ROBERT CARR FUND

For civil society networks

WITH COMMUNITIES IN THE LEAD

2023

ANNUAL REPORT

CONTENTS

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ART	Antiretroviral Therapy
AGYW	Adolescent Girls and Young Women
ARVs	Anti-Retroviral Drugs
CBO	Community-Based Organization
CE SI	Community Engagement Strategic Initiative (of the Global Fund)
CLM	Community-Led Monitoring
COP	PEPFAR Country Operational Plan
CSE	Comprehensive Sexuality Education
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DR	Drug Resistance
FMA	Fund Management Agent
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GC7	Grant Cycle 7 (of the Global Fund)
GF	Global Fund
ISP	Inadequately Served Populations
LGBTQI+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, and Queer/Questioning
MEL	Monitoring and Evaluation for Learning
NSP	National Strategic Plan
OAT	Opioid Agonist Therapy
PEP	Post-Exposure Prophylaxis
PEPFAR	United States President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief
PLHIV	People Living with HIV
PrEP	Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis
PWUD	People Who Use Drugs
RCF	Robert Carr Fund for civil society networks
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infection
TGD	Trans and Gender Diverse persons
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
U=U	Undetectable equals Untransmittable
WHO	World Health Organization

FOREWORD
BY RCF CHAIR & VICE CHAIR

2023 marks the middle year of the 2022–2024 grant cycle and the 11th year since the creation of the Robert Carr Fund (RCF). Once again, the RCF has demonstrated remarkable achievements, and its grantees are showing impressive resilience and extraordinary strength and courage at challenging times. It is obvious that the context is getting increasingly precarious – shrinking space for civil society organizations (CSOs), anti–rights movements gaining traction, governments increasingly imposing restrictive laws, war and conflict negatively impacting civil society and community organizations on the ground, and social and structural stigmatization against the most vulnerable and inadequately served populations (ISP) persisting and frequently increasing.

Against this alarming background, the findings summarized in the 2023 report are truly encouraging. Of the 71 networks supported through RCF investments, an increasing number has demonstrated enhanced institutional capacity, improved network governance, and strengthened accountability to manage their resources effectively. Most importantly, the main results pertain to amplifying membership, allies, partnerships, and advocacy. Several networks were able to secure other funding sources and, to a certain degree, diversified their resource base successfully. There are concrete examples, positive trends and encouraging findings of how networks advocated for, and were instrumental in, improving access of ISPs to quality services and were actively engaged in advancing human rights for ISPs — through documentation, advocacy, and support to litigation. This is, undoubtedly, essential in the wake of the anti–rights environment.

We feel that the strength of this report is from both the findings derived from a structured monitoring and evaluation for learning (MEL) approach, as well as the qualitative data that present examples from the grassroots level of what has actually been done and what has been achieved. We are pleased that the report, once again, is able to demonstrate that the model of ensuring core funding for the 71 networks through flexible multi–year grants proves to be vital to enable them to do their programmatic and policy work, to render them more and more resilient, and to ultimately make them more sustainable. The uniqueness and strength of the RCF model are now widely recognized and communicated by grantees themselves, funders, and other partners — what is sometimes less understood is how the RCF is instrumental in complementing investments from other major sources, specifically the Global Fund (GF) and in amplifying their impact — hence this report devotes a section to highlighting this mutual reinforcement of RCF and the GF.

2023 was also a year of reflection to develop RCF's new strategy for 2025 – 2030 through a highly participatory approach where all stakeholders were actively engaged. The strategy reiterates RCF´s commitment to supporting stronger ISP-movement leadership and encouraging innovation and creativity through continuous and multi–directional learning. The RCF will remain focused on HIV and sexual reproductive health and rights (SRHR), while emphasizing the broader needs and benefits for wider health, social inequities, and political issues. People who are inadequately served due to systematic human rights violations and inequalities, including those based on gender and barriers to services rightly should and will continue to be at the heart of RCF.

The UN Secretary General's message in 2023 highlighted the year's theme as "let communities lead" and the SDG Goal is to end AIDS by 2030. Both these are interconnected. The solution that we all seek, from grassroots to governments to funders, can only be achieved if investments like those in RCF to support the essential role of Civil Society are sustained, if not increased.

RCF is an example of the power of collective action — the action that heavily depends on communities deploying the right practices on the ground enabling them to be the torch bearer of human rights. We would like to express our deep gratitude and respect to everybody in the RCF family who contributes to achieving our shared vision and goals — at the center our partners on the ground (the "grantees") who work endlessly under most challenging circumstances; all those who trust and support RCF (financially and otherwise); our highly committed and hard–working Secretariat team, Aidsfonds as the fund management agent of RCF, the Program Advisory Board, and the International Steering Committee.

Gottfried Hirnschall & Sushena Reza Paul

Chair and Vice Chair of the RCF International Steering Committee

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The year 2023 marks the 11th anniversary of the Robert Carr Fund (RCF) and the second year of the 2022–2024 grant cycle which supports the largest cohort funded by the organization since its inception through 25 grants to 71[1] unique networks.

The RCF provides multi-year flexible core funding to ISP-led / ISP-serving networks globally. RCF uses its MEL framework to monitor and measure grantee progress against the RCF Theory of Change's four main outcomes through 11 indicators. RCF grantees develop a workplan at the onset of the grant cycle, which is updated annually, and report on their progress annually through a survey structured around the RCF MEL framework. This grant cycle marks a period of RCF MEL learning and adaptation. In 2022, the annual survey was restructured to respond to partner requests to simplify and streamline reporting processes. We organized participatory workshops with active partners to revise the MEL framework throughout 2023, which resulted in a simpler framework with fewer and clearer indicators.

In 2023, RCF continued to support and strengthen 71 unique networks from the 2022–2024 grant cycle, focusing on four key outcome areas: Stronger Networks, Human Rights, Access to and Quality of Services, and Resource Accountability/ Funding Environment. **In 2023, RCF funding supported implementation of HIV response programs/interventions in 130 countries globally.** Grantees faced key challenges in 2023, including increasing anti-LGBTQ+ legislation, hostile policies, and the rise of anti-rights movements globally. These factors hindered advocacy efforts and led to operational challenges for ISP-led movements. The ongoing conflict in Ukraine along with political instability and severe climate change impact in countries like Pakistan and Bangladesh disrupted daily operations and posed significant safety risks. Social and structural stigmatization against ISPs and an increasingly limited funding landscape further compounded these challenges.

Despite these adversities, there have been instances of strong community resilience. Positive trends were also observed, with several countries repealing laws that criminalized LGBTQ+ people and a significant shift in the legislative landscape concerning HIV laws. However, the challenges underscore the critical need for ongoing strategic planning, capacity building, partnership expansion, and resource mobilization in effecting positive impact across the HIV sector.

Stronger Networks

The year saw significant progress in strengthening the institutional capacity of networks; all RCF funded networks showed progress in this area. A majority (73%) of networks produced audited financial statements for their organizations and 31% reported not relying on any single donor for more than 30% of their funding. Governance was robust, with 97% of networks holding annual meetings of their Governance Body. Importantly, 85% of networks report at least 50% of their board are comprised of members from the communities and regions served by the network. The most frequently reported result was the strengthening of membership, partnerships, allies, and other advocacy capacities. Network partners also highlighted to what extent their increased capacity to employ relevant individuals has strengthened their organizational capacity to build and implement systems.

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[1] In 2022, the cohort included 72 individual networks one of which dropped out of a grantee consortium at the end of 2022 bringing the total number of individual networks to 71 in 2023.

Human Rights

Human rights remained a critical focus, with 59 (83%) networks carrying out activities aimed at improving the human rights of ISPs. A total of 32 networks documented human rights violations as a form of producing evidence to support advocacy, and 47 networks implemented human rights advocacy campaigns or initiatives. Six networks engaged in strategic litigation to further human rights for ISPs. The main focus was on HIV-related criminalization, including drug use and sex work[2].

Access to and Quality of Services

RCF-funded networks and consortia advocated for improved access to and quality of services for ISPs. A total of 55 (77%) networks carried out activities to improve the enabling environment for better access to or quality of services for ISPs. This is an increase from 2022 where 48 networks engaged in this outcome area (66%). In 2023, the main focus was on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) in the context of HIV. Of the networks that carried out these activities, 29% reported changes relating to increased access results, and 24% reported changes relating to quality improvement.

Resource Accountability/Improved Funding Environment

In 2023, linked to resource accountability, 38 networks (53.5%) carried out activities aimed at improving the funding environment for the HIV response for ISPs showing an increase from 2022 where only 24 networks engaged in this outcome area (33%). In 2023, 18 networks documented funding needs for HIV programmes or monitored state or donor expenditure, and 19 networks implemented advocacy initiatives to increase sustainable financing. Of these networks, 42% reported change results for the funding environment, these results include increased funding streams, as well as positive indicators towards commitment for increased funding. As indicated above, numerous network partners explained how, with the support from RCF, they have been able to employ individuals with the relevant financial expertise enabling them to reach more diverse funding sources, which has contributed to the sustainability of the programs being implemented by the networks.

The 2023 annual report reaffirms that multi-year flexible core funding enables networks to implement their vital advocacy and other programmatic work, most importantly by paying the salaries of expert staff responsible for these activities. It allows them to build their organizational capacity and sustainability. The insights presented in this report also shed light on how the RCF's core funding complements that of other major HIV donors such as the Global Fund, optimizing investments and amplifying impact. The report findings emphasize that core funding is essential to ISP community-led networks that have been historically underfunded. In 2023, we have seen that the networks, with their deep understanding of the communities they represent and serve, have strengthened institutional capacities, advocated for human rights, improved access to and quality of services, and enhanced the funding landscape for HIV. While the impact of their work can take many years to achieve, these changes are seen to have far-reaching systemic impact, ultimately contributing to better health, inclusion and wellbeing of ISPs and 'health for all'.

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[2] As in line with contract stipulations, funding from FCDO and Norad is spent only on activities and countries that qualify for ODA according to OECD/DAC. No US Government funding was used for advocacy related to decriminalization of sex work activities.

ABOUT THE ROBERT CARR FUND

The Robert Carr Fund is a unique participatory grant-making mechanism, focused on funding regional and global networks led by, involving and serving ISPs.

The Fund is a pooled funding mechanism, leveraging the contributions of multiple funding partners for the common cause of improving the health, social inclusion and well-being of ISPs. As a cooperative effort of donors and civil society, RCF is structured to maximise participation, empowerment, equity, transparency and accountability in fundraising and grant-making.

