



**GPP BRIEFING:**  
**COVID-19 LGBTI PHILANTHROPIC  
RESPONSE SURVEY RESULTS**

# INTRODUCTION

As the COVID-19 pandemic emerges, LGBTI movements must forecast, adapt, and identify how they can best respond to the likely serious long-term health, socio-economic, and political impacts of the crisis. At the same time, the global LGBTI philanthropic community must work together with civil society to ensure that the gains made in LGBTI resourcing over the past decade are not lost, and that we meet the emerging demands of this crisis. This moment demands philanthropic action to galvanize the necessary resources for the particular and significant challenges that LGBTI communities across the world will face in the coming months and years.

As a first step towards these collective efforts, the Global Philanthropy Project (GPP) launched a short survey of all GPP member organizations as well as non-GPP members within the top 20 funders of global LGBTI issues.<sup>1</sup> The online survey ran between April 1-17, 2020, and had four main goals:

1. Discover good practices and identify underlying principles supporting institutional efforts by our community;
2. Use these documented practices to better respond to requests about how LGBTI grantmakers are addressing the social, political and economic implications of the pandemic;
3. Share promising practice recommendations derived from the feedback of GPP members and other leading LGBTI grantmakers to better understand and coordinate with each others' efforts; and
4. Align our longer term response efforts and coordination with other communities of grantmakers and properly center LGBTI grantmaking expertise in developing discussions on effective rights-based response by broader philanthropy and government and multilateral donors.

This briefing document provides insight in the activities and processes in motion for a key group of LGBTI global funders in response to COVID-19. The findings provide a path to collective strategic development for both GPP as a member network and the wider community of LGBTI global funders. This report will be presented at the GPP Standing Committee meeting on April 28, 2020. Feedback from that meeting will be incorporated into a final brief, which will then be shared as a public document with wider philanthropic and civil society partners.

## Who participated in the survey

The analysis included in this brief is based on an initial rapid survey of 26 of the leading foundations and NGO intermediary funders supporting global LGBTI issues, including 19 GPP members and 7 other grantmakers. Excluding funding focused on the U.S., **the 26 respondents accounted for over 43% of all funding on LGBTI issues, and over 68% of funding from foundations for LGBTI issues in 2017-2018. Further, the survey respondents awarded just over half (52%) of all grants given on LGBTI issues in 2017-2018.**<sup>2</sup>

**GPP Member Organisations:** American Jewish World Service, Arcus Foundation, Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice, Baring Foundation, Dreilinden, Ford Foundation, Foundation for a Just Society, Fund for Global Human Rights, Global Fund for Women, Hivos, Horizons Foundation, International Trans Fund, Mama Cash,

<sup>1</sup> The top 20 LGBTI funders list referenced here excludes grants focused on the United States, and does include funds awarded for the purpose of regranteeing. This list is based on the forthcoming 2017-18 *Global Resources Report*. Funding focused on the United States is excluded throughout this brief. For information about funding within the U.S. related to COVID-19, see Funders for LGBTQ Issues' [response page](#).

<sup>2</sup> Funds awarded for regranteeing are included in these funding totals and comparisons in order to account for the full funding flowing from and through all of the reporting funders. This data is based on the forthcoming 2017-18 *Global Resources Report*.

Oak Foundation, Open Society Foundations, Other Foundation, Sigrid Rausing Trust, UHAI EASHRI (East African Sexual Health and Rights Initiative), Urgent Action Fund, and Wellspring Philanthropic Fund.<sup>3</sup>

**Additional reporting foundations:** AmplifyChange, COC Netherlands, Comic Relief, Elton John AIDS Foundation (UK), Gilead Sciences, National Lottery Community Fund, and Tides Foundation.

This brief outlines the public statements our institutions have made, shifts in funding practices, feedback from grantee partners on current and emerging impacts of COVID-19 in their contexts, and initial forecasts for the next 6-12 months. Informed by these materials, the brief also identifies opportunities for coordination within the global LGBTI philanthropic community to leverage collective influence, mobilize to protect existing funding streams, and identify new ways of resourcing LGBTI movements.

