

**ROBERT
CARR
FUND** For civil
society
networks

**WITH COMMUNITIES
IN THE LEAD**

2023

**ANNUAL REPORT
SUMMARY**

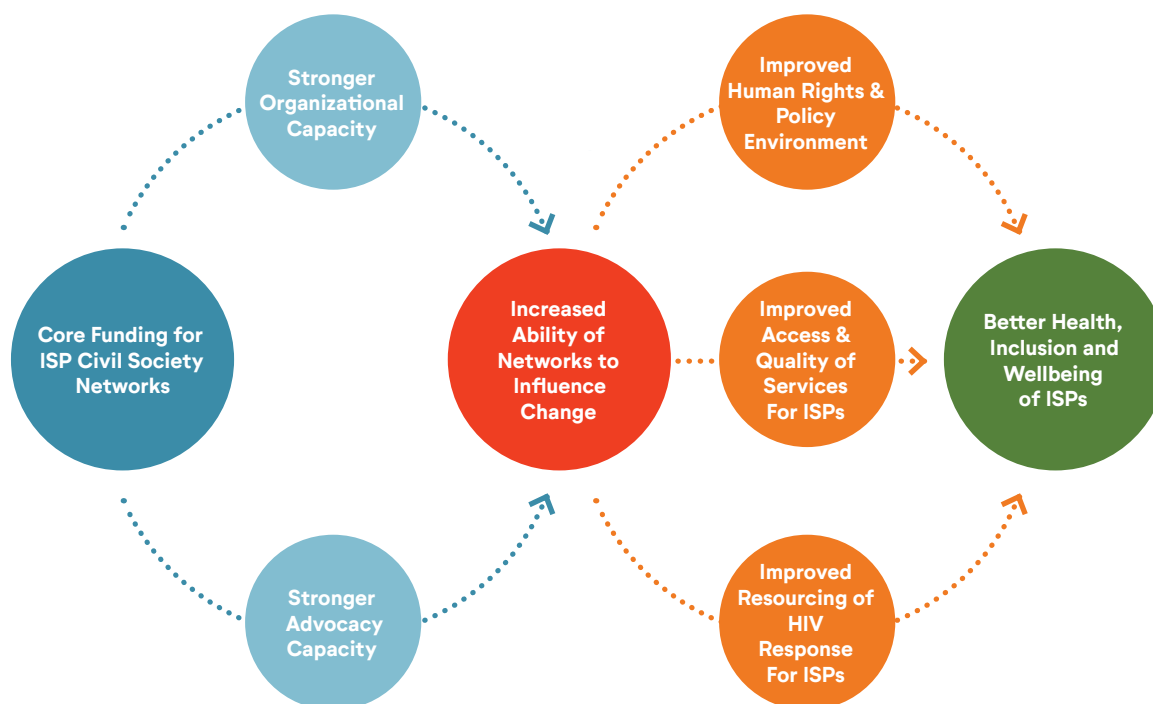
www.robertcarrfund.org

ANNUAL REPORT SUMMARY

The Robert Carr Fund is a unique pooled funding mechanism that focuses on providing long-term, core, and flexible funding to global and regional community-led and civil society networks in HIV response. Over the past decade, the Robert Carr Fund (RCF), as a participatory grant-maker, has been committed to improving the health and rights of **inadequately served populations*** most affected by HIV.

2023 marks the mid-point of the 2022–2024 grant cycle. The RCF has awarded 25 grants to 71 global and regional networks, the largest cohort to date. In 2023, RCF funding supported the implementation of HIV programs and interventions in 130 countries globally, demonstrating the fund's extensive influence in addressing the HIV epidemic across the world.

RCF grantee partners deliver programs across the four key outcome areas of the RCF Theory of Change.



RCF grantees faced increasing anti-LGBTQ+ legislation, hostile policies, and the rise in anti-rights and anti-gender movements globally. These factors hindered advocacy efforts and led to operational challenges for ISP-led movements. Ongoing wars, political instability and climate change disrupted daily operations and posed significant safety and security risks.

Despite these adversities, there have been instances of strong community resilience and notable progress. Positive trends were observed, with several countries repealing laws that criminalized LGBTQ+ people and a significant shift in the legislative landscape concerning HIV laws. These developments underscore the success of long-term advocacy efforts and the effectiveness of RCF's model in driving change.

2023 AT A GLANCE



24 grantees, including 8 single networks and 16 consortia of networks



\$11.4M disbursed in 2023



71 individual networks serving all regions globally and across ISPs



\$32.1M invested in core funding grants to ISP-led/ISP-serving regional and global networks from 2022–2024

*RCF defines the term “inadequately served populations” (ISPs) as populations facing a high HIV risk, mortality and/or morbidity compared to the general population, and, at the same time, facing systematic human rights violations and barriers to information and services.

WHY IS CORE AND FLEXIBLE FUNDING SO VITAL?