The Robert Carr Fund was named after Dr. Robert Carr, to honor his memory and recognize his contributions to the global HIV response. Dr. Robert Carr was a scholar and activist who worked for human rights and an end to HIV in his native Caribbean, and globally. Robert was a powerful advocate for the central role of communities in the HIV response. Read more about Dr. Robert Carr here.

The RCF is governed by an International Steering Committee (ISC), consisting of an equal number of donor and civil society voting members, which sets strategic direction, makes decisions about funding priorities, decides on funding allocations, supports fundraising, and oversees the implementation of activities. The Fund is administered by RCF's Secretariat. The Secretariat's functions include raising and securing donor contributions; administering grant making processes; convening grantees; managing RCF's MEL processes; providing logistic and administrative support to the governing bodies, providing reports to donors and other stakeholders; and maintaining regular public communications about RCF's work and results. The Secretariat currently consists of a team of 11 people.

The Steering Committee and Secretariat are supported by a civil society Program Advisory Panel (PAP) which reviews grant proposals; makes recommendations for funding to the ISC; and provides programmatic advice about opportunities for funding, grantee capacity building, technical support, and monitoring and evaluation. Together with the grantees funded, these bodies form the Robert Carr Fund collective.

The Secretariat is supported by a fund management agent (FMA), Aidsfonds. The FMA provides supportive administrative services to RCF, including entering into contractual agreements with grantees and donors; supporting financial management and reporting; supporting financial due diligence and prevention of corruption, fraud and mismanagement; supporting the Secretariat with office and communications infrastructure; and supporting the Secretariat staff with employee and human resources services and promotion of a healthy, safe and supportive work environment. Aidsfonds has served as the RCF's FMA since 2012 and has been affirmed and renewed in that role due to its strong commitment to human rights; experience in working for and with ISPs; ability to work with many funding partners; and ability to administer grants to civil society organizations (CSOs) in every region of the world.

INTRODUCTION TO THE 2023 REPORT

This report provides an overview of progress made by grantee partners in 2023 against RCF's progress metrics (quantitatively), as detailed in the MEL framework. It also reflects on significant changes (qualitatively) as aligned with RCF's Theory of Change Outcome Areas:

1. Network Strength and Influence
2. Human Rights
3. Access to and Quality of Services
4. Resource Accountability in financing the HIV response for ISPs / Improved Funding Environment.

Each of these outcome areas is measured by indicators that grantees report on annually by submitting an online annual survey. Together, 11 key performance indicators make up the MEL framework (see Annex 2). More information pertaining to each outcome area is presented at the beginning of its relevant section.

Core Funding Support

RCF also asks grantees to reflect on how the RCF core funding support has enabled their work. We ask grantees to indi–cate which type of funding (activity or core funding) they used for each programmatic outcome area and how they used it, for which specific needs. The findings and reflections are described in the section below, Value of Core Funding.

Linkages With The Global Fund

We sought to better understand how RCF funding supports grantees' engagement with the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria and contributes to programs supported by the Global Fund. The findings are discussed in RCF and the Global Fund.

Updated MEL Framework/Survey

The work funded by RCF aligns with its Theory of Change, and results are measured annually. The RCF annual report is informed by annual grantee reporting, which is in turn structured around the MEL framework (see Annex 2).

In 2023 the RCF updated its MEL framework through a series of participatory workshops with its active partners. The framework was simplified, with fewer indicators included and less repetition. It is also the first time that thematic focus areas have been included in the survey covering areas of SRHR in the context of HIV; gender transformative approaches[3] ; youth leadership; HIV–related criminalization[4]; and impact of climate change on communities affected by HIV. This re–view was conducted to meet the demands of collecting and processing data for the largest cohort of grantees in RCF's history. As such, this report is a "test drive" of the new methodology and RCF will continue evaluating and refining its MEL process throughout this grant cycle, to make sure we collect accurate data in a process that is user–friendly and intuitive for the grantees.

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[3] including a focus on the rights of adolescent girls and young women, transgender people, and gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men.
[4] including of drug use or sex work.

THE CONTEXT

Main Findings

In a complex and often hostile landscape, grantee organizations are navigating significant challenges, from reduced funding and political barriers to rising anti-rights movements, yet they continue to demonstrate remarkable resilience and adaptability in their advocacy efforts.

Ending HIV and AIDS remains a critical global health priority, with an estimated 39 million people living with the virus. While significant progress has been made in treatment and prevention, structural challenges persist and continue to hamper global HIV goals. Stigma and discrimination remain significant barriers, which have influenced harmful laws and policies that undermine hard-fought gains. Collaborative global strategies and funding, driven by organizations such as RCF, the Global Fund, and other multilateral organizations are crucial in striving towards the United Nations' goal to end the HIV and AIDS epidemic by 2030.

Around the world, disparities in access to comprehensive healthcare and HIV treatment continue to exist, particularly in low- and middle-income countries.

RCF's grantees lead innovative programs to increase ISP's access to biomedical tools like antiretrovirals (ARVs), pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) and post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP), alongside educational campaigns like U=U (Undetectable equals Untransmittable), Support. Don't Punish, and the HER Voice fund.

Key Challenges

Regressive and Anti-Rights Movements

A well-organized global campaign is aiming to *'Restore the natural order'*. It has ten times more funding than women and LGBTQI+- rights' movements; coordinates attacks on women and LGBTQI+ people and movements globally; focuses to prevent access to SRHR, including contraception, abortion and sex education; promotes gay conversion therapy; and notably it is directly funded by USA, Russia and EU governments[5].

The rise of anti-rights movements globally has led to new anti-LGBTQ+ criminal laws and prohibitions on gender-affirming care. This environment has made it difficult to maintain momentum for long-term advocacy campaigns. The influence of anti-gender movements in already restrictive civic spaces, such as in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, has forced organizations to alter their advocacy narratives and strategies to adapt to their increasingly hostile policy environment. The Anti-Homosexuality Act passed by Uganda's Parliament in March 2023 has drawn global attention to the criminalization of LGBTQI+ communities. This law has led to stigma, discrimination, and violence against people based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Unfortunately, this crisis is not limited to Uganda; other African countries like Kenya, Burundi, Ghana, Senegal, and Tanzania are also considering similar legislation. These laws pose a threat to community livelihoods, disrupt HIV/AIDS and SRHR programming, and contribute to the closure of civic space.

Anti-rights movements have also put women and girls' health at risk by limiting contraceptive choices and access to comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) and information. In the year 2023, the anti-abortion movement gained significant traction across both the United States and Europe. This surge of policy shifts poses a direct threat to reproductive rights and access to sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services. In Texas, hundreds of new state laws came into effect on the 1st of September, including further limitations on abortion and pushing back climate efforts[6]. In November, the Russian Supreme Court banned and labelled the LGBTQI+ movement as extremist[7]. These trends reflect a concerning global shift to the right amidst closing civic space that call for urgent and coordinated regional and global action.

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[5] Love Alliance (2023) Global Review of Anti-Rights Movement and HIV
[6] Pilkington, E. (2023) 'Death star law' to abortion: The new rightwing laws taking effect in Texas, The Guardian.
[7] Russia: Supreme Court bans 'LGBT movement' as 'extremist' (2023) Human Rights Watch.

Policy and Legal Barriers

Research in sub–Saharan Africa shows that in countries which criminalize homosexuality, HIV prevalence is five times higher among men who have sex with men (MSM) than it is in countries without such laws[8]. Several grantees reported facing increasing anti–LGBTQ+ legislation and hostile policies. Notably in 2023, the passage of the Anti–LGBTQ+ bill in Uganda posed significant risks and operational challenges for ISP–led movements. Legal and policy barriers in Sub–Saharan Africa, including restrictive age of consent laws and criminalisation of same–sex practices, hindered advocacy efforts.

Networks highlight the extent that these challenges in the external context affected their ability to carry out their advocacy efforts: this severity is captured by the African Trans Network (ATN) who state that,

> *"due to the various punitive laws in most African countries the majority of our steering committee members relocated to Europe which forced them to resign from their duties".*

They note that their membership organizations have also been greatly impacted by the legal and policy environment, with recent laws being tabled in Kenya, Ghana, and Nigeria and passed in Uganda. This is further exacerbating the existing social barriers, including lack of legal protections, limited resources, and entrenched prejudice and discrimination faced by transgender people and organizations. Networks indicate that they have received reports that most trans–led organizations in Uganda were closed due to the censorship of their work by law enforcement making it difficult to advance their agenda and support transgender communities effectively while continuing with their wide–scale advocacy initiatives. The LGBTQI+ movement has been greatly affected by these developments, and organizations have been connecting with other organizations addressing SRHR/HIV to find ways forward within their increasingly restrictive environments.

Conflict and Political Instability

In 2023, there were 183 regional and local conflicts worldwide, marking the highest number in the last three decades[9]. Additionally, there were nine wars (conflicts with more than 1,000 deaths per year), which is the highest figure since 2017 [10]. The world remains in a state of heightened tension, with peace and stability at risk. The eruption and sustained state of conflict stands as a major threat to human rights, HIV and SRHR programming.

For example, the ongoing war in Ukraine significantly impacted organizations based in the region, disrupting daily operations and posing significant safety and security risks. Political turmoil and frequent changes in government officials in countries like Pakistan and Bangladesh led to disruptions and delays in advocacy activities. The Eurasian Network of People who Use Drugs (ENPUD) reports that,

> *"In Ukraine, due to the ongoing invasion of the Russian army, people who use drugs continue to be affected by the war. People who use drugs are now forcibly conscripted into the army despite no provision of harm reduction services available in the army (specifically Opioid Agonist Treatment)."*

Social and Structural Stigmatization

Stigma and discrimination against ISPs were reported as major barriers, affecting both community acceptance and the ability of donors to support this work because of restrictions placed in the way of funding organizations working in these spaces. ISP networks, organizations and communities working on HIV continue to be socially excluded and heavily affected by funding cuts to the HIV response.

> *"The use of drugs is criminalized in most – if not all – of MENA countries, which prevents us from organizing ourselves into associations and limits our participation in decisions that directly affect our lives, or carrying out advocacy activities, providing services to peers, or even benefiting from the services available to the rest of society due to criminalization and the consequences of stigma and discrimination it entails."*

> *"WHRIN activity remains curtailed – despite growing capacity and demonstrated need, by the restricted funding environment which is doubtless also impacted by reticence from some donors to engage with issues impacting women who use drugs. We are seeing that the stigma that impacts our community extends also within the donor community and especially the women's movement. As a global network, we remain for now heavily dependent on RCF support however hope to build new strategies for funding diversification into our 2024–27 strategic planning."*

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[8] Jobson, G., Struthers, H., & McIntyre, J. (2015). "In the Fell Clutch of Circumstance": HIV and Men Who Have Sex With Men in Sub–Saharan Africa. Current HIV/AIDS Reports, 12(1), 164—172.
[9] Zimko, Oleksandra . "Not Only Ukraine and Israel: 183 Ongoing Regional Conflicts in 2023." msn.com, RBC Ukraine, 10 Dec. 2023.
[10] "UCDP: Record Number of Armed Conflicts in the World – Uppsala University." Uppsala University, 3 June 2024.

