

CONFERENCE REPORT – DECEMBER 3 & 4, 2013 – BERLIN, GERMANY

# ADVANCING TRANS\* MOVEMENTS WORLDWIDE

**LESSONS FROM A DIALOGUE  
BETWEEN FUNDERS & ACTIVISTS  
WORKING ON GENDER  
DIVERSITY**

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# WHY A MEETING ON TRANS\* AND INTERSEX<sup>1</sup> FUNDING?

“Know your identity as you would know your heart, and then you will know your place in your family, in your government, in your island, and in your world.”<sup>2</sup>

**Trans\* and intersex movements are rapidly growing, and their advocacy is influencing issues and policies around the world. Increased funding attention for trans\* and intersex communities is both a response to and a cause of this activism.** Recognizing the need for better coordination and collaboration between donors and activists, Global Action for Trans\* Equality, Open Society Foundations and Wellspring Advisors partnered to host *Advancing Trans\* Movements Worldwide: A Meeting for Funders and Activists Working on Gender Diversity* in December of 2013. These organizations worked in collaboration with six trans\* activists as part of a working group to design the agenda, as well as identify activists to participate and speak on the key issues. As a result, 22 trans\* and intersex activists, came together in Berlin with 24 foundation and bilateral donors to learn, to network, and together identify ways to better collaborate and coordinate to advance the rights of trans\* and intersex people. The organizers hope that this dialogue, and the resulting outcomes, will increase the amounts of funding going to support these movements, and improve the way that donors and trans\* and intersex activists partner to achieve their shared aims.

The first day presented experiences, data, and information about the needs and priorities of these movements. Discussions identified opportunities within movements, challenges in terms of accessing funding and support, and an analysis on the alignment of donor priorities. The second day focused on understanding the operating reality of donors and how that informs their response, and identifying concrete next steps to improving the quantity and quality of support to trans\* and intersex movements.

\* For the purposes of this report trans\* refers to people whose gender identity or expression differs from the gender assigned at birth. Some trans\* people identify and present themselves as either a man or a woman; others identify with a non-binary gender category. Trans\* people describe themselves by many different terms, some of which are specific to local cultures, including transgender, transsexual, fa'afafine, travesti, hijra, genderqueer and transpinoy—to name just a few. Many global activists have started to use the abbreviation “trans\*,” with an asterisk, denoting a placeholder for the entire range of possible gender identities that fall under the broad definition of trans\*.

1 **Intersex** refers to people who were born with chromosomes, gonads and/or genitals that vary from female and male standards. A former medical term, intersex has been reclaimed by intersex people as a personal and political identity. In certain local contexts, intersex people have also reclaimed the older term ‘hermaphrodite’ (or, more recently, ‘herm’) and the abbreviation ‘inter\*’.

2 This quote, and the others that follow throughout the report, are taken from comments made during the two-day dialogue.

## PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

**This report serves a number of purposes. The first is to capture the discussions and outcomes towards better coordination and collaboration on trans\* and intersex funding.** Included are concrete recommendations at the organizational level that could improve an individual donor's approach to funding on trans\* and intersex issues, as well as ideas about how to collaboratively and strategically support these movements. **The second purpose is to document the methodology of organizing a donor/activist convening in a collaborative manner.** The means to the end of improving the amount and quality of funding is critical. A collaborative process between donors and activists resulted in a meeting that is more relevant, and that builds the capacity of donors and activists. The first two sections of this report outline the suggested next steps and actions coming out of the dialogue, and document the meeting methodology. They are followed by a number of sections that provide reflections on the different presentations and discussions that took place over the two days. The report finishes with recommendations to donor organizations, and trans\* and intersex activists and groups.

# BEYOND BERLIN: AIMING TO INCREASE AND IMPROVE FUNDING ON TRANS\* AND INTERSEX ISSUES

While learning and networking were key objectives, the meeting was designed to reach some concrete next steps towards improving and increasing funding for trans\* and intersex movements. These are outlined below.

**Explore formal and informal mechanisms that foster donor-to-donor, activist-to-donor, and vice versa, collaboration, learning, sharing and networking.**

Global Action for Trans\* Equality, Open Society Foundations and Wellspring will coordinate a working group process with activists and donors to determine the objectives of a further collaboration, and a process towards this end. This group could explore the idea of a global solidarity fund for trans\* and intersex movements.

Global Action for Trans\* Equality will provide a listserv that will allow continued sharing of information and learning on trans\* and intersex activism and funding.

**Continue strategic dialogue with donors absent from the conversation, with a clear goal on fund leveraging, coordination, education and/or movement funding.**

Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice agreed to take the lead in organizing a working group of donors under the auspices of the Global Philanthropy Project (GPP) to determine how there could be more learning and collaboration on trans\* and intersex funding. This working group has commissioned a follow-up study to map the opportunities and gaps in funding for trans\* issues.

**Give clear guidance to donors on how to provide appropriate and impactful for trans\* and intersex organizations at all levels (grassroots, national, regional and international).**

The final report from this convening will include recommendations to donors that came out of these discussions, and organizers will use the working group processes to determine if further guidance or tools could be useful for the donor community.

**Expand and publish the information from the donor survey.**

Arcus Foundation, Open Society Foundations, Wellspring, and Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice will work together to commission an expanded and improved donor survey and trans\* movement/issue mapping that will be done in collaboration with trans\* communities, in order to inform and influence donor coordination and investments.

