Last Mile Funding:

Improving Practice In Philanthropic Funding of Community Action on AIDS.

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On behalf of Funders Concerned About AIDS

Contents

Acknowledgements

Abbreviations

CBO	Community-based organisation
KII	Key informant interview
FCAA	Funders Concerned About AIDS
PCB	Programme Coordinating Board (UNAIDS)
PEPFAR	President's Emergency Plan For AIDS Relief
PR	Principal Recipient
SR	Sub-Recipient
UNAIDS	Joint UN Program on AIDS

Executive Summary

Community action has long been acknowledged as the cornerstone to the response to the global AIDS pandemic. Many of the key innovations, breakthroughs and progress on the ground would not have happened without the involvement of communities.

Despite this, and despite significant investments in the response to AIDS over the past two decades, funding for community action has remained sporadic, limited, and hampered by a number of challenges related to the nature of the community sector, attitudes to AIDS and those affected, and the systems of funders. At the same time many community-based organisations are receiving funding in an effective manner, and many funders have managed to adapt their approaches to overcome these challenges.

Funders Concerned About AIDS, the leading voice on philanthropic resources allocated to the global AIDS epidemic, commissioned this study to better understand what effective funding for community-based action on AIDS looks like. The research team spoke to a range of community-based organisations to identify real-life examples of funder practices that they had found to be effective. The findings were enhanced through interviews with organisations involved in providing funding to community-based organisations.

While the impetus for this report was borne of concern about insufficient resources reaching community based organisations engaging in community led efforts, the findings of this effort indicate that the best response to this challenge is for funders to understand best practices in supporting community based organisations, to assess which of those they can undertake on their own, and where and when they need the assistance and expertise of others in implementing as many of those practices as possible.

The wide range of practices and examples identified should in themselves provide ideas that funders can adopt and adapt. They also demonstrate the ability of most funders to be flexible and to develop mechanisms that work for communities. The findings do not suggest a one-size-fits-all approach, but rather that a diversity of funding mechanisms is often needed to meet the needs of diverse communities. Above all, they underscore the importance of dialogue and feedback with communities, and collaboration and self-evaluation for funders.

Drawing on these findings, the final section of the report proposes some initial reflective questions that may form the basis for dialogues planned by FCAA in the near future. The report emphasises the unique role that private, philanthropic funders have played and must continue to play to enable effective community responses to AIDS.

1   Introduction

1.1   Background

Funders Concerned About AIDS (FCAA) is the leading voice on philanthropic resources allocated to the global AIDS epidemic. FCAA provides funders with the data necessary to make informed decisions on HIV and AIDS funding, and galvanizes the philanthropic sector to work collaboratively, transparently, and urgently to drive robust, focused, funding for:

- Evidence-based interventions in the treatment and prevention of HIV infection;
- Advocacy, research, and the exploration of new methods to hasten the end of AIDS; and,
- Investments that address social inequities, health disparities, and human rights abuses that fuel the spread of the epidemic.

During FCAA's 2017 Annual AIDS Philanthropy summit, a panel discussion on *Supporting community based work* pinpointed a number of challenges related to the levels of funding currently going to this critical component of the global response to AIDS. The panel and participants also spoke to challenges related to the mechanisms and procedures for funding operated by many funders, which often limit the ability of community organisations to be effective.

Following the FCAA summit a small working group was convened to take the discussion further. The group agreed that these challenges are neither new nor unique to the AIDS response, and they have been well documented. The lack of progress is a major cause for concern, particularly as the global response to AIDS faces the increasing challenge of needing to do more with less. The group also agreed that the challenge related to the volume of available funding is also already well identified, and that it is a challenge facing not just community organisations but the entire AIDS response. The group therefore decided to prioritise a new FCAA effort to track levels of resources going to community organisations, and in parallel to explore practical improvements and solutions to the problems related to funding mechanisms. The present document describes a study conducted as a first step of FCAA's efforts to address this second component.

1.2   Study overview

Purpose and rationale

The aim of this project is to improve the ability of philanthropic organisations involved in funding AIDS initiatives to support hard to reach and excluded community-based responses.

To achieve this, the project team set out to identify funding modalities and strategies that have been deemed by community-led organisations to be effective in addressing the challenges in practice, rather than simply identifying what an ideal approach could look like. This *positive deviance* approach helps ensure that the practices and insights are realistic and feasible within the common constraints that funders have.

Recognising that organisations providing funding in the AIDS response come from a variety of starting points including health, human rights, and specific population groups, and that they differ in their approaches, the study did not set out to describe a template for the ideal donor or funding model. Rather, the findings are intended to provide a menu of options that any organisation engaged in funding AIDS-related community work can learn from and, hopefully, use as a basis for adapting and improving their approaches. It is also anticipated that, by highlighting examples of good practice that funders already adopt, this will generate the basis of a broader discussion with funders to identify additional creative mechanisms to fund community-based responses.

Key research questions

The overarching questions framing the research component of this project were as follows:

Research question
Principal research question: • *How can funders more effectively support community responses to AIDS across the world?*
Funding experiences and community perspectives: • What mechanisms exist for getting funding to non-registered, local level community groups? • Which mechanisms were the most manageable and effective from the perspective of community groups and why? • What risks do community groups take on when accepting funding and how are these mitigated? • What types of effective rapid response or emergency funding are available? • How has funding contributed to capacity building? • What specific approaches can be recommended to build upon funders' existing support for community groups?
Funder procedures and constraints: • What strategies do funders have to respond and adapt to crises and shocks in countries where they operate? • What are funders currently doing in terms of donor collaboratives, and fund pooling, in order to reduce duplication and burden of applications and management? • How do risk management requirements affect funding for community groups? • What approaches exist in terms of supporting groups / collectives of grantees? • What are funders' policies with respect to overheads, salaries, core costs within grants? • How do funders incorporate capacity building within funding relationships? • How do funders establish whether grant applicants are filling gaps and effectively complementing other services on the ground? • How decentralized are the models funders use for fund decision-making? • How much scope does each funder have to change its approach?

Key concept definitions

The key concepts being addressed in this project are understood in a variety of ways by different actors. While different perspectives are valuable, it is also important to clarify the working definitions and usage of terms in this study, so that the frames of reference and

potential biases underlying the research are transparent and clearly understood. The definitions below have been developed with the experiences of the AIDS response in mind.

Community: refers to a group of individuals who share a sense of identity and common experiences. This may be based on geography (for example, people living in the same village) and/or other factors including, but not limited to age, gender, occupation, religion, ethnicity, sexual identity and HIV status. Individuals usually belong to more than one 'community' and within any community there are differences as well as similarities between members. Communities are therefore made up of a range of views and motivations that can come into conflict with each other. In the context of the AIDS response, communities can include groups with shared identity or challenges working at local level; however, they can also act at country, regional or global level.

Community action: community members acting on the challenges and needs that they face in their everyday lives in order to achieve improvements or change. The term **community responses** is also used. Community action does not necessarily require a formal organisation. Community action on health can encompass almost any activity that contributes to improving health, including involvement in direct service provision, epidemiological research or programme management. However more often, community action complements the formal health sector – for example, community mobilisation to promote the uptake of services in a community – or fills gaps by providing supplementary services where existing services do not have sufficient coverage; or provide additional services for underserved populations. Community action also often involves advocacy and activism and representation of community experiences and perspectives at community level and in decision-making forums at national, regional or even global levels.

Community based organisation (CBO): CBOs are defined as formal or informal groups originating within specific communities and working to address the needs of those communities. They can be working within a local, specific geographic area but also include national, regional or even global groupings such as key population networks. Given the scope of this study, participating CBOs were organisations receiving funding to support their work.

Community level: This term is used in order to clarify activities that are conducted in the community such as service delivery, outreach, community mobilisation and empowerment, as opposed to community-led activities that are conducted at national, regional or global levels.

Civil society: is the interface between the state and the individual, and more specifically in the context of this project between communities and health services and other government actors that influence vulnerability to HIV such as law enforcement officials and the judiciary; or between community organisations and regional or global decision makers and funders. Although the term 'civil society' does not necessarily refer to formal organisations, development partners have promoted the emergence of the sector so that community-based organisations, faith-based organisations and NGOs have in many countries become the visible face of civil society. In the context of this project, **civil society organisations (CSO)** are defined as civil society entities that can be legally contracted, funded and held to account. While civil society organisations often emerge from spontaneous community action or are responsive to community needs, this is not always the case, and marginalised sections of the

population may be just as excluded from civil society efforts as they are from public or private sector ones.

Funder. The term funder is used broadly in this study and refers to any organisation that provides financial support to community-based organisations, whether funding is the primary role of the funder or not. The term therefore does not signify an identity but rather that a given organisation provides funding among its functions. The term **donor** is used to describe organisations with a sole or primary mandate of providing funding, such as foundations.

Funding intermediary: describes those organisations that act as the interface between funders who want to invest large amounts of money in a region or country, and community-based NGOs, CBOs and networks implementing programmes directly at a local level or conducting community-led advocacy. Intermediary organisations may include UN agencies, international NGOs, national NGOs and regional networks who offer specialist knowledge of a sector and country/region and have the necessary skills and systems to oversee programme delivery and financial management and reporting. These organisations may play the role of a funder on the one hand, while also receiving other funding from donors to implement programmes directly as a 'grantee'. It is important to note that some funding models involve several intermediaries so that there is a chain of actors between the original donor or funding source and the activity being implemented.

