

**EXECUTIVE
SUMMARY**

THE STATE OF TRANS ORGANIZING

3RD EDITION

2024



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The third edition of *The State of Trans Organizing* survey was launched in October 2023 and received participation from 449 respondents worldwide. The results provide illuminating insight into trans organizations' priorities, activities, needs, and experiences.¹ The survey results also document their funding sources, budget sizes, and other elements related to movement sustainability, as well as their capacity to serve trans people.²

This survey documents a period (2020–2023) with simultaneous surges of movement growth and oppositional attack, all in the context of broader upheavals impacting trans communities around the world—including wars, forced migration, and the COVID-19 pandemic.

The survey findings identify key ongoing and emergent themes:

- 1 In this report, the term “organization” refers to both autonomous (independent) groups—whether registered or unregistered—that were not part of any other group and trans-focused programs that are part of broader organizations with issue area focuses that are not exclusively trans. Where the report specifically refers to autonomous organizations or programs of broader organizations, it uses these phrases.
- 2 Trans people are those whose gender identity differs from the sex assigned to them at birth. Conversely, cis people are those whose gender identity is aligned with the sex assigned to them at birth.
- 3 In this report, “trans movement” refers to the entire universe of activists, organizations, networks, and initiatives focused on defending, promoting, and advancing trans people’s human rights. The use of the singular form of the word does not assume, by any means, homogeneity, unity, or simplicity within that universe, whose diversity is reflected throughout the report.
- 4 The term “anti-gender movement” refers to diverse stakeholders (governments, political parties, religious institutions, think tanks, traditional media and digital platforms, campaigns, mobilizations, groups, and individuals) opposing gender as a concept, a theory, a field of study, a human rights framework, and, overall, an “ideology.” The opposition to so-called “gender ideology” works against comprehensive sex education, same-sex marriage and adoption, legal gender recognition, and access to gender-affirming health care, surrogacy, and sex work. Anti-gender views can be found in the entire political spectrum, including the far right and the far left, among practitioners of many religions, and within different branches of feminism.

Trans organizations are central to broader movements for human rights, bodily autonomy, and the defense of democracy.

Worldwide, the trans movement is campaigning for the right to self-determination regarding gender identity and gender expression, for competent and affirming health care, safety from violence and repression, equitable economic opportunities, the basic right to self-organize, and more. These efforts are crucial to advance human rights, and their success or defeat also holds major implications for broader and intersecting movements.

The trans movement is under attack worldwide.³ Survey responses demonstrate dire conditions amid the escalation of anti-trans violence, discrimination, stigma, and marginalization. Nearly all trans organizations globally (90%) reported high levels of violence and harassment in person, to their communities, leadership, and gathering spaces. Additionally, during and after the time of most acute COVID-19 isolation, organizations experienced serious levels of attack and harassment in the digital/online sphere. Over two-thirds (67%) of trans organizations reported having to respond to attacks from oppositional groups or individuals, including those affiliated with the anti-gender movement,⁴ and more than one-third (36%) were responding to increased scrutiny or disruption of activities or finances by law enforcement or government agencies.

Trans organizations are working hard to meet their communities' needs, but they are extremely under-resourced.

Trans organizations reported a median of 19 sub-activities, stretching across many types of advocacy, direct service, education/training, safety/security, and arts and culture work.⁵ Many organizations play key roles in humanitarian response for their communities, and organizations of all budget sizes reported making sub-grants to individuals and other organizations. At the same time, most trans organizations reported a budget size of under \$20,000 (with 14% having zero budget).

The trans movement is growing and maturing with expansion, particularly documented across Latin America and the Caribbean and Sub-Saharan Africa. Yet most funding is still focused on the Global North.

As documented in *The State of Trans Funding* (Appendix I), most of the funding for trans populations in 2021–2022 (67%) was focused on the Global North, with 93% of those funds being focused specifically on the United States. Survey respondents in Northern America and Western Europe were also significantly more likely to receive funding from foundations and from their own governments.

This is a pivotal time to support trans organizations. Despite the major challenges facing trans organizing, the trans movement has made great gains in recent years in protective international policies and standards, especially through international human rights courts and the World Health Organization. There have also been meaningful wins in country- and local-level legislation and policies impacting trans communities.

While these gains testify to the great strength and determination of trans organizations, opposition forces are focused on eroding any advancement for the human rights of trans and gender diverse people. Ongoing support is crucial to ensure these significant wins are upheld, defended, and leveraged for further defense of trans lives. Given that the opposition's resources far outweigh those of the global trans movement, it is also critical to integrate efforts for the inclusion and protection of trans people into the agenda of broader human rights movements.

⁵ The median of a set of numbers is the value separating the higher half from the lower half; compared to the average, it is not skewed by a small proportion of extremely large or small values and, therefore, provides a better representation of the center.