**Recognize the need for intersex activists to have their own space and dialogue.**

An Intersex working group was formed, and Global Action for Trans\* Equality agreed to provide logistical support for this group.

# WHERE ARE WE NOW? FUNDING SNAPSHOT ON TRANS\* AND INTERSEX ISSUES

## David Scamell

Open Society Foundations,  
USA

## Sarah Gunther

American Jewish World Service,  
USA

“The current funding landscape on trans\* and intersex issues is bleak, but the future looks bright.”

At the time of the convening, American Jewish World Service (AJWS) and Global Action for Trans\* Equality published a survey of 340 organizations working on trans\* and/or intersex issues documenting the level of current funding, and alignment with organizational and community needs. The Open Society Foundations, with support from the other leading partners, undertook a separate survey with donors to understand the level and type of funding going to trans\* and intersex issues and organizations, as well as obstacles to funding trans\* and intersex organizations and issues. While the surveys had methodological limitations, they provide a snapshot of the needs of trans\* and intersex-led organizations, the organizing that is currently happening, how funders are currently supporting trans\* and intersex movements, and the opportunities for improving and increasing support.

Both surveys documented the tremendous growth and momentum of trans\* and intersex rights movements around the world. The majority of groups were founded after 2005, and a third in the last three years. Most existing trans\* donors recognize this growth and have increased funding in 2012 or indicate an intention to increase in 2014 or 2015.

## 2012: FUNDING TREND

Did funding increase, decrease or stay about the same since the year prior?

### ON TRANS\* ISSUES (20 RESPONDENTS)



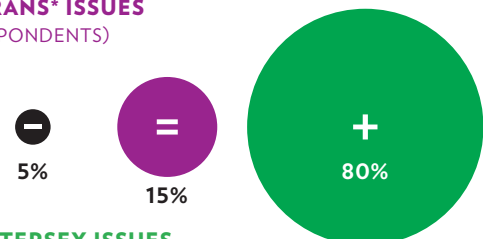
### ON INTERSEX ISSUES (12 RESPONDENTS)



## 2014: FUNDING TREND

Do you plan to increase, decrease or maintain the same level of funding?

### ON TRANS\* ISSUES (19 RESPONDENTS)



### ON INTERSEX ISSUES (12 RESPONDENTS)



REFERENCES: DECREASE STAY THE SAME INCREASE

This is critical, as donors responding to the Open Society Foundations' survey reported a total level of committed 2012 funding on trans\* issues at **\$2,372,000**, and **\$270,500** on intersex issues. While these figures likely represent an underreporting of the total, as only half of respondents gave data, even doubling the amount would mean that these movements are grossly under-resourced. The limited funding is not reflective of the breadth or depth of work taking place on trans\* and intersex issues across the world—and severely limits groups' ability to advance rights-based advocacy, provide needed services to excluded communities, and build the organizations and leadership that successful movements require.

In 2013, 1 in 4 trans\* and intersex groups had no funds and more than half (54%) had an annual budget of less than \$10,000. Trans\*- and intersex-led groups have significantly less access to available funding than organizations that are not self-led.<sup>4</sup> When trans\* and intersex-led groups are funded, the budget sizes are much smaller, resulting in smaller or no organizational cash reserves and fewer paid staff.

4 For this survey, self-led was defined as groups where the important financial decisions about their trans\* or intersex work are made entirely or mostly by trans\* people and/or intersex people.

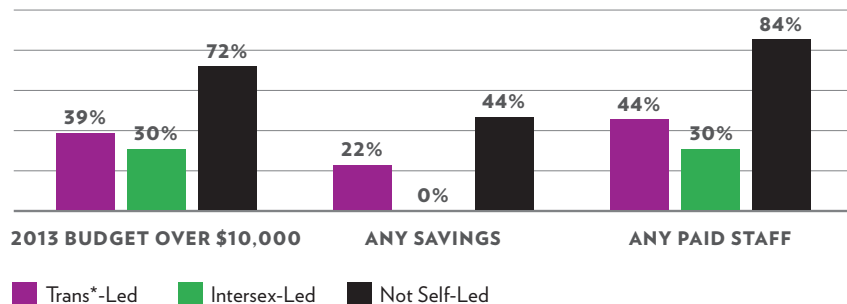
### GRANT SIZES: TRANS\*

SAMPLE: 19 RESPONSES

Median of average grant size



### BUDGET, SAVINGS, AND STAFF BY LEADERSHIP DEMOGRAPHICS



While almost 65% of the AJWS/ Global Action for Trans\* Equality survey respondents identified as self-lead, half of trans\* and intersex groups are not independent organizations, rather functioning as programs within larger organizations that have a mandate beyond trans\* and/or intersex work, and only a quarter (26%) of these groups make most or all of their own financial decisions. As a result, activists are constrained in their ability to prioritize needs and the allocation of resources to address these needs.

**A comparison between the main areas of reported donor funding and the reported priorities of the trans\* and intersex groups illustrates this constraint.**

While there is alignment between what donors are funding and what groups are doing now, what groups want to do with more funding—provide social services, provide health care, etc—is not reflected in donor priorities. Donors are also primarily giving project support and not core support, which is what many organizations say they need to build and then grow their organizations.