Funding mechanism: refers to the systems and processes necessary to ensure the successful transfer of financial resources from a funder to the intended recipient or grantee.

2   Methods

2.1   Data collection

Literature review

Following feedback and suggestions from the advisory group convened by FCAA, the literature review was updated to include new sources and to expand upon the challenges outlined in the inception report (submitted in March 2018). The updated analysis is presented in Chapter 3 of this report.

Key informant interviews

Information on effective funding modalities and funder constraints were identified by means of key informant interviews (KII) with representatives of three different types of organisation: 1) community-based organisations; 2) funding intermediaries; and 3) funders. Although these three categories (CBOs, funding intermediaries and funders) were used as entry points to ensure that perspectives from organisations playing different functions were sufficiently included, many of the organisations contacted play a number of different functions with some participants falling into two or even all three categories. Consequently, the initial categorisation used to identify participants did not determine how the data was analysed in the study. For instance, where organisations interviewed from a "funder" or "funding intermediaries" starting point were also community-based or community-led, that aspect of their experience was also recorded and used to develop the chapter on community insights.

CBO participants were identified through the team's established contacts and networks, supplemented by suggestions from study advisory group members. Selection was biased towards representatives of organisations who were willing to share positive funding experiences. Participants were also selected with a view to ensuring a range of perspectives were included such as:

- Different geographical regions
- Organisations working directly at the community level, as well as community-led organisations working with a national or regional focus
- Groups led by people living with HIV
- HIV key population-led organisations and/or networks
- Criminalised and/or non-registered groups
- Organisations with AIDS as a primary focus as well as organisations working on AIDS within a broader mission or mandate.

Participants identified under the "funding intermediaries" and "funders" categories included foundations, donor organisations, pooled and thematic programmes and funds, and advocacy organisations. These participants were identified based upon CBO respondents' identification of organisations who are currently demonstrating good practice in their support and systems for CBOs and based on suggestions by FCAA and advisory group members. Participants in these categories included some with a specific HIV focus, some with a population specific focus, and some with broader mandates but with specific workstreams or programmes aimed at relevant topics such as HIV or key populations.

Key informant interviews were conducted with a total of 37 participants; including 22 coming from the CBO perspective, 7 from the funding intermediary perspective and 8 from the other funders' perspective. However, it is important to note again that many of these participants shared experiences outside of the category under which they were initially identified. The total of 37 was slightly higher than the number of initially planned interviews (33). In addition, a large number of additional potential participants was invited to participate and either did not respond or were not able to participate for a variety of reasons. In these cases, suitable replacement participants of a similar profile were identified. The full list of key informant interview participants is included in the table in the Annex.

Key informant interviews were conducted by telephone and skype using a semi-structured questionnaire, designed to identify and elicit feedback on experiences of CBO funding recipients, funding intermediaries and other funders. The questionnaires, which include introductory texts and a formal request for consent to participate in the study, are included in the annexe.

All interviews were recorded by manual note-taking and notes transcribed into an electronic version shortly afterwards and shared with interviewees for their review, input and finalisation. Interviews were conducted in English, French and Spanish; in a small number of cases these were carried out in other languages through a translator.

2.2   Data analysis

Literature review

As noted above the purpose of the literature review was to revise and update the basic presentation of funding challenges presented in the March inception report. The revised description of the challenges, included in Chapter 3 of this report, also provided a framework which was used for analysis of key informant interview data (see section below and Chapter 5).

Key informant interviews

Once confirmed by participants as an accurate record of the experiences they shared, all of the interview transcripts were reviewed jointly by the research team. Key statements from each transcript were inputted into an Excel spreadsheet by both researchers, each starting with the transcripts of the interviews conducted by the other researcher.

Following initial data entry, each individual statement was given a rough thematic coding based on the key theme/topic being referred to. Secondary analysis of the thematic coding for statements from CBO perspectives led to the identification of a smaller number of key themes relating to the relationship between CBOs and funding organisations, providing further structure to the analysis. These themes are: 1) Making funding accessible; 2) Funding the right things in the right way; 3) Going beyond financial support; 4) Responding to crises; and 5) Promoting evolution, autonomy and sustainability of community responses. Chapter 0 shares findings and community insights on good funding practices and is structured around these five key themes.

Secondary analysis of the coding for statements reflecting the perspectives of organisations involved in providing funding (funders or intermediaries) led to them being categorised according to an adapted list of challenges used to code a study conducted by the NGO Delegation to the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board[1]. This made it possible to identify how organisations involved in funding have attempted to address these commonly identified challenges. Those used in the analysis in Chapter 0 are: 1) Balancing the priorities of funders and CBOs; 2) Funding in repressive legal and political environments; 3) Alleviating registration and sophisticated financial management requirements; 4) Funding for core operating expenses; 5) Funding for advocacy; 6) Investing in CBO capacity; and 7) Seeing risk from the perspective of CBOs rather than funders.

Findings are therefore structured according to the positive experiences reported by funding recipients (Chapter 0) and according to the efforts of organisations involved in funding to address challenges (Chapter 0). As a result this report is illustrated by both points of view and provides a cross-check on which funder efforts have made a difference to funding recipients.

2.3   Limitations

The key limitations of this study that it is important to acknowledge are as follows:

- A number of participants as well as study advisory group members talked about the importance of continuing to make the basic case for community funding. While this is recognised, this study was not designed to evaluate the effectiveness of community funding and so does not address this point in detail. The underlying assumption behind the study is that FCAA members value community responses and are interested in identifying ways to support them more effectively.
- Very few unregistered CBOs participated in the study. CBOs known to the researchers and recommended for participation were generally more established and registered. However, many participants were able to discuss the experiences they had had pre-registration and the implications for smaller, newer or unregistered groups. In addition, some organisations involved in funding community groups were able to describe approaches that they used to support unregistered groups.
- As noted in section 2.2, a number of organisations contacted were not interviewed for a variety of reasons. Given the purposive approach to identifying participants, this means that some important examples of good funder practice may be missing from the study. This gap was to an extent mitigated by the identification of appropriate alternative participants.

3 Community responses to AIDS: history and challenges

3.1 History of community responses

The centrality of communities in improving health has long been recognised, and was established as a pillar of primary health care in the 1978 Alma Ata Declaration[2]. Communities should be understood as part of the "ecosystem" that builds better health, as implied by the WHO in its definition of health systems: "A health system consists of all organizations, people and actions whose primary interest is to promote, restore or maintain health."[3]

The emergence of AIDS highlighted the role of communities. Those directly affected by the epidemic responded spontaneously as it expanded, rapidly highlighting not only the disease itself but its relationship with criminalisation, stigma, and lack of access to effective interventions. Community responses combined care and support for those affected with efforts to prevent HIV infection and advocacy for the rights of those affected and for better access to treatment and other services. They often catalysed new practice in service delivery and treatment research and have inspired community activism in other health domains.

Nearly forty years into the pandemic, community responses are still often at the forefront of making sure that resources available for the global response to AIDS are used effectively. Many national strategies explicitly recognise the role of communities, and global donors and technical agencies such as the Global Fund to fight AIDS, TB and Malaria, PEPFAR, UNAIDS and WHO have guidelines and requirements to promote meaningful engagement in design, delivery and monitoring of AIDS programmes. At the same time most actors agree that effective integration of community action in national responses to AIDS remains sub-optimal, and support to community responses is fragile and not well sustained.

3.2 Challenges in ensuring effective community roles in the response to AIDS

There is still a significant gap in funding for the global HIV response, across the board, and a high level of consensus that available funding needs to increase if the ambitious target of ending AIDS by 2030 is to be achieved. In addition, many countries that have successfully scaled up AIDS programmes with the support of international development assistance funding are confronting the need, over the next few years, to find domestic funding sources to sustain and scale up their efforts, while also addressing other important health and development priorities.

While the UNAIDS Fast Track document estimated that around 1% of global AIDS resources in 2014 were allocated to "community mobilisation", and called for a progressive increase to 3%, community mobilisation is just one component of community responses[4]. Meanwhile the United Nations Political Declaration on AIDS of 2016 stated that community-led service delivery should expand to cover "at least 30% of all service delivery by 2030"[5]. In reality, accurately estimating the optimal contribution of communities to the response to AIDS, or by extension the optimal amount of resources that should be channelled to community responses, is difficult if not impossible. On the one hand it is hard to pin down what constitutes a community response, and on the other hand the priorities for community

responses are largely determined by the state of the AIDS response and the broader social and legal context in a given community or country. Nonetheless the UNAIDS targets reflect a broad consensus that community responses need to be more effectively supported.

The challenge for strengthening community responses is not solely related to the volume of available funding. There are a number of characteristics of community responses and of funding mechanisms that mean that even those resources that are available are not as effective in supporting community responses as they could be.

