Shocks & Shifts

Impact of major donor funding cuts on LGBTI intermediary infrastructure

SUMMARY REPORT

GLOBAL PHILANTHROPY PROJECT

Executive Summary

Global LGBTI intermediary funders—key organizations that channel resources, strengthen local movements, and sustain essential infrastructure—are facing a period of acute instability. In July 2025, GPP surveyed 29 of the leading LGBTI intermediary funders. Their responses, combined with trends from the 2021–2022 Global Resources Report, reveal the profound and immediate effects of major donor withdrawals, particularly the rapid elimination of U.S. Government support.

In the last Global Resources Report (for years 2021–2022), the 29 participating intermediary funders accounted for more than half (54%) of the number of grants awarded for work focused on LGBTI communities in the Global South and East (GSE). Given this, the key findings in this report map the tectonic shifts in ODA and philanthropy that are influencing the global LGBTI funding ecosystem.

Major Donor Cuts Are Reshaping the Ecosystem

More than half of intermediaries reported reductions to their LGBTI-focused regranting budgets, averaging 25% cuts since 2024. Nearly 60% have experienced declines in their own organizational budgets, and one-third have already reduced staff—most losing around 20% of their workforce. The largest intermediaries, which collectively move the most funding to LGBTI movements in the Global South and East, report the steepest reductions, posing significant risks to community-based and national organizations that rely on their support.

Critical Emergency Response Capacity in Decline

One of the most alarming impacts concerns emergency response funding. The termination of U.S. Government programs—most notably Dignity for All—has severely undermined rapid-response mechanisms that protect LGBTI human rights defenders. Freedom House, once a major emergency assistance provider, has ceased operating in this space, leaving significant gaps during a period of escalating global crises.

Signs of Resilience
Despite the challenges, intermediaries maintain an average of 10–13 months of financial reserves, and only a small number have closed programs to date. Many continue to prioritize regranting to local organizations, leveraging strategic adjustments to preserve core support for frontline movements. Nevertheless, the collective capacity of intermediaries to meet growing demand is under severe strain.

Future Government Cuts Expected
Intermediaries anticipate further reductions from a number of donor governments beginning in 2026. These anticipated cuts raise significant concerns about the sustainability of global LGBTI movements amid rising authoritarianism, anti-rights agendas, and increasing security threats.

This report is a snapshot in time and provides the clearest picture yet of what intermediaries are experiencing in 2025, based on self-reported data. Through a range of upcoming research, GPP will continue to monitor and update on the shifting of the LGBTI funding landscape.

Introduction

Intermediary, or regranting, funders play a central and critical role in the global LGBTI funding ecosystem.[1] In the *2021–2022 Global Resources Report: Government & Philanthropic Support for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Intersex Communities*[2], intermediary organizations accounted for just under a third of all LGBTI funding focused outside of the U.S. Many of the largest donor governments and private foundations partner with intermediaries in order to reach national and local organizations—often in contexts where direct funding is legally challenging or politically dangerous. With deep local knowledge and trusted movement networks and partnerships, intermediaries provide not just funding but also capacity building, security support, rapid-response resources and other forms of accompaniment. Many help catalyze and are part of resilient movement infrastructure. As noted in the *Global Resources Report* methodology (and included above in this brief), there are two main intermediary sub-types: public foundations, and nongovernmental organizations, or NGOs.[3]

In a shifting funding landscape, understanding the impact of recent major donor cuts on intermediary infrastructure is critical for all actors within this ecosystem—donor governments, private philanthropy, civil society advocates and importantly, intermediary funders themselves. After a decade of continuous growth in funding for global LGBTI movements, a number of the leading donor governments and private foundations that have historically supported LGBTI movements have already or are planning to dramatically scale back their commitments. None more so than the United States Government. Under the new 2025 administration,

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[1] The definition of an intermediary funder that GPP uses is drawn from the Oak Foundation report *Resonance in a Stakeholder Ecology*, which defines an intermediary funder as an institution that receives funding from one or more donors and meets at least one of the following three criteria: 1. funds a grantee or grantees directly, 2. performs a function so important that, absent the intermediary, the funder would have to perform itself, 3. relates to grantees or a field of interest in any way that makes it act as a grant-making advisor. See Oak Foundation. (2017). *Resonance in a Stakeholder Ecology: Working Effectively with Intermediaries,* page 5. Citing Keton, A., Herzog, N., Rubalcava Shulman, M., Kimber, R. (2017), *Grantmaking Toolkit: Intermediary Partners.*

[2] Global Philanthropy Project (2024). *2021–2022 Global Resources Report*.