Limited Funding and Financial Constraints

Many networks have reported a shrinking funding landscape, particularly for core activities, and encompassing all components such as health, social support, human rights, and income generation. Project-based funding typically fails to cover essential costs like salaries and office expenses, threatening the sustainability of ISP-led networks' activities. Additionally, economic crises in regions such as Ecuador, Lebanon and Argentina have further restricted the ability to receive and transfer funds safely. The Global Network of Sex Work Projects (NSWP) observes that,

> *"Available funding at the country level often does not reach sex worker-led organizations."*

Positive Trends and Opportunities

Community Resilience and Grassroots Efforts

RCF has witnessed partners' resistance and resilience in the face of shrinking civic space, anti-rights movements and oppressive policy shifts as they worked to safeguard and advocate for access to health, human rights, and social justice.

For example, in September 2023, UN experts raised concerns about serious human rights violations in Manipur, India, including sexual violence, extrajudicial killings, home destruction, forced displacement, and torture, predominantly against the Kuki ethnic community, following a conflict that erupted in May 2023[11]. Despite this challenging environment, there were instances of strong community resilience. The crisis in Manipur highlighted the importance of grassroots work and the vital role played by local organizations in providing support during crises. This situation underscores the critical need for both addressing human rights violations and fostering community resilience in times of conflict. RCF grantee network Y+ Global reports that the conflict created an urgent need for emergency support, which resulted in re-allocating resources initially planned for network strengthening and advocacy work under the 4 YOUTH project.

Supportive Legal and Policy Frameworks

Since 2019, among active RCF-supported countries of intervention, Botswana, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Cook Islands, Mauritius, and Dominica have all repealed laws that had criminalized LGBTQI+ people[12]. Additionally, in the past five years, there has been a significant shift in the legislative landscape concerning HIV laws. A total of 24 repeals and modernisations across 12 countries and 24 jurisdictions have been observed. Many of these changes (19 out of 24) were achieved through legislative reform, while the rest were through litigation. In 10 jurisdictions, the reforms led to a complete repeal of laws specifically targeting HIV (as reported by The HIV Justice Network (HJN)). In the Philippines, an active HIV and AIDS law and the engagement of community-based organizations (CBOs) and international allies supported advocacy efforts to repeal HIV criminalization laws.

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[11] India: UN experts alarmed by continuing abuses in Manipur — United Nations
[12] As per UNAIDS 2024 PRIDE press statement.
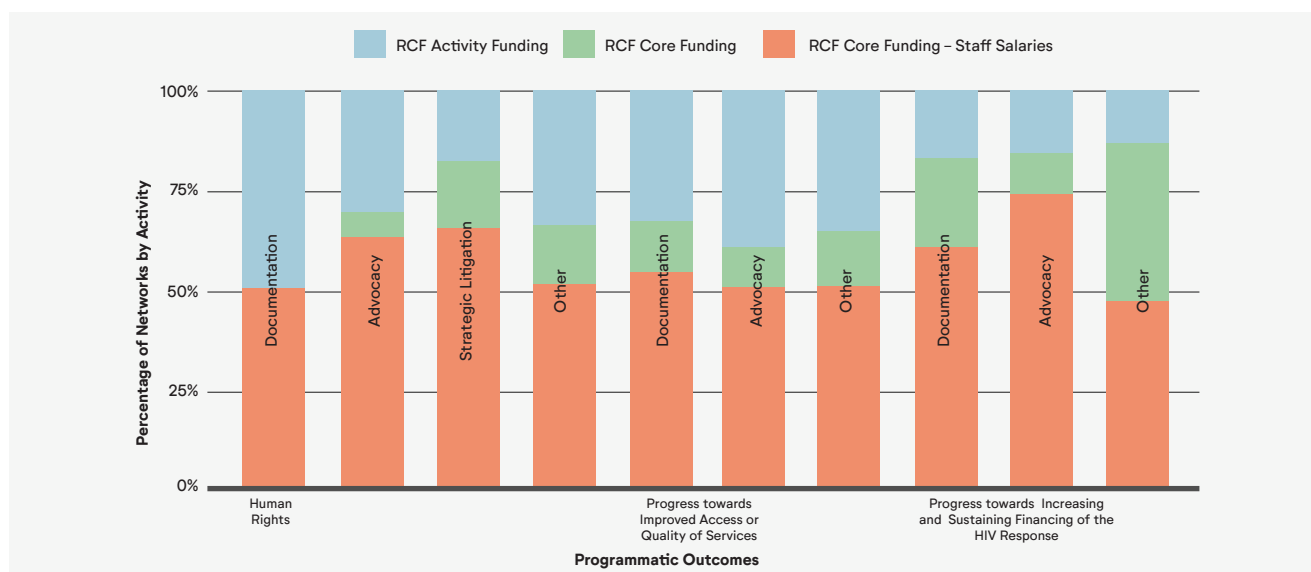
VALUE OF CORE FUNDING

Main Findings

- Up to 87% of networks relied on RCF core funding to implement programmatic activities, most frequently by paying salaries of trained staff responsible for implementation.

- Across the programmatic areas of human rights, improving access to and quality of services, and improving the funding environment for the HIV response, RCF core funding was primarily used to fund salaries of staff members.

- Networks report that core funding from RCF has been crucial in maintaining operational stability and allowing for strategic growth and overall improved organizational health.

- This high use of core funding to support programmatic outcomes is consistent across the grantee cohorts and all years that RCF collected this data, affirming the vital value of flexible core funding support for financial systems, governance, and strategic planning and fundraising to enhance stability and sustainability of ISP-led networks.

RCF provides long-term, flexible core funding, as mandated by our Theory of Change and strategy. Since 2019, we have been asking grantees to reflect on the value of core funding for their organizations and for their ability to make progress towards their programmatic goals.

Core Funding and Programmatic Outcomes

2023 grantee data is consistent with previous years: core funding is vital in supporting ISP-led and ISP-serving networks in achieving their programmatic outcomes, it reiterates the importance of funding staff expertise and the importance of human resources for all aspects of the HIV response, placing people at the centre of advocacy and service delivery. Depending on the outcome area, up to 87% of networks relied on core funding to implement programmatic activities, most frequently by paying the salaries of expert staff involved in implementation.

Figure 1. Core Funding and Programmatic Outcomes

The data presented in Figure 1 is consistent with that of previous grant cycles, and shows that in general, 50% or more networks report using RCF core funding across all programmatic outcomes. These figures illustrate the gaps in personnel costs across project-based funding streams and the value of RCF funding as a crucial gap filler for sustainable ISP-led advocacy work in the HIV response sector.

Core Funding and Organisational Health

Our data shows that core funding is also vital for networks in strengthening their organizational systems, including to meet donor requirements and qualify for new funding.

Networks highlight the importance of RCF core funding and emphasize that this funding has become even more important given the changing funding landscape. They commented that this core funding has been crucial in maintaining operational stability and allowing for strategic growth. For instance, **the funding covered essential costs which enabled networks to meet due diligence requirements and secure additional funding from other donors, such as the Global Fund.** This foundational support has been pivotal in proposal development and in maintaining continuous engagement with donors. RCF long-term core and flexible funding enables networks to strengthen and maintain organizational systems and processes which is critical for delivering high quality programmes and services for all donor contracts. The significance of core funding is detailed below:

- *The importance of core funding for enabling organizations to build a foundation to operate and for effective advocacy:* For example, the Global Network of Sex Work Projects (NSWP) observed that even the scant funding that "is available to our community is project-based and cannot be used to cover core costs, such as office rental, salaries, etc." They also reported that project funding does not regularly support interventions that require a longer period to yield an impact. They observe that "it cannot be used to fund long-term advocacy work, such as advocacy for decriminalization."

- *Core funding is also vital in enabling organisations to respond to emergencies:* For example, the Global Network of Young People Living with HIV (Y+ Global), with the support of the RCF, was able to respond urgently and reallocate funds from the core budget to provide emergency support to those most at risk in Uganda due to the Anti-Homosexuality Act enacted in March 2023. Additionally, this support was extended to address the safety concerns of our young networks in India amidst the ongoing riots. A similar observation was made by International Treatment Preparedness Coalition Global (ITPC) who notes the need for core funding to allow them to respond to activists who require support but who cannot openly receive or account for funding because of the political context in which they are organising (such as activists from Ukraine).

- *Core funding allows networks to appoint staff, and in particular financial staff who can support the development of financial systems:* The African Sex Workers Alliance (ASWA) reports that members improved their reporting and financial systems by developing financial manuals. This allowed the networks to attract other sources of funding and become more independent and sustainable.

- *Core and consistent funding create a virtuous cycle where networks' increased capacity allows them to strengthen the impact of their work:* This is illustrated by the value realized by the core grants provided by RCF, which enabled the Africa Network of People who Use Drugs (AfricaNPUD) to develop and enhance their advocacy capacity significantly. They report that this support allowed them to participate effectively in high-level discussions, such as the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) intersessional thematic discussion on harm reduction, thereby amplifying their voice and influence on crucial issues.

RCF AND THE GLOBAL FUND

Main Findings

- **65% of RCF–funded networks engaged with the Global Fund (GF) with more than 70% of these reporting using RCF core funding for core organizational staff salaries. This core funding from RCF enables net-works to build capacity, strengthen systems in CBOs, maintain operations, and engage effectively with the GF.**

- **Collaborative Efforts Yield Results:** Collaboration among networks, and between networks and the GF, resulted in increased influence and improved health outcomes. This suggests that multi–stakeholder ap-proaches, linking across national, regional and global, are effective in addressing complex health issues.

- **Capacity Building and Technical Assistance:** Providing training, resources, and technical support is essen-tial for empowering local organizations and ensuring sustainable engagement with large funding bodies like the GF.

- **Coordination and Complementarity:** While RCF primarily funds regional and global networks and consor-tia through flexible, core support; the GF funds primarily via country grant activities and through strate-gic initiatives such as CE SI and CLM SI, amongst others, with the former for grant implementation and the latter for community engagement. 41% of RCF–funded networks also receive funding from GF. The RCF ensures alignment and avoids duplication through regular monitoring, audit processes, due diligence, and collaboration with GF representatives who are on RCF's ISC. In May 2023 RCF hosted GF CE SI at a meeting to identify opportunities for collaboration and enhance strategic alignment and complementarity between RCF and the CE SI.