Some of the unique characteristics of community responses that pose the greatest challenges to funders are as follows:

- They are not inherently part of a hierarchical or organised structure, so there is rarely a central entity that can allocate and distribute funds – unlike the formal health sector. Networks of CBOs do exist but rarely include all potential community group members.
- The range of community interest groups is vast and includes those that focus on development or health more generally, or on AIDS in particular, or on specific sub-populations (such as key populations). The number of potential grantees or funding recipients for community action on AIDS is considerable, and much community action takes place at a small scale and at local level. It is unlikely that funders have the capacity to allocate and manage funding to such a large number of actions.
- One of the strengths of community action is that it emerges as a response to challenges that the community is facing. It is therefore hard to plan and quantify, unlike formal health sector or biomedical interventions. This is problematic for funding approaches that favour pre-determined deliverables or results.
- One common strategy to avoid the challenges described above is to fund through intermediaries which have the capacity to work more closely with community groups and pass funding through to them. However, this approach is often criticised as being costly, and as favouring large international NGOs to play those intermediary roles.
- In many countries there are political and legal barriers to funding community responses. These include restrictions on access to overseas funding for CBOs, difficulties in obtaining registration and banking facilities for CBOs, and the spill over effects of criminalisation and repression of key populations, which make it difficult for them to convene or establish associations or CBOs.

Many features of donor approaches also pose challenges for funding of community responses. These were described as "barriers and chokepoints" in a recent study conducted by the NGO Delegation of the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board (PCB)[6]. Some of the key issues identified in that report, in other studies on funding for community work[7,8,9], and in the interviews conducted as part of this study, are as follows:

- There is often a *disconnect between funder priorities and those of CBOs*, which results in CBOs having to decide whether funding opportunities align with their goals, and in compromising on reaching those goals in order to secure funding.
- *Requirements to have legal status and sophisticated financial management procedures* are often a barrier to small, nascent organisations receiving funding.

- *Procedures for accessing funding can be complex,* and therefore skewed towards higher capacity organisations or those with the relevant writing or language skills.
- *Onerous reporting requirements* can be time consuming and often lack relevance for CBOs, since they are often modelled on specific types of standardised project.
- *Strict risk management procedures* and risk aversion at the level of donors can result in CBOs taking on a disproportionate level of risk and therefore being vulnerable to policy and focus changes and to being penalised.
- *Limited funding for core operating expenses.* While most donors make a contribution to core operating expenses, the levels of funding are often reported to be insufficient, with CBOs often unable to negotiate an appropriate level of support.
- *Limited funding for advocacy.* A particular issue for community organisations in the AIDS response is that funding is often skewed towards service delivery and other easily quantifiable efforts, leaving social transformation and advocacy efforts under-supported.

Unlike the broader contextual challenges, funding mechanism challenges are closer to being under the funder's control since the funder has some influence over its own systems and risk appetite. These challenges tend to be particularly common in donor agencies that work at large or national scale. However, as the following chapters show, there is evidence that funders have been able to adapt to become more effective funders to community action. They also show how independent, smaller and more nimble funders have a particular opportunity and role to play in reaching small, sometimes unstructured and unregistered community groups.

3.3 Closing space for civil society

Community responses to AIDS are also increasingly facing the fundamental challenge of closing space for civil society. While international funding efforts have helped invigorate community action, increasing numbers of countries are passing legislation that restricts the actions of civil society organisations. This includes limiting the scope of their activities (for instance, to exclude human rights or advocacy related work) or constraining their ability to receive funds from external sources. In some cases, funding organisations themselves have been de-registered by national authorities or have had their ability to fund civil society organisations constrained.

At the same time, many CBOs participating in this study said that there was little prospect of them receiving funding from domestic sources, particularly for human rights and advocacy related work. In other words, some of the challenges identified in the previous sections are being compounded and accentuated. Finding creative ways to resource community responses, and capitalising on the unique roles and flexibilities of independent and private funders and foundations, is therefore as important now as it was at the start of the AIDS epidemic.

4 Community insights on good funding practices

This chapter describes the practices that participants identified as being effective in enabling them to access funds and achieve their goals. It is structured around five key elements of the relationship between CBOs and organisations that they receive funding from – these elements emerged during data analysis.

4.1 Making funding accessible

This element relates to the processes that funders put in place to deliver funding to CBOs. It includes aspects such as identification and selection of grantees, application forms and processes, due diligence, project or proposal review and selection criteria. Many CBOs report that these processes can be challenging in a number of ways – for instance because they are onerous, inaccessible, or because they favour stronger, established organisations such as NGOs. However, as this section shows, study participants identified a host of ways in which funders have taken account of their capacities and situations and made funding more accessible to them.

Applying appropriate eligibility conditions

Accessing funding begins with eligibility. Because funders are often limited by organisational policies or even legal requirements that grant recipients should have past experience managing funds, existence of official records such as registration and audits, or bank accounts, this can limit access to funding opportunities for small, nascent groups.

One reportedly successful approach to mitigating this is when ***funders establish differentiated or tailored funding modalities***, with different funding streams allocated to different purposes. Examples include:

- Providing funds in forms other than organisational grants, such as fellowships for individual community leaders, social entrepreneurs or informal social groups, doing away with the need for a contractual relationship between organisations.
- Making different types of grant or funding available with eligibility thresholds tailored for different types of applicants and different levels of funding – for instance, making small "first time" grants with low eligibility thresholds.
- Providing funding for organisational start-ups, including for legal costs of registration, banking and offices. This type of support also helps new organisations become eligible more quickly to other funders.
- Working through intermediaries is discussed in more detail in subsequent sections; however, CBOs also gave examples of international funders establishing contracts with eligible intermediary organisations working at national or subnational level, and allowing the intermediary to use funds flexibly to support groups which do not fulfil the usual criteria. One interviewed CBO pointed out that donor-country embassy funds often play this role, acting as a stepping stone for groups eventually receiving funding from donor-country funding agencies.

Funders' due diligence requirements are closely related to eligibility issues. As well as the fact that many of the CBOs that need funding may not fulfil such requirements, due diligence processes are also often costly and onerous both for funders and grantees. CBOs mentioned

that *some funders have shown flexibility by reducing or doing away with due diligence requirements, particularly when dealing with modest funding levels* – which again relates to tiered funding as noted above.

They also cited *funders who use due diligence not to rule out possible grantees but as a basis for establishing the type of support that grant funding should include*. In other words, funders which have a mission of building community capacity embrace the lowest capacity candidates for funding rather than gravitating to the strongest ones.

Establishing common standards for due diligence between funders and accepting the due diligence results of other funders was also cited as a positive practical example of how to reduce the burden of due diligence. One potential risk of this approach – albeit not one mentioned by participants in this study – is that any CBO deemed ineligible by one funder might therefore automatically be disqualified by others.

CBOs themselves have developed strategies for overcoming eligibility and minimum capacity barriers. Some key population communities in the context of AIDS face laws criminalising their identity or behaviours, making registration even less accessible. *Many groups that have achieved registration stated that they were discrete in their choice of name or description of their purpose*. This could mean for instance an LGBTI group not specifically referring to sexual orientation or identity but describing itself in more general terms, to avoid drawing negative attention. In other cases, *communities have opted to form private companies or social enterprises rather than NGOs or CBOs* since the path to registration is simpler, there are often fewer restrictions on their activities, and it can even open the door to being subcontracted by government agencies. This tactic has proved viable for CBOs whose primary purpose is service delivery as opposed to advocacy or human rights promotion.

While being discrete about the true purpose of an organisation is seen as something of a compromise since it means to some extent accepting stigma, it has helped some movements to become more established. A number of study participants described close partnerships and linkages between formal, registered NGOs or companies whose name and primary focus was deemed acceptable enough by authorities to allow them to register, and informal, advocacy and human rights focused groups. Indeed, one example was given of a chief executive of a service provision organisation also being a member of the informal CBO, and therefore being able to use the formal organisation to support the work of the informal one.

Many participants also mentioned receiving *support from funders for the process of registration*, which in some cases involved successfully supporting legal challenges to the authorities when registration is refused. This is clearly a positive contribution that engaged funders can make.

Finally, on the topic of eligibility, a number of participants raised concerns about funders withdrawing support from organisations in countries that fall into middle income brackets and higher. They welcomed *the continued engagement of some funders in funding communities in countries no longer benefiting from funding from large bilateral HIV funders and programmes* (such as the Global Fund and PEPFAR), emphasising that these are some of the contexts where excluded populations most need continued support for community action.

Making application processes accessible

Unsurprisingly, CBOs have a preference for **straightforward funding application procedures with as short a turnaround as possible between request and decision**. This is because weaker-capacity organisations are not always conversant with typical project vocabulary and concepts, and because community needs tend to evolve and change rapidly, and most small CBOs have short timelines for their priorities. Funding received months or even years after an initial proposal was designed may no longer be addressing relevant priorities.

Participants talked about what the most effective procedures look like in their experience. As well as being easier to complete, **clear, simple templates allow CBOs to evaluate themselves and the soundness of their programme** before they submit a request. At the same time no CBO asked for procedures to be devoid of content. One example given was when templates encourage applicants to highlight potential gaps in their capacity that they may not have considered – an approach that helps them think through what will be required not just to be awarded funds but to use those funds effectively. On the other hand, budget and outcome templates were cited as components which ask for unnecessary levels of detail or which are not realistic since needs may change over the course of a grant (the issue of flexibility is dealt with in more detail below) and since the precise outcomes of advocacy or mobilisation activities are impossible to predict.

Other examples of helpful application processes included **availability of instructions and forms and the ability to apply in local languages** and, if complex terminology is used, a clear glossary of key terms. While some participants highlighted the ease of use of **online application portals** others flagged that these can disenfranchise groups with poor internet connectivity. **Dissemination of funding opportunities** was also seen as critical with some participants stating that they had managed to obtain funding from funders they had never come across, thanks to those funders' effective dissemination approach, which in this case involved using civil society and community networks and listservs as well as making information available on their website in a range of languages.

