



interAct/Credit: interAct

FUNDER BRIEFING:

THE STATE OF INTERSEX FUNDING



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND SUGGESTED CITATION

This report was written by Dave Scamell for Global Philanthropy Project.

Input and review provided by Mauro Cabral Grinspan, Sarah Gunther, Anne Gathumbi, Matthew Hart, Ezra Nepon, Jennifer Redner, Lo e Petit and Ruth Baldacchino. Andrew Wallace of Funders for LGBTQ Issues provided research analysis for data from the 2015-16 Global Resources Report. Copyediting by MaxZine Weinstein. Design by Lauren Denitzio.



When referencing this report, we recommend the following citation:

Scamell, D. (2019). *The State of Intersex Funding: Funder Briefing*. New York: Global Philanthropy Project, American Jewish World Service, Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice and GATE.

About Global Philanthropy Project: 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 and only 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.

About American Jewish World Service: American Jewish World Service (AJWS) is the leading Jewish organization working to promote human rights and end poverty in the developing world. AJWS promotes civil and political rights; advances sexual health and rights; defends land, water and climate justice; and aids communities in the aftermath of disasters. We pursue lasting change by supporting grassroots and global human rights organizations in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean and by advocating for U.S. and international policies for justice and equality worldwide.

About Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice: The Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice is the only philanthropic organization working exclusively to advance LGBTIQI rights around the globe. Through grantmaking, capacity building and leadership development, philanthropic advocacy and media and communications, we support hundreds of brilliant and brave grantee partners in the U.S. and internationally who challenge oppression and seed social change. We work for racial, economic, social and gender justice, because we all deserve to live our lives freely, without fear and with profound dignity. Astraea launched the Intersex Human Rights Fund as a core program in 2015 and serves as the fiscal host for the International Trans Fund.

About GATE: GATE is a civil society organization working internationally on gender identity, gender expression and bodily diversity issues by defending human rights, making available critical knowledge and supporting political organizing worldwide. Our areas of work include depathologization and human rights, trans and gender diverse issues in the international HIV response, movement building and socioeconomic justice, and trans, gender diverse and intersex advocacy at the United Nations.

INTERSEX¹ MOVEMENTS HAVE BEEN ACTIVE FOR OVER THIRTY YEARS, AND THE LAST DECADE has seen especially significant growth in local, regional, and global organizing, with increasing visibility and advocacy to challenge violence and discrimination on the basis of sex characteristics in many regions of the world, and in multilateral spaces like the United Nations, European Union, Council of Europe, and Organization of American States. Progress is being made. A growing chorus of international human rights bodies, civil society, and political decision makers are recognizing the serious human rights abuses faced by intersex children, youth, and adults, including non-consensual, harmful, and medically unnecessary treatments and surgeries to alter intersex people’s bodies to fit into societal expectations about “male” and “female” bodies. These medical interventions have lifelong consequences, including but not limited to sterilization and genital mutilation.

Yet, funding for intersex activism has not matched the progress made by intersex activists and allies. The state of intersex funding globally is one of an urgent scarcity of resources for those leading these human rights struggles, with only a few funders substantially supporting intersex movements.

This brief is a call to action for funders. Building on and sustaining the hard-fought gains made in recent years will require new and increased investments from funders in the fields of LGBTI rights, children and youth rights, women’s rights, disability rights, and broader health and human rights.

When comparing the funding needs and priorities of the global intersex movement with the state of intersex funding in 2015–16, several funding challenges emerge:

1. **Intersex funding is an incredibly small percentage of total global LGBTI grantmaking.**
2. **Intersex organizations are working with little financial resources and few paid staff.**
3. **Less than 10% of funders of global LGBTI issues support intersex organizations.**
4. **Funding is limited across the entire world; however, intersex groups in the Global South and East experience the greatest challenge in accessing resources.**
5. **Intersex organizations are working at multiple levels but are not being funded to do so.**
6. **Intersex organizations identify the need for increased resources for community organizing and movement building.**
7. **Very few children and youth rights funders are funding intersex organizations.**

Each of these challenges is outlined in the brief below. It should provide both funders and activists with evidence needed to drive greater attention to intersex issues within individual funding institutions and philanthropic fields, with the goal of scaling up funding levels to meet current movement needs and aligning the funding with the activist priorities.