The RCF's core funding complements the support civil society and community–led networks receive from the Global Fund.

In 2023, 46 (65%) RCF–funded networks reported engaging with the GF and 29 (41%) reported receiving funding from the GF. Those that did not receive funding from the GF report engaging with them through advocacy, technical assistance, capacity building, participation in Country Coordinating Mechanisms, and strategic collaborations. The RCF measures complementarity with the GF by asking grantees to reflect on how RCF support contributed to the implementation of work co–funded by the GF. Of the 46 networks that engaged with the GF, 33 (72%) used RCF core funding for salaries, 11 (24%) used RCF core funding for operations, and 7 (15%) used RCF activity funding. This is a strong indicator that RCF support enables GF implementers to be able to deliver on GF programs, through providing core funding for the networks' core salaries and operations.

The primary purpose of engagement with the GF among the RCF grantees was to ensure that the needs and priorities of ISPs were **effectively integrated** into national health responses and funding requests. This engagement aimed to en-hance the representation and influence of marginalized groups in decision–making processes and improve access to HIV services, funding, and advocacy efforts.

The support from the RCF **enabled** these networks to:

- **Enhance their Advocacy Efforts:** RCF support facilitated the development and implementation of advo-cacy roadmaps, capacity–building initiatives, and participation in decision–making forums. This resulted in increased representation and influence of ISPs in national and regional health responses. Organizations that indicate RCF support enhanced their advocacy efforts include Eurasian Movement for the Right to Health in Prisons (EMRHP), Global Action for Trans Equality (GATE), International Network of People who Use Drugs (INPUD), Eurasian Harm Reduction Association (EHRA), African Sex Workers Alliance (ASWA), Sex Work Advocacy Network (SWAN), Asia Pacific Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS (APN+), HIV Legal Network/Réseau juridique VIH and International Treatment Preparedness Coalition Global (ITPC)[13].

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[13] ITPC UN General Assembly Advocacy toolkit

- **Develop and Disseminate Resources:** Networks used RCF funds to create and disseminate advocacy tools, conduct research, and publish reports that informed and influenced policy and funding decisions. Organizations that indicate RCF support assisted them in developing and disseminating resources include Global Network of Sex Work Projects (NSWP), Eurasian Harm Reduction Association (EHRA), Paediatric-Adolescent Treatment Africa (PATA), MENA Rosa, Global Action for Trans Equality (GATE), International Network of People who Use Drugs (INPUD) and International Treatment Preparedness Coalition Global (ITPC) .

Grantee networks undertook various **activities** as part of their engagement, including:

- **Training and Capacity Building:** Activities included MENA Rosa's training of trainers (ToT) on treatment literacy for women living with HIV and Youth LEAD's developing training guides for youth-led organizations on GF processes. Efforts also included the Eurasian Women's Network on AIDS (EWNA) which strengthened capacity of women's community leaders to conduct CLM on gender-based violence (GBV) among women living with HIV (Kazakhstan, Moldova), and on successful practices and gaps in the access to mental health services for women living with HIV (Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Ukraine, Uzbekistan). Efforts also included those of Sex Workers' Rights Advocacy Network (SWAN)'s development and dissemination of a resource sharing experiences and tips on community led monitoring.[14]

- **Advocacy, Coordination and Technical Assistance:** Many networks provided technical assistance and conducted advocacy activities to increase access to HIV services in various countries. For instance, the Eurasian Movement for the Right to Health in Prisons (EMRHP) supported advocacy activities to increase access to HIV services for prisoners. In another example, The Executive Director of Caribbean Vulnerable Communities Coalition (CVC) used their membership in the CCM to facilitate and coordinate the development of the national funding request, ensuring synchronization and consistency between GF grants and other local health and development endeavours. The Seven Alliance consortium (comprised of AP-COM, Asia Pacific Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS (APN+), Asia Pacific Network of Sex Workers (APNSW), Asia Pacific Transgender Network (APTN), International Community of Women Living with HIV in Asia Pacific (ICW-AP), Network of Asian People who Use Drugs (NAPUD) and Youth LEAD) supported through RCF successfully applied through a competitive process administered by the GF to host the Asia Pacific regional learning hub for Grant Cycle 7 (GC7) of the GF (2024-26). Additionally, community-led networks; the Eurasian Movement for the Right to Health in Prisons (EMRHP) and the International Network of People who Use Drugs (INPUD) are new pre-qualified technical assistance providers under the GC7 CE SI.

- **Community-Led Monitoring (CLM):** The South African Network of People who Use Drugs (SANPUD) received a grant for CLM which involved conducting surveys with people who use drugs (PWUDs) and service providers on the harm reduction services available in South African GF districts. ITPC EECA conducted a CLM for a Drug Resistance (DR) project in Belarus and Kyrgyzstan. The purpose of this project was to apply the CLM approach to monitor indicators related to drug resistance among people living with HIV (PLHIV), access to DR testing, and new ART regimens in the region as it will expose existing gaps and provide strong evidence for advocacy, including in relation to Advanced HIV Disease and access to testing.

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[14] Experiences and tips on Community-Led Monitoring — SWAN, 2023

The engagement with the GF, supported by RCF, is leading to several positive **outcomes**:

- **Increased Representation:** Enhanced representation of marginalized groups in policy spaces, national HIV strategy development, and GF processes. For example, the participation of Trans and Gender Diverse (TGD) community–led organizations in policy advocacy led to significant policy gains in Ukraine. Y+ Global indicates engagement with the GF with RCF support resulted in *"increased representation and influence of young people in the GC7 processes across multiple countries in the African region."*

- **Improved Access to Services:** Advocacy and technical support led to improved access to HIV services for key populations, including prisoners, women living with HIV, and youth. For example, the Eurasian Movement for the Right to Health in Prisons (EMRHP) *"supported advocacy activities in 5 countries (Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Ukraine) aimed at increasing access of prisoners to HIV services."* This was linked to funding from the GF in the framework of the regional program *"Sustainability of services for key populations in EECA region"*. In another notable example, The International Network of People who Use Drugs (INPUD) indicate that their engagement with the GC7[15] contributed to a high likelihood of increased access to harm reduction services in Nigeria, Pakistan, Zimbabwe, and Kenya. Additionally, harm reduction is expected to be introduced or scaled up in Malawi, Mozambique, and Ghana. These results are based on GC7 funding requests submitted in these countries and are subject to grant–making negotiations. In Nigeria, there is a scale–up of Needle and Syringe Programs (NSP) from two to 19 sites, introduction and pilot of Opioid Agonist Therapy (OAT) and naloxone, and funding for decriminalization advocacy. In Zimbabwe, there will be for the first time–NSP pilot and advocacy for OAT and potentially a population size estimate for people who inject drugs. In Pakistan, there will be an introduction and pilot of OAT, establishment of gender–sensitive services, and a CLM mechanism for PWUDs. In Kenya, there will be the implementation of gender and youth–sensitive services.

- **Capacity Building:** Strengthened the capacity of CBOs to apply for and manage donor funds, ensuring sustainable and effective participation in health initiatives. For example, Paediatric–Adolescent Treatment Africa (PATA) highlights their work under the GF CE SI to develop and pilot a capacity–building curriculum for CBOs led by and for adolescent girls and young women (AGYW). This initiative was supported by RCF, contributing to the development of the "We are the Change" capacity–building curriculum.

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[15] INPUD: Communities at the Centre: A report back on the Global Fund Grant Cycle 7 (Windows 1 and 2)

2023 GRANTEE RESULTS

Outcome Area 1: Stronger Networks

RCF's Theory of Change asserts that institutionally strong ISP–led or ISP–serving networks are more influential change–makers. Outcome Area 1 is mandatory to report on for each unique network that receives RCF funding (71 networks in 2023). This section considers how networks have strengthened their organizational status, staff structure, financial capacity and accountability, financial sustainability, representativeness and democratic governance, and capacity to unite and mobilize movements. These areas are monitored through six indicators as follows:

Network Strength and influence

Organizational Capacity	1A. Number of networks with strengthened organizational status
	1B. Number of networks with strengthened core staff structure
	2A. Number of networks showing strengthened financial capacity and accountability
	2B. Number of networks showing strengthened financial sustainability
	3. Number of networks more representative of their constituencies and more democratically governed
Advocacy Capacity	4. Number of networks showing strengthened influence and capacity to unite and mobilize movements

Key highlights and notable findings per indicator are included in the report narrative: for complete figures against the RCF MEL framework indicators, please refer to Annex 1: Data Tables.

Main Findings

- 73% of networks produced audited financial reports in 2023, a significant increase from 2022 (57%).

- At the onset of the grant cycle, 21% of RCF–funded networks reported **not** relying on any single donor for more than 30% of their network's total funding. In 2023, this figure increased to 31% of reporting networks.

- A 72% increase from baseline was observed in the cohorts' ability to finance at least 1 paid staff member (programmatic or otherwise). 15% at baseline (11 out of 72) reported having only volunteers to carry out a defined scope of work and has no paid staff members, this was reduced to 3% (2 out of 71) at the close of 2023.

- In 2022, 72% of reporting networks indicated that 50% or more of their board members identified as being from the communities and regions served by their network, this figure rose to 85% of networks in 2023 showing strengthened representative governance structures among RCF–funded networks.

- Only 7 (10%) of the networks indicated that without RCF funding, their other funds would be enough to implement their strategic plan or support their essential operations for at least 2 years (until December 2025), noting that RCF committed funding from this cycle ends in 2024.

- The most frequently reported result for strengthening networks' internal capacity was *"Strengthened membership, partnerships, allies, and other advocacy capacities"*.

Strengthening Organizational Status

Among the 2022–2024 RCF cohort of grantees, 58 (82%) networks report being legally registered as of 2023. Of these 58, 1 network was officially registered in 2023. Being registered allows them to open their own bank accounts and build their internal financial capacities to manage their own funds as well as, where relevant, to facilitate transfers to other countries. This is critical to enabling them to apply for additional funding opportunities. Partners also report that it allows them greater access to and credibility with the media, which is seen as vital to forming partnerships, doing advocacy and highlighting violence by law enforcement authorities.

Of the 13 unregistered networks, 7 networks state that they are in the process of formally registering, including 1 network which launched its formal registration process in 2023. Partners explain that the registration process is not without its challenges; in some cases, uncertainty within governments has delayed — for many months — the approval processes, making registration very slow. There are also many bureaucratic hurdles, which can require legal support, which may be costly. Another complex challenge is that networks need to consider the legal situation in other countries their partners are based in; if these countries have restrictive laws, this can make registration unsafe and thus unfeasible for partner organizations.

