

**SEMI-ANNUAL CONFERENCE
NEW YORK CITY
JULY 17-18, 2012**

Putting Grantees in the Driver's Seat: Grantees as Grants Decision-Makers

Wednesday July 18, 2012

2:45 pm – 5:15 pm

Rotation 1

Session Organizers:

- Annie Hillar, Director of Programmes, Mama Cash
- Heather Doyle, Director, Sexual Health and Rights Project, Open Society Foundations

Facilitators:

- Heather Doyle, Director, Sexual Health and Rights Project (SHARP), Public Health Program, Open Society Foundations;

Panelists:

- Kyoma Macklean, Women's Organization Network for Human Rights Advocacy (WONETHA) (Uganda)
- Annie Hiller, Mama Cash - Red Umbrella Fund

Sponsor:

- Mama Cash
 - Open Society Foundations
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Annie Hillar discussed the Red Umbrella Fund, a recent grant making fund run by and for sex workers aiming to promote the human rights of sex workers. Donors funding to improve the human rights and health of sex workers recognize the importance of sex worker-led groups in an appropriate and effective response. To date, however, there is a dearth of funding for such groups.

HD: Before Red Umbrella Fund, Mama Cash had been already funding sex worker-led organizations and had sponsored first ever sex worker convention. What led Mama Cash to join the Fund when you already had that capacity?

- The RUF was appealing for a number of reasons – self-led, brought marginalized populations to the forefront, and is a truly participatory/inclusive model.
 - The RUF is about mobilizing new resources vs. moving funds around.
 - Lastly, it's important to work with broad-based coalitions to shift the discourse on sex worker rights.
 - Rights Based Approach. Human rights of sex workers front and center.

Kyomya Macklean, from the Women's Organization Network for Human Rights Advocacy, discussed bad funding practices in Uganda.

- Challenge to make people understand human rights-based approach to sex work and getting donors to support sex worker rights.
 - For instance, sex workers are never put on board or organizations or in other positions related to allocating funds/making decisions.
 - Not really benefiting the sex workers because there is no autonomy.

- At the end of the day, these projects aren't successful
 - Sex workers are seen as victims, and not adults responsible for their own lives.
- Results of IHRFG surveys show donors always indicate that they're interested in structural change. How does the RUF contribute to structural change that would reduce the violence and other abuses sex workers face?
 - The process of establishing and managing the RUF is a capacity building and leadership exercise for sex workers. There are eleven governance members – seven are sex workers, four are from within the donor community. These people decide the policies for the Red Umbrella Fund.
 - Encouraging sex workers to take leadership.
 - Inclusiveness makes the work stronger.
 - Structural Change – Location in terms of governance (as diverse as possible)
 - Recognizes the power politics of language (needing to speak English, etc.) and tries to accommodate different movements, diversity of communities, etc.
 - Inherently trying to make Red Umbrella Fund a learning organization.
- Right from the beginning of the Red Umbrella Fund (pre-meetings) made sure that the funding decisions would not be taken away from sex workers. By ensuring meaningful participation, sex worker involvement was not tokenistic but rather equal.
- Red Umbrella Fund working with consultants throughout the process, including reports on the needs and resources of sex worker led groups, and a report on the pros and cons of existing funding collaborations
 - In addition to producing a bulky report, they also produced a synthesized “take-away.”, which helped activist to better understand donor jargon. Advisors were made available to meet with sex workers to get through all the points before meetings, and the documents were translated into a variety of languages.
- Donors were impressed that sex workers came to the table as informed and active participants.
 - Need to stop allowing stereotypes and preconceived notions influence us as funders and people.
- Discussions around advocacy and Red Umbrella Fund as an advocate organization
 - The Fund is not the advocate – the groups on the grounds are the advocates.
- Relationship in decision-making committee – funders and sex workers
 - Governance structure: language issues requires lots of clarification.
 - Access to privilege – Who can make a Skype call, who can make a phone call, can someone afford the long distance calls?
 - Breaking down ideas of skill sets – sex workers don't generally get masters degrees in international development.

Question: Are there spaces to have more of a discussion about sex work and the bridging of funders and sex workers?

- Core Funding – supporting movements
 - RUF likely to fund lots of new/unregistered groups. How do you marry the desire to provide core support while still working with new groups?
 - Good for the donor to know who they're working with. Getting someone on the ground to see what's going on and to know who's who.
 - Movement Building Process – accountability to movement/project

Question: If in 2017 we're here having the same discussion, what should have changed with the RUF?

- Sex worker demonstrations for parliament, showing that they are not all victims and need to be empowered.
 - Petitions, engagement in policies (national/regional/international).
 - Learning lots more about processes – reports, planning, effects on lives of sex workers. Real empowerment.
- RUF will have increased amount of money going to sex worker rights organizations, new resources.
 - The term “sex worker” is used as common parlance rather than anything else.
 - No discussion about sex worker rights being used like disability rights, women’s rights, etc. More talk about sex worker movements. Agendas being heard.
- Distinctions must be made between trafficking and sex work.

Question: Is there a space at the Red Umbrella Fund for non-funding donors?

- Yes. Just put your foot in the door and get educated, get access. Locking the process and locking the doors just makes things more difficult all around.
- Red Umbrella Fund started and continues to be a larger collaboration about learning and exchange that includes a co-fund