## REPORT FINDINGS

### How have foundations supporting the global LGBTI movement responded to the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic?

All 26 respondents have publicly communicated about COVID-19, either through the release of a public statement on their website or through direct email communication with grantee partners. Many have done both. A review of these statements showed a range of common principles:

- **Solidarity** with grantee partners and commitment to ongoing partnership and support.
- **Flexibility in grantmaking practices** enabling grantee partners to respond nimbly within the fast-evolving crisis.
- A **commitment to listen** to grantee partners needs and to provide resources and support with minimal interruption.
- **Recognition that the pandemic disproportionately impacts people already marginalized within societies**, including LGBTI communities as well as other intersecting communities and experiences. Some funders recognized an imperative to direct solidarity and support to those most marginalized within LGBTI communities who will likely be particularly impacted.
- **Importance of physical and mental health and safety** for foundation staff as well as the staff, volunteers, and others engaging with grantee partners.
- **Acknowledgement that this crisis presents opportunities** to strengthen connections within our movements and networks, and to redouble efforts to mobilize for the world we want to live in.
- The **need for other donors to adopt the same principles**, particularly flexibility in grantmaking practices.

Many of these common principles have emerged within the broader philanthropic community as a response to the crisis, and many of the survey respondents have signed onto philanthropic statements pledging to adopt these principles in their institutional practice.

Funders supporting global LGBTI issues have undertaken a number of innovative initiatives to support their grantee partners in alignment with the principles outlined above. As many of the reporting funders support

<sup>3</sup> 19 of the 20 GPP member funds participated in the survey.

multiple movements, communities, and issues, many of initiatives identified were not LGBTI-specific, but nonetheless were applicable to grantee partners working on LGBTI issues.

- Numerous funders have created resource pages for their grantee partners which offer information and advice on issues such as health and safety, digital security, and flexible/remote working practices. The Oak Foundation has published a concise resource on these issues, [Working within the confines of COVID-19](#). American Jewish World Service (AJWS) has published [COVID-19 health and safety information toolkits](#) in 10 languages and distributed them to their grantee partners.
- In order to highlight the health, human rights, and development impact that COVID-19 is having across the world, [Fund for Global Human Rights](#) and [AJWS](#) are regularly publishing blog updates from their grantee partners.
- Public foundations and NGO intermediary organizations that raise funds from individual donations have launched specific COVID-19 fund appeals to galvanize resources needed by their non-US based grantee partners to address the pandemic. All of these public appeals will be listed on our COVID-19 resource page to be launched soon.

### What have global LGBTI funders heard from grantee partners since the crisis began?

We asked survey participants what requests, feedback, or other communication they had received from their grantee partners in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic emergence. These were the top responses:

Grantee Partner Requests	All Respondents	GPP Respondents
Additional funds	23/26 (88%)	16/19 (84%)
Shift in terms of funding agreement, including change in reporting requirements and timeline	22/26 (85%)	15/19 (79%)
Change of project or program funding to general operating	15/26 (58%)	8/19 (42%)
Request for additional non-financial resources	9/26 (35%)	6/19 (32%)

In addition to the above, grantees shared a range of other challenges and issues with their funding partners:

**Shifting activities to respond to immediate needs of the communities they serve.** While many LGBTI organizations already undertake a diverse range of activities to improve the lives of the communities they serve, a number of funders reported that their grantee partners asked for support through the reallocation of existing funds or through new funds to provide immediate, humanitarian support (distribution of financial aid, food, medicine, etc.) to their communities.

**Significant impact on the lives of the communities they serve.** The enactment of public health measures such as physical distancing and lockdown of businesses are causing significant human rights and socio-economic challenges for marginalized communities. At the same time, these conditions are disrupting the capacity of LGBTI organizations to respond. One respondent shared an example of a group that has not been able to go to the police station to provide bail for arrested community members. Another reported a group unable to hold a community meeting to develop strategic responses to a Member of Parliament who is proposing an amendment which will increase criminality of sodomy.