23 networks report operating with a fiscal host. This approach has a number of reported benefits including that of assisting the organization to focus on its priorities, work within project timelines, and properly use and manage funds. They explain that,

> "Regular meetings organized by the fiscal agent for project reviews, helped us to reflect on progress made, challenges faced, and offer a way forward. They play a role of supervision of the project and ensure that implementation and reporting is done correctly, timely and successfully."

The importance of a fiscal agent to wider system development was also highlighted,

> "The fiscal host has provided fiduciary oversight which in so many ways has helped us to build our capacity from a name to a network that is now registered with clear systems in place. Helped us with develop policies and our financial capacity through training for non-financial managers. The fiscal host has handled our funds and have helped in disbursements in a clear and transparent way".

While working with and through a fiscal host helps strengthen networks by providing administrative support and oversight, grantees report using RCF funding to strengthen internal organizational capacities (through external support and personnel costs/hiring staff), to work towards their independence. 29 grantees reported working through a fiscal host at the onset of the grant cycle in 2022, this has been reduced to 23 networks in 2023. **This shift reduces ISP-led networks' dependence on fiscal hosts and further enables ISP leadership in the HIV response globally.**

Strengthening Staff Structure

At the onset of the grant cycle, 11 RCF grantee networks reported only having volunteers to carry out a defined scope of work and had no paid members. In 2023 this figure has dropped to only 2 networks, a 72% increase in cohorts' ability to finance at least 1 staff member (programmatic or otherwise). In stark contrast, in 2022, 44 networks (61%) reported that their networks have a core team of full-time paid staff to carry out work for at least 2 years, this figure dropped to 23 networks (with a 47% decrease) from 2022 to 2023. **These findings underscore the impact of RCF's funding on the staffing capacity of grantee networks. The decrease in networks maintaining a full-time paid team from 2023 for two subsequent years is indicative of networks' inability to sustain staff for two years without the ongoing core support of the RCF (noting that 2024 is the last year in the RCF's 2022–2024 grant cycle). This highlights the critical need for long-term, flexible core funding to maintain essential personnel across ISP-led networks.**

Strengthening Financial Capacity and Accountability

Baseline data collected at the start of the funding cycle found that 41 (57%) networks had at least one paid dedicated finance staff member to manage accounting. In 2023 this figure has increased to 64 networks (90%), showing a 33% increase since the launch of RCF's grant-making cycle. **These figures point to RCF's contributions to the stability and sustainability of the networks' financial infrastructures.**

Main improvements to financial management systems among grantees in 2023 include the introduction of a risk register which has clear action points for their governance bodies to help strengthen accountability. Other networks indicated that they have fine-tuned different financial management documents such as the Finance Manual Policy, Fraud Risk Management Policy, Anti-Fraud and Bribery Policy. AfricaNPUD observe that,

> "these documents are designed to strengthen the financial systems and enhance transparency and the flow of funds in AfricaNPUD".

One network partner, The European Prison Litigation Network (EPLN), highlighted that in 2023, their financial management was strengthened through the development of their accounting system, which allowed them to plan their activities in quarterly periods and to quickly process requests for operating expenses as well as provide responsive financial support to partner organizations. This result was enabled by the appointment of two people to support internal management together with a part-time person for internal auditing who supervises operations and indicates whether there are any measures to improve.

In another example, The Asia Pacific Transgender Network (APTN) revised their financial manual to enhance practicality and standardization, thereby improving transparency and governance. The updated policies encompass areas such as audits, procurement and consultancy contracts. In addition, they have appointed a consultant to review policies, which is an ongoing process to improve financial systems and documents through practice.

Strengthening Financial Sustainability

Networks provided insights about how they increase financial stability for example through advocacy to highlight the need for increased funding to sustain key areas of work.

One example is Global Action for Trans Equality's (GATE) work to support partners to effectively participate in Global Fund processes (GC7) and successfully advocate for the inclusion of increased funding allocations for TGD community priorities in their countries' Global Fund funding requests in GC7. **This illustrated that investing resources that strengthen community-led organizations can contribute to their success in advocating for increased funding for community priorities.** As observed by The International Network of People who Use Drugs (INPUD),

> "due to GC7 engagement, increased funding commitments for harm reduction and people who use drugs programming has been strongly predicted to increase by millions of dollars, not only in the countries for which we directly provided resourcing and technical assistance, but more broadly. This can be attributed to long-standing advocacy efforts by communities globally, regionally and nationally".

Partners report that RCF funded research has strengthened their evidence-based advocacy, which has been critical to their ability to engage and attract diverse funders and ensure sustainability of activities.

Networks used RCF core funding to take steps to increase their financial stability. 19 developed a fundraising strategy, 15 hired a fundraising consultant or a dedicated fundraising staff member, 46 proactively nurtured relationships with new potential donors, and 12 proactively explored non-traditional funding sources (e.g. crowdfunding). **Notably, only 7 (10%) of the networks indicated that without RCF funding, their other funds would be enough to implement their strategic plan or support their essential operations for at least 2 years (until December 2025), reiterating the crucial core support the RCF provides to ISP-led networks globally.**

In a relevant snippet[16], an RCF partner reports that in 2022, their network developed a finance manual with procedures and internal controls. In 2023, the network then opened a bank account and began to use parts of the manual for both their secretariat and country chapters. **These results suggest that while immediate efforts to strengthen internal systems are a crucial step for strengthening ISP–led networks, longer–term efforts reflect more nuanced results and substantiate the importance of long–term funding to achieve organizational development, contributing to a strong and independent ISP–led movement.**

Strengthening Representation and Democratic Governance

Insights into progress on this indicator include efforts to share plans and financial reporting in ways that build accountability. Network partners have continuously built systems to strengthen their governance structures.

One network partner MENA Rosa indicated that during this grant cycle they updated the governance manual and modified the network's structure to avoid any conflict of interest. They further strengthened capacity by including an Executive Committee in the organigram, which includes the Executive Director, the Program Coordinator and two Focal Points, who are women living with HIV/ community leaders in their respective MENA country.

Another partner, The International Network of People who Use Drugs (INPUD), highlighted the learnings of their efforts, sharing these insights in a 2023 peer forum to exchange existing governance models, challenges, and solutions. This forum acknowledged the possibilities within *"the inherent complexities of governing ISP–led networks."*

Most networks strengthened their network's governance structure and/or built the capacity of their board members in 2023. This included 19 networks conducting a needs assessment, 29 developing an action plan, 23 implementing an action plan, and 21 conducting training or other capacity–building activities for their board members. 16 networks indicated they did not take steps to strengthen their network's governance structure and/or to build the capacity of their board members as they focused on other priorities in 2023.

Notably, baseline data collected at the onset of the grant cycle in 2022 identifies 52 networks where the Board of Directors actively engage in governance of the network and is accountable to its constituents from among the members of the network. In 2023, this figure jumped to 67 networks (94%), indicating progress on accountability and board oversight among the cohort. Additionally, 72% of reporting networks indicated that at least 50% of their board is comprised of members from the communities and regions served by the network, this figure increased to 85% in 2023. **These figures reflect the effectiveness of core, long term flexible funding in allowing ISP–led networks to strengthen their governance structures and ensure that they are democratic, and representative.**

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[16] Some partner names anonymized across this report for safety and security

Strengthening Influence and Capacity to Mobilise Movements

In 2023, 62 (87%) of the networks indicated they engaged their community and/or network members in developing an advocacy initiative or strategy. These strategies included involving partners across organizations in community-based research; advocating for funding to ensure that partners across the movement receive resources; holding round tables to support a shared understanding of challenges being faced by the movement and creating spaces for developing collective strategies and plans. A key aspect of this work includes efforts to strengthen organizations in areas of community engagement, local alliances and leadership.

Figure 2. Reporting networks' engagement with their communities

How networks engage their comminity members in developing their new advocacy initiative or strategy
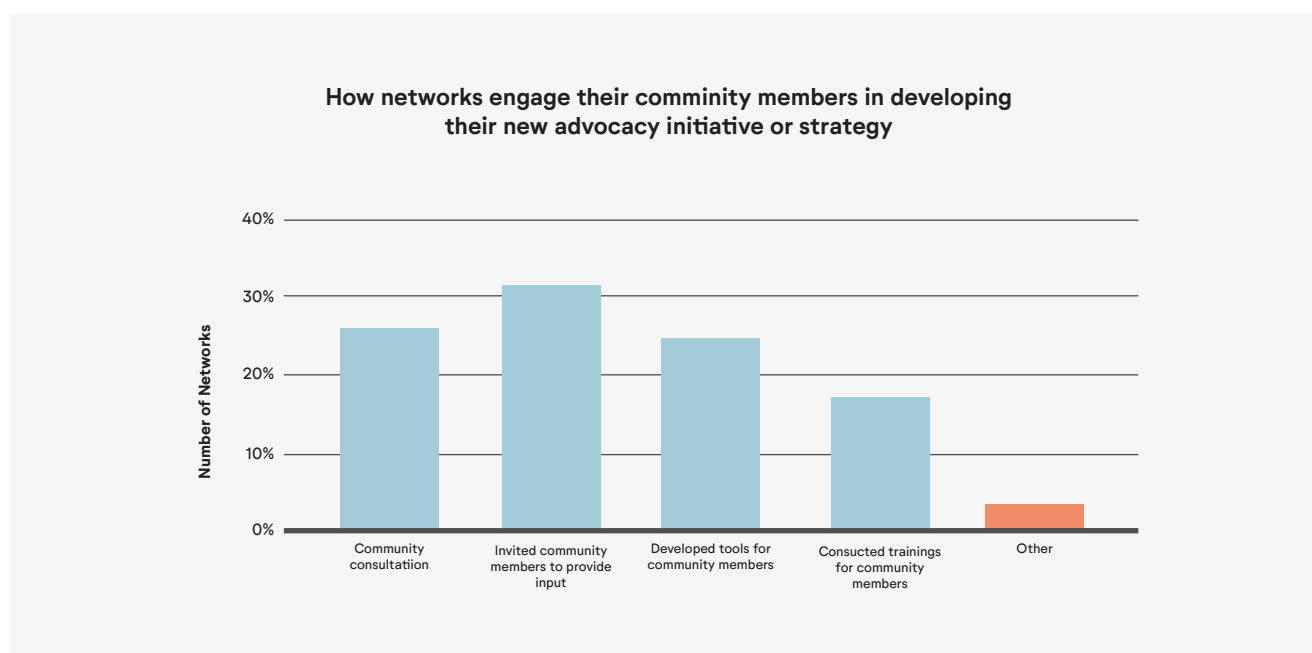
Those stating the Other category reported generating a feedback mechanism for the ISPs after the deployment of the advocacy initiative and supporting a network of volunteers to act as representatives of the community.