**The low capacity of trans\* and intersex-led groups impedes their ability to access funding, particularly core support. At the same time, low knowledge and capacity of donors affects their willingness and ability to adequately respond.** Donors reported that the number one barrier to funding trans\* and intersex groups is their lack of experience with funding and capacity to administer grants. Groups reported that many donors lack basic knowledge about trans\* and intersex issues, and that application procedures are too complicated, often in languages they don't speak, and surpass the capacity of groups. Groups also reported their challenges with legally registering, which affects their ability to directly receive and control funds.

**Funders and groups are having a hard time reaching each other.**

Eight of the nine donor respondents funding on intersex reported not knowing how to find intersex groups. At the same time, trans\* and intersex groups reported a lack of knowledge on where to look for funding or how to make contact with donors. By far the most common request from survey respondents is for donors to publicly state that they are willing to support trans\* and intersex groups and to do active outreach to identify potential recipients



Both due to the low capacity of trans\* and intersex groups, including their ability to register, and the hard time in reaching donors, groups that identify as “LGBT” receive funding intended for work on trans\* issues. This is often problematic, however, as these groups are not always trans\* inclusive or do not provide trans\*-specific programming.

**Besides financial support, groups want capacity building and opportunities to network and learn from other trans\* and intersex groups.** Other priorities included mentoring and skills training, particularly on fundraising.

# CRITICAL CHALLENGES FACING TRANS\* AND INTERSEX COMMUNITIES

**Diane Marie Rodriguez  
Zambrano**

Asociación Silueta X, Ecuador

**Kellan Baker**

FtM Phoenix Group, USA

**Leigh Anne van der Merwe**

S.H.E. South Africa

*Facilitated by*

**Rebecca Fox**

Wellspring Advisors, USA

“If you make health care better for trans people it will be better for everybody.”

## ACCESSING APPROPRIATE AND QUALITY HEALTH CARE

The right to the highest attainable standard of health is a universal human right generally not accorded to trans\* and intersex populations. Inequitable access to any health care, provision that does not take into account their needs, and violence at the hands of care providers are common, along with a perpetuation by the medical community of the pathologization of trans\* and intersex identities. The pathologization not only fuels an approach that runs counter to patient-centered care, but also underpins systemic maltreatment and harmful policies. The lack of information, inadequate services, and outright hostility and discrimination on the part of medical providers fosters the exclusion of and discrimination against trans\* and intersex people –perpetuating structural violence against these communities, including increased risk to HIV and other infectious diseases. Transition-related care, which should be viewed as primary care (with the exception of gender affirming surgeries), is generally unavailable and where available, is inaccessible. Intersex individuals are often the victims of “normalizing” surgery that renders them sterile and facing psychological and emotional trauma. As a result, trans\* communities suffer higher mortality, and both trans\* and intersex individuals higher rates of morbidity. These inequalities and rights abuses, while present for many, if not most, trans\* and intersex individuals around the world, are exacerbated by hierarchies of power based on race, ethnicity, and class inequalities.

A report on trans\* health (*Transforming Health: International Rights-Based Advocacy for Trans Health*) published by the Open Society Foundations highlighted efforts by trans\* communities to transform health care responses to not only provide transition-related care, but promote the wellness and wellbeing of trans\* individuals. In Ecuador, activists are calling for the legalization of hormone therapy for the trans\* community, with an approved medical protocol on which doctors are trained. In South Africa, trans\* activists have informed local and national medical guidelines, and are working to localize the language to be appropriate in the South African context.

**Carla LaGata**

Transgender Europe, Germany

**Kimberly Zieselman**Advocates for Informed  
Choice, USA*Facilitated by***Heather Doyle**

Lutian Advisors, USA

“Our children  
are victims of  
socially accepted  
violence by  
medical doctors.  
And this violence  
is sanctioned by  
their very own  
parents.”

**SAFETY AND VIOLENCE**

Trans\* and intersex people around the world face extreme violence that often goes undocumented and unrecognized by policy makers and the general public. In order to expose the levels and extreme nature of the violence against trans\* people, the Transrespect versus Transphobia (TvT) research project by Transgender Europe painstakingly documents the homicides of trans\* people around the world. In 2013 alone, 238 people were added to the list of murdered trans\*-identified individuals. The update shows reports of murdered trans\* people in 26 countries in the last 12 months, with the majority from Brazil (95), Mexico (40), the USA (16), and Venezuela (15). The relative numbers show even more worrisome results for some countries with smaller population sizes. Honduras, for instance, has a rate of 1.5 reported trans\* killings per million inhabitants, for El Salvador the rate is 0.71. Throughout all six world regions, the highest absolute numbers have been found in countries with strong trans\* movements and trans\* or LGBT organizations that have the capacity to carry out professional monitoring. This fact points to the reality that the murders of those living in places where there are no individuals or groups to monitor are not included. The TvT research project also allows trans\* communities to remember and celebrate the lives of those lost.

Intersex individuals are faced with violence that is condoned by society and their families. Children as young as infants are subject to irreversible sex assignment and involuntary genital “normalizing” surgery, sterilization, medical display and photography of genitals, and medical experimentation. A “corrective” surgery is recommended by doctors to assign a sex to a child, which is accepted by parents to address social anxiety and the fear of stigma and homophobia. The surgical procedures are not needed for medical reasons, and the result can be sterilization. All affected intersex people report some level of psychological and emotional distress from the surgical process, as well as the accompanying lies that families often tell intersex individuals. Groups are responding with strategic litigation against medical facilities, organizing and networking an intersex movement, and education projects that help to expose the issue and give voice to intersex individuals.

