategies, and adapt to changing circumstances and emergencies as needed. Longer-term support from the Red Umbrella Fund has enabled the male and transgender sex worker group Adarsha, in India, to strengthen its organisational and democratic processes, build its members’ leadership skills and expand its advocacy partnerships with other organisations. Fundación Margen de Apoyo y Promoción de la Mujer in Chile, which had previously focused on women sex workers in the capital city of Santiago, successfully expanded the organisation across the country, increased its outreach to migrant sex workers and fostered their local leadership.

Most sex workers work in a context of criminalisation that contributes to stigma, discrimination and violence against them. Criminalisation creates huge barriers to sex worker organising: some Red Umbrella Fund grantee‐partners are not able to register their organisations or open a bank account, others have difficulty finding or retaining an office space because landlords refuse to rent to them. In this context, the Red Umbrella Fund’s flexible support has been critical.

**Shifting power**

The Red Umbrella Fund collaborates with philanthropic peers and feminist organisations to positively influence funding for sex workers’ activism. In 2018, following several years of preparatory dialogue, we were pleased to co-launch the new Sex Work Donor Collaborative, which provides a platform to catalyse philanthropic support of sex worker organising and sex workers’ rights.

As part of the Count Me In! Consortium, we co-organised the global Money and Movements Convening, which brought together activists and funders to discuss and strategise about feminist movement building. In the words of Phelister Abdalla, a member of the Red Umbrella Fund’s International Steering Committee: ‘Sex workers are feminists too. We belong in the feminist movement. My body, my business!’

Through collaboration with the Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women (GAATW), the Network of Sex Work Projects (NSWP) and others, we facilitated conversations between activists, funders and other stakeholders about the impact of anti‐trafficking measures on sex workers and the types of effective responses that sex workers are already implementing.

The Red Umbrella Fund has also contributed to increased interest in and momentum behind shifting decision-making power around funding to the communities served. The Red Umbrella Fund shared its knowledge and experience to help develop several GrantCraft resources on participatory grantmaking, including the new funder guide *Deciding Together: Shifting Power and Resources Through Participatory Grantmaking.*
Anonymous
€20,000
Working mainly at the local level, this anonymous organisation advocates for sex work to be recognised as work and decriminalised. 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. Most sex workers involved in the organisation are migrants. The group raises awareness and builds confidence and solidarity among these diverse women workers through peer support groups, workshops, film and karaoke.

Bangladesh
Sex Workers Network of Bangladesh (SWNOB)
€20,000
This national network unites 29 member organisations representing sex workers of all genders and different localities in Bangladesh. The group aims to strengthen its member organisations by building their leadership capacities. SWNOB works with community leaders and the media to raise awareness about the human rights of sex workers, and takes action against brothel evictions and violence from law enforcement institutions. SWNOB advocates at the national level for the inclusion of sex workers in the country’s social security strategy.

Brazil
Coletivo Rebu
€20,000
This group was established in 2015 to benefit cis, trans and transvestite sex workers working on the streets and in hotels in the state of Minas Gerais in Brazil. Coletivo Rebu organises conversation circles with sex workers in hotel venues, conducts outreach work, distributes condoms and lubricants, and gives information regarding health prevention and sexual and reproductive rights of sex workers. The group advocates at the city, regional and state levels for the rights of sex workers.
Canada

Butterfly Asian and Migrant Sex Workers Support Network
€50,000

This sex worker-led organisation based in Toronto provides support to and advocates for the rights of Asian and other migrant sex workers in several cities in Canada. Butterfly builds leadership skills and capacities of migrant sex workers through a peer-to-peer programme. Its members visit migrant sex workers in detention centres, prisons and court. The group provides legal support and interpretation services, assists with arranging bail and supports deported workers. Butterfly advocates for changes in anti-trafficking policy and immigration laws to make them less harmful for migrant sex workers.

Chile

Fundación Margen de Apoyo y Promoción de la Mujer
€40,000

This group promotes the sexual and reproductive health and human rights of women sex workers in Chile. Fundación Margen reaches around 2,000 sex workers across the country, including many migrant women, by distributing condoms, providing peer education on HIV and human rights, offering accompaniment of sex workers to health centres, and organising informative community workshops. The Red Umbrella Fund grant supports the group to expand its efforts to build local leadership and advocacy skills of sex workers in different parts of the country.

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, and actively contributes to the building of a national sex worker union. The group defends and promotes sex workers’ human rights and aims to create choices and tools that allow sex workers to achieve a better quality of life. ASMUBULI builds the capacity of sex workers in advocacy, governance, democracy, gender and human rights, and implements projects that improve sex workers’ access to health, education, housing and legal services. The group strategically builds partnerships to conduct more effective advocacy at the national level.