**Concerns about levels of future funding.** Some funders were asked by their grantee partners about the likely level of support that they could provide over the longer-term, given the significant economic impact that the pandemic will have in global north and global south countries. Others reported that their grantee partners have communicated anxieties about future funding, having been informed by other donors that they will no longer be able to move forward with grants this year and/or that they may not have the resources to commit to them in the future. This uncertainty about future funding is particularly pertinent for smaller groups who feel ill-equipped to do the kind of scenario planning necessary to prepare for possible cuts or downsizing.

**Support with shifting communication practices:** A number of funders reported that their grantee partners sought support to shift how they work and communicate, including communications with their funders. This included support with digital security, virtual organizing, and networking, as well as either postponing calls to discuss their grants with their funders or limiting the number of grantee partner staff required to participate.

**Challenges with lack of flexibility in other funding agreements.** A number of LGBTI organizations identified issues with the institutional restraints of some donors, particularly governments, around changing funding agreements. Grantees reported that these restraints on changes were causing significant hardship; for example, lack of flexibility about re-allocating funding from existing events which can no longer occur because of physical distancing. A number of funders reported that grantee partners had asked them to advocate with other donors to address these constraints.

**Request to collect data around COVID or address COVID stigma.** Recognizing the role that funders can play beyond providing financial support, one funder reported that they had been asked by their grantee partners to collect evidence and take action to combat stigma related to COVID.

**How have global LGBTI funders adapted their grantmaking policies and practices in response to COVID-19?**

We asked survey participants if their organization had taken any action to shift or enhance its grantmaking policies and practices in order to respond to the challenges posed by COVID-19. These were the top responses:

Organizational actions	All Respondents	GPP Respondents
Changing reporting requirements, including deadlines, for grantees	23/26 (88%)	18/19 (95%)
Extending grant timeframes	22/26 (85%)	17/19 (90%)
Instituting flexible funding by changing project or program funding to general operating support for grantees	18/26 (69%)	12/19 (63%)

The high level of positive response to the above three actions demonstrates the proactive way in which global LGBTI funders have responded to the pandemic, and its active and anticipated impacts on their grantee partners. In addition to these three actions, the survey showed the following good practices in grantmaking policy and practice shifts:

**Supplementing existing agreements or planned awards to enable grantee COVID-19 response activities.** Several funders indicated that they had provided and/or were planning to provide additional funding to existing grants or for those in upcoming grant dockets. This additional funding is intended to ensure that grantee partners

can respond to the challenges of COVID-19 within their institutions and communities, including support for humanitarian assistance and planning for longer-term impacts. In the initial weeks of the pandemic, one funder provided \$500<sup>4</sup> to all grantee partners who requested support for software and other services to transition to working remotely. The same funder is also considering larger amounts than in the past for renewed grants, on a case by case basis.

**Reallocating funding within existing grants to address COVID-19 challenges.** Several other funders said they had enabled grantee partners to re-allocate budget line items in existing grant agreements to proactively respond to the impact that the pandemic was having on their organization and their communities.

**Shifting funding agreement payment terms to ensure adequate resources for grantee partners.** In the initial stages of the pandemic, another way in which funders have provided responsive financial support is through shifting the terms of funding agreements. One funder reported that they are considering ending existing grants earlier to enable a larger amount to be spent sooner, followed by renewing grants sooner than scheduled. Other funders said they have capacity to release pending grant installments earlier to meet any financial needs being experienced by grantee partners, as well as considering cost extensions in the event that groups are not able to complete grant activities due to restrictions imposed because of COVID-19.

