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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THE STATE OF TRANS ORGANIZING (2ND EDITION)

Understanding the Needs and Priorities of a Growing but Under-Resourced Movement

In 2016, American Jewish World Service (AJWS), Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice (Astraea) and Global Action for Trans* Equality (GATE) surveyed 455 groups from across the globe working on trans issues.¹ The results provide a unique snapshot of the funding and organizational needs and experiences of those at the front line of addressing the significant human rights challenges facing trans people. While funding for trans work has improved over time, there are still serious limitations in the availability of resources. At the same time, trans groups face unique barriers to accessing available funds. *The State of Trans Organizing*² intends to provoke dialogue between activists and donors, and act as a call for increasing the amount and quality of resources flowing to the growing, dynamic, but under-resourced global trans movement.



KEY FINDINGS

TRANS PEOPLE IN EVERY REGION OF THE WORLD ENCOUNTER DISCRIMINATION, MARGINALIZATION, VIOLENCE AND ABUSE.

They face challenges in aspects of everyday life—including going to school or work, using a public restroom, voting or travelling across borders. In most countries, trans people encounter serious barriers to meeting their health needs or changing their identification documents to align with their gender identity.³ A lack of recognition and protections also heightens trans individuals' vulnerability to poverty and exclusion, with serious impacts on their health and wellbeing. Those whose gender expression does not fit within socially and culturally constructed gender norms are especially vulnerable. These challenges are magnified for those who come from communities that are disadvantaged and who face intersecting forms of marginalization based on race, ethnicity, class, caste, nationality, disability status or age—or because they are indigenous people, migrants or sex workers; or are incarcerated or living with HIV.

In recent years, trans groups working at the local, national, regional and international levels have won important victories and made significant gains in challenging discrimination, stigma and violence.

Responding to the lack of access to appropriate health care, trans groups are implementing community-led health care programs and developing comprehensive guidelines for addressing the health of trans people. Over the past several years, activists have successfully advocated in a growing number of countries for the adoption of progressive gender recognition laws that enable individuals to change their legal gender marker without having to meet burdensome or arbitrary conditions. Groups are challenging the criminalization of trans people and advancing the rights of sex workers, and through persistent documen-

tion have brought international attention to the alarmingly high level of murders of trans people across the world. A global trans-led campaign is seeking to remove provisions within international guidelines such as the WHO's International Classification of Diseases (ICD) that pathologize trans people and gender diversity. Importantly, trans activists are collaborating with donors to influence and increase the resources flowing to trans-led organizing.

than half (56%) of trans groups had an annual budget of less than US\$10,000 in 2016, compared to 54% in 2013.⁵

Budget size for trans groups varies by region. Regions where the largest proportion of trans groups had budgets of less than US\$10,000 in 2016 were Europe (72.1%) and the Caribbean, Central America and South America (69.7%). Even in regions where a higher proportion of groups had larger budgets, such as North America and Sub-Saharan Africa, more than two in five groups had budgets of US\$10,000 or less in 2016.

Many trans groups are autonomous, with more groups reporting trans people making financial decisions than in 2013.

In 2016, a significant majority (85%) of trans groups were autonomous—meaning they were led by trans people—compared to just over half (55%) in 2013.⁶ More than two-thirds (68.2%) of trans groups in 2016 had most or all trans people making financial decisions, compared to about two in five trans groups in 2013.

Trans groups—particularly autonomous groups—lack sufficient full-time paid staff.

Trans groups across the board frequently lack paid staff. Groups that are programs of larger organizations were more likely to have full-time paid staff (44.4%) than autonomous trans groups (32.4%). Trans groups responding to the survey in 2016 reported slightly lower rates of paid staff than those responding in 2013: half (50%) of trans groups reported having any paid staff in 2016, compared to 51% in 2013. A dearth of paid positions for activists doing trans work may mean people may be dividing their time between jobs or working uncompensated.