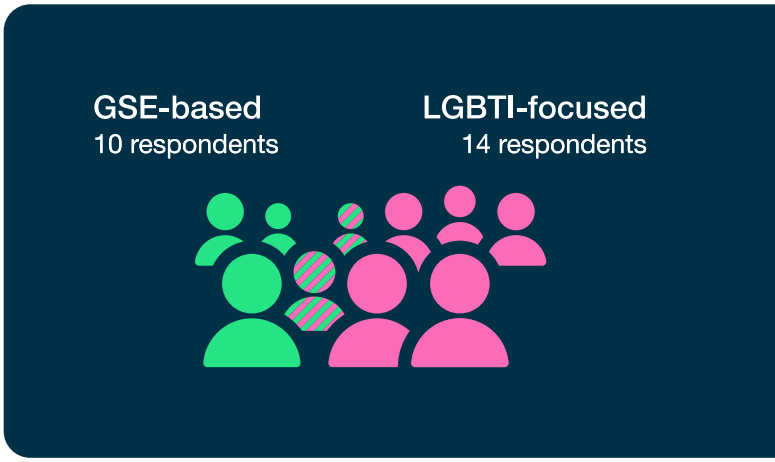
[3] Global Philanthropy Project (2021). *Diving Deeper: Under the surface of LGBTI Intermediary funding data*, page 4.

the United States Government shifted almost overnight from being one of the two largest funders of the global LGBTI movement[4] to fully withdrawing, even weaponizing previously funded programs to justify dismantling USAID and eliminating its overseas development assistance budget.

This report offers a snapshot of how shifts by major donors—particularly the U.S. Government—are affecting intermediary funders to the global LGBTI movement. Drawing on a July 2025 survey of 29 intermediaries and data from the *2021–2022 Global Resources Report*, it examines impacts on organizational health and capacity, LGBTI regranting budgets, regranting by population, and by region.

About the survey respondents

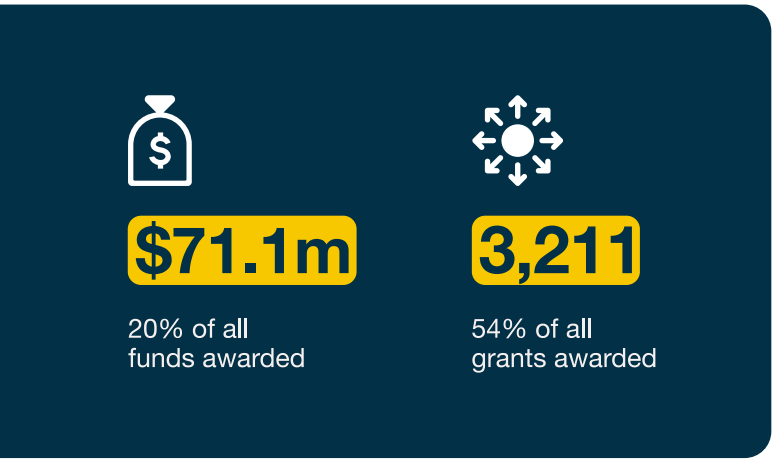
The list of intermediaries that were invited to participate in the survey were determined based on an analysis of top funders by grants awarded in 2021–2022 with a focus on the Global South and East (GSE). Some additional intermediaries were included pursuant to recommendations by GPP staff and some private foundation GPP members due to the significance of their regional or population funding impact. In total 29 intermediary funders participated in the survey. Of these, 10 (35%) are based in the GSE and 14 are primarily LGBTI-focused funders (49%), with an overlap of 4 respondents.



A few leading intermediary funders were excluded because their funding was known to originate exclusively or primarily from a donor government that was maintaining or increasing their LGBTI Official Development Assistance (ODA) funding.