**Kim Mukasa**

Refugee Law Project, Uganda  
(via Skype)

**Giovanna Rincon**

Acceptess-T, France

*Facilitated by*

**Masen Davis**

Transgender Law Center, USA

“It’s necessary for me to explain from my personal experience and to translate the experience of those people. Let’s all work together on this path”.

## INTERSECTIONS: EXPERIENCES OF TRANS\* SEX WORKERS, REFUGEES, AND MIGRANTS

The abuse that gender nonconforming individuals face is exacerbated by other assumed and ascribed identities usually linked to their lived experience as trans\* individuals. A trans\* migrant and/or sex worker, usually living in poverty and often a minority, suffers multiple forms of discrimination and oppression. Organizations like Acceptess-T in France and the Refugee Law Project in Uganda are working with trans\* individuals who also identify as sex workers, migrants, and/or immigrants. These communities face harassment and violence from host as well as refugee communities, and are in constant interaction with the police because of the stigma of gender non-conformity, and the criminalization of sex work and migration status. In many places, trans\* sex workers face even greater abuse at the hands of police than other sex workers. This includes sexual violence, blackmail, and extortion. When incarcerated, trans\* people are often excluded from activities, have no access to trans\*-related medical care, and can be placed with prison populations of the opposite gender from which they identify—making them vulnerable to sexual abuse. As a result, availing refugee status determination on grounds of gender identity is difficult because most individuals will not disclose their trans\* status to police. Further, refugee shelters are often divided into men and women, and trans\* women are generally not accepted in women’s shelters, trans\* men in men’s shelters, and those identifying as a gender other than men or women have no place to go.

Trans\* activists and groups like Acceptess-T and the Refugee Law Project are advocating with health services providers, legal practitioners, lawyers and law students, and policy makers to help them understand the impact of current policies and practices on trans\* individuals. It is critical for them to create safe spaces where trans\* individuals can organize, support each other, and eventually reach out to other movements (women’s rights, immigrant rights, sex worker rights, etc.) for support.

**T\*im Lysenko**

Insight, Ukraine

**Jack Byrne**

New Zealand

*Facilitated by*

**David Scamell**

Open Society Foundation, USA

“The system puts labels on top of us and defines us in ways that require us to continually prove who we are.”

## LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

The cost of the incongruence between one's gender identity and one's official identity as reflected in documentation has a major impact on the lives of individuals. It results in multiple discriminations and denial of basic rights including the right to privacy, mobility, education, health, and work. These abuses are compounded by the insidious psychological impact of a person with documents not reflecting their gender identity needing to explain their gender identity to often ignorant and hostile people. Despite the importance of having appropriate identification to fulfill basic human rights, most legal jurisdictions have no means to get them, or have in place insurmountable obstacles such as medical procedures that people may not want or need, or have no means to finance (surgeries, hormone therapy). These obstacles include sterilization, and requirements for individuals to be single, without children, and to be above a certain age. Beyond being exceedingly inaccessible, attaining legal gender recognition under these legal frames would violate an individual's right to a family, the right to privacy, and the right to be free from torture and cruel and inhumane treatment.

To illustrate, the process to changing one's identity in Ukraine to match their sex is creating undue obstacles and human rights violations in all steps of the way. First, an initial interview is required with a licensed sexologist who refers the individual to a psychiatric clinic. Individuals are required to stay in a closed, psychiatric clinic for 30-45 days, placed in facilities for the opposite gender from which they identify. The expectation is that the doctors will affirm their gender identity through pressure and consistent questioning. If the person attains a diagnosis of gender incongruence, the individual then goes to the capital city of Kiev to be seen by an official commission of the Ministry of Health to affirm that the individual is a “real” trans\* person and, in turn, then approved for surgery. The commission is composed of 17 doctors and meets infrequently. It will deny the request if the individual is intersex or homosexual, has been or is married, or is under the age of 18. If approved by the commission, the individual is referred to one of two doctors who can perform the surgery. A full gender-affirming series of surgeries is required, as well as sterilization. It is possible to perform the surgery abroad, but the person will still need to report to the commission with confirmation of

sterilization. The individual pays all related costs to the process and medical interventions. Only once an individual has gone through this process can they officially change their documents to reflect their gender identity.

There is a growing precedent for gender recognition laws that are affirming to the rights and dignity of individuals. Under the new law in Argentina, people can change the gender in their documentation based on an informed consent model. A medical diagnosis is not required, and other onerous requirements that work as obstacles for individuals have been removed. In the first year of operation, more than 3,000 trans\* individuals were able to change their name and gender. With the scant resources dedicated to advocacy and education on legal gender recognition, trans\* and intersex groups are starting to organize nationally and internationally to influence legal norms and policy implementation.

**Amitava Sarkar**

Integrated Network for  
Sexual Minorities, India

**Amaranta Gomez Regalado**

Collective Binni Laanu B.C.,  
Mexico

*Facilitated by*

**Viviane V.**

Brazil

“We are not to be  
seen as folklore”

## CULTURE AND GENDER DIVERSITY

Gender diversity is influenced by and informs cultures and contexts, but global conversations, and in turn funding, on gender identity and intersex issues are often dominated by Western concepts and perspectives. It is important to understand that indigenous communities around the world have a rich and contextually specific history and way to discuss and live gender diversity. The Western hegemonic approach is often tied with a history of violence and oppression: colonial powers introduced discrimination against gender non-conformity in many places and then institutionalized this belief in laws and language. In India and Mexico, the presence and visibility of trans\* people was historically present in the hierarchical structure of communities, and in indigenous terminology such as hijra, muxe, or gender neutral articles. Colonial rule not only outlawed identities that didn't conform to a gender binary, but also changed the language to fit under the Western terms and constructs. The influence of Western language continues to today. For example, the prevalence of the term “men who have sex with men” or MSM which has perverted programs for and by trans\* communities—where gender nonconforming individuals have to identify under this construct to access funds that are limited to HIV.