A number of participants appreciate **facilitated application processes**, whereby funding organisations organise programme development activities, or "write-shops", during which different CBOs work together to develop programmes, critiquing and improving each other's work. Facilitated processes tend to focus on ensuring every candidate CBO has a fundable proposal, rather than taking a competitive approach that seeks to identify the best proposals. Examples were given of processes involving CBOs from just one country or community as well as processes involving organisations from multiple countries. In the latter case the write-shop was financed by the funder but organised and facilitated by the CBOs themselves. In some examples, participating CBOs had been shortlisted following submission of an initial brief concept note. Advantages from the funder perspective include the ability to benchmark quality of applications between different CBOs as well as achieving coherence across the portfolio of projects. From the point of view of a CBO this means that the time investment will be worthwhile; in addition, collective processes enable learning and the development of a stronger understanding of the funder. The intensive work process can also lead to quicker disbursement of funds.

Other examples of favoured approaches included those with open timelines, since deadlines and cycles do not always fit with the schedules and priorities of CBOs. ***Smaller, flexible funding pots that are available at any time to respond rapidly to emerging needs were cited*** and may be viable for funders that are able to operate different types and scale of grants alongside each other.

Many granting processes involve independent expert review of applications. CBOs provided examples of review processes that were validating, positive experiences. One cited example was that of ***peer review of applications***, with some or all review panel members being from the same communities that applicants represent. This is a principle of participatory grant-making and helps ensure applications are reviewed by people with similar lived experiences to the applicant. Clearly it is not easy for a review panel to be made up of representatives of every type of community, and the examples cited were from funders focused on reaching specific groups such as LGBTI people or sex workers. Funders that operate this principle monitor and manage any potential conflicts of interest, such as associations between reviewers and applicants.

CBOs also value funders who actively engage with them through the application review process. Examples given included the use of ***collective webinars (for all applicants) as well as individual phone calls, and even visits to the CBO to support clarification of requirements and revision or clarification of applications***. As well as helping to strengthen applications, this approach was also felt to help funders better understand the context within which potential grantees operate, and to identify potential in CBOs that that may not have the ability to develop a sophisticated proposal. The approach contrasts with formal, deadline-based processes where proposals are rejected without scope for corrections or improvements.

Following on from the application review process, ***CBOs also emphasised the importance of receiving feedback even to unsuccessful funding applications***; according to study participants a minority of funders provide effective feedback.

Section 4.3 below discusses the positive role funders can play in providing non-financial support in more detail. However, a number of CBOs spoke specifically about ***the role of funders in supporting them at the proposal development stage***. Beyond dialogue during the review process (as described above) examples included hands-on visits from staff or consultants to facilitate proposal development, or the provision of small amounts of funding to enable applicants to arrange support themselves. Provision of this type of support can be systematic; however, one CBO described a situation where an online form was difficult to fill because of connectivity problems, and where the funder was flexible enough to allow its own staff to submit the content through the system.

4.2 Funding the right things in the right way

CBOs – and other respondents – talked a lot about the types of activities that can be funded: in other words, what gets funded in terms of types of cost and types of activity. They also talked about the conditions and procedures for implementing grants or other types of financial support. Although these two areas are quite different, they both relate to the implementation of funding by CBOs. The common thread between them is the ability of

funders to establish guidelines and processes that enable CBOs to work effectively. Some of these are discussed in this section.

Funding the right things

One of the critical needs of CBOs is support for core costs which can include administration, salaries, rental or equipment. CBOs interviewed for this study confirmed that overall, while most funders make a contribution, the level of contribution is for the most part too low. This is particularly the case when funders agree to support a proportion of costs in the expectation that other funding sources will also pay a share. The outcome is often that some of these costs remain uncovered, leading to general instability in the organisation and low morale and high turnover among staff. Part of the challenge is that many funders have a policy establishing a maximum percentage of their contribution that can cover these costs. Study participants therefore acknowledged that **some funders agree their core cost contribution levels based on actual needs, since these needs vary for each CBO and context**. Funders which invest specifically in establishing or strengthening community movements are more likely to take this approach, and **some even allow for all of their funding to cover the basic operations of the CBO, at least during a start-up phase**. This approach is more likely to be adopted by donors which can provide funding against an overall objective (regardless of how funding is spent) rather than being related to specific outputs or deliverables.

Some study participants pointed out the importance of CBO capacity and experience in ensuring appropriate levels of funding for core or running costs. Those with more experience working with funders are often more able to assess their funding needs, better placed to negotiate, and more likely to have the confidence to turn down funding opportunities that do not cover their costs. Conversely, younger and less experienced organisations may accept opportunities that put them at high risk of failure because not all costs are covered, or funding is not sufficient to achieve objectives.

Many of the CBOs interviewed have advocacy goals, often in relation to human rights and key populations. The existence of funding pools dedicated to supporting advocacy was identified as being extremely valuable. These can take the forms of specific advocacy challenge funds or programmes within a funder's broader programme, or as part of collaborative multi-funder efforts. Some funders focus entirely on advocacy. Critically, CBOs pointed out that **the most effective funders of advocacy recognise the non-linear, opportunistic and unpredictable nature of effective advocacy, and are therefore prepared to support efforts with uncertain workplans and objectives**. This differs from the standard project-funding model and so tends to involve a shift in approach or policy on the part of the funders concerned.

Linked to this, CBOs talked about the importance of having funders who support programmes that other funders don't want to touch – advocacy, key community empowerment, and operating costs were among the examples given.

A final important element of "funding the right things" relates to the relative influence that funders have on the content or priorities of a given grant. Cleary, funders that have decided to direct support to community AIDS responses or key populations have already determined strategic priorities. **CBOs interviewed emphasised the importance of funders or funding programmes dedicated to their area of work which would be neglected under a more**

general funding approach. Within an overall funding framework however, they said that some but not all funders recognise the importance of allowing CBOs to define their specific priorities and activities. ***CBOs valued partnerships with funders who allowed them leeway and freedom to identify priorities as they emerge and implement their work and adapt to local contexts***. These funders accepted that CBO projects may not always turn out as planned, striking a balance between prioritising neglected issues at the strategic level but enabling autonomy at the level of action. One practical example was that of funders accepting that key population CBOs are best placed to define who is part of their community: rigid or narrow funder definitions of sex workers, for instance, can limit the ability of sex worker organisations to reach people involved in the sex trade that do not identify as sex workers.

Funding things in the right way

Funding conditions and contractual requirements have a significant influence on CBOs receiving funding. In discussions with CBOs it was clear that non-government funders, such as foundations or NGOs, exercise a great deal more flexibility than government funders and therefore play a unique role in the funder landscape.

CBOs recognised that all funders have conditions and requirements but were able to describe examples of practices that were more enabling. These included ***having a say in or even being able to determine conditions such as fund disbursement and reporting schedules and formats***, which meant they could adapt these to their own cashflow needs and ensure reports are more relevant. In some cases, funders agree to adjust disbursement schedules over the course of a grant, in recognition of the fact that workplans and priorities can shift over time and that CBOs often need to change their plans in order to be able to respond quickly to advocacy or other action opportunities. Cashflow is a common problem for small organisations and so ***CBOs prefer to partner with funders who are prepared to provide up front funding (even if provided in tranches) rather than a reimbursable approach*** or one where final disbursements are conditional on final report submission. CBOs also noted that funders that are not able to be flexible on disbursement schedules have managed nonetheless to ***mitigate the risk of funding interruptions by adopting a policy of disbursing well in advance of agreed schedules***. Another related example aimed at reducing interruptions or temporary cessation of programmes was the policy of some funders to provide "stop-gap" funding between grants – particularly important in the context of treatment programmes where lack of continuity can be life-threatening.

While flexibility to change and adapt workplans and budgets is understandably favoured by CBOs, they also recognise the need for funders to maintain some oversight. These needs are balanced by ***donors allowing a fairly high threshold of autonomy for grantees to make changes, as well as committing to quick review and turnaround of requests for more substantial changes***. Funders that provide support against overall objectives rather than specific workplans or budgets find it easier to put in place flexibilities like these.

CBO participants were asked about contractual restrictions imposed by funders. Although some mentioned the "Gag rule" and prostitution pledge associated with US government funding, as well as one example of a requirement that a grantee should make a declaration stating that staff do not consume illicit drugs, CBOs stated that most funders imposed no such restrictions.

Reporting as a supportive process

Although most analyses identify reporting as a common challenge for CBOs, most participants in this study saw reporting processes as positive and an opportunity to reflect upon implementation for both the CBO and the funder. **In some cases, CBOs see direct evidence that funders use grant reports to improve their own approaches – in one case this meant the donor extending grant durations to increase the chances of results being achieved.** Seeing changes like this is validating for the CBOs and shows a willingness on the part of funders to adapt to the challenges being faced by their partners.