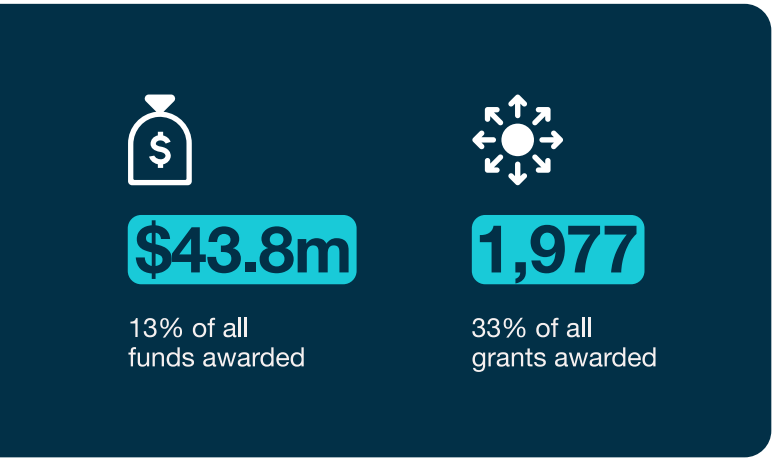
[4] According to the *2021–2022 Global Resources Report*, the United States Government was the second largest funder of global LGBTI issues outside of the U.S. The Netherlands was the largest, however, the U.S. Government total was only a partial amount, as not all U.S. government agencies that provide foreign assistance reported their LGBTI grantmaking.

Visual 1. Funds focused on LGBTI communities in the GSE by total of respondents



In the last *Global Resources Report* (for years 2021–2022), the 29 participating intermediary funders reported awarding a combined total of $71.1m in grants focused on LGBTI communities in the Global South and East (GSE). This total represented 20 percent of all funds awarded during the two-year period. In total, they provided 3,211 grants to GSE-focused work, comprising 54 percent of all grants awarded.

Visual 2. Funds focused on LGBTI communities in the GSE by top 6 respondents



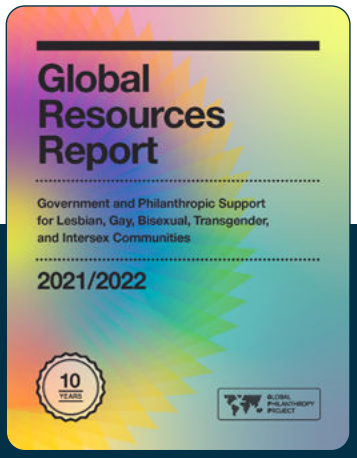
Of the 29 respondents, the six largest in terms of amounts awarded in the GSE in 2021–2022 gave a combined $43.8m, making these six funders responsible for 13 percent of all funds awarded in those two years. They accounted for a third of all grants given.

Given the amount of overall funding to the LGBTI movement in the GSE that these funders represented, particularly in terms of number of grants awarded (which primarily are awarded to LGBTI organizations working at the local and national level), the key findings in this report map the tectonic shifts in ODA and philanthropy that are influencing the global LGBTI funding ecosystem.

Methodology

Participants were sent a short survey of 13 questions (Appendix 1) about changes in organizational and LGBTI grantmaking budgets, shifts in funding by region and populations, and organizational financial health and resilience. The survey was not anonymous and was open from June 24-July 23, 2025. Once closed, survey respondents were coded according to the categories listed above, in order to identify any specific themes or trends.

Responses provided by each intermediary were then compared with their *2021–2022 Global Resources Report* (GRR) grantmaking data to identify aggregate shifts in LGBTI regranting among the cohort since 2022, as well as the anticipated impacts of shifts in their grantmaking budgets on specific regions or populations.



What is the Global Resources Report?

The *Global Resources Report* tracks donor government and philanthropic support for LGBTI communities globally every two years. It is the most comprehensive resource available on worldwide LGBTI funding, with the most recent report documenting over 20,000 grants awarded by nearly 1,300 foundations, intermediary NGOs, and corporations and by 16 donor government and multilateral agencies for LGBTI issues in the years 2021 and 2022.

How to read the data in this report?