Intersex Island at the 2018 Pride March in Iceland! Credit: Intersex Island

1 Intersex people are born with sex characteristics (including genitals, gonads, and/or chromosome patterns) that vary from typical binary notions of male or female bodies. Intersex is an umbrella term used to describe a wide range of natural bodily variations.

METHODOLOGY

This brief is based on a comparative analysis of data from two reports. The first, *The State of Intersex Organizing (2nd Edition)*, produced by American Jewish World Service, the Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice, and GATE, is based on a global survey of 54 intersex organizations in 2016 about their organizational structure and budget as well as funding needs and priorities. The report, written by Strength in Numbers Consulting Group, was published in October 2017. The second report, the *2015/2016 Global Resources Report: Government and Philanthropic Support for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Intersex Communities*, analyzed data on 12,964 grants awarded by 511 foundations, intermediaries, and corporations and by 15 government and multilateral agencies over the two-year period of 2015–16. It was published by the Global Philanthropy Project and Funders for LGBTQ Issues in April 2018.

Comparative analysis was done based on the published findings of *The State of Intersex Organizing* and a review of the original data set that was used to inform the *Global Resources Report*. All findings from *The State of Intersex Organizing* report were reviewed to determine which could be aligned with variables in the *Global Resources Report* data set to draw comparative analysis. Whereas *The State of Intersex Organizing* survey solicited data from organizations or groups that specifically and primarily exist to work with intersex people or on intersex issues, the comparative review of data from the *Global Resources Report* focused on grants that were given to intersex-specific grantees (referred to in the brief as intersex organizations) and/or to work with intersex populations (which included both intersex-specific organizations and non-intersex-specific organizations).

Given that *The State of Intersex Organizing* was a global survey including responses from the U.S., effort was made to compare data from that survey with global LGBTI funding data that included domestic U.S. funders. However, given that the funding context for LGBTI issues within the U.S. differs and is quite distinct from funding outside of the U.S. (as recognized throughout the findings of the *Global Resources Report*), in a number of instances in this brief, comparison between the two reports focuses on data for work outside of the U.S. Where this occurs, it is indicated in the text.

WHY FUND INTERSEX ORGANIZING?

Around the world, intersex people experience stigma, shame, discrimination, and violence because their bodies do not fit within societal expectations of “male” and “female.” This means that intersex people face a range of human rights violations, starting with the violation of their right to make autonomous and informed decisions about their own bodies, to be free from torture, to obtain identity documents, to enjoy sexual and reproductive rights, and to access health care, education, and employment. Intersex activists and movements have been at the forefront of highlighting these human rights issues and calling government and non-state actors to account where violations have occurred. The institutions and professionals within medical systems whose actions activists are seeking to stop are often backed by significant financial and human resources.

Intersex organizations hold expertise, informed by lived experience, which makes them well-placed to find the best solutions to the challenges they face. Importantly, such organizations are deeply connected to intersex communities and are vital to supporting their development, which is crucial for achieving sustainable and long-term improvements in the lives of intersex people. As intersex visibility increases across the globe, intersex activists and organizations are being called on by others to provide their expertise, but without sufficient funding, there is a real risk of individual burnout. This also presents a challenge to the sustainability of organizations and movements.



Africa Regional Intersex Convening at Changing Faces, Changing Spaces conference in Kenya, 2019; Credit: African Intersex Movement

KEY FINDINGS

FUNDING CHALLENGE 1

Intersex funding is an incredibly small percentage of total global LGBTI grantmaking.

Within a context of insufficient global funding for LGBTI issues, intersex issues and intersex-led organizations in particular face a crisis of funding. **Between 2015–16, across the world just 26 intersex organizations were awarded 72 grants for a combined total of only \$1,563,700² in funding. This represents only 0.29% of all global funding on LGBTI issues in those two years.**

Between 2015–16, 142 grants were awarded for work focusing on intersex issues (which includes funding to both intersex and non-intersex organizations) totaling \$3,218,500, which represents only 0.59% of all global funding on LGBTI issues in those two years. This data suggests that a substantial portion of the scarce funding for intersex work is going to LGBTI organizations who may not have intersex leadership and knowledge rather than to intersex-led organizations. It is critical that funding reach intersex activists themselves, who have lived experience and expertise about the challenges they face and the solutions that will shift their realities.