El Salvador

Organización de Trabajadoras del Sexo (OTS)
€25,000

This national sex worker organisation in El Salvador 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 to more effectively influence policymakers, and improve laws and practices in order to protect the human rights of sex workers.

Germany

Berufsverband Erotische und sexuelle Dienstleistungen (BesD)
€32,000

This group unites sex workers from all backgrounds and regions of Germany to engage in the public debate around fair and dignified working conditions in the sex industry. Operating as a professional union, BesD amplifies the voices of sex workers in media, public debates and conversations with policymakers. The group provides information to sex workers and works to build greater solidarity among sex worker communities. In response to a recent law requiring mandatory registration for sex workers, the group is supporting migrant sex workers in Germany who are most affected by the change.

India

Adarsha
€40,000

This organisation works to increase social acceptance for men and transwomen sex workers in India, and to secure their fundamental rights as citizens. Adarsha is active at the local level in Mysore and other districts in the state of Karnataka, and contributes to national 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. Adarsha mobilises sex workers and allies to improve laws, policies and practices around sex work, homosexuality and gender identity.

Sramajibi Mahila Sangha (SMS)
€20,000

This group in West Bengal advocates for the rights of sex workers at local and national levels in India. SMS has been actively opposing a harmful new anti-trafficking bill. The group interacts with government departments to ensure access to social entitlements for sex workers and to secure their participation in advisory and decision-making bodies that address issues relevant to them and their families. The group runs 20 Self-Regulatory Boards, an effective community-led anti-trafficking mechanism that has been endorsed by the Supreme Court of India.

Jamaica

Jamaica Sex Workers Coalition (SWAJ)
€23,000

This group of sex workers works to change laws that criminalise aspects of sex work in Jamaica. SWAJ promotes the rights of sex workers and aims to reduce stigma through outreach to the general public and videos that show the human face of sex work. The group organises workshops with police officers to sensitise them about how to interact with sex workers, especially street workers who are the most vulnerable to police harassment. SWAJ plans to organise a conference where sex workers will share their experiences with law enforcement.
Bar Hostess Empowerment and Support Programme (BHESP)  
€35,000

This Kenyan national sex worker-led organisation was created in 1998. BHESP runs three community-led clinics providing free and comprehensive health and legal services to sex workers. The group successfully reaches street sex workers who are considered particularly vulnerable. This organisation identifies county laws oppressing sex workers across Kenya and works to repeal them through legal actions, demonstrations, media campaigns and petitions. BHESP works closely with other sex worker groups in the country and region.

Public Association Shah-Aiyym  
€20,000

This network unites sex workers from across Kyrgyzstan and neighbouring countries (mainly Tajikistan and Russia) to build peer support structures and amplify the voices of sex workers in public and policy debates. Shah-Aiyym documents rights violations and builds the capacity of sex workers on leadership, advocacy, safety and security. In Kyrgyzstan, Shah-Aiyym aims to protect existing legislation that decriminalises sex work while speaking out against police violence against sex workers. In Tajikistan, Shah Aiyym builds the capacity of sex workers to enable the creation of an independent national organisation.

Jagriti Mahila Mahasangha (JMMS)  
€20,000

This network unites 27 community-based organisations of women sex workers in 22 districts of Nepal. JMMS raises awareness among sex workers about HIV and works to end violence against sex workers perpetrated by police, institutions, clients and intimate partners. The network provides legal counselling to sex workers and supports them with filing complaints with the police. At the national level, JMMS engages in CEDAW reporting processes and advocates against laws and policies that discriminate against sex workers and criminalise them.

Aye Myanmar Association (AMA)  
€30,000

This national network of sex workers in Myanmar has 25 member organisations as well as individual members. AMA 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 the media and organising public events the group challenges stigma and discrimination against sex workers.

This young community network advocates for the rights of male sex workers in Malawi, who face a double stigma related to homosexuality and sex work. It conducts outreach throughout the country to expand its reach. CheRA is building a network of friendly health-care providers by training health workers in five districts of Malawi on the health needs and rights of sex workers.

igeria Sex Workers Association (NSWA)  
€45,000

This national network of sex workers in Nigeria provides trainings to build the capacity of its 24 member organisations. This group particularly works on reducing violence from the police by educating sex workers on how to document abuse when they face it and by organising workshops with police officers on respect for human rights. NSWA provides trainings to sex workers to build self-esteem and public-speaking skills so that sex workers can speak out more effectively in national and international forums.