1. All data points are for funding outside of the U.S., unless stated otherwise.

2. Any reference to the ranking of funders is based on the number of grants awarded in 2021–2022, unless stated otherwise. We have chosen to focus on this unit of analysis rather than the amount of funding awarded by funders, as it more accurately reflects the role that intermediaries play in the funding ecosystem as important sources for reaching local and national organizations

3. All amounts included are in USD.

Limitations

The findings included in this report should be read with the following limitations or caveats:

All data provided by survey respondents is based on their 2025 budgets according to the respondents' most accurate knowledge at the time and compared with their 2024 budgets. It is meant to be a snapshot in time, and given that shifts in donor government and private foundation budgets and priorities will likely continue for the rest of 2025 and in the coming few years, some of the provided budget numbers may shift.

As our primary focus was to understand which intermediary funders had been impacted by cuts from major donor governments and other funders, our questions on shifts in current organizational budget and LGBTI regranting budget compared to 2024 focused only on where decreases had occurred. Quantitative data was not collected on whether organizational and LGBTI regranting budgets had increased since 2024 and by how much. However, some organizations did report in the last open-ended question that they had seen an increase in funding.

GPP could compare 2025 survey responses on LGBTI regranting budgets with 2022 funding data from the last GRR to see which intermediaries have expanded their regranting and by how much over the last three years. However, survey questions about regional and population-level funding only asked respondents where they expected cuts. Therefore, the analysis at these levels in the report do not include data on possible areas of growth in funding by individual intermediary organizations.

As it is the most recent comprehensive analysis of global LGBTI grantmaking, GPP has used data from the *2021–2022 Global Resources Report* to understand the relative importance of each survey respondent in a particular geographic region or for a population group within the LGBTI movement. We then compared this with their anticipated cuts compared to 2024 in order to develop a picture of where donor cuts are impacting the intermediary ecosystem. Since we collected data for the last GRR, some survey respondents may have had significant changes in their funding priorities by region or population group, which would impact this analysis. However, the trend across the decade of data that has been collected through the GRR indicates that significant shifts in funding priorities are not widespread.

Further, while this cohort of intermediaries play a critical role in funding the global LGBTI movement, including by enabling funding from donor governments and private foundations to reach local and national organizations (as outlined above), changes in their LGBTI regranting only provide part of the picture of what is happening in the funding landscape. Donor governments, particularly the U.S. and the Netherlands, have also been important sources of funding for local and national groups through embassy grants. In the last GRR, these two governments alone awarded 184 grants, which was 55% of all embassy grants awarded in 2021–2022. These grants are likely not to continue, particularly from the U.S. The impact of cuts in embassy funding will also have an impact at the regional and population levels, but tracking this is beyond the scope of this report.

Key Findings

Major donor cuts are being felt across the intermediary funding ecosystem

The impact of recent cuts by major donors, particularly by the United States Government, can be seen across the field of intermediary funders. Out of the 29 intermediaries surveyed:

- Just over half (n=15) reported reductions in their LGBTI-focused regranting budgets, averaging 25% cuts since 2024. Leading funders identified reductions in LGBTI regranting budgets across key populations and regions.

- Almost six in ten respondents (59%) have seen their organizational budget reduced compared to 2024; and,

- Ten (about 34%) reported that they had laid off staff, with those doing so letting go 20% of their staff on average.

The largest regranters have been particularly hard hit

The six funders providing the most grants to LGBTI movements in the Global South and East in the *2021–2022 Global Resources Report* all reported decreases in their LGBTI regranting budget (averaging 37% cuts) and their organizational budgets (averaging 30% cuts). This means that while roughly half of the surveyed organizations are shrinking, the heaviest losses are concentrated among the funders with the widest reach.