Notably, 58 (82%) of the networks indicated they engaged in an intersectional partnership or coalition to advance a shared goal across the HIV, LGBTQI+ and SRHR sectors. **63 networks (89%) indicated they engaged in partnership or working relationships with national government agencies, UN or other global or regional agencies, or bilateral or multilateral donors.**

Figure 3. Reporting networks' engagement with national government agencies, UN or other global or regional agencies, or bilateral or mul–tilateral donors.

Which entities did networks engage in patnerships in 2023?
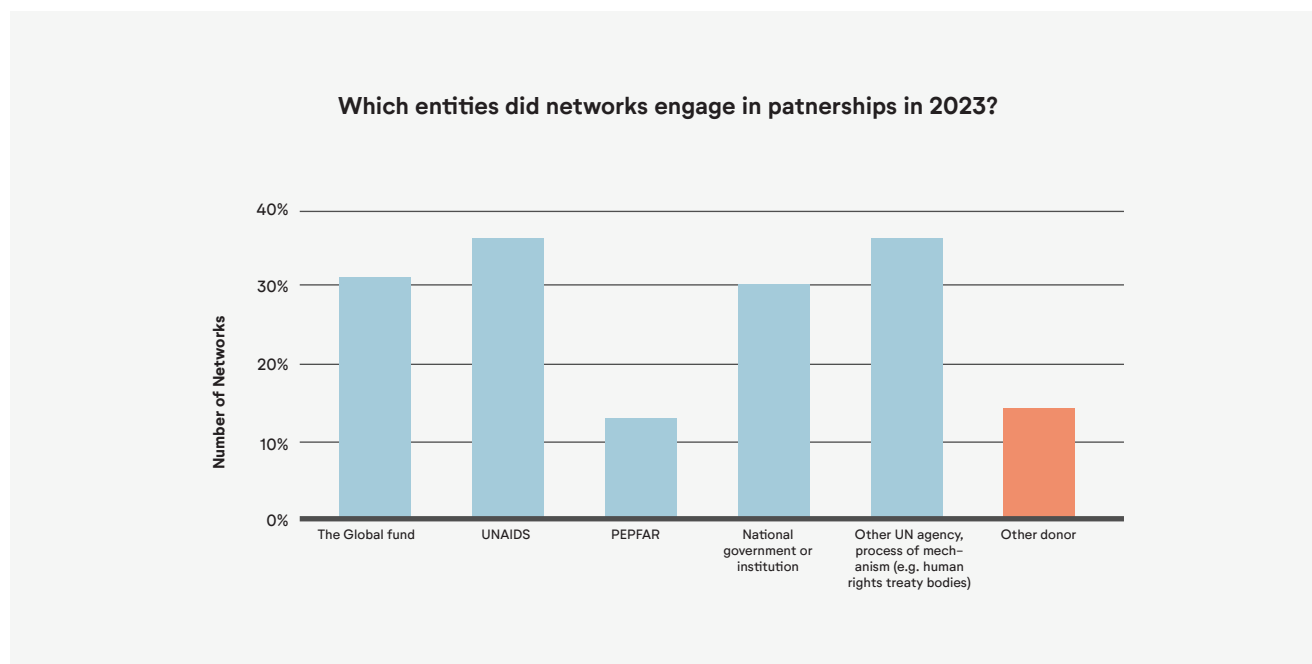
49 (69%) of the networks indicated they held a formal membership in a committee, coordination council, or board, on a key topic for its constituent ISPs. Networks used their membership to steer HIV and/or health policy for their target ISP at the national, regional or global level in 2023.

For example, The International Community of Women living with HIV Central Africa (ICWCA) reports that the network joined the Regional Hub of Paediatrics in October 2023. The Hub's aim is to bring together key players at regional level to share learnings and to contribute to decision–making on paediatric HIV response at regional level.

All 71 networks gave insights into the most important result they achieved in building the internal capacity of their net–work. 35 networks (49%) indicated that their most important result area pertains to strengthening membership, part–nerships, allies, and other advocacy capacities; 11 networks (15.5%) indicated that their most important results focused on strengthening their network's staff structure; 9 (12.7%) networks reported that their most important results related to strengthened governance; 7 networks indicated that their most important results related to improving their finan–cial management capacities; 6 networks (8.5%) reported their most important results pertained to increased financial sustainability; and 3 networks reported that their most important results were either significantly working towards or obtaining legal registration.

48 (68%) of the networks indicated that the most important result came from a change made in 2023 to strengthen their network and 23 (32%) of networks indicated this came from continuing improvements made before 2023.

Programmatic (Advocacy) Outcomes

RCF understands that advocacy is not a linear process and that bringing about change often requires multi-year strategies and efforts. While individual advocacy actions rarely automatically lead to change, every achieved milestone ultimately contributes. The RCF Annual Survey measures this by plotting grantees' progress along a continuum:

- *Foundational Actions:* Collecting evidence to inform advocacy efforts or identify advocacy priorities
- *Early Actions:* Developing and launching advocacy campaigns or strategies
- *Advanced Actions:* Continuing advocacy campaigns or strategies, and engaging in decision-making spaces to influence change
- *Advocacy Results:* Achieving the desired, quantifiable advocacy results, including legal or policy change, documented changes in service access or quality, and changes in funding availability or use.

The three programmatic outcome areas (Human Rights, Access and Quality of Services, and Resource Accountability) are optional. This means that RCF grantees set their own priorities for their efforts and hence for what they report on. Some networks report on none[17] or one of the programmatic outcomes, while others report on all three.

At the start of the 2022–2024 funding cycle, we asked grantees about their plans for the three grant years, including which outcome areas they plan to prioritize. The number of networks that report on each of the programmatic indicators is based on their responses to this question.

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[17] For instance, if a network is nascent and prioritizes investing RCF support in its own organizational capacity instead of programmatic activities.

Outcome Area 2: Human Rights

There is a direct link between human rights violations and HIV risk. ISPs are disproportionately impacted by laws and policies that affect their human rights and their ability to protect their health. The Human Rights outcome area considers how networks documented evidence, engaged in advocacy initiatives, or supported strategic litigation for the advancement of human rights for ISPs.

Main Findings

- 59 networks carried out activities aimed at improving the human rights of ISPs.

- 32 networks documented human rights violations or produced evidence to support advocacy.

- 47 networks developed and implemented a human rights advocacy campaign or initiative.

- 6 networks engaged in support for strategic litigation to advance human rights for ISPs.

- The main focus of the networks for advancing human rights was under the theme "HIV-related criminal-ization (including drug use or sex work)".

- Of the networks that carried out human rights activities, 39% have reported legal or policy changes result-ing from to their advocacy activities or strategic litigation.

- The impact of this work can often take many years to achieve as highlighted by the changes realised by partners. Although it takes a long-term investment to achieve, these changes have far-reaching systemic impact.

In 2023, 59 (83%) of the networks report having carried out at least 1 activity aimed at improving the human rights of ISPs.

Figure 4. Activities that describe networks' efforts to advance the human rights for ISPs.
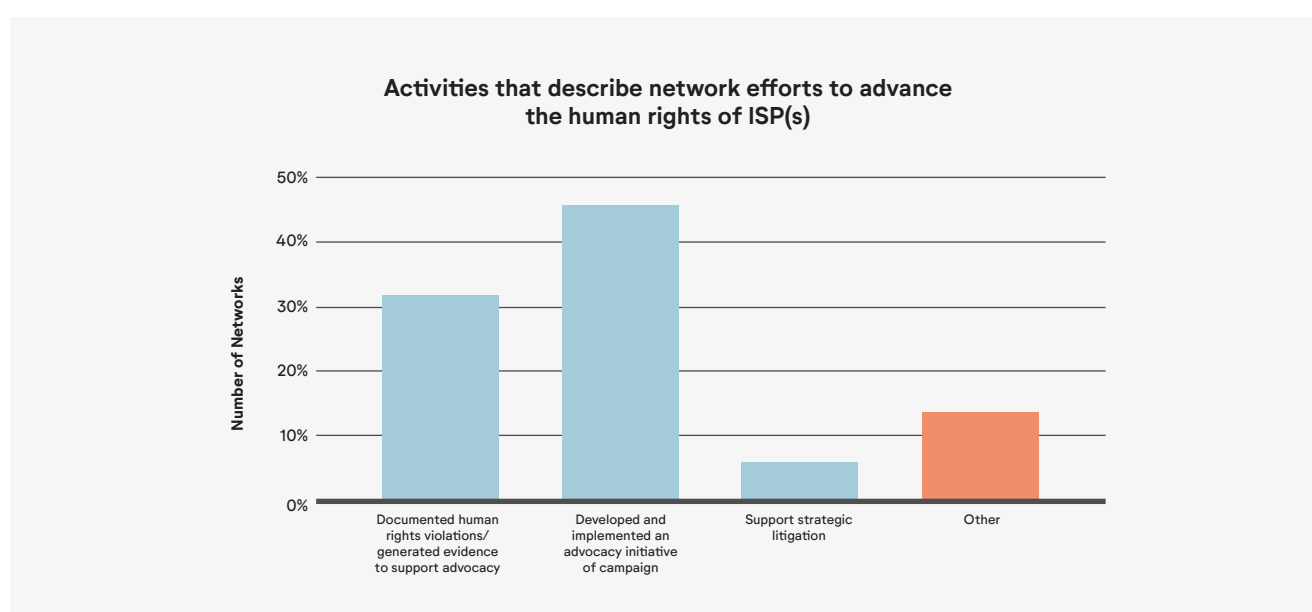
The above breakdown in Figure 4 indicates that in 2023, 32 networks documented human rights violations or produced cred-ible evidence to support advocacy efforts, 47 networks developed and implemented an advocacy campaign or initiative, and 6 engaged in support of strategic litigation.

Various additional initiatives have been undertaken to support marginalized communities and advocate for their rights which are classified as 'other'. The South African Network of People who Use Drugs (SANPUD) organized the FEMALIVE walk to raise awareness about GBV and educate on safe drug use practices as well as provide information to women who use drugs on their rights as women. The Asia Pacific Network of Sex Workers (APNSW)'s Leadership and Mentorship program empowers sex workers through training in advocacy and leadership. The Sex Work Advocacy Network (SWAN) supports sex workers in multiple countries by providing project communication and emergency response assistance. The International Drug Policy Consortium (IDPC) actively challenges repressive drug policies and promotes harm reduction through engagement with UN fora, helping to secure a groundbreaking resolution at the Human Rights Council in March 2023 focused on human rights, drug policies and harm reduction.

Foundational Action on Community–Led Evidence Generation

In 2023, the RCF began to monitor intersectional thematic focuses across partners' work, the below graph (Figure 5) rep-resents focus thematic areas captured through community–led evidence generation and documentation.