Recommendations

Despite significant increases in the amount of trans funding and the number of donors supporting trans issues worldwide, *The State of Trans Organizing* survey illuminates a stark reality: most trans-focused (and especially trans-led) organizations worldwide are deeply under-resourced.

These findings are a call to action to continue building support for trans movements within philanthropic and development aid and to increase the sophistication and responsiveness of that support to more equitably meet the demonstrated needs of global trans movements.

While adequate philanthropic responses are key to supporting the trans movement, responses from other stakeholders are also extremely important for the success of that ecosystem. That is the case, for example, of agencies monitoring and evaluating the implementation of humanitarian and development programs and institutions creating and applying inclusion indexes, research agendas, training curricula, and strategies for change. In a global context characterized by the demonization of movements working in the field of sexual and reproductive rights, a truly supportive ecosystem for trans organizing requires not only providing access to effective support and protection; it also requires, more than ever, fully acknowledging trans expertise and leadership in meaningful and transformative ways.

Increase resources for the trans movement. Trans organizations need more funding, larger grant sizes, support from a broader number of donors, and more sustainable types of funding, including multiyear and core funding. Access to unrestricted support is a key component of strong, resilient, and flexible movements, capable of addressing emergencies, reacting effectively to sudden challenges and opportunities, and building reserves to ensure sustainability.

Fund trans organizations in the Global South and East. While trans organizations worldwide face funding challenges, the survey and most recent *Global Resources Report* findings demonstrate that trans organizations in the Global South and East face particularly inequitable funding conditions. Especially when world population proportions are considered, funding levels are shockingly low.

Join efforts to mobilize, activate, and defend global trans funding. Advocate for the expansion of trans funding across geographic areas and funding program “silos”—including funding focused on the defense of democracy, economic opportunities and livelihoods, health and wellbeing, humanitarian response, other intersecting

human rights issues, and arts and culture. Organizing spaces including the Global Philanthropy Project Trans and Intersex Funding Initiative⁶ and the Funders for LGBTQ Issues' Grantmakers United for Trans Communities⁷ initiative are key sites of strategic donor organizing for more and better trans funding.

Develop responsive resources to support the needs identified by trans activists. The top needs identified by most survey respondents were funding for advocacy for the human rights of trans people; to improve health care access; for policies that improve access to employment, welfare benefits, or livelihoods; and funds for movement building. *The State of Trans Funding* also identified a funding gap in most grant funding, which is focused on advocacy and organizing, while health care and other forms of direct service were key activities and priorities of many trans organizations. When it is possible to provide general operating funds, groups can be adaptive and responsive to shifting conditions. However, there are also key areas of challenge that donors may be able to address with specific resources, such as emergency funding to support evacuation and relocation or other safety and security needs.

Recognizing the internal gender diversity within trans movements, ensure funding for the entire ecosystem. *The State of Trans Funding* identified that organizations focused specifically on transfeminine, transmasculine, or other gender diverse populations within the trans umbrella were under-resourced compared to groups focused on the overall trans and gender diverse community. As in all communities, these organizing spaces can be crucial for identifying and addressing the needs of all community members, especially those most marginalized.

Ensure that philanthropic responses to the anti-gender movement are informed by trans activists. The trans movement worldwide is among the main targets and scapegoats for authoritarian and anti-rights movements. In addition to funding trans organizations to resist these attacks, trans activists and thought leaders are key partners in informing strategic responses. They should be consulted and involved in designing, implementing, and monitoring those responses.

Fund registered and unregistered organizations. Around one-quarter of trans organizations are unregistered. As civic space continues to close and anti-trans legislation continues to be instituted worldwide, the number of unregistered organizations is likely to increase. Ensuring funding gets to unregistered groups is a key strategy to keep trans movements strong in authoritarian and hostile environments. Peer funder spaces can offer a key site of shared knowledge about strategies and opportunities to support unregistered groups.

6 globalphilanthropyproject.org/initiatives/trans-and-intersex-funding

7 lgbtfunders.org/programs/gutc

Support long-term advocacy work. Trans organizations have made impressive strides in national, regional, and international advocacy, shaking seemingly immobile structures of power, injustice, and oppression. That is precisely the kind of work that requires designing, developing, and implementing long-term strategies. Access to increased support, spread over multiple years, is key to ensuring the continuity and, ultimately, the success of the trans movement in dismantling those structures.

Dive deeper into the survey findings. Some of the responses invite additional inquiry. For example, what are the main government and multilateral funding sources that many trans organizations reported? What are the dynamics of the widespread sub-granting between trans organizations of all budget sizes, individuals, and other organizations? What kinds of support are needed to address or build upon these findings?

Become an advocate. Human rights violations against trans people are an ongoing reality, and individual advocates are key to driving impactful ecosystem responses. Ask trans activists how you and/or your institution can support their work; encourage your colleagues and allies to do the same. Share your interest, knowledge, and commitment to advocating for trans people and issues to be fully included in your field.