FUNDING CHALLENGE 2

Intersex organizations are working with little financial resources and few paid staff.

According to *The State of Intersex Organizing*, more than one-third (35.7%) of intersex groups had no external funding in 2016, and only about one in five (19%) received \$10,000 or more in external funding in 2016. Analysis of the *Global Resources Report* supported this, noting that only 26 organizations worldwide received at least one grant in 2015–16. This lack of external support from donors has meant that intersex organizations are working with very limited financial and human resources. More than three-quarters (76.6%) of intersex organizations reported in *The State of Intersex Organizing* that they operated with an annual budget of less than \$10,000, and less than one-third (32.0%) had any paid staff.

FUNDING CHALLENGE 3

Less than 10% of funders of global LGBTI issues supported intersex organizations in 2015–16.

Of the 142 funders that reported at least one grant on LGBTI issues outside of the U.S. in 2015–16, only 1 in 13

(7.7%) funded an intersex organization and only 12% gave a grant that focused on intersex communities. Of the top 20 foundation funders of LGBTI issues outside of the U.S., who combined account for 43% of total LGBTI funding outside of the U.S., only five³ provided at least one grant to an intersex organization and only nine⁴ provided at least one grant that focused on intersex communities.

Intermediary or regranting foundations have played a leading role in supporting the intersex movement, accounting for eight of the eleven funders that supported intersex organizations in 2015–16. One funder, the Intersex Human Rights Fund (IHRF) at the Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice, accounted for almost three-quarters (73%) of all grants to intersex organizations. It should be noted that a number of larger, private foundations as well as one government have supported the IHRF as a mechanism for reaching intersex organizations directly.

FUNDING CHALLENGE 4

Funding is very limited across the entire world, however, intersex groups in the Global South and East experience the greatest challenge in accessing resources.

According to *The State of Intersex Organizing*, groups operating in Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, the Caribbean, Central America, and South America were nearly three times as likely as those in Europe, North America, Asia and the Pacific, Australia, and New Zealand to not receive any external funding (60.0% vs. 22.2%). Similarly, a review of the very limited number of grants to intersex organizations and for intersex issues by geographical location of grantees in the *Global Resources Report* showed the particular dearth of funding going to certain regions of the world.

For example, although Asia accounts for 60% of the world's population and almost one in six of the respondents to *The State of Intersex Organizing* were from the continent, in 2015–16 intersex organizations in the region received a miniscule \$40,000 in funding. This represents only 2.6% of worldwide funding to intersex organizations over those two years. No grants were awarded to intersex organizations in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, and only \$40,000 was given to intersex organizations across the Caribbean, Central America, and South America.

2 All monetary figures in the brief are in U.S. dollars.

3 OSF, AJWS, Astraea, UHAI, Sigrid Rausing Trust

4 Hivos, OSF, Arcus, AJWS, Astraea, Sigrid Rausing Trust, Global Fund for Women, UHAI, FRI

Table 1 – Average and Median Grant Size, Total Funding, and Number of Grants to Intersex Organizations, by Region

REGION (% OF STATE OF INTERSEX ORGANIZING SURVEY RESPONDENTS)	AVERAGE GRANT SIZE (\$)	MEDIAN GRANT SIZE (\$)	TOTAL AMOUNT GIVEN TO INTERSEX ORGS (\$1,563,700)	NUMBER OF GRANTS TO INTERSEX ORGS	% OF TOTAL AMOUNT GIVEN TO INTERSEX ORGS
Europe (38.9%)	22,000	5,200	685,000	31	43.8%
Asia (16.7%)	8,000	10,000	40,400	5	2.6%
North America (16.7%)	26,200	10,000	337,400	16	21.6%
Sub-Saharan Africa (11.1%)	30,300	15,000	273,000	9	17.5%
Pacific, Australia, and New Zealand (11.1%)	31,500	8,000	189,000	6	12.1%
MENA (N/A)	0	0	0	0	0
Caribbean, Central America, and South America (N/A)	8,000	7,000	40,000	5	2.6%

FUNDING CHALLENGE 5

Intersex organizations are working at multiple levels but are not being funded to do so.