Those most comfortable with reporting were the organisations with established monitoring procedures of their own, meaning that onward reporting was for the most part simply a matter of inputting existing data into the relevant format. **The key good practice was for donors to ensure their requirements are realistic and commensurate with the levels of funding being provided, and that they are aligned with the CBO's work and that facilitate learning**. This approach is more common among funders or funding programmes with a specific mandate. CBOs also emphasised the importance of **reporting templates not being changed** by funders over the course of a project, of **reasonable reporting schedules (ideally agreed with grantee input)**, and of **ensuring templates use technology that is appropriate to the grantee and the context** (for instance, finding alternatives to online reporting when it is not realistic). Enabling grantees to participate in the design or improvement of reporting templates was also reported as a good funder practice, as was providing technical assistance for reporting when needed.

Funder approaches to reporting can also support some of the positive practices described earlier in this section. For instance, reporting templates can include a section that allows grantees to describe planned changes. More ambitiously, rather than focusing only on recording activities or outcomes of funding, **some funders design their report frameworks to capture changes in the context, and in this way can enable both grantees and funders to identify and justify changes to workplans and budgets**. This is particularly important for grants that aim to effect social or contextual change to improve the lives of excluded or key populations.

Funding through specialist intermediaries

There are many ways that funders support CBOs through intermediaries. For some funders, despite their commitment to community HIV funding, it is simply not realistic for them to work directly with large numbers of community-based organisations. Intermediaries can bring technical know-how as well as practical contributions such as language skills and geographic proximity. At the same time, intermediary models are often criticised as being resource intensive, increasing transaction costs, and in some cases, they are seen as adding a layer of complexity and burden to funding relationships. However, as the next chapter discusses, most funding goes through at least one intermediary step. Participants interviewed in this study identified some of the beneficial ways of funding through intermediaries.

One form of intermediary funding often used in the case of young, low-capacity or unregistered CBOs with limited grant management experience is fiscal hosting whereby funders sign a contract with a third-party organisation which takes care of financial

management and pays directly for outgoings or disburses cash to the CBO on an activity-by-activity basis. ***Many interviewed CBOs acknowledged that fiscal hosting can be necessary at early stages, and that in some highly restrictive CBO or key population environments, it is the only way any resources will get to CBOs***. However, many felt that it limits their autonomy and can be associated with rigid workplans. ***Moving as soon as possible to a direct funding relationship was seen as an important mark of CBO maturity and funder trust***. It is also important to acknowledge that some mature organisations preferred the arrangement as it enables them to focus on community level work and to leave onerous management tasks to the host. As one participant said, "People living with HIV who are vulnerable may be made more vulnerable if they have to handle funds". Others acknowledged that ***some intermediaries effectively mediate some of the more onerous requirements of funders and develop granting approaches that are adapted to CBO needs***. An essential principle was therefore to agree the approach with the CBOs themselves.

Participants also noted that ***the use of fiscal host or intermediary arrangements does not necessarily mean the funder has to disengage from the relationship with the CBO*** – and many referred directly to the principal funder rather than the intermediary organisation with whom they signed a contract. ***Some funders working through intermediaries maintain close contact with CBOs through partners meetings, or project visits, despite being one or more steps removed from the CBO.***

It was also noted that many organisations playing an intermediary funding role are themselves community-based – this is often the case for collective, thematic funds established for the purpose of supporting (both financially and more generally) work in a given community or on a given theme. ***Community-based organisations involved in providing funding are more likely to engage community groups in defining their strategies and approaches***. CBOs acknowledged that these funding programmes often bring a strong understanding of their needs, and therefore welcome the efforts of ***funders who work through intermediaries or hosts which are community based or have a strong affinity with the communities they are being tasked to support***.

4.3   Going beyond financial support

Many funders provide more than just funding. ***Provision or facilitation of appropriate technical assistance, mentoring, training and other forms of capacity building as part of a relationship with a funder is seen as essential by many CBOs***. As noted in previous sections, many of the CBOs interviewed had received support from funders that was explicitly aimed at growing or strengthening a specific community movement or sector. In these cases, mentoring, technical assistance and capacity is built in to the funding approach. However, many funders with broader mandates also recognise the importance of non-financial support.

Capacity building and technical assistance

The term "capacity building" encapsulates a wide range of interventions. ***Some funders provide grantees with a programme of training and input on specific thematic topics, which is welcomed providing it focuses on CBOs' needs, such as those identified during the grant application process.*** On the other hand, CBOs were critical of capacity building

efforts designed primarily to ensure that CBOs met donor grant management standards or priorities. ***They also welcomed an approach to capacity building that allows for reactive support, for instance to address needs that had not been anticipated***. It was noted that these unplanned needs can be relatively mundane – for instance information technology challenges – but no less essential to address. ***Continuous dialogue on support needs, evaluation of the effectiveness of support, and development and regular updating of support plans, was viewed as an important part of the funder relationship***.

Examples of effective technical assistance also included the provision of assistance related directly to the activities being funded in the grant. One of the examples was of support to pay for the services of legal experts to facilitate registration or litigation activities – it was also noted in this case that ***the funder's provision of resources that the CBO could use to identify its own support provider, rather than the support being provided by the funder directly, was a good practice***. As noted in section 4.1, technical support even before granting, for instance to support proposal or programme development, is a highly beneficial approach.

Building peer support

One area where some funders have added value is by promoting peer support to grantees. ***The primary mechanism for enabling peer support is by funding opportunities for CBOs from different communities or regions to work together: study visits and fellowships, virtual buddy systems, peer learning activities, mentoring between more and less experienced CBOs, and grantee meetings***. This needn't replace other forms of capacity building and technical support, and some funders do both in parallel – albeit always considering peer support as the default option before providing support from other sources.

4.4   Responding to crises

CBOs involved in the HIV response – in particular those working on the intersection between HIV and human rights, with criminalised populations, and in restrictive environments – operate in unpredictable contexts and often face crises or the need to deal with emergencies. These can include interruptions in essential services for key populations, abuse or violence, arrests or other legal emergencies. These challenges are compounded by the issue of closing space for civil society, discussed in section 3.3. Funders can also play a role in supporting CBOs to deal with these situations.

Listening and advising

CBO participants said that as a starting point, ***having funders who they knew were aware of the precarity of their situation and were prepared to hear about and discuss crises had been critical***. For this to happen, regular and close communication lines must exist between the CBO and the funder. Because many funders support work in multiple countries, they are often able to share advice and experiences from similar situations.

Intervening with authorities and other country-based stakeholders

Not every funder has political leverage at country level – indeed in some cases, it can be inappropriate or even counterproductive for NGOs or foundations involved in funding human

rights advocacy to try to intervene when their grantees face a crisis. However, ***CBOs shared examples of their funders sharing information and concerns with stakeholders that do have political influence and open communication channels with authorities, such as embassies, UN agencies or larger multilateral donors, and thereby generating their commitment to addressing crises***. A well-documented example of this was the dialogue with the Ugandan government which led to the suspension of the Anti-homosexuality Act in 2014. Conversely, some interviewed CBOs warned that funders should always take their lead from local community activists; again, in reference to Uganda, local LGBTI groups had argued against withdrawal of funding since it would punish the Ugandan population rather than the government. ***CBOs also mentioned examples of their funders linking them to emergency funds from other funding sources or to specialist support at country level***.

Financing crisis responses

Funding of crisis response is also an extremely important aspect of support. Previous sections have discussed the value that CBOs place on being able to implement flexibly and reorient grant funds in response to changes in the environment. ***Some funders make it clear that certain situations – such as the need for emergency legal assistance when CBO members are arrested or emergency evacuations to avoid risk of arrest or violence – justify reorientation of funds even without authorisation***. Similarly, CBOs reported examples of ***funders being prepared to rapidly authorise changes or provide additional funding when emergencies arise***.

Although emergencies of this sort are unfortunately expected in a number of the countries represented in this study, CBOs pointed out that it is very difficult to predict or anticipate the timing. ***The availability of emergency or rapid response funding was therefore noted as a vital part of the funding landscape***, although it was also noted that having emergency funds locally available would increase their accessibility (emergency funds tend to be internationally-based).

Some CBOs are giving thought to how to better anticipate emergencies, so that they can ensure that grant or organisational funds are set aside for quick responses – while at the same time avoiding the risk of leaving grant funds unspent and having to return them to funders. They point out that while crises are largely unpredictable, they are starting to find ways to anticipate them by adapting their monitoring to look not only at their own work but at the environment. As noted in the section on reporting above, ***some funders have also started to integrate this type of monitoring in their own reporting frameworks, in order to make themselves more aware of potential crises***, and therefore enabling them to plan contingencies into grants.

A final key message to emerge from this part of the discussion with study interviewees was that the availability of a range of types of emergency support – all of the examples listed above – helps increase the chances that a given CBO will be able to access support as soon as possible when it is needed.

4.5 Promoting evolution, autonomy and sustainability of community responses

What links many of the examples of good funder practices described in the sections above is an underlying commitment on the part of funders to develop a relationship that goes beyond grant-making towards a partnership. Strong partnerships are those that promote the growth and autonomy of CBOs; the study identified several additional examples of how funders do this in practice.

Engaging with and learning from CBO partners

Some of the points raised by CBOs seem obvious but are worth recording since not all funders adhere to them. ***Respectful engagement, according to study participants, starts with the basics such as taking calls and answering emails and requests quickly***. Given the constant threat of crisis for many CBOs involved in HIV and human rights work, open communication lines are critical.