Data shows that core funding is vital for RCF grantees for three key reasons:

- **Sustainability and Capacity Building:** Core funding allows ISP-led networks to build credibility, strengthen institutional capacity, and improve financial management. It enables long-term planning, resource mobilization, and organizational development, which are crucial for sustained impact in the HIV response.
- **Flexibility and Adaptability:** Core flexible funding enables organizations to be agile and adapt quickly to emerging threats, crises, and opportunities. It empowers grantees to respond to changing environments, ensuring they remain resilient and effective in their efforts to combat HIV.
- **Strengthening the HIV Movement:** Core funding plays a critical role in stabilizing and strengthening the global and regional HIV movements. It supports grantees to push-back against anti-rights movements, protect progress on HIV, health, and gender equality, and support overall community strengthening and well-being.



Advocacy stickers created by NSWP and the regional sex worker led networks in 2023.

HOW DO WE LINK TO OTHER GLOBAL INVESTMENTS?

A majority (65%) of RCF-funded networks engaged with The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (The Global Fund) in 2023, with 41% receiving direct funding from The Global Fund.

The RCF plays a crucial role in supporting and complementing the work of The Global Fund in the global HIV response. This engagement includes advocacy, technical assistance, capacity building, and participation in country-level mechanisms, amongst others.

In 2023 over 70% of networks engaging with The Global Fund used RCF funding to cover core staff salaries.

RCF grantees used RCF funding to contribute to both core and implementation costs of The Global Fund supported programs: e.g., staff salaries (core cost), developing tools, mobilizing partnerships, and using community-generated data and documentation to engage with The Global Fund processes more effectively.

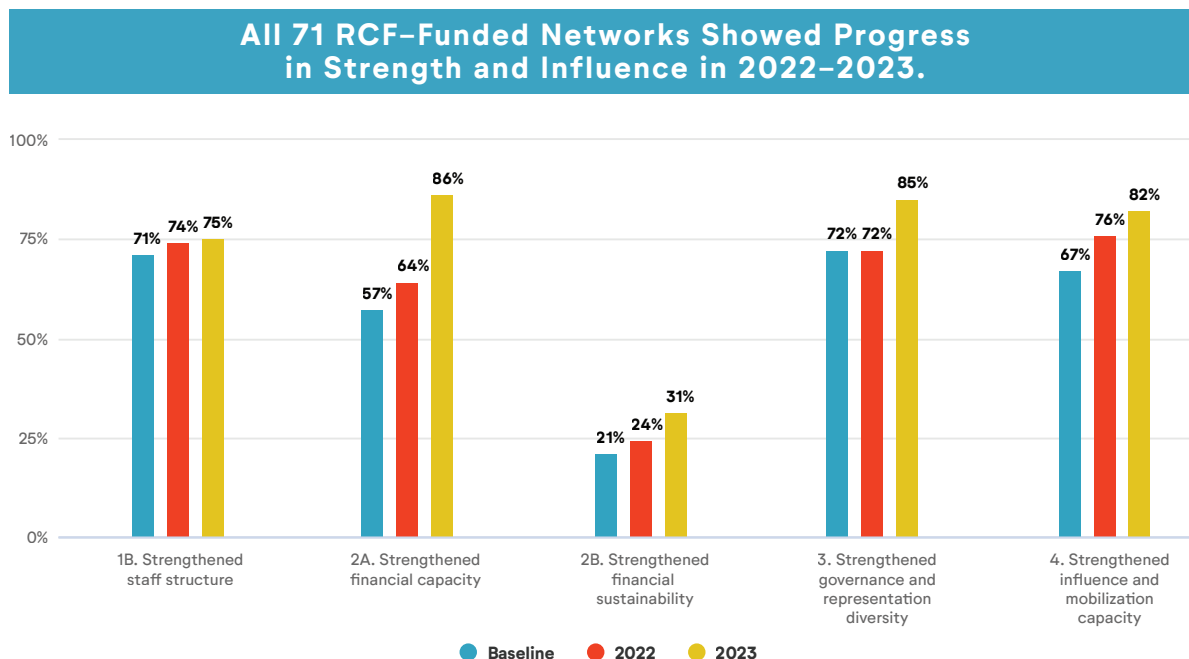
Almost a third of grantees also engaged government or UN agencies, including UNAIDS, UNODC, UNDP, and the UN Human Rights Committee.

With RCF funding, our grantees are able to inform the UNAIDS strategy via the Program Coordinating Board and participate in high level meetings on HIV. RCF also collaborates with UNAIDS by regularly sharing new knowledge from the field, while UNAIDS serves as a non-voting observer on the RCF International Steering Committee.

WHAT DID NETWORKS ACHIEVE?