Figure 5. Focus areas for the documentation of human rights violations or evidence production

Focus area that best applies to documentation of human rights violations or evidence generation

- HIV–related criminalization (including of drug use or sex work)
- Impact of climate change on communities affected by HIV
- Youth health, rights, leadership
- Sexual and reproductive health and rights in the context of HIV
- Gender transformative approaches (including focus on girls and women, transgender people, and gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men)
- Other

Those stating the Other category included those who reported a focus on social protection (4), health rights of people in prison (1), discrimination against those who use drugs (1), and general human rights (1).

Central to this documentation effort is the role played by organizations in monitoring changing environments as seen in the work that is being undertaken. In Ukraine, The European Prison Litigation Network (EPLN) is supporting three Ukrainian NGOs in documenting violations of human rights of prisoners in territories under Russian occupation and initiating a judicial response for the protection of prisoners who are victims of war crimes. EPLN also further supports Ukrainian NGOs in monitoring prisons under governmental control. 15 new strategic cases were documented in 2023 concerning torture and deaths in prison, or inhumane and degrading treatment due to the inadequate provision of healthcare. The findings of this work were channelled to the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT), but more particularly to the European Commission, who included prisons, and the prison health system, as a key area of reform in the process of Ukraine's accession to the EU in their Ukraine Report 2023.

The value of having the space to generate evidence is also seen in the work done by Red de Mujeres Trabajadoras Sexuales de Latinoamérica y El Caribe (RedTraSex) in collaboration with the Workers' Innovation Center (CITRA) of Argentina whereby evidence collected by RedTraSex in 2022 was analyzed into a report on the Working Conditions and Human Rights Violations of Sex Workers in Latin America and the Caribbean[18]. In addition, the analysis led to the inclusion of variables related to the working conditions of sex workers in the instrument used for the interviews to strengthen documentation efforts.

In another notable documentation effort, the Caribbean Vulnerable Communities Coalition (CVC) awarded grants to three organizations across the English, Spanish, French, and Dutch-speaking Caribbean, to enable them to expand their capacity to document human rights violations within their respective ISP communities through The Shared Incident Database developed by the CVC. During the reporting period, the reporting organizations documented a total of 137 cases of human rights violations. The main issues highlighted include instances of physical violence, verbal harassment, and discrimination by relatives. It is worth noting that this documentation was carried out by field officers who are ISPs themselves. The CVC indicates that the data accumulated from the Shared Incident Database will serve as a pivotal resource directing future advocacy endeavours and organizational undertakings. This dataset will empower the organization to formulate targeted advocacy campaigns, suggest policy reforms, and devise intervention strategies specifically customized to address the distinct needs and challenges outlined in the documented incidents.

Image 1. CVC Human Rights Sensitization Session in Guyana in collaboration with FACT (SID Grantee) 2023

Early Action to Advance the Human Rights of ISPs

The nature of this indicator is more complex than the previous indicators, with actions often cyclical, e.g. an activity occurring one year may build on activities done in previous years, and the repetition of additional foundational steps may or may not be needed each year. Nevertheless, in 2023, 66% of grantee partners (47 networks) developed and implemented an advocacy initiative or campaign to advance the human rights for ISPs.

The reported interventions carried out by RCF-supported networks in 2023 were numerous and inspiring. The examples provided below merely scratch the surface of the significant efforts undertaken throughout the year.

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[18] Report on Working Conditions and Human Rights Violations of Sex Workers in Latin America and the Caribbean — RedTraSex in collaboration with CITRA

In one example, an RCF partner[19] embarked on a significant advocacy journey aimed at repealing part 1 of Article 118 of the Criminal Code of Kazakhstan. This article criminalized the transmission of HIV, a policy that had long been criticized for its detrimental impact on public health and human rights. The main objective of this campaign was not only to decriminalize HIV transmission but also to foster a more supportive and understanding environment for PLHIV, encouraging them to seek care and support without fear of legal repercussions.

In another case, The International Community of Women Living with HIV West Africa (ICWWA) organized a forum and roundtable discussion to advocate for improved services for ISPs. The objectives were to share and collate experiences of service gaps for ISPs and to advocate for improved services for ISPs. The data used to inform this activity allowed for the identification of focus areas which included poor treatment of ISPs by healthcare providers and the police. Participants of the forum included duty bearers, policy makers, government representatives, community heads, and different categories of ISPs in Nigeria (PLHIV, people living with disability, key populations and other vulnerable populations). Target audience included, UNAIDS, National Agency for the Control of AIDS, AIDS Healthcare Foundation, The Nigerian Police, Community Heads, Healthcare Professionals, and others.

Image 2. Poster Side Event at the 66th Commission on Narcotic Drugs — March 2023

Another notable example is the Rise and Decriminalize mobilization campaign, initiated by the Eurasian Harm Reduction Association (EHRA), which aimed to unite key communities in the Eastern Europe and Central Asia (EECA) region around decriminalization of issues impacting LGBTQI+ people, PWUDs, women living with HIV, and sex workers. The campaign, which included EHRA, Eurasian Coalition on Health, Rights, Gender and Sexual Diversity (ECOM), the Eurasian Women's Network on AIDS (EWNA), The Sex Work Advocacy Network (SWAN), and The Eurasian Network of People who use Drugs (ENPUD), focused on promoting understanding and support for decriminalization. The campaign emphasized the formation of strategic alliances and partnerships, regular communication, and stakeholder coordination with the ultimate aim of gaining support to drive the decriminalization agenda forward in the EECA region.

Another effort undertaken by RCF grantees focused on access to care and harm reduction for people in prison. In a joint effort, RCF grantee partners, The European Prison Litigation Network (EPLN), Harm Reduction International (HRI), and UnMode submitted several reports to the Human Rights Council's procedures and mechanisms. These highlighted the dire situation of harm reduction in prisons in terms of availability, accessibility and quality of services, while highlighting the negative impacts of punitive drug policies and incarceration on PWUDs. The reports informed the work of the OHCHR and the Special Rapporteur on health. In a related initiative, the European Prison Litigation Network (EPLN), in collaboration with others including Harm Reduction International (HRI), UnMode, and Health Without Barriers – the European Federation of Prison Health (HWB), organized a side event during the United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs, (UN CND). The event, which saw the participation of the Special Rapporteur on Health, aimed to urge States to ensure equivalent care for PWUD in prisons and to strengthen the independence of health professionals providing harm reduction and health services in prisons.

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[19] Some partner names anonymized across this report for safety and security

In 2023, grantees continued their strong engagement in cross-sectoral partnerships across HIV, LGBTQI+ and SRHR sectors, as well as their working relationships with UN agencies, multi-lateral and bilateral donors and government agencies (Figure 6).

Figure 6. Networks' engagement with entities within their advocacy work

Entities networks engaged with directly in 2023 in their advocacy to improve human rights of inadequately served populations
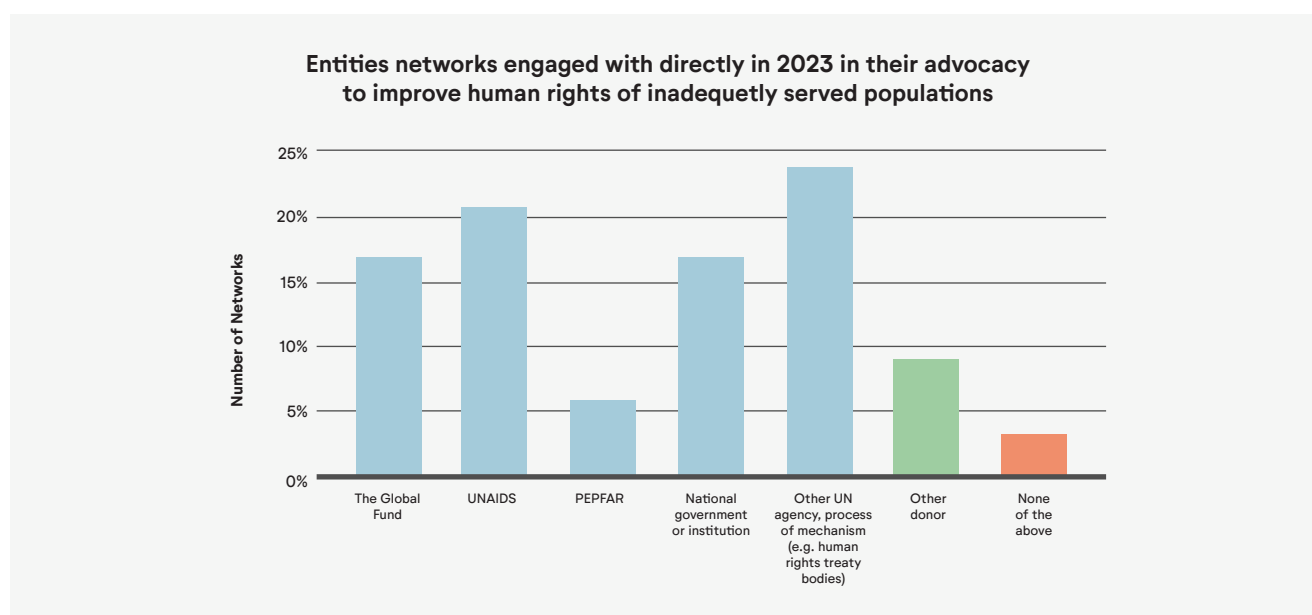
Grantees' advocacy efforts focused on HIV criminalization including of drug use or sex work (32%), SRHR in the context of HIV (19%), Gender Transformative Approaches including focus on girls and women, transgender people, and gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men (19%), Youth Health, Rights and Leadership (15%), and Impact of Climate Change on Communities Affected by HIV (2%).

Advanced Action to Advance the Human Rights of ISPs

In 2023, 6 networks supported strategic litigation to improve the human rights of ISPs. Of the 6 networks, 2 focused on strategic litigation relevant to HIV-related criminalization (including of drug use or sex work), 2 focused on litigation relevant to Gender Transformative Approaches (including focus on girls and women, transgender people, and gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men), and 2 focused on other areas.

Strategic litigation initiatives were diverse and focused on the rights of ISPs in ways that achieved important changes. One example of how RCF has supported networks in this work is demonstrated by the work of HIV Justice Network (HJN). The organization has been able to put in place the capacity to monitor and document activism, litigation and law reform related to the criminalization of HIV non-disclosure, exposure and transmission throughout the world. HJN created and maintained an online Global HIV Criminalization Database as a repository, which is used to search laws, cases and organizations country-by-country or with a map. The database is used by activists, lawyers, academics, students and community members. HJN also analyses this data periodically to identify trends, advocacy targets and collaboration opportunities. As part of its ongoing work, HJN reports that as of 15 January 2024, 105 jurisdictions in 79 countries have HIV-specific criminal laws in place, including 21 jurisdictions in the United States, two in Mexico, and three in Nigeria, together with a federal HIV law in each country.