According to many interviewed CBOs, true partnerships develop with funders when they can interact directly, beyond contracts, reports and disbursements. ***Participating in partners meetings convened by funders, and receiving visits from funders, both help to validate experience and strengthen mutual understanding***. CBOs said that they welcomed these interactions, and the opportunities they provide to help funders understand their contexts and realities. For instance, barriers related to CBO registration (discussed in a previous section above) are often quite specific to the political and legal situation in a country: an engaged funder seeks to understand the precise situation in a given country and to adapt its funding methods and mechanisms so that CBOs can receive the support they need. ***Close engagement with partners has also helped funders be aware of and anticipate emergencies***, as discussed earlier on. An important example of this is donor awareness of the situation for community responses in countries that are transitioning away from major aid funding streams.

While the importance of regular communication between funders and CBO partners is understood, interviewed ***CBOs also spoke to the usefulness of formal mechanisms for giving feedback to funders*** – including suggestion boxes, evaluations and surveys, some of which can be administered confidentially. One particularly interesting example was that of a CBO being involved in the evaluation of the funder. Just as important is the commitment from funders to act on feedback: ***some CBOs reported that they had seen evidence that their feedback had been taken on board and positively influenced funder practice***. A strong partnership approach by funders also recognises the importance of disagreements and contentious discussions.

Taking risks and tolerating failure

Many funders are risk averse in their approach, in particular when they have been given the responsibility to safeguard the use of funds from external sources. (There are some indications that endowed foundations are able to take a more flexible approach to risk). CBOs participating in this study pointed out several ways in which their own work is risky – not only in terms of financial management but in terms of personal and organisational security. ***They***

therefore welcomed the support of funders that are prepared to acknowledge these risks and tolerate uncertainty, and to take a pragmatic approach to dealing with situations that breach their own due diligence protocols. CBOs may confront issues related to financial mismanagement, misuse of funds, and even disputes leading to the collapse of management or governance. A common outcome is the collapse of the organisation itself. However, examples were given of situations where funders with strong relationships, and with a commitment to keeping movements alive, had given these CBOs the space, resources and opportunity to regroup. As one community-based funder put it, "**we want to see incremental progress in the strength of the groups, but neither progress nor regression necessarily constitute a barrier to continued partnership since we understand that capacity growth is not always linear**".

Promoting CBOs as leaders beyond their own communities

While CBOs have their own goals from the outset, many are also aware that they have something to offer other organisations like theirs, especially as they become established. Strong partnerships with funders promote and enable strong CBOs to raise their profile and share their experiences more widely. Examples of opportunities that CBOs had been given included **participating in regional or global strategy or policy platforms**, **involvement of CBOs in funder working groups to develop technical resources and revise funding approaches**, and **involvement of CBOs in providing mentoring or technical assistance to nascent CBOs representing similar communities**. Well-established CBOs had also in some cases been involved in "incubating" – or even fiscally hosting – emergent groups; and indeed **the fact that some of the funding organisations interviewed were themselves community-based is testament to the types of roles that communities can take on**.

Long term partnerships between funders and CBOs

As previous sections have noted, social movements develop over a long time, and the types of social change that community action on HIV and human rights seeks to achieve does not occur in a linear, predictable way. **Unsurprisingly CBOs favour funding relationships that are long-term and stable**. However, even within the context of such a partnership they also spoke about the value of funders who enable the relationship to evolve – towards greater trust and greater autonomy for the CBO. **Funders show increased confidence and trust in their partners from one grant to another in a range of ways, including reducing the frequency of reporting, alleviating disbursement conditions, lengthening grant durations, and instituting "rolling grants" – in other words an assumption that funding will be renewed or continued rather than CBOs needing to re-apply through a formal process**. Moving to a "framework agreement" approach in this way does not mean that funders have to disengage from dialogue, however: **facilitation by funders of continued exposure of CBO partners to new themes and experiences was reported as a highly valued input**.

Supporting access to new funding sources and CBO sustainability

CBOs welcome funders who understand that sustainability doesn't just mean doing away with the need for money or solving problems once and for all: they understand that to grow, CBOs need to be able to access a range of funding sources. CBOs reported that **some funders are**

proactive in supporting them to be more viable as partners to other funders, in making them aware of other funding opportunities; many provided examples of this support effectively resulting in them diversifying their funder base. As well as providing capacity building, introducing CBOs to other potential funders, practical examples of support included funders writing up case studies of their CBO partners' work to raise their profile, publishing audits that showcase their effectiveness, supporting proposal-writing, and helping CBOs to forecast and plan strategically for shifts in funding.

The discussion on transition of countries from official development assistance has also generated interest in the future of community responses in countries which are ceasing to access aid funding. Alongside the continued role of philanthropic donors and foundations, ***CBOs have received support from some funders to catalyse and influence national dialogues on domestic financing***, succeeding in some cases in obtaining government commitments to establish mechanisms and provide funding for CBOs – an approach known as "social contracting". The know-how of funders has been a key input to making this happen.

5 Organisations involved in funding CBOs: adapting practice to address challenges

A number of organisations involved in funding community organisations were interviewed as part of this study. Section 5.1 of this chapter discusses the different profiles of organisations involved in funding and their relevance to CBOs.

All of the interviewed organisations were aware of many of the challenges faced by CBOs and were therefore able to describe how they have gone about mitigating these challenges and becoming good partners to CBOs. Section 5.2 of this chapter describes these different strategies and approaches, using the key challenges described above in section 3.2 as a framework.

5.1 Funding arrangements for community action on HIV

Different types of funding source

Among the participating organisations involved in funding CBOs, some identified as funders but many did not – some were community led organisations themselves, others were advocacy organisations which do on-granting in furtherance of their advocacy objectives. Many of the organisations were playing a role as an interface or intermediary positioned between funders and CBOs, and therefore able to play a specialist support role in making funding more accessible. A large variety of organisations is involved in funding communities, as the box below shows.

Types of organisation involved in funding community action on HIV

- National programme funders (such as the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria or PEPFAR), with funding generally delivered through organisations based at country level, playing an intermediary role.
- INGOs and NGOs providing funding to CBOs, generally within the context of thematic, timebound programmes.
- Funding organisations with a sole relevant focus such as HIV, key populations or human rights.
- Funding organisations with a broad focus but which include a component, programme or strategic area with a relevant focus on HIV, key populations or human rights.
- Organisations with a dedicated department or programme to fund communities (which may be implemented/supported through intermediaries).
- Pooled (multi-funder) funding entities established with a thematic focus, generally to fill an identified gap in the funding landscape.
- National governments, for instance through social contracting mechanisms.
- Advocacy or issue-based organisations that do sub-granting to support advocacy objectives.

While these categories are not mutually exclusive, they give a sense of the range of perspectives or starting points of organisations involved in providing funding to CBOs, and some hints as to how they are likely to deliver funding.

Funding chains and intermediaries

A further element of complexity comes from the fact that many of the organisations that CBOs receive funding from are playing an intermediary role. In other words, as well as acting as funders to communities or grantee partners, they are often themselves accountable to the individuals or entities that fund them, whether this funding comes in the form of donations, structured grants or service contracts.

In many cases, by the time funding reaches a CBO it has passed through a long chain of intermediaries. For instance, CBOs in countries receiving grants from the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria are on the whole not contracted by the Global Fund, but by an organisation acting as Principal Recipient (PR) – or even by one of the PR's sub-recipients (SR). At the same time, the Global Fund itself raises funds from a range of sources, including the development or health assistance agencies of donor countries. These departments themselves are allocated funds by ministries of finance.

Each link in these funding chains may imply a combination of strategic directions and funding conditions or regulations, and these have a bearing on how funding can be used at the level of the community and therefore on the ability of the CBO funder to be an effective partner. Organisations on the funding chain have different levels of focus, with a tendency for them to be more niche in their focus and approach the closer they are along the chain to CBOs – this can be beneficial. However, because these chains can sometimes imply multiple layers of interest and accountability, organisations receiving funds to conduct onward-granting to CBOs themselves often experience some of the challenges with funders that CBOs face.

Other funders of CBOs receive their funding from public fundraising, or from private or government donors, and are therefore not part of such a long chain. This is often the case for endowed foundations, some of which were interviewed for this study.

Implications for communities

When CBOs talk about their funders they do not necessarily refer to the last link in the funding chain – in other words the organisation that disburses funds and other support to them. Typically, if the funds originate in a large national programme (for instance, funded by the Global Fund or PEPFAR), or if they are part of a strategic country or multi-country programme (for instance, PITCH), the CBO will refer to the primary funder or to the programme – despite the fact that selection of grantees, funding conditions, and provision of additional support may all be largely defined by the organisation that disburses funds to them.

It is important to recognise the extent to which funding is intermediated since the role of intermediaries is sometimes seen as reducing the amount of funding that actually gets to communities. While this can be the case, the intermediary approach can also ensure that CBO funders have more of the attributes that enable them to be effective partners to communities – such as having a niche focus on specific or neglected issues, or on movement-building. Many funders recognise that they do not have the capacity to work effectively with CBOs themselves and so decide to partner with organisations who can.

The complexity of the funding landscape can place an additional burden on small, inexperienced CBOs, which may not be able to effectively assess the pros and cons of working with different funding partners. The ability to understand and navigate this funding landscape is an important skill for CBOs.

5.2   Perspectives of organisations involved in providing funding to CBOs

As described in section 3.2, the challenges faced by CBOs in receiving funding are well-documented. Interviews with organisations involved in funding CBOs focused on identifying the approaches and strategies that they have put in place to mitigate these challenges. These findings are categorised below using some of the main headings emerging from the research conducted by the NGO delegation to the UNAIDS PCB[10].

