

# Sex Worker-Led Organisations and the Sustainability of the HIV Response

Sex worker-led organisations have long been underfunded in the HIV response, despite facing a disproportionate burden of the epidemic. Now, with international donors retreating and governments expected to take ownership of domestic HIV responses, funding gaps are widening and more is at stake than ever.



## Impacts and Challenges

The shift from international to national funding raises serious concerns about sex workers' access to care. Criminalisation, stigma, and discrimination hinder access to resources and place vital community programmes at risk.

### COMMODITY SHORTAGES,

including antiretrovirals, condoms, lubricants, HIV self-testing kits, and PrEP, have been reported globally.



### DEFUNDING OF COMMUNITY-LED SERVICES



has reduced access to care, impacting outreach, referral systems, and direct service provision. Many sex worker-led organisations have cut staff and programming.

### EXCLUSION FROM NATIONAL HIV FUNDING

persists due to criminalisation, stigma, and bureaucratic barriers. Government funding often sidelines sex workers in favour of larger, non-community implementers.



### RESISTANCE AND LACK OF POLITICAL WILL

remain the norm, exacerbated by anti-rights agendas.

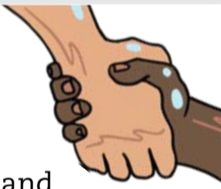


## Sex Worker-Led Strategies for Sustainability

Despite challenges, sex worker-led organisations are developing strategies to secure resources and sustain their work.

### DIVERSIFYING FUNDING:

Alternatives to international HIV donors include regional and national funds, private foundations, individual donors, and private sector partnerships. Social enterprises are being explored as both economic empowerment and community funding tools.



### GENERATING DATA:

Community-led monitoring strengthens sex worker advocacy, provides accurate data for governments, and promotes accountability in HIV programming.



**BUILDING ALLIANCES:** Sex worker-led organisations are strengthening connections with other key populations, public health institutions, government agencies, and policymakers.



**STRENGTHENING CAPACITY:** Sex worker-led organisations are prioritising capacity-building, including mentorship, technical support, and peer-to-peer learning to build skills in fundraising, governance, and finance.

## Towards Inclusive HIV Responses

A sustainable HIV response must place community-led programming at its centre.

### SEX WORKERS MUST BE MEANINGFULLY INVOLVED IN EVERY STAGE

of programme development, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation. Community-led services should remain autonomous while being recognised and funded by national health systems.



### SUSTAINABLE FINANCING REQUIRES DEDICATED LINES FOR SEX WORKER-LED SERVICES

in national HIV budgets. Governments must establish inclusive and collaborative funding mechanisms that allow sex worker-led organisations to directly access state resources.



### SEX WORKER-LED ORGANISATIONS ARE ESSENTIAL TO THE HIV RESPONSE.

Without communities at the centre, HIV responses will fall short of their goals and risk reversing decades of progress.

**Find out more on our website**