Trans groups face barriers to finding, applying for and implementing grants.

Seven in ten (70.8%) trans groups reported at least one barrier to applying for funding. Some barriers can be addressed by donors, who can shorten applications and make them less complex or help build capacity for groups and programs to write grants. Trans groups also reported encountering barriers once they received funding, including long delays in payment (48.1%), primarily in the initial payment. More than one-third (35.2%) of trans groups were not registered with their country's government in 2016, which renders them ineligible for many funding opportunities.

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Trans groups all over the world continue to do critical work, addressing the human rights violations facing trans communities with very limited resources.

Trans groups report operating with very low budgets. In 2016, more than half (55.8%) of trans groups responding to this survey had annual budgets of less than US\$10,000. Nearly three-quarters (74.8%) had annual budgets of less than US\$50,000. Unfortunately, the proportion of trans groups with very low budgets has not changed much since 2013.⁴ More



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Trans groups work on a variety of activities; however, they lack resources to provide health care that their constituents need.

Trans groups work with constituents that face multiple and intersecting types of oppression. The most commonly reported constituencies were low-income people, sex workers, ethnic minorities and people living with HIV/AIDS. The most common activities trans groups reported wanting to do, but lacking resources to implement included: provide trans-specific health care (36.1%) and provide health care services to trans people other than trans-specific services (32.4%). Many trans groups that do advocacy also provide or want to provide services. For example, among those that did advocacy, nearly six in ten (59.6%) reported also providing or wanting to provide trans-specific health care services or primary health care services for trans people.

More than nine in ten (91.6%) trans groups did advocacy, community organizing and/or community education, while nearly eight in ten (79.2%) provided social services, peer support, individual-level advocacy or health care to trans people. Nearly six in ten trans groups engaged in some form of safety or anti-violence work (59.5%), while just over one-third did arts and culture work (34.4%).

Trans groups are most likely to receive funding from foundations and larger NGOs as sub-grants; they are unlikely to receive government funding.

In 2016, more than two-thirds (68%) of the trans groups surveyed had external funding, compared to half (50%) in 2013. In 2015 and 2016, more than two in five trans groups had no external funding.⁷ Trans groups that did receive external funding in 2015 or 2016 most frequently reported having foundation funding (40.2%) or a sub-grant from an NGO (40.8%). Fewer trans groups applied for government funding, and when they did apply, they were less likely to be successful. In 2016, just one in ten (10.0%) trans groups surveyed received embassy funding and even fewer (6.4%) received bilateral funding. Trans groups with a 2016 budget of US\$20,000 or greater were over eight times as likely to be funded by a bilateral donor than groups with smaller or no budgets (15.0% vs. 2.0%, OR=8.54).

Foundation funding for trans groups has improved, but access remains uneven.

A higher proportion of trans groups received foundation funding in 2016 than in 2013 (40% vs. 27%). Of the trans groups responding to this survey that received foundation funding, three in four (75.0%) had general operating support

1 In 2013, AJWS and GATE did an initial survey of 340 trans and intersex groups, which yielded the first systematic data from trans activists and groups about their work, leadership, funding—including obstacles in accessing funding—and capacity-building needs. The findings of this survey can be found in *The State of Trans* and Intersex Organizing: A Case for Increased Support for Growing but Under-Funded Movements for Human Rights*.

2 This brief is an executive summary of the full report: Howe, E, Frazer, MS, Dumont, M. and Zomorodi, G. (2017). *The State of Trans Organizing (2nd Edition): Understanding the Needs and Priorities of a Growing but Under-resourced Movement*. New York: American Jewish World Service, Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice and Global Action for Trans Equality.