Balancing the priorities of funders and CBOs

It is normal for funders to have strategic priorities. These are determined in various ways: endowed foundations sometimes define these priorities in their constitutional documents, and many funds are set up with a particular purpose in mind. As has been mentioned already, such niche funding programmes can provide greater clarity to CBOs. There are several examples of funds that were established to ensure excluded community groups are able to access funding – such as UHAI, the Robert Carr Fund, and the Red Umbrella Fund; or key population networks which aim to strengthen movements through a range of support including funding. **Because of the participatory and focused nature of these funds and programmes, they are often well aligned with CBO needs**.

Efforts to simplify the landscape for CBOs were also discussed. Examples of this are **pooled, thematic funds (such as those mentioned above), as well as alignment approaches such as sharing of information between funders, and inter-funder alignment of goals and application processes**. This requires a degree of commitment on the part of funders to the principle of collective impact, and an acceptance that not all outcomes of funding will necessarily be directly attributable to a given funder.

Funder alignment and pooling are not the only ways that funders with a broader focus can work to ensure their priorities do not undermine those of CBOs. Funder strategies can be community-informed, for instance by **developing impact frameworks based on a bottom up approach, drawing on the contexts and results of CBO partners, and being flexible enough to adapt when these change**.

Finally, among the interviewed funders, some also stated that it is important to consider and mitigate the impact of changes in their priorities on CBO partners. One way that funders can do this is by helping CBOs plan ahead, particularly when funding is likely to cease, by adopting a policy of **providing "tie-off" or transition grants to partners which might not receive funding under a future strategy**.

Funding in repressive legal and political environments

Many funders are aware of the unpredictability and hostility of environments for CBOs, particularly those representing excluded populations and working on human rights – indeed this challenge is often one of the main reasons funders are working in this space. Practically

dealing with this can be challenging; however **some funders have managed to institute a policy of flexibility whereby existing CBO partners are immediately authorised to use funds for emergency purposes if needed**. As one funder put it "if someone is put in jail we say to the grantee to use all their money to get them out". In recent years **there is increasing availability of rapid response or contingency grants to respond to emerging challenges and emergencies**. In some cases, emergency requests can be disbursed within 48 hours. **Including support for training on safety and security and for the development of appropriate safety protocols within grants** were other examples of practical inputs that funders have made, recognising their responsibility towards their CBO partners.

There is also an interest among some funders in improving planning for and learning from emergencies. **Adapting grant reporting formats to focus on both negative and positive changes in the CBO's environment, and providing supplementary funds or convening activities to support grantees to systematically identify and share roadblocks** over the course of projects are examples of innovations that funders are putting in place. Funder interviewees shared the view of CBOs that while funders can intervene at a political level to resolve crises, care should be taken to avoid doing this in a counterproductive way. For human rights funders, it is sometimes better not to be too visible at the political level.

A final point to note is that restrictive environments can also hamper the activities of funders themselves, with some becoming deregistered and with legal restrictions being imposed on CBOs receiving external funding. Funders are therefore increasingly looking for ways to mask their own involvement in country level funding.

Alleviating registration and sophisticated financial management requirements

For many international funders, it is either impractical or impossible for them to contract a grant with a non-registered organisation in a different country. This poses a challenge given the barriers faced by excluded communities. **Specialist intermediary models, as discussed above, can provide a pragmatic solution, particularly if they are from the same community or based in the same country as the CBOs and are able to provide fiscal hosting for unregistered or low-capacity groups**. Indeed, some specialist programmes are established with the express purpose of working with weak or unstructured organisations.

Other examples include **providing funding and other types of support directly to individual leaders, or groups of individuals**, with transparent communication to the broader community on how funding is being provided and what for, and with rotation of leadership responsibilities within the community group. **Funders working through fiscal hosts can also ensure the mechanism is not disempowering, by mandating the role of community or CBO members in approving disbursements by the host, and by asking the CBO to identify a host that they are happy to work with**. Funders can pay for technical support and legal assistance for CBOs to support registration, as a basis for a future relationship. Greater collaboration between funders was also identified as a potential way to alleviate the burden faced by CBOs – for instance, if funders can agree common minimum standards for eligibility requirements, financial systems and audits, **they can share information among themselves and avoid CBOs having to go through repeated assessments**.

Funding for core operating expenses

Funders vary in their approach to funding core costs of grantees; many set a threshold or allowable proportion of grant funds to be used for these costs. At the same time, the definition of core costs varies widely, with views differing as to whether equipment and salaries are core costs or programmatic.

Recognising this, **some funders have moved towards an outcome rather than activity or budget-based approach to funding**. Financial reporting can still be included in such a model albeit with a focus on the validity of expenditures rather than on what they are paying for. On the other hand, organisations providing funding often have to adhere to organisational policies or the policies of the organisations they receive their funding from. Some funders in this position have been able to **move away from setting core cost thresholds and instead work with CBOs to determine what their actual funding needs are**, so that core cost funding levels are clearly justified but not pre-determined. Most of the funding organisations interviewed stated that their approach to core costs had shifted over time – this is encouraging since it suggests that core funding policies are not always set in stone.

Funding for advocacy

While many funders traditionally involved in supporting community level service delivery have come to recognise the importance of providing funding for advocacy, overall grant making paradigms have not necessarily adapted accordingly, with many continuing to expect set workplans to produce predefined, timebound outcomes. **Experienced advocacy funders spoke to the usefulness of working closely with their CBO partners to pragmatically define their advocacy goals and the multiple pathways to achieving them; and to taking an iterative and contextual approach to assessing progress, rather than a project-based approach**.

Investing in CBO capacity

Common capacity gaps among CBOs identified in the UNAIDS PCB report included capacity for project design or proposal development and for implementation. In terms of project design, funders confirmed what CBO participants reported in terms of the importance of funders learning to see beyond the quality of presentation and to focus on potential. **Some funders explicitly set out to support the weakest proposals they receive, given their commitment to movement-building**. Similarly, the funders interviewed confirmed that a programme of organisational strengthening and a range of direct support, funding to procure technical assistance, mentoring, south-south support and other learning opportunities are central to effective grant-making programmes. They also recognised the importance of providing support to individual leaders, such as fellowship programmes. Peer support models were common among participatory grant-makers or thematic/identity-based funders.

While many funders provide capacity assessment tools, **it was also argued that providing resources to CBOs to identify and act on their own capacity gaps is more empowering than simply providing a pre-defined package of support**. They argued for a shift away from the classical capacity building model of funding external consultants or experts to

provide support, or capacity building which is primarily about helping CBOs meet funder requirements rather than the growth of the organisation.

Seeing risk from the perspective of CBOs rather than funders

Understandably, risk management is a key part of any funder's mandate. Given that, as discussed in section 5.1, many organisations funding CBOs are part of a longer funding chain, they need to provide their own funders with the assurance that funds are being used for the agreed purpose. However, it is also clear that misuse of funds is just one aspect of the risk faced in community responses to HIV. Moreover, CBOs, who are working in often hostile contexts, are themselves expected to take on considerable risks when they accept funding since the consequences of failure are severe.

There are indications that some funders of CBOs are adapting their risk appetite and building a tolerance of failure into their grant-making – however this is not a realistic option for many funders, in particular those receiving restricted funding with strict management conditions. ***It is important that those receiving restricted funding be clear about the conditions under which they will accept money, and rule out restrictions, including risk management conditions, that are ethically unacceptable or that would limit their ability to partner effectively with CBOs.*** As one participant put it, "We need to be more stringent with our donors as to the conditions under which we will manage their funds, and we need to advocate on this".

In addition, many of the organisations interviewed stated that ***by developing appropriate risk assessment tools they had been able to alleviate some of the restrictions that used to be applied to grants*** – in other words, a shift to calculated risk-taking, tailored to the contexts and characteristics of different grantees. In some cases, ***these risk assessment approaches go beyond funder risk questions to ensure an appraisal of organisational and institutional risks for the grantee***, so that the two perspectives are better balanced and so that the process is more equitably owned.

Participatory grant-making approaches including peer-review of proposals and transparency on grant content were also raised as approaches that can build community-owned risk management. ***Strategies such as using low and frequent disbursements can be inconvenient for CBOs but can be the best way to accommodate risk management policies***; in repressive contexts they have the added benefit of avoiding drawing the attention of authorities to restricted activities or foreign funding.

Participants also made suggestions of possible future strategies to explore. Collaboration and information sharing about grantees between funders, and the establishment of common standards, may help reduce the burden on CBOs. The CBO funding sector might also consider taking inspiration from the commercial sector and ***establishing a risk insurance fund to cover CBOs facing cash-flow issues, emergencies, or reimbursement demands*** from funders who deem their financial reporting to be unacceptable.

6 Conclusion: improving practice in support for community action

6.1 Key conclusions and questions emerging from the study

As this study demonstrates, despite the significant challenges that CBOs face in negotiating the funding environment and obtaining funding to strengthen community action on AIDS, many CBOs are also able to report positive experiences. Organisations involved in funding CBOs have shown that they are able to adapt to the needs of the CBOs they wish to support, and to mitigate some of the challenges. The wide range of practices described in this study, whether coming from the perspective of CBOs receiving funding or organisations giving funding, are testament to the fact that many funders can engage with and understand the needs of CBOs, and exercise flexibilities in their approaches.