**Simplifying grant application processes.** A number of funders said they were making it easier for LGBTI groups to access resources by reviewing their application process. Some specifically mentioned making it simpler and quicker to renew grants. Examples included lifting the requirement of a written proposal, and enabling the renewal of existing general support grants without requiring applications. Other funders reported that they would fast track COVID-related applications, with one funder setting up a monthly docket, with few and simple requirements, specifically for COVID-19 response grants.

**Negotiating with donors to enable grantmaker flexibility in re-granting funds.** As many of the survey participants support LGBTI organizations by re-granting funding received from government or multilateral donors or private foundations, several mentioned that they have been working with their donors to request flexibility in how resources can be spent by their grantee partners.

**Coordinating with peer donors.** A number of funders reported that they had reached out to their peer donors to coordinate efforts in supporting mutual grantee partners. One survey participant said they had been reaching out to peer donors to explore their ability to provide new funding for grantee partners, while another was engaging with other funders in order to reduce duplication of funding.

## What initial forecasting or planning have global LGBTI funders done to respond to and mitigate the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic?

Beyond the immediate grantmaking steps that funders have taken to support LGBTI organizations (outlined above), funders provided information on how they are planning and forecasting for the longer-term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Funding levels for 2020.** In a positive sign for the LGBTI movement (in the short/medium term), a number of the largest private foundations supporting global LGBTI issues reported that they do not foresee a change to their grant-making budget for this year, with some of them indicating that they are increasing their level of support to existing grantee partners. Two funders (one private and one public foundation) reported that they had either decided or were considering whether to take on any new grantee relationships in 2020. A number of funders

<sup>4</sup> All funding amounts in this brief are reported in U.S. dollars unless otherwise noted.

indicated that they would likely redirect some funds previously allocated to projects or events that are no longer feasible due to current travel/movement restrictions to respond to COVID-19-related needs.

**Continuing to monitor the situation before making plans.** Several other funders said that at this time – only a few months into the fast-evolving global pandemic – it was too early for them to forecast their future grantmaking plans. Almost all indicated that they are continuing to monitor the pandemic, with some looking at multiple financial models and projections, and others reporting that they are drawing on feedback from grantee partners and other donors to assess how to best respond. One funder reported that they are continually monitoring information and advice from global partners and health ministries as part of their forecasting on the likely impact of COVID-19 on their grantee partners.

### **Establishing an internal working group on “Mitigating Business Risks during COVID-19.”**

One funder shared that they had set up an internal cross-team working group early on in the pandemic to look at organizational fundraising, grantmaking, learning, and communications over the coming months. The working group is exploring:

- Impacts on donor giving in past crises, such as 9/11 and the 2008 financial collapse;
- Scenarios if revenue decreases by various amounts (or maintains due to increases in some areas);
- Needs of grantee partners and how to communicate these needs with external partners including the funding organization’s own donors;
- Opportunities: are there donors that haven’t supported before who may support because of this crisis?
- Online communications and fundraising strategies;
- How to support the organizing of virtual convenings;
- Contingency plans to get funds to grantee partners if banks close or collapse.

**Advocating for a rights-based response now and in the long-term.** One funder shared that they have started planning documentation and advocacy efforts to address attacks that their grantee partners may face due to being scapegoated, or through anti-rights policies and practices that may be pushed through during the upheaval created by COVID-19. The same funder was supporting work to ensure that any aid packages responding to COVID-19 are responsive and accessible to community needs. Similarly, another funder reported that they are planning work to influence how development and philanthropic actors respond in the long-term to the pandemic, by inserting the slogan, "vulnerability funding, not (siloe) health funding" into post-COVID funding discourse. They called on other funders to join them in this advocacy.

## **What new funds have been established that would be relevant to the global LGBTI movement?**

We asked survey participants if they had made new and specific funding available for civil society organizations to respond to COVID-19 and its impact on LGBTI communities in the global south and east. The following funders have made public commitments and/or put out calls for proposals for new funding related to COVID-19, of which LGBTI organizations may be eligible:

- Open Society Foundations announced a new [\\$130 million COVID emergency fund](#).<sup>5</sup>
- Gilead Sciences announced the [Gilead CARES \(COVID-19 Acute Relief and Emergency Support\) Grantee Fund](#), which will provide \$20 million in financial support to current grantees facing an imminent closure or termination of vital services due to losses attributable to the COVID-19 pandemic.