**Abhina Aher**

India HIV/AIDS Alliance, India

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**Kemal Örddek**

Red Umbrella Sexual Health  
and Human Rights Association,  
Turkey

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**Mitch Yusof**

PT Foundation, Malaysia

*Facilitated by*

**Justus Eisfeld**

Global Action for Trans\*  
Equality, USA

## HIV AND TRANS\* MOVEMENTS

Trans\* people remain disproportionately vulnerable to HIV infection, yet still receive relatively little attention from national and international strategies and funding to combat HIV. The funding that has been available has both opened doors for trans\* activists, and also stymied and complicated efforts for activists and policy makers to distinguish between issues of sexual orientation and those on gender identity. The ethos of inclusion that has permeated much of the HIV response in the last ten years has meant that trans\* groups and individuals have started to be included in health policy discussions. While generally segregated to the HIV response, there have been opportunities for activists to use this space to advocate for increased resources and opportunities for trans\* communities. The processes have also allowed trans\* activists to develop leadership skills to broker new relationships with groups and policy makers.

However, the priorities and framing of donors and policy makers primarily concerned with HIV often exclude trans\* communities and can perpetuate their vulnerability to infection. When donors focus solely on a very narrow response to HIV, such as condom promotion, they are ignoring the factors which often put individuals at “high risk” such as violence, homelessness, and lack of access to health care and transition-related medicine. The HIV world has also introduced concepts such as “men who have sex with men” which have included trans\* women in their framing. The framing is problematic in its conceptualization and the way that resources flow to groups and the types of programs that result. If the funding for trans\* is conceptualized under “MSM”, then it makes sense that the money would go to groups primarily working with gay men. These groups may not be well oriented in the needs of trans\* communities, and the resulting programming will likely be out of touch with what these communities really need to protect themselves from HIV and have access to appropriate services. Further, funding MSM groups to respond to trans\* needs ultimately deprives trans\*-led movements and groups of resources and their own leadership representation.

Trans\* groups are best placed to know how to protect their communities from HIV, and work with health professionals to design the most appropriate services to ensure that HIV-positive trans\* individuals can access and receive care. Donors, policy makers, program planners and other civil society groups, including LGB groups, should recognize the expertise and leadership of trans\* groups, and ensure that resources and support is given to foster their role in responding to HIV as well as other health challenges.



# THE STATE OF TRANS\* AND INTERSEX MOVEMENTS

## **Mauro Cabral**

Global Action for Trans\*  
Equality, Argentina

## **Dan Christian Ghattas**

TransInterQueer, Germany

## **Julia Ehrt**

Transgender Europe, Germany

## **Chan Grey Mubanga**

Transbantu Association, Zambia

*Facilitated by*

## **Nicolas Beger**

Amnesty International, Belgium

“The severe discrimination and oppression negatively affects the ability to network and build a movement.”

While trans\* and intersex activism and organizing is rapidly growing, and taking place at local, national, regional, and international levels, these emerging movements face enormous challenges. The severe discrimination, oppression, and exclusion impacts the work at all levels: an individual’s ability to be engaged and contribute financially or otherwise, the overwhelming organizational need to provide self-help and other basic services, and the degree to which the movement is networked and collaborative. Communities are often localized in cities, and there is little connection nationally, much less internationally. This isolation compounds the already low organizational and leadership capacity, which in turn exacerbates the challenges in attracting donor attention.

Activists recognize the critical role that donors play in supporting movements, and used the space to outline priority needs for many communities in order to better align donor interests. These are issues that are present, in different forms, in just about all regions and contexts where trans\* and intersex activists are living and working. These are also in addition to the type of advocacy and programmatic priorities that were discussed above (pages 10-15) and highlighted in the section Critical Challenges Facing Trans\* and Intersex Communities.

## **Safe Spaces and Security**

In many contexts, just being visible and out as a trans\* or intersex person is a political act that comes with extreme risk and consequences. Activism, which can include providing services to marginalized and criminalized populations, takes a heavy toll on the lives of individuals and the collective consciousness of communities. The organizing impact is that groups are very isolated, and have very little opportunity to meet. It is often legally or socially untenable for groups to register as formal entities.

## **Leadership**

Burn-out, or total exhaustion, is a real issue for both movements. There are few leaders, and they are carrying local, national, regional, and global movements on their backs. These leaders are under constant strain, balancing a response to the reality of human rights oppression, and being “professional advocates,”

with polished demeanors. There is no room for anger, or the recognition that individuals return from these spaces and go back to a daily affront of human rights violations. Training for leaders is virtually absent, as is coaching.