Outcome 1: Network Strengthening and Influence

The RCF 2023 Annual Report showcases remarkable progress across all Outcome 1 indicators. This comprehensive improvement underscores the effectiveness of long-term, flexible core funding to *Inadequately Served Population (ISP)*-led networks. This holistic strengthening of networks enhances their ability to advocate and represent their communities more effectively.



Outcome 2: Advancing Human Rights

There is a direct link between human rights violations and HIV risk. ISPs continue to be disproportionately impacted by restrictive laws and policies that affect their ability to access HIV services and protect their health.

In 2023, the majority of RCF grantee partners, **63 networks (80%)**, prioritized advancing the human rights of ISPs

Together, they carried out over 113 activities to advance human rights in 2023. They documented human rights violations, brought their advocacy to the UN, and engaged in strategic litigation.

23 networks (37%) saw that their efforts contributed to a better human rights law or policy for ISPs.

RCF Grantee Partner: International Drug Policy Consortium (IDPC)

In March 2023, the International Drug Policy Consortium (IDPC) and partners achieved a *major advocacy success* with the adoption of a progressive Human Rights Council resolution on drug policy. This resolution, “Contribution of the Human Rights Council with regard to the human rights implications of drug policy,” marks a significant shift towards rights-based global drug policies.

This groundbreaking resolution is the first UN drug-related resolution to explicitly mention “harm reduction” in the context of the right to health. It also calls for reforms to address racial discrimination and protect Indigenous Peoples’ rights to traditional medicines. This stands in contrast to the lack of progress at the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs in 2023.

The resolution mandated a report by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), which emphasized harm reduction and decriminalization. IDPC’s sustained advocacy played a key role in shaping this outcome, advancing human rights and public health in drug policy.

Outcome 3: Improved Access to and Quality of Services

Many people living with or at risk of HIV still face barriers in accessing adequate quality HIV and other vital services. Improving service access and quality remains a priority for RCF-funded civil society and community networks.

In 2023, **58 networks (82%)** worked to improve access to and quality of services for ISPs. Together, they carried out over 89 activities to improve access to and quality of HIV testing, treatment, and counseling services including Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP), Antiretroviral Treatment, Opioid Agonist Therapy, harm reduction services, and gender affirming care. Efforts also aimed to improve harm reduction services, decrease stigma in healthcare and in places of detention, and improve health services for migrant workers, amongst others.

25 (42%) networks reported results in improved access to and quality of services linked to their advocacy efforts.

RCF Grantee Partner: Eurasian Coalition on Health, Rights, Gender and Sexual Diversity (ECOM)

ECOM has prioritized the study of chemsex among men who have sex with men (MSM), producing several publications on the topic. In 2023, with financial support from RCF, they conducted a qualitative study in Kazakhstan examining the reasons for use and risks associated with chemsex among MSM. This research, combined with joint advocacy efforts alongside national partners, contributed to a new Global Fund country grant for Kazakhstan. The grant funded pilot services for 450 chemsex users in the cities of Almaty and Astana throughout the year.

To further support this initiative, ECOM is developing a training module to educate doctors on the specifics of working with MSM who practice chemsex, scheduled for implementation in 2024. Funding for this training is also included in Kazakhstan's national grant, demonstrating a comprehensive approach to addressing the health needs of this population.

Outcome 4: Financing The HIV Response

As community-led HIV responses remain critically underfunded, in 2023, **38 grantee-networks (53.5%)** advocated for more and better resourcing of the HIV response for ISPs. Together, they carried out over 54 activities in advocating for increased commitments and allocations of funding for ISPs.

16 (23%) networks ultimately saw their advocacy contribute to increased funding commitments.

RCF Grantee Partner: Coordination of Action Research on AIDS and Mobility in Asia Network (CARAM Asia)

CARAM Asia advocated for increased sustainable financing to address HIV vulnerabilities among migrants in Pakistan. Through a series of strategic engagements with the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Overseas, and the National AIDS Control Program, CARAM Asia highlighted the critical gap in government budget allocation for migrants' HIV and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) needs.

CARAM Asia's member organization, SPEAK Trust, played a crucial role in these advocacy efforts, emphasizing the importance of including migrants in the next Global Fund country funding request. Their persistent advocacy across various forums has yielded promising results. The issue of financing migrants' health has gained considerable traction, leading to the inclusion of migrants' HIV challenges in the draft National AIDS strategy, which is currently awaiting approval from the Ministry of Health. The strategy is expected to guide future budget allocation processes specifically addressing the HIV vulnerabilities of migrant populations, which have been overlooked in Pakistan's national HIV response.

Please download our [2023 Annual Report](#) for more details, explanation of how we measure results, and to access our 2023 financial report.



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Robert Carr Fund
With Communities in the Lead
2023 Annual Report Summary



The Norwegian Government



The Bill & Melinda Gates
Foundation



The U.S. President's
Emergency Plan for
AIDS Relief (PEPFAR)



UK International Development



Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Ministry of Foreign
Affairs of the
Netherlands