<sup>5</sup> All funds listed in this brief are reporting U.S. dollars unless otherwise noted.

- The Oak Foundation announced that they have [committed an additional \\$6 million](#) in rapid response grant-making to help their partners address the pandemic.
- [Elton John AIDS Foundation](#) has set up a COVID-19 Emergency Fund which is accepting applications for solutions that have strong potential to address specific challenges arising for people already living with or at severe risk of HIV/AIDS, and those who are now at heightened risk as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

A number of other funders reported that they have already earmarked dedicated COVID-19 emergency funds, with one having allocated \$1 million out of their current overall grantmaking budget to respond to emergency needs, and noting the potential to seek further funding from their board. Another reported that they had identified at least \$100,000 to provide emergency funding to grantee partners this year, and are hoping to increase that within the next few weeks. One funder has provided an initial allocation of €100,000 for emergency needs for each of the regions they fund. One private funder reported unlocking almost half a million euro in increased funding for LGBTI emergency response funds and regional re-granting organizations, as well as new funding for a national sex worker alliance, given the significant known impacts of COVID-19 on sex workers, many of whom are part of the LGBTI community.

Encouragingly, several other respondents shared that they are in the planning stages of establishing emergency grants programs, with some estimating how much of their existing resources are able to divert to such a program. As outlined above, a number of public foundations/NGO intermediary funders have launched fundraising campaigns, some focused on individual donors and others on institutional donors, to increase the amount of emergency and humanitarian funding they can distribute to their grantee partners. One GPP member has established a *COVID-19 Collective Care Response* fund, which aims to raise \$1 million to re-grant to its existing grantee partners.

**How can the global LGBTI philanthropic community work together to respond to COVID-19 impacts on LGBTI communities across the world? What is GPP’s role?**

To help shape GPP’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic, we asked survey participants what GPP can do in this time to be a supportive and effective resource for their organizations and the wider landscapes of philanthropy and – importantly – the global LGBTI movement. These were the top responses:

What can GPP do?	All Respondents	GPP Respondents
Monitor shifts in resource flows to LGBTI movements and communities	23/26 (89%)	17/19 (90%)
Develop field oriented policy papers for recommendations	19/26 (73%),	13/19 (68%)
Convene key philanthropic stakeholders for exploratory discussions on fund mobilization	16/26 (62%)	13/19 (68%)
Elevate the voices of GPP member organization in the broader philanthropic ecology and response spaces(co-convene webinars that have GPP members speaking, etc)	15/26 (58%)	12/19 (63%)

Given the overall survey data, the above responses, and additional feedback, GPP proposes a number of strategic directions in the coming months and years. These are described in detail throughout the following section.

## What GPP proposes to do

- Publish and disseminate this survey brief.
- Produce an additional analysis brief on the specific funding challenges facing LGBTI organizations as they respond to COVID-19.
- Undertake a follow-up to this survey in July 2020, aiming to document any shifts or trends amongst global LGBTI funders, in order to inform future planning by GPP and the global LGBTI funding community.
- Convene a meeting of interested philanthropic stakeholders to explore possibilities to mobilize new financial resources for LGBTI organizations responding to the pandemic and related challenges.
- Convene a meeting of GPP's public foundation membership to discuss the particular challenges and opportunities facing these funders in the immediate and longer-term response to COVID-19.