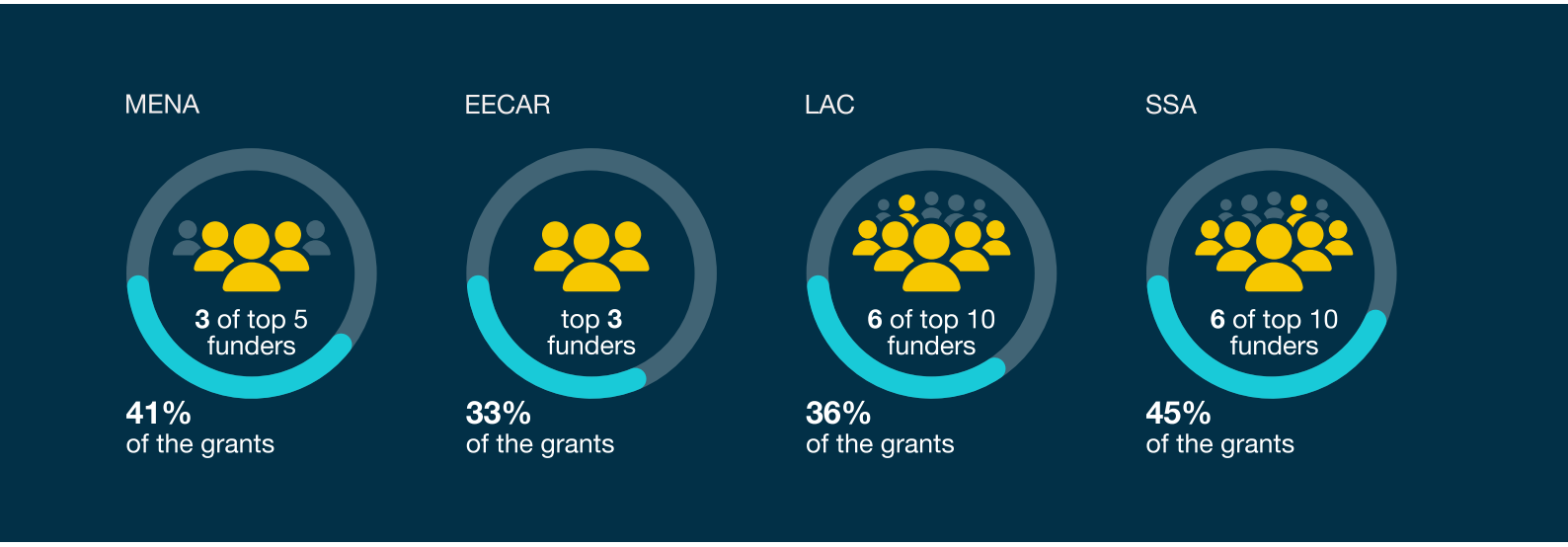
Given that these six intermediary organizations accounted for a third of all grants given by all funders in 2021–2022, the scale of reduction in their LGBTI-granting and organizational budgets will significantly limit the available funding sources for local and national LGBTI organizations in 2025 and beyond.

Cuts are happening in each region and population group, but some will be particularly impacted

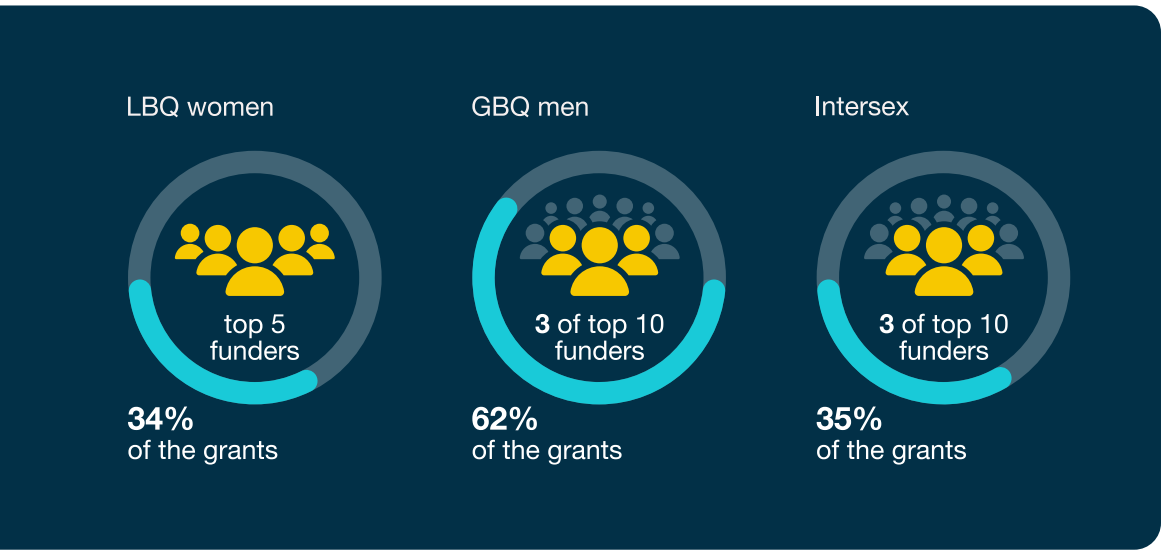
The survey shows a global pattern, though with varying impact across regions and populations.