### **Capacity Building and Networking**

The capacity building agenda should be driven by groups in consultation with donors, fully recognizing the diversity of the skills and capacities in the movement. Networking is critical to both organizational and movement capacity building. In 2011, the International Intersex Forum brought together activists for the first time to coordinate and network. The third International Forum was held in Malta just prior to the Berlin convening, helping intersex activists to speak with a common voice. These kinds of opportunities for communities to meet together, define their agenda, commiserate on shared challenges, and brainstorm solutions and priorities are critical. There is, however, too often an assumption that capacity flows from north to south, despite the body of work emanating from southern-based activism.

### **Brokering Relationships**

Trans\* and intersex activists are often new to national, regional, and international advocacy and funding spaces, and lack the connections and credibility to successfully approach new donors, international organizations and other critical players. Donors are generally well-connected in advocacy, funding, and political space and could help to broker these relationships.

### **Production of Knowledge**

The assumption within research and in the development of knowledge and information is that the “norm” or standard subject is a cis-gender person (someone whose gender identity matches the sex that they were assigned at birth). This places an oppressive burden on trans\* and intersex communities. Further, much of the research produced to date has been pathologizing and further stigmatizing to trans\* and intersex communities.

## **Different Movements, Different Priorities**

While there are some points of advocacy convergence with intersex and trans\* communities, differences are present in the identities, and human rights issues, as well as the histories of these movements. Intersex is about variations of healthy bodies that are pathologized. Intersex can be a gender identity, but does not need to be one. In the West, the history of the intersex movement is tied to operations on intersex children, which started in the 1960s. When these children became adults in the 1990s, they started speaking out about the human rights violations they had suffered. Activism focuses on recognizing the rights of intersex people, such as the right for intersex children to maintain bodily integrity. This runs counter to the approach of surgeries or treatments to correct a medical problem. Globally, intersex communities are still invisible, with very little common knowledge about their existence or condition in the general public.

# SUPPORTING A MOVEMENT: FUNDER STRATEGIES

## **Masen Davis**

Transgender Law Center, USA

## **Ajit Joshi**

USAID, USA

## **Wanja Muguongo**

UHAJ—East African Sexual Health and Rights Initiative, Kenya (without Babra Muruga, Transitioning Africa, Kenya—Skype connection did not work)

*Facilitated by*

## **Heather Doyle**

Lutian Advisors, USA

“We are building the ship while we are sailing.”

## **Safe Spaces and Security**

There is little dedicated funding available to trans\* and intersex groups, and the available grants are relatively small, even when groups show a capacity to manage larger grants. As such, groups spend a lot of time writing grant applications to “piece together a lot of small grants.” In some contexts, donors have been quick to respond to emergencies, but have not invested in the long-term policy change, security, and protection beyond the immediate situation.

Part of the problem is that program staff who are not well versed on trans\* or intersex issues fail to see how these issues fit into their existing funding portfolios. Even when a program officer is issue-savvy, they often need support in making these arguments to their management and boards. If individuals within donor organizations are aligned with the movements, they are more likely to fund. As such, it is necessary to find and cultivate allies in funding organizations, and make spaces where they can ask questions and become informed. Even more so, funding organizations that have trans\* and intersex-identified individuals as consultants and staff are able to shape and manage funding portfolios informed by a lived experience.

## **Best Grant Making Practices**

Donors recounted examples of launching open calls for proposals for issues addressing “LGBT” communities and receiving no applications from trans\* organizations. Specific outreach and funding opportunities targeting trans\* and intersex-led groups is necessary. Streamlined and simplified processes that are in step with the realities of movement capacities improves the chances that funding will reach trans\* and intersex-led groups. For example, one organization found that instead of requiring full proposals initially, it worked to accept a general statement of motivation or interest, and then work with the groups to develop the proposal.

Donor grant making practices should continually question the production of knowledge—by whom, for whom—and recognize the inherent value and need to be informed by the diversity and richness of movements. Understanding the different cultural and political contexts, and how that should shift grant making priorities and practices is a specific expertise that needs to be recognized as such. General operating support is crucial to any organization, giving

## DOING IT DIFFERENTLY

The Trans Justice Funding Project addressed the lack of funding for trans\* issues in the United States by raising \$50,000 in small to medium sized donations through social media. More than a hundred organizations responded to an open and simple call for 1-2 page funding applications. A community funding panel made up of people from trans\* communities were paid to manage the decision-making process. While the largest grant was only \$5,000, the trans\*-led grantmaking process did more than make money available: it was a movement building exercise. Money went to groups that were registered and unregistered, formal and informal. A directory of all projects who submitted applications was provided to everyone to enable networking and demonstrating to donors the diversity and plethora of on-going organizing.

flexibility to be proactive and responsive in advocacy tactics and to invest in organizational infrastructure. Project support should always integrate capacity building activities. Whether giving general operating support or project support –the aims and design of the grant should be developed collaboratively between donors and groups.

## Community-Driven Funding Models

In the case of UHAI, LGB and Trans\* communities are involved in defining the resource needs, and then prioritizing or short-listing the applications. The effect of the community being involved in resource allocation is that the funding decisions define and are defined by the movement. The decisions, in turn, hold more credibility—and are accountable to the movement. “If your peers won’t fund you, you shouldn’t be funded.” In the 5 years of existence, UHAI has seen a shift in what gets funded from mainly gay, male organizations to more diverse organizations representing different constituencies.

