



Catalyzing Communities: Strengthening Philanthropic Funding for Community Action on AIDS

An executive summary of a comprehensive report available on the Funders Concerned About AIDS website.¹

Communities are at the forefront of the global HIV and AIDS response. Many of the key innovations, breakthroughs and progress on the ground would not have happened without the involvement of communities. Nearly forty years into the pandemic, community responses are still leading the way, helping to ensure that available resources are used most effectively and that the most affected groups are not left behind.

Despite this, funding for community action remains sporadic, limited, and hampered by a number of structural and contextual challenges.

- Political and legal barriers
- Closing spaces for civil society
- Complex demands placed on community based organizations (CBOs) to access funding, including legal status, complex financial management and onerous reporting
- Unwillingness to fund core operating expenses and advocacy
- Vital rapid response or crisis funding is hard to plan and quantify

A Global Call for Community Action

The UNAIDS Fast Track document reported that, in 2014, only 1% of global AIDS resources were allocated to “community mobilization.” It called for a progressive increase to 3%. The 2016 United Nations Political Declaration on AIDS called for community-led service delivery to be expanded to cover “at least 30% of all service delivery by 2030.” These UNAIDS’ targets reflect a broad consensus that community responses need to be more effectively supported.

¹ *Last Mile Funding: Improving Practice in Philanthropic Funding of Community Action on AIDS*. June 2018. Matt Greenall and Helen Parry. Available online at www.fcaids.org/what-we-do/research/community-based-organizations/

At the Funders Concerned About AIDS (FCAA) 2017 AIDS Philanthropy Summit, one question came up repeatedly: How can funders more effectively support community responses to AIDS?

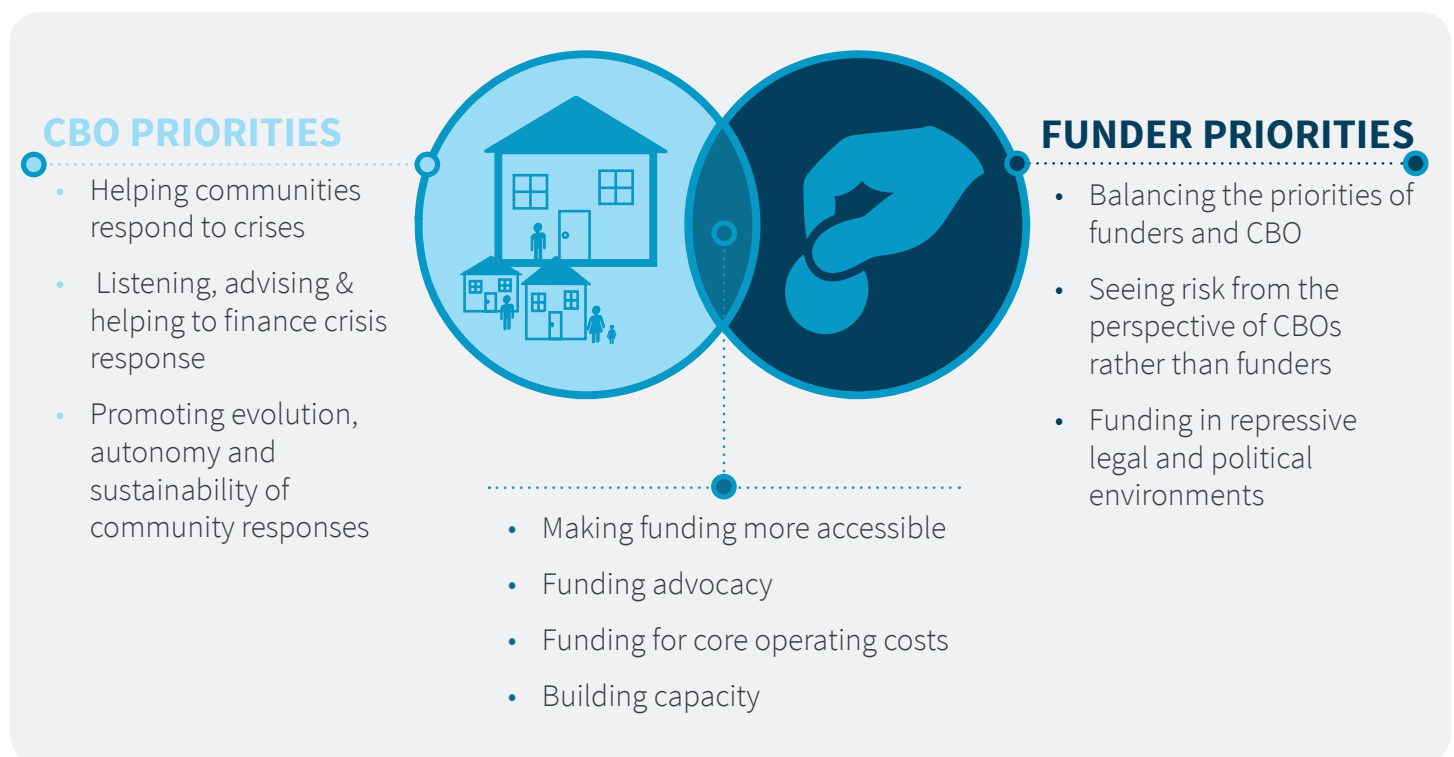
In its role as the leading voice on philanthropic resources allocated to the global AIDS epidemic, FCAA has spent the past year seeking to answer this question. We have gathered data through a comprehensive literature review and key informant interviews.² This analysis helped us to:

- Identify challenges in funding CBOs in the AIDS response
- Articulate both CBO and funder perspectives - and identify the high degree of overlap between them
- Illustrate the range of organizations involved in funding community action on HIV – what we refer to as the “funding eco-system”
- Identify the many effective practices that already exist and that are improving the way in which funding reaches CBOs

REPORT HEADLINES

1. There is a great deal of common ground to be found when looking at the priorities of CBOs and funders.

Clear areas of synergy emerged from interviews with both representatives of CBOs and funding organizations.



² *Last Mile Funding: Improving Practice in Philanthropic Funding of Community Action on AIDS*. June 2018. Matt Greenall and Helen Parry. Available online at www.fcaids.org/what-we-do/research/community-based-organizations/

2. There are many examples, from both the CBO and funder perspective, of effectively addressing these challenges.

Some of the best practices FCAA identified during its analysis include:

Making Funding More Accessible

- Tiered, multiple funding channels offering different levels, durations and modes of funding
- Collaboration between funders – sharing forms, due diligence standards & working together to create different types of opportunity

Funding Things the Right Way

- Supporting core costs based on need rather than arbitrary thresholds
- Being open to unpredictable & opportunistic advocacy efforts
- Building on a CBO's own monitoring needs & processes for reporting
- Using reports to assess changes in needs & the environment
- Showing CBOs how their reports influence practice of funders

Going Beyond Financial Support

- Providing resources that allow CBOs to design & procure capacity building/technical support for themselves
- Enabling peer support e.g. study visits & fellowships, virtual buddy systems, peer learning activities, mentoring, grantee meetings

Responding To Crises

- Being open to reprogramming
- Establishing special response funds
- Monitoring changes in the environment to help anticipate/respond to emerging crises

Promoting Evolution, Autonomy & Sustainability

- Ensuring feedback mechanisms & demonstrating that feedback has been used
- Tolerating organizational weakness & avoiding organizational collapse
- Showcasing capacity & leadership e.g. CBO participation in platforms, working groups to revise funder approaches, mentoring & TA

Funding in Repressive Legal & Political Environments

- Including support for training on safety and security and for the development of appropriate safety protocols within grants

3. Definitions are not clear-cut.

For example, how is the term “community” being defined?

- Those who share a sense of identity and common experiences?
- Individuals within a specific geography or people living in the same country or village?
- A specific demographic related to, for instance, age, gender, sexual identity or HIV status?

The answer is all of the above. Communities are complex. Therefore, our approach to funding effective community-based responses must be as well.

How do we define the wide range of organizations involved in funding community action on HIV?

There are many grey areas when it comes to defining the entities within the funding ecosystem. Definitions of “CBO,” “Intermediary” and “Funder” are complex and contain overlaps. In addition, entities may classify themselves in multiple ways: both in terms of identity (e.g. funder, CBO) and in terms of function (providing funding, community led service delivery or advocacy). All of these roles must be taken into account when determining funding approaches.

4. There is no single blueprint for the perfect donor or funding model.

There are, however, practices and approaches that have been identified as being highly beneficial by different types of CBOs. Because these examples are based on concrete experiences, funders can feel confident that they are feasible and realistic actions.

5. Opportunities for improvement exist and should be acted upon.

Clearly, CBOs play a critical role in reaching global HIV and AIDS targets. We believe that FCAA members also play a critical role – helping to enable these organizations to support community responses. Our analysis is not intended to be an exhaustive list of the recommendations for private philanthropy. But we do believe there is a great deal of potential for large institutional funders and government funders to learn from and adopt these practices.

Our hope is that the insights we have provided will help improve the ability of philanthropic organisations to support hard to reach and excluded community-based HIV and AIDS responses. We look forward to working with you in taking these ideas to fruition and in identifying new ways to support communities as we continue the fight against HIV and AIDS.



FCAA

For more information, the full report is available online at
www.fcaids.org/what-we-do/research/community-based-organizations/