3 International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association. Chiam, Z., Duffy, S. and González Gil, M. (2016). *Trans Legal Mapping Report 2016: Recognition Before the Law*. Geneva: ILGA. Retrieved from <http://ilga.org/what-we-do/gender-identity-and-gender-expression-program/trans-legal-mapping-report/>

4 Note that the primary sampling difference revealed by comparing the 2013 and 2016 surveys was the percentage of groups that self-identified as autonomous (85% in 2016 vs. 55% in 2013). Thus comparisons between the two surveys are limited by sampling differences.

5 The 2016 findings are rounded to the nearest decimal place, except when being compared to 2013 findings. 2013 findings and 2016 findings are rounded to the nearest whole number.

6 The 2016 survey used more stringent sampling criteria, asking for groups or programs that “explicitly and primarily” work on trans issues; this may have impacted which groups decided to take the survey.

7 External funding sources include government and foundation funding and exclude membership fees, community fundraisers, events and individual contributions from founders or their family members. It is a measure of the combined support trans groups receive from government, private and public donors.



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from foundations. However, given small budget sizes, these grants may not be sufficient to meet current needs.

Nearly half (48.6%) of trans groups in high-income countries had foundation funding, compared to just under one-third (31.8%) of trans groups in low-income countries (OR=1.78). The regions where a higher proportion of trans groups received foundation funding were North America (59.3%), Sub-Saharan Africa (46.2%) and Europe (39.0%). Regions where a lower proportion of trans groups received foundation funding were the Pacific Islands, Australia and New Zealand (23.8%) and the Caribbean, Central America and South America (29.6%).

Donors want better resourced trans groups, but they often don't prioritize funding them.

More than a third of trans groups reported receiving feedback from donors that their group is too small or lacks capacity (36.7%). A similar amount of trans groups received feedback from donors that despite funding LGBT or LGBTI groups, they would not fund a trans-specific group (36.1%).

Trans activists need capacity-building support to sustain and grow their groups and prevent burnout.

In 2016, almost eight in ten (79%) trans groups wanted skills training in fundraising and grant writing, compared to nearly two-thirds (64%) in 2013. In 2016, more than seven in ten (70%) trans groups wanted skills training in budgeting and financial management, compared to about two in five (39%) in 2013. Capacity-building needs are compounded for trans groups that do not receive any external funding, including foundation funding; these groups are both less likely to receive training or capacity-building support and more likely to need it.

In addition to needing support to grow and sustain their groups, trans activists need training related to healing from

trauma and preventing burnout. More than three quarters (76.5%) of trans groups reported wanting training in these areas. This is unsurprising given the low rates of full-time paid staff within trans groups, particularly those that are autonomous.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUNDERS

- Support trans groups by continuing to identify new groups to fund, particularly those that are not receiving a grant from another foundation donor or are in regions where a small proportion of trans groups have access to foundation funding.
- Increase the amount of funding available to trans groups, both through giving larger, longer-term grants and generating interest in trans issues among new donors.
- Prioritize increasing access for trans groups to the human rights and development funding provided by government funders, both bilateral donors and national, state or municipal governments.
- Find new donors to support trans groups and encourage them to explicitly state their interest in funding trans work.
- Lower barriers to trans groups' access to funding; simplify applications and be flexible in application and reporting processes.
- Support autonomous groups and those with more trans leaders and decision-makers, especially those with leadership that reflects their constituents.
- Support capacity building and training opportunities for trans groups, particularly those related to organizational development and healing, anti-trauma work and/or burnout prevention.
- Invest in activities that trans groups prioritize but cannot do because of lack of funding, particularly those related to securing a sustainable livelihood and advancing struggles for economic justice.

For a copy of the full *The State of Trans Organizing (2nd Edition)* report, please visit www.ajws.org, www.astraeaoundation.org or www.transactivists.org.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are grateful to the 455 trans groups that took time out from their important work to respond to this survey and share detailed information about their work with us. We hope this report will serve and advance the struggle for trans human rights, as well as be a tool to mobilize additional needed resources. We also thank the donors who provided project support for the production and dissemination of this report: American Jewish World Service and Open Society Foundation.