## More than Money

A huge investment in capacity building is needed beyond financial transfers. At this point, it is hard to disentangle capacity building and leadership. These organizations are often built “on one person’s trauma” and the need to respond. In many contexts, the leaders are young people, without the management training to lead organizations. Capacity building models should extend beyond traditional organizational development, and consider how leadership programs contribute to stronger organizations and movements. This could mean supporting and facilitating internships, scholarships and other investments in trans\* and intersex leaders. Ideas on coaching and mentorship are important, particularly facilitating cross-movement fertilization.

## Investing in Relationships

Funding success is often about cultivating relationships. It is better for groups to spend their limited time and resources to try and develop a relationship with donors than to write many grant applications. Of course, this is a challenge for informal grassroots groups that often do not speak the same language as donors. Both trans\* and intersex communities and donors need to consider how to more strategically bridge this divide.

# RECOMMENDATIONS TO DONOR ORGANIZATIONS

## WHAT TO FUND:

### Priority Issues and Services

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Issues identified in collaboration with trans\* and intersex communities as priorities including but not limited to provision of social services, provision of health care access to appropriate health-care, including HIV services, and legal gender recognition. See the section above on Critical Challenges Facing Trans\* Communities.

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Service provision (social services, health care, shelter, legal services, basic education, employment, training, etc.) as a necessary component of long-term advocacy in many contexts. This is particularly necessary for the most vulnerable, such as trans\* migrants and sex workers.

### Safe Spaces and Security

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Security training and plans, which might include safe houses.

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In some cases, long term approaches to security and safe spaces issues, such as the purchase of real estate so that groups cannot be evicted.

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Emergency housing, not just for activists, but also for community members who have been rejected by their families/landlords/neighborhoods.

### Movement Building

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Networking and organizing of trans\* people safely in their communities, in the way that they need to meet.

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When necessary, alternative ways to support groups that are informal and not officially registered as a legal NGO.

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Networking and convening opportunities for groups to meet, without necessarily involving allies and donors, across the movement nationally, regionally, and internationally.

### Leadership and Capacity Building

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Expansion of the circle of leaders, in a holistic and community-based way, so that movements trust the way they are represented.

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Leadership support for trans\* individuals to deconstruct internalized discrimination and to have clear advocacy asks—this could include mentorships and coaching for leaders and other staff.

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Collaboratively designed leadership and capacity building approaches such as alternative income producing projects, or support for formal education opportunities.

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Innovative mechanisms to offer administrative and organizational support, such as a consultant who provides accounting and bookkeeping services for a number of trans\* organizations in one country.

## Intersectionality

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Support for cross-movement organizing.

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Documentation of the rich and diverse history of gender non-conforming identities and/or non-binary gender expressions in local cultures.

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Work that takes different and intersecting forms of oppression into account, such as racism, ableism, sexism, etc.

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Intercultural dialogue that is not biased by hierarchical positions based on identities.

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Support for local communities to identify their own language, problems and solutions—and allow these needs and priorities to drive funding priorities.

## Production of Knowledge

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Community-based research projects that allow communities to define, document and respond to their own research questions.

## HOW TO FUND:

### Be Accessible, Clear, and Respectful

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Publish the organization's principles, and grant making priorities and processes. This should include non-financial support and opportunities that are available, as well as a clear and public statement on support for trans\* and intersex issues.

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Streamline the application procedure for trans\* and intersex organizations that are new to grantmaking, and have an iterative process whereby funders work with the grantee to develop the proposal from the concept.

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Work with communities to understand the appropriate local language and use it in communications. Review grant making processes to ensure that the language is respectful of trans\* and intersex communities.

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Hire trans\* and intersex-identified staff who can function as bridges to their communities.

### Align Grantmaking Practices

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Align grantmaking practices with the needs and realities of the trans\* and/or intersex movements. This depends on the context and organization. In many cases, more general support grants are needed that would allow for flexible growth and responsive advocacy. For first time grantees, provide small grants with easy applications that have fewer requirements. If project support is provided, integrate resources for capacity and leadership building. In all cases, recognize the

need for paid staff and provide funds for salaries and benefits, including health care that provides for transition-related health care.

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Develop separate funding portfolios for trans\* and intersex communities, that recognize the different priorities and tactics necessary, and track donor activity separately for each of these populations.

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Make longer-term financial commitments, understanding that there will be organizational and advocacy setbacks.

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Adapt reporting and monitoring requirements to the realities of groups: one example was using Skype calls for mid-term reporting.

### **Provide Non-financial Support**

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Provide mechanisms of non-grant support such as fund leveraging assistance, brokering relationships and access to advocacy spaces, organizational capacity building, and leadership development.

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Consider providing translation support so that groups can submit proposals and reports in their own language.

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Broker and support relationships and entry into important spaces for your grantees with other donors, governments, international organizations, and other key advocacy actors.

### **Invest in Organizational Change**

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Hire intersex/trans\* staff and consultants to provide expertise in strategy design, project monitoring, policy reviews, donor education, and other related activities. Treat knowledge of trans\* and intersex communities as specific expertise in your hiring processes.

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Invest in innovative learning of staff on gender, trans\* and intersex issues, and situate this knowledge in the regions where the organization is funding.

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Develop guidance on integrating trans\* and intersex issues into existing organizational funding portfolios, while maintaining a specific funding focus if possible.

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Publicize prominently your support for trans\* and intersex communities and organizations.



# RECOMMENDATIONS TO TRANS\* AND INTERSEX ACTIVISTS AND GROUPS

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Document the advocacy, service provision, capacity building, and leadership models that have been effective for your organization and movement, and make them accessible for other organizations. This includes sharing funding strategies and skills.