Friends Frangipani Incorporated  
€17,000

This sex worker group in Papua New Guinea was formed in 2005 in response to a police raid in a brothel in the capital city Port Moresby. Friends Frangipani now has branches all over the country and promotes the human rights of sex workers by increasing opportunities for their voices to be heard, and expanding their knowledge and skills. The group organises sensitisation workshops with police, health-care providers and media professionals to improve services to sex work and media coverage of sex work.

Asociación de Trabajadoras Sexuales Mujeres del Sur  
€24,000

This organisation led by women sex workers in southern Peru offers support and training to its members to develop public speaking and leadership skills. Mujeres del Sur works to address police harassment, economic exploitation and violence against sex workers in the workplace. The group builds alliances with other sex worker and allied organisations at local, national and international levels. It advocates with local governments for sex work to be recognised as work and for sex workers to be able to access quality health and social services.

Asociación de Trabajadoras Sexuales Sarita Colonia  
€20,000

This women sex worker-led organisation is based in Iquitos, a remote city in the Amazon area of Peru. Sarita Colonia reaches sex workers of different generations as well as Indigenous sex workers. The group conducts peer education among sex workers and organises workshops to build knowledge of sex workers on human rights and HIV. Sarita Colonia works to influence local policies and laws, including regional ordinances, that impact the lives of sex workers.
Senegal

And Soppeku
€35,000

And Soppeku (meaning ‘together for a change in behaviour’) is a ten-year-old sex worker organisation that aims to improve sex workers’ knowledge of their rights and achieve legal reform in Senegal to ensure that sex work is respected as work. And Soppeku provides leadership training for sex workers and engages in advocacy with parliamentarians and other politicians. The group is comprised of women sex workers who live and work in the suburbs of Dakar and in the regions of Thies, Kaolack and Sédhiou.

Tanzania

Warembo Forum
€24,000

This community-based organisation advocates for the rights and emancipation of sex workers in Tanzania by raising awareness among parliamentarians and advocating for better policies on sex work. Warembo Forum conducts outreach work among women and transgender sex workers in different types of venues and offers legal trainings to sex workers to inform them about their rights. By running a telephone hotline, the group is able to document rights abuses and provide sex workers with appropriate referrals to legal support and other services.

Uganda

Kabarole Women Health Support Initiative (KWHI)
€12,000

This recently formed group from the rural district of Karambole in Uganda advocates for sex workers’ rights and against violence targeting women sex workers in this region. KWHI works on prevention of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and supports sex workers living with HIV to overcome barriers of distance and stigma so they can access adequate health. The group raises awareness about human rights through workshops with local stakeholders, such as law enforcers and cultural and religious institutions, to reduce discrimination against sex workers.

Transgender Equality Uganda (TEU)
€33,000

This transgender sex worker group in Uganda works in a context where human rights are denied by law and practice for both sex workers and transgender people. The group builds the health and human rights knowledge of transgender women sex workers in particular through workshops and dissemination of educational materials. TEU raises awareness among health workers, religious leaders and police officers to address stigma and discrimination of sex workers. The group advocates for the decriminalisation of sex work at the national level.

United States

New Jersey Red Umbrella Alliance (NJRUA)
€15,000

This alliance of sex worker activists promotes the human rights of sex workers living and working in New Jersey. In the context of rising criminalisation, NJRUA provides community support and campaigns for better policies. The group conducts outreach to street sex workers and organises community activities in various cities throughout the state of New Jersey, informing sex workers about their rights, distributing condoms and expanding its network among sex workers.

Regional: Africa and West Asia

African Sex Worker Alliance (ASWA)
€50,000

Created in 2009, this regional network based in Kenya unites 100 sex worker groups from 33 countries in Africa and aims to expand its membership to include all countries of the continent. ASWA 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 the interests of sex workers in regional and international debates and platforms.

Regional: Europe, and Central and North Asia

International Committee on the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe (ICRSE)
€40,000

This sex worker-led network unites 103 organisations from 32 countries in Europe and Central Asia 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 such as human rights, LGBT and migrant organisations.

Regional: Latin America and the Caribbean

Plataforma Latinoamericana de Personas que Ejercen Trabajo Sexual (PLAPERTS)
€30,000

This regional network, created in 2013 and based in Ecuador, unites 28 member organisations of sex workers of all genders in seven countries of Latin America. PLAPERTS offers trainings to its members to develop strategies and conduct political advocacy for the recognition of the labour and other human rights of sex workers. PLAPERTS reinforces local leadership and shares tools among its members to denounce the violations of sex workers’ rights in the challenging context of rising conservatism and violence in Latin America.