Several participants shared additional/more specific detail on the role that they thought GPP could play. These recommendations included:

**Convene and facilitate advocacy with large donors to influence the significant new and emerging development assistance and humanitarian assistance flows.** This included advocacy for funding responsive to LGBTI community needs, and opportunities for LGBTI organizations to be funded within these streams. A number of participants noted the importance of engaging with the humanitarian sector, which has not traditionally been inclusive of LGBTI and other marginalized groups. Further, it will be crucial to articulate a rights-based frame into engagement with large donors to ensure that structural inequities are addressed within COVID-19 response mechanisms. One participant said that it would be important to hold a more overarching discussion with all rights-based donor collaboratives as different conversations are happening separately in different spaces.

## What GPP proposes to do

- Convene a working group of GPP and non-GPP members with experience and interest in advancing advocacy with funders and implementers in the humanitarian sector about the importance of including LGBTI organizations and issues within humanitarian funding streams.
- Engage in initial one-on-one dialogue with LGBTI policy and programmatic leads in the major government and multilateral donors to understand how their institutions have responded. Provide evidence to support any internal advocacy by these leads to secure existing LGBTI funding and/or create opportunities for LGBTI groups to be considered under new funding streams responding to COVID-19.
- Through the GPP Government and Multilateral Donor Taskforce, continue monitoring government responses, and leverage existing plans for bilateral engagements with donor governments about the forthcoming *2017-2018 Global Resources Report* to provide direct recommendations about how they can effectively respond to the needs of the global LGBTI movement during and after the current crisis.

**Documenting the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the global LGBTI movement, including the funding challenges and opportunities.** A number of participants articulated a role for GPP in documenting and comparing the needs of both LGBTI groups and global LGBTI funders as related to COVID-19. This could include providing information about what funders are specifically doing to become more flexible and responsive to their grantee partners' needs, including how these changes are being embraced or challenged within their organizations. Further, the role could include providing funders with information about the specific challenges

that LGBTI groups are facing, both in terms of their own organizational infrastructures as well as their capacities to serve their constituencies and communities.

## What GPP proposes to do

- Continue to monitor shifts and trends within the grantmaking practice of GPP members through regular updates during GPP monthly standing committee, taskforce, and working group calls.
- Explore the development of partnerships with civil society organizations monitoring the impact of COVID-19 on LGBTI organizations to facilitate the distribution of up-to-date and accurate information to funders about how the pandemic is impacting LGBTI civil society and, conversely, informing civil society about the shifting policies and practices of global LGBTI funders.

**Act as a resource hub for global LGBTI funders.** Some funders asked that GPP play a role in assembling information lists related to LGBTI orgs in the global south with active COVID response programs, and international LGBTI COVID-19 funds that can be shared with grantee partners to assist them in accessing resources.

## What GPP proposes to do

- Host a Global LGBTI Philanthropy and COVID-19 resource page on the GPP website ([see page in development here](#)), that will include updates on the evidence that GPP and partners are producing, statements from GPP members and other funders about COVID-19, links to COVID-19 related funding calls, and COVID-19 fundraising appeals from our members.

## CLOSING

COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organization on March 11, 2020. In the weeks leading up to that announcement, and since, our organizations and networks (and our individual families and communities) have attempted to understand and adapt to how this new reality will impact us all in the present and in the coming months and years. Six weeks past the pandemic pronouncement, this brief provides a first look at the philanthropic response to support LGBTI communities around the world.

We can be sure that LGBTI communities around the world will be hard hit. We can be sure that our effort in this phase of assessment and urgent-response will be critical in the immediate crisis and in the long haul of recovery.

GPP is grateful to be in this work with our members and colleagues, and look forward to building a strategic path together to ensure that we create the conditions for transparent, efficient, and effective coordination and resource mobilization. This document is a first step.

## ABOUT GPP

Global Philanthropy Project (GPP) is a collaboration of funders and philanthropic advisors working to expand global philanthropic support to advance the human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) people in the Global South and East.

Established in 2009, GPP's 20 member organizations include many of the leading global funders and philanthropic advisors for LGBTI rights. As the first international cohort of LGBTI funders, GPP is internationally recognized as the primary thought leader and go-to partner for donor coordination around global LGBTI work.

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