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Create learning tools for donors and others that clearly define the language and terms that are resonant with the communities you are serving.

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Establish formal and informal mentoring programs between seasoned and new activists.

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Participate in spaces where trans\* and intersex movements can organize with other movements such as rights of women, migrants, sex workers, people who use drugs, and incarcerated persons.

# THE MEANS TO AN END: MEETING ORGANIZATION METHODOLOGY

Global Action for Trans\* Equality, Open Society Foundations, and Wellspring Advisors comprised the leadership team responsible for the overall organization of the meeting. A central organizing principle was that the meeting be developed as a collaboration between the donor and trans\* communities. To this end, a working group was established, responsible for: identifying themes and key issues related to trans\* and intersex rights to be highlighted at the meeting, creating an open call for activists working on trans\* and/or intersex rights to present and participate at the convening, and creating the final agenda based on the selected presentations. In addition to the leadership team, another five working group members were identified through an open call that was circulated across a broad range of listservs, websites, and social media. Responses had to be in English, and participants needed to have a fairly high degree of English language capacity. Of the 25 applications received, five were selected based on the articulation of their motivation in 2-3 paragraphs. Funder working group members represented the organizing group of funders.

Working group members included:

**Abhina Aher** (India HIV/AIDS Alliance, India)

**Maxim Anmeghichean** (Open Society Foundations, USA)

**Masen Davis** (Transgender Law Center, USA)

**Justus Eisfeld** (Global Action for Trans\* Equality, USA)

**Rebecca Fox** (Wellspring Advisors, USA)

**Carla LaGata** (Transgender Europe, Germany)

**Barbra Muruga** (Transitioning Africa, Kenya)

**David Scamell** (Open Society Foundations, USA)

**Viviane V.** (Brazil)

The working group developed a call for presenters circulated widely in English, French, Russian and Spanish on relevant list servs<sup>3</sup>, websites, and through the personal and organizational social media of the working group members. From the more than 120 applications received, the working group reviewed and rated the applications on a number of categories, recording possible presenting topics. These ratings were cross-compared, and working group members voted to narrow down the list to 24 participants. The working group then made recommendations of thematic focus areas, particularly for the learning aspect of the meeting. A draft agenda was developed by consultants, and circulated to the working group members for review. The aforementioned leadership team made the final decisions about the agenda and presenters. A total of 15 presenters were selected, and combined with the working group members and one member of Global Action for Trans\* Equality's leadership team, there were 22 participants at the convening representing civil society from the Americas, Asia, Europe, Africa and Oceania.

To identify the donor participants, the leadership team developed a list of potential donors to invite, and sent it to working group members for review.

<sup>3</sup> Transgender Europe (TGEU) mailinglist; Arc-International Sogi mailinglist; WPATH members only mailinglist; Asia Pacific Trans; Participants list from Barcelona Trans Congress; TransAfrica; QueerRussia;

<sup>3</sup> Trans Advocacy Network (US trans list); CREA Sexuality, Gender and Rights Institute list; Nexgeneration; Transgender Studies Quarterly editorial board list.

Working group members added any additional names to the list, and an initial Save the Date was sent out six weeks before the event. As new donors were identified, they were invited on a rolling basis. Donors contributed information to a survey on current funding practices, amount and projected amounts which informed a background paper on the current funding landscape.

There are lessons to be drawn from the intensive investment made in the meeting organization. The inclusive manner of the working group contributed to the success of the meeting by ensuring the participation of **diverse, well-informed, and motivated trans\* and intersex activists**. The quality of presentations and interventions, which spoke from both evidence and lived experience, enhanced the level of conversation and created an **open but dynamic learning space**. It improved the overall quality of the meeting, and raised the visibility of the trans\* and intersex activism in the eyes of donors that have had less exposure to these movements.

The process in and of itself becomes a political statement. The power of convening donors generally rests in the hands of other donors. If activists are involved, it is usually a select few that are familiar in international advocacy circles, and are often working at regional or international levels rather than with grassroots organizing. Although language is a big limitation, particularly for the participation of activists in the working group, an open-call process for working group members and presenters makes more transparent the articulation of priorities and agendas. The application process in both cases was kept simple, in order to not intimidate or preclude activists from applying. In addition to contributing to meeting content that is more

aligned with movement priorities, the process opened up advocacy and learning spaces for some activists that had never been involved in this type of convening. Ultimately, this strengthens movements by contributing to leadership development, new networks, and diversity.

This type of participative process, however, requires significant management and oversight, and attention to the power imbalances that can be present between donors and grantees (or potential grantees). The time commitment needed from working group members was fairly significant, given the short organizing period. While the responsibilities were outlined in the call for working group members, the leadership team could have had a conversation with each member to explain the process, expectations and time commitments. The working group could also have been better utilized if there was more time allotted for the process, to allow for travel and working schedules, and better technological support.

The organizing process and meeting included issues faced by both trans\* and intersex communities. While there were some benefits derived from this inclusive approach, there was the unintended effect of conflating issues faced by these communities when the social, political, medical, and other lived realities are often quite distinct. Some recommendations are made at the end of this report aiming to better address these distinctions. In terms of donor participation, a decision was made to focus on donors funding outside of the U.S. In hindsight, it would have been good to include donors from the U.S. that have been funding on trans\* or intersex issues to build a base of donors who care about these issues and want to contribute to shared learning and networking.