Many intersex organizations work across multiple levels in order to achieve change for their communities. Almost 40% of respondents to *The State of Intersex Organizing* indicated that they worked at the international level. There are several reasons why such a high number of intersex organizations are engaging in international work to achieve their advocacy objectives, including the opportunity of using international mechanisms as a strategy for advancing change at the national or local level, as well as the role of the internet and cross-national communication platforms in breaking isolation and building cross-border intersex movements in recent years.

Yet, according to the *Global Resources Report*, only just over one in ten (8 out of 72, or 11.1%) of grants awarded to intersex organizations in 2015–16 were for work at the international level. These eight grants totaled \$312,300, which accounts for less than one-fifth (19.97%) of total funding to intersex organizations in those two years. Intersex organizations need general, flexible support that will resource them to work where they will have most impact—whether that is within their local communities, at the national level, and/or through international policy processes.

FUNDING CHALLENGE 6

Intersex organizations need more resources for community organizing and movement building.

In many contexts, advocacy to advance intersex human rights is being led by a small number of dedicated intersex activists, where one or two persons are establishing and leading community groups or organizations. The demands placed on these activists, with limited human and financial support, presents a challenge to the sustainability of intersex movements. Nearly three-quarters (74.3%) of intersex groups reported in *The State of Intersex Organizing* that they need support in healing, anti-trauma resources, or burnout prevention for organizers. Unsurprisingly, the most common local or national activity that respondents to the survey reported they wanted to do—but could not because of a lack of resources—was community organizing in order to expand the number of people engaged in work for advancing the rights of the intersex community.

However, of the small number of grants that were given to intersex issues in 2015–16, only two (2.8%) were explicitly intended to support community organizing. The vast majority of intersex grants were awarded for advocacy (56 out of 72, or 77.8%). Funders committed to supporting intersex rights should take the long view of social change by resourc-

ing grantee partners to undertake community organizing work. While community organizing may not have the same quantifiable results as policy advocacy, it is a demonstrated priority of activists and is essential for the sustainability of the intersex rights movement.

FUNDING CHALLENGE 7

Very few children and youth rights funders are funding intersex organizations.

The prevention and prohibition of non-consensual, medically unnecessary surgeries and medical interventions on intersex babies and children is a principal focus of intersex advocacy and activism. Despite this advocacy, and although such acts have been recognized as a harmful practice by the Committee on the Rights of the Child and numerous other UN and international bodies, very few children and youth funders supported intersex organizations in 2015–16. Of

the members of the Elevate Children Funders Group, the network of leading philanthropic organizations committed to advancing philanthropy that supports children and youth facing adversity, only one (Open Society Foundations) was recorded in data from the *Global Resources Report* as providing specific funding to intersex organizations in 2015–16.

Intersex activists and organizations are shining a spotlight on the abuses experienced by intersex communities across the world. To date, they have done so with almost no resources. This is clearly unsustainable, and in order for the lives of intersex people to improve, more funders need to step up their support on intersex issues. The Global Philanthropy Project, GATE, American Jewish World Service, and the Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice call on LGBTI rights, children and youth rights, women's rights, disability rights, and broader health and human rights funders to take the challenges outlined above as opportunities to join the global movement for intersex rights.

*Intersex Island
at the 2018
Pride March in
Iceland
Credit: Intersex
Island*





Africa Regional Intersex Convening at Changing Faces, Changing Spaces conference in Kenya, 2019. Credit: African Intersex Movement



GLOBAL PHILANTHROPY PROJECT
 c/o Astraea Lesbian
 Foundation For Justice
 116 East 16th Street, 7th Floor
 New York, NY 10003
globalphilanthropyproject.org



**AMERICAN JEWISH
 WORLD SERVICE**
 45 West 36th Street
 New York, NY 10018
www.ajws.org



GATE
 576 Fifth Avenue, Suite 903
 New York, NY 10036
 USA
 Tel: 646.519.2020
transactivists.org



Astraea
 LESBIAN FOUNDATION
 FOR JUSTICE

**ASTRAEA LESBIAN
 FOUNDATION FOR
 JUSTICE**
 116 East 16th Street,
 7th Floor
 New York, NY 10003
www.astraeafoundation.org