The range of real-life practices experienced by CBOs is grounds for some confidence that funders who care about supporting community responses to AIDS can be even more effective. At the same time there are some important factors to consider in interpreting the findings:

➢ The effective practices described in this study originated for the most part in philanthropic organisations or foundations, or within tightly focused networks or organisations for whom CBO sub-granting is one component of a broader portfolio of work. This confirms a pre-existing assumption that organisations of this type often have more flexibility and room for adaptation than the multilateral institutions and governmental organisations that provide the majority of AIDS funding. ***This unique characteristic of these organisations suggests that one of their major added values is to innovate and not to settle for business as usual.*** At the same time there is surely potential for the large institutional funders to learn from and adopt these practices too.

➢ The range of practices described is very wide. However, no funder has adopted all of these – and it is unlikely that any funder would be able to, since while most funders can exercise a degree of flexibility, almost all funders have to operate within organisational or legal constraints. ***Rather than being taken as a blueprint or checklist, this wide range should be seen on the one hand as a series of options that funders can consider, and on the other hand as a demonstration of what is possible***. It also suggests that there are almost certainly innovations and practices that are not captured in this report, and that organisations involved in funding can develop in partnership with CBOs.

➢ It goes without saying that many of the insights emerging from this study are resource-intensive. Not every funder is able or well-placed to work in proximity to a large number of CBO partners. Some of the foundations interviewed admitted that they were moving away from funding small CBOs, not because of a change in their commitment to community action but because their systems and institutional resources simply did not allow them to work directly with CBOs in an effective way. However, most have maintained their commitment to funding community responses by moving towards providing more substantial grants to specialist organisations to take on the CBO support role.

➢ Not every CBO is the same or has the same needs. It is therefore important to CBOs that a portfolio of support mechanisms or funding opportunities is available, so that CBOs at different stages of development, with different aims, and in different types of context, can access support. Some funding organisations themselves provide support in a range of

ways, though this is unlikely to be feasible for all funders. However, when looking at the overall funding landscape, *funders can work together to assess whether the range of opportunities they are collectively providing is suitable for the range of CBOs in the movements they aim to support.*

➢ The study findings point to the value of niche support mechanisms which focus on specific objectives or populations. These mechanisms are more likely to be participatory or community-led and therefore provide highly appropriate support. At the same time, it is also important to recognise that broader funds play a critical role since there remain a number of orphan issues that are not covered or sufficiently served by focused programmes.

➢ What most of the examples and practices described in this study have in common is a commitment on the part of the funder to take on board feedback from CBO partners, and a commitment to finding flexibilities and making changes within the realm of what is possible. The need for constant feedback, self-evaluation and openness to change and improve is probably the most important lesson to draw. *Approaches such as the Keystone Accountability Constituent Voice[11] and Firelight Foundation's Learning Journey[12] provide examples of how funders can systematically assess and improve their practice*.

6.2   Next steps

FCAA intends for funders in the network to use these opportunities to co-create recommendations and agreed actions. The findings of this study point to the potential value both of greater collaboration between funders, and of actions by each individual funder.

From the outset, FCAA has intended this study to be a starting point for discussions on how to strengthen the role of funders in supporting community action on AIDS. This report, alongside FCAA's work on categorising and quantifying funding for community action, will form the basis for discussions at a donor dialogue taking place in Amsterdam on 22 July 2018. The discussion will be deepened at the 2018 Philanthropy Summit, on the theme of "Catalyzing Communities", in November 2018. We propose the following key questions as the starting point for these discussions:

- ✓ Are organisations providing funding to CBOs systematically gathering feedback from their CBO partners, and self-evaluating their funding practices?
- ✓ Are organisations providing funding to CBOs maximising the flexibility available to them in terms of what activities they are able to fund and how their processes are designed to support this? What more can they do?
- ✓ How can funders better anticipate and plan for emergencies and crises faced by the CBOs they fund?
- ✓ How can funders collaborate practically to build a funding architecture that better meets the needs of community action on AIDS?
- ✓ To what extent can these funders play a lead role in challenging established practices and be at the forefront of fundamental changes to support communities, that can influence the multilateral and governmental funding sector?

Annexes

List of study participants

Country/ Region	Organisation	Description	Participant name	Position
Botswana	WAR	CBO - Women Against Rape (WAR) works with survivors of GBV	Peggie Ramaphane	Executive Director
Uganda	Icebreakers	CBO focused on HIV care for LGBTI	Brant Luswata	Clinic and Resource Centre Manager
Cameroon	Positive Generation	CBO of people affected by HIV; community mobilisation and advocacy	Fogué Foguito	Executive Director
DRC	UCOP+	CBO - National network of people living with HIV	Ange Mavula	M&E manager
Kenya	Kenya Network of people who use drugs (KENPUD)	CBO - National network of people who use drugs	John Kimani	Executive Director
Kenya	BHESP (Bar Hostess Empowerment & Support Programme)	CBO - Sex worker organisation	Peninah Mwangi	Executive Director
Malawi	GENET	CBO - Girls and young women's rights organisation	Faith Phiri	Executive Director
Nigeria	TIER Lagos	CBO - LGBTI rights and health organisation	Olumide Makunjola	Director
Senegal	And Soppéku	CBO – sex worker organisation	Mme Lala Maty Sow	President
Swaziland	SWANNEPHA	CBO – national network of people living with HIV	Gavin Khumalo	Regional Coordinator
Zimbabwe	WAG	CBO – women's rights advocacy organisation	Edinah Masiyiwa	Executive Director
India	Lakshya, Gujarat	CBO – LGBTI	Sylvester Merchant	Board member
Indonesia	Rumah Cemara	CBO – self-help of people living with HIV and people who use drugs; also provides on-granting to CBOs	Aditia Taslam	Executive Director
Vietnam	Lighthouse Social Enterprise	CBO – Self-help group for MSM and transgender people	Doan Than Tung	Executive Director
Montenegro	Juventas	AIDS Service organisation, also involved in supporting establishment of CBOs	Jelena Colakovic	Programme Director
Bosnia Herze-govina	Margina	CBO – Harm reduction; support to sex workers, people in prison and people who inject drugs	Denis Dedajic	President
Georgia	GeNPUD	CBO – People who use drugs	Koka Labartkava	Executive Director
LAC (HQ in Argentina)	REDLACTRANS	CBO - Latin American and Caribbean Network for Transgender Persons	Aldo Fernández Turitich	Coordinator
Costa Rica	CIPAC	CBO – LGBT organisation	Daria Suárez Rehaag	Executive Director
El Salvador	Orquídeas del Mar	CBO – sex worker organisation	Haydee Laínez Cabrera	Director
Honduras	Kukulkan (LGBT)	CBO – gay mens' rights	Javier Medina	Director / legal representative
Jamaica and regional	Jamaican Network of Seropositives (JNP+)	CBO – women living with HIV	Althea Cohen	Project Assistant

Country/ Region	Organisation	Description	Participant name	Position
	and Positive Women's Network			
Netherlands	Aidsfonds	AIDS-focused funder also involved in delivery of pooled funds (e.g. RCNF)	Yvette Fleming	Manager: children, young people and women
US	Open Society Foundation	Funder with large public health and rights/HIV remit	Julia Greenberg	Director of financing and governance, Public Health Program
US	AJWS	Foundation also operating as intermediary organisation; HIV supported through human rights and SRH strand of work	Shari Turitz	Director
Canada	Stephen Lewis Foundation	Foundation established to support community action on AIDS	Lee Waldorf	Director of Policy
US and UK	Elton John AIDS Foundation	Single issue foundation focused on AIDS	Mohamed Osman	Grants Director
US and UK	ViiV Healthcare	Dedicated community AIDS funding programme within ViiV	Dominic Kemps	Head of Positive Action
UK	Vitol Foundation	Foundation funding HIV grants under health funding stream	Sarah Jeffery	Vitol Foundation
US	Conrad Hilton Foundation	Foundation with funding stream for children affected by HIV	Lisa Bohmer	Senior Program Officer
West Africa (based in Senegal)	ENDA	West African health NGO involved in community sub-granting	Daouda Diouf	Executive Director
Southern Africa (based in South Africa)	SAT	Southern African AIDS focused NGO involved in community sub-granting	Jonathan Gunthorp	Executive Director
Africa	AMSHER	Pan African Coalition of LGBTI organisations	Olu Odumosu	HIV & Health Systems Advocacy Manager
Global	RCNF	Pooled fund for support to networks working on AIDS for inadequately served populations	Sergey Votyagov	Fund Director
East Africa (based in Kenya)	UHAI	Public foundation – activist-led LGBTI and sex worker focused	Leonard Mutisya and Cleo Kambugu	Support Officer: Office of the Executive Director Programme Officer: Grantmaking and Grants Administration
Georgia	Georgian Harm Reduction Network	Network for harm reduction programming, involved in sub-granting to CBOs.	Marine (Maka) Gogia	HIV Programme Director
Global	MPact (formerly MSMGF)	Global advocacy network focused on gay men and men who have sex with men involved in sub-granting to further its objectives	George Ayala	Executive Director

Data collection tools

CBO interview script

Intermediary interview script

Funder interview script

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[11] http://keystoneaccountability.org/

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