In the Middle East and Northern Africa (MENA), three of the top five funders (who accounted for 41% of all reported grants in the region in the 2021-2022 Global Resources Report) told us that their budget for the region had decreased since 2024. In Eastern Europe, Central Asia, and Russia, the top three funders (33% of grants) reported reductions, while in Latin America and the Caribbean, six of the ten largest funders (36% of grants) noted decreases. In Sub-Saharan Africa, six leading funders (42% of grants) also reported cuts.

Visual 3. Top funders reporting reductions by region



While funding for all population groups have been impacted, it was particularly striking that the five largest LBQ women's funders (34% of grants) and three of the top ten GBQ men's funders (62% of grants) reported decreases, while three of the top ten intersex funders (35% of grants) signaled reductions in 2025.



Visual 4. Top funders reporting reductions by population

Severe impact on emergency response funding

One of the most critical findings from the survey is the **significant impact on rapid and emergency response funders**. Most starkly, the decision by the new U.S. Administration to terminate all LGBTI funding agreements under its foreign assistance meant that the Dignity for All Consortium, hosted at Freedom House, which provided rapid funding for LGBTI human rights defenders across the world, **lost its core funding and has ceased operating**. This presents a major challenge for the global LGBTI movement. Freedom House awarded a larger number of LGBTI grants in 2021–2022 than any other funder in the world, and was among the top funders in terms of the number of grants awarded across almost all population groups and geographic regions.

The cessation of the Dignity for All funding mechanism will not only mean the loss of a critical and unique funding program, it will also put additional pressure on other rapid response funders at a time when they are facing unprecedented demand. For example, several of the major rapid response funders for global LGBTI movements, including Urgent Action Fund-Africa, Urgent Action Fund-Asia Pacific and Rainbow Railroad, all reported a significant increase in applications for emergency and rapid response funding as a result of the current funding crisis.

Potential impact of future donor government cuts

As the survey focused on capturing how intermediary funders are impacted by shifts in major donor funding in mid-2025, particularly by the U.S. Government, it is important to consider that major changes may only be felt from 2026 onwards. The other largest donor government funder for the global LGBTI movement, the Netherlands, began cutting its funding for civil society in 2025, however the full impact of these cuts will not come into force until the current five year civil society partnerships that are the major source of its global human rights funding come to an end at the close of the year. Some of the surveyed intermediaries that are recipients under these partnerships have factored this into their budgets this year, while others have flagged that the uncertainty about whether they will receive further funding from the Dutch government is a major concern for their future organizational and regranting budgets.

Beyond the Netherlands, other donor governments such as the U.K., Germany, and France have been reducing their overall ODA budgets. The extent to which these cuts will flow through to reductions in their global LGBTI funding is to be determined.

There are positive signs of resilience within the intermediary ecosystem

Amid these challenges, the survey also highlights strengths within the intermediary ecosystem. Over half of respondents reported higher LGBTI regranting budgets in 2025 compared to what they awarded in 2022 (based on *2021–2022 GRR* data), and the total LGBTI regranting budget across all respondents increased from $38.9m in 2022 to $47.5m in 2025.

Financial reserves remain healthy, averaging 10 months across all respondents, with the six largest funders by number of grants awarded to LGBTI movements in the GSE averaging 13 months and Global South/East–based intermediaries averaging 12 months.

Visual 5. Financial reserves on average

Program closures remain limited, with only five of 29 intermediaries closing LGBTI programs and just one reporting the possibility of merging or winding down.

Visual 6. Program closures

While not minimizing the challenges caused by the withdrawal of U.S Government funding in 2025 and the possibility of retreat from other major donors from 2026 onwards, these factors demonstrate that many LGBTI intermediary funders have so far been able to adapt and maintain support to the global LGBTI movement.


GPP