Over the past five years, HJN indicates that they received reports of 10 HIV criminalization laws being adopted, either introducing new legislation or enhancing existing legislation, and are aware of 24 repeals and modernisations of HIV criminalization laws (12 countries, 24 jurisdictions). A total of 19 of these occurred through legislative reform, while five occurred through litigation. In 10 of these jurisdictions, the reform amounted to a full repeal, leaving no criminalizing laws which specifically target HIV remaining.

In other cases, networks did not directly undertake legal actions, but played a role in amplifying voices of ISPs as part of wider efforts. For example, in 2023 Y+ Global, as an advocacy–based organization, shared statements that gave voice to young people living with HIV and advocating for policy changes and human rights protection and promotion, as part of a wider collaboration with national legal organizations and the UN to support strategic litigation aimed at improving the human rights of individuals living with HIV, particularly young people.

Other advanced actions to progress the human rights of ISPs included the development of submissions to UN bodies, member states and national consultations; participating in key forums and created space for greater representation and inclusivity. Networks also offered training on human rights and created opportunities for network members to reflect on their practice. Other network partners developed manuals that members could use to monitor and document violations of the human rights.

For example, the International Drug Policy Consortium (IDPC) worked with numerous partners to implement key advo-cacy efforts during a Global Day of Action for the "Support, Don't Punish" campaign, with activities in more than 270 cities across 90 countries. In the MENA region, with support from the Middle East and North Africa Harm Reduction Network (MENAHRA), the campaign objectives included the preparation and distribution of a booklet highlighting the restrictive laws faced by PWUDs; advocating for a health and human rights–based approach to drug use; and raising awareness about the risks of drug criminalization policies. Efforts were also made to raise awareness among law students at Al–Manar University in Tunisia, introduce them to the Middle East and North Africa Network of People who Use Drugs (MENANPUD), and correct public misconceptions about drug use.

Finally, on the 13th of July 2023, the HIV Research and Advocacy Officer from Transgender Europe (TGEU) participated in the UNAIDS Global Report launch in Geneva. A TGEU representative networked with prominent global health leaders and delivered a public address. This speech centred on identifying the three primary impediments faced by transgender individuals in accessing HIV–related services: systemic, socio–cultural, and economic barriers. Specifically, it addressed the urgent need for stronger anti–discrimination laws to protect transgender individuals in HIV service environments and to alleviate minority stress; the necessity for regulating medication prices to improve access to essential drugs; the development of policies and programs to combat transphobia and cisnormativity among healthcare professionals; the importance of laws, policies, and practices that ensure the availability and accessibility of HIV–related services for Trans and Gender–Diverse people; and the importance of increased funding for HIV advocacy and the enhancement of trans-gender representation in all aspects of the HIV continuum and advocacy forums.

Reported Results

Of the 59 networks that carried out at least 1 activity aimed at improving human rights, 23 (39%) of the networks reported that their advocacy or strategic litigation brought about legal or policy change.

Some examples results achieved are provided below.

The Global Network of Sex Work Projects (NSWP) engaged with the UN Working Group on Discrimination Against Women and Girls (UN WGDAWG) in collaboration with other networks, which resulted in a position paper titled 'Eliminating dis-crimination against sex workers and securing their human rights'[20] advocating for the complete decriminalisation of sex work. This marks the first instance within the UN Special Procedures body of OHCHR on women's rights where a position in favour of full decriminalization has been adopted.

In another example, the MENA Community (MENA+) participated in the national coalition of advocacy for Universal Ac-cess to Health Coverage. This participation began during the first roundtable to constitute the coalition composed of more than 20 NGOs, national and regional structures for lobby and advocacy for the inclusion of key populations in the national health coverage project in Morocco. The voice of PLHIV was expressed through the MENA Community and their needs were taken into account in the official statement to the Moroccan government. This led to the Moroccan govern-ment revising its procedures for inclusion of PLHIV in the national population project.

Image 3. UHC Workshop Casablanca , Morocco — MENA Community, June 2023

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[20] "Human Rights Council Working Group on Discrimination against Women and Girls Eliminating Discrimination against Sex Workers and Securing Their Human Rights Guidance Document of the Working Group on Discrimination against Women and Girls." United Nations, General Assembly, 7 Dec. 2023.

Outcome Area 3: Access to and Quality of Services

RCF funds networks and consortia to advocate for the promotion and protection of access to and increase the quality of services for ISPs. Access to HIV and other life-saving services for ISPs should be available, adequate, accessible, appropriate and affordable. People from ISP communities should be aware of and demand these services. The indicators for this outcome area measure the number of networks that are engaged in various stages of advocating for increased access to and improved quality of HIV services and programs and indicates their progress towards affecting change.

Main Findings

- 55 networks carried out activities aimed at improving the enabling environment for better access to or quality of services for ISPs

- 31 networks documented gaps in service access/quality or generated evidence to support advocacy

- 41 networks implemented advocacy initiatives to increase access/quality of services

- The main focus of the networks for improving access to and quality of services was under the theme "Sexual and reproductive health and rights in the context of HIV"

- Of the networks that carried out access and quality of services activities, 29% indicated they had changes to report relating to results for access and 24% indicated they had changes to report relating to results for quality improvement.

- Networks mostly engaged with national governments and institutions, followed by the Global Fund, UN-AIDS and other UN agencies processes and mechanisms, and PEPFAR among other donors in their advocacy efforts for this outcome area.

In 2023, a total of 55 (77%) of the networks reported carrying out at least 1 activity to improve the enabling environment (policies or practices) for better access to or quality of services for ISP(s). 31 networks documented gaps in service access/quality or generated credible evidence to support advocacy efforts, 41 networks implemented advocacy initiatives to increase access/quality of services, and 17 networks implemented other advanced actions to improve access/quality services.

Foundational Action on Community–Led Evidence Generation

Of the 31 networks documenting gaps in service or generating evidence, 20 indicated the main goal was increased access to services, and 11 indicated the main goal was improved quality of services.

30 of the 31 networks (97%) indicated the documentation or evidence generation was community led.

Figure 7. Community–led roles across community–led evidence generation

Leading role of the community in documentation or evidence generation for increasing access or improving quality of services

- 1 (3.3%)
- 11 (36.7%) Conducted documentation (gathered data)
- 7 (23.3%) Identified a need or issue that needed documenting
- 5 (16.7%) Analyzed findings
- 3 (10.0%) All of the roles
- 3 (10.0%) Developed documentation tools
- Other
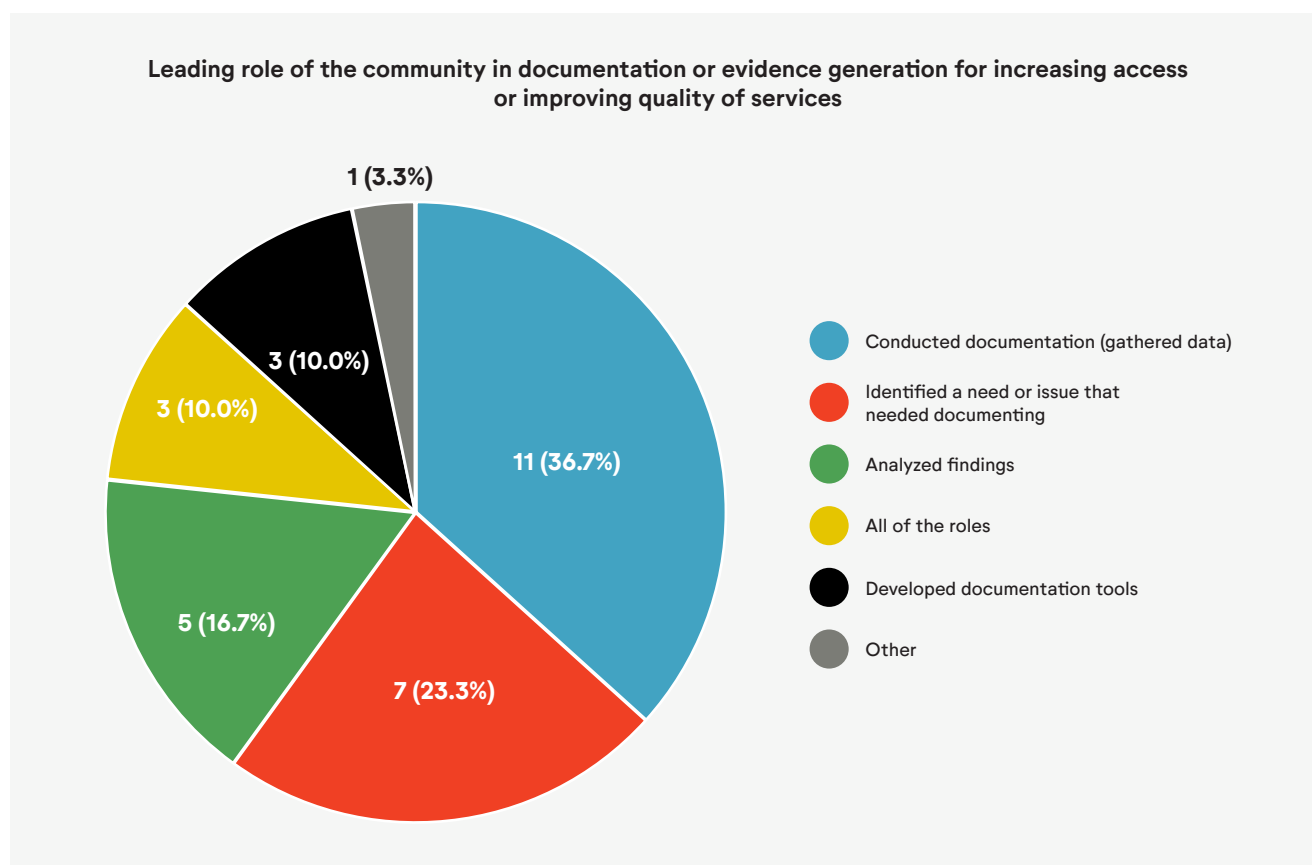
The one organization in the 'Other' category reported community members responded to queries about changes in their country.

The Global Network of People Living with HIV (GNP+) supported data collection by a partner CBO in Kenya during the two months their clinics were impacted by anti–LGBTQI+ attacks. This CBO is a community–led HIV treatment and prevention services site for men who have sex with men and transgender people living with HIV where almost 4000 people accessed services like PrEP, TB treatment and prevention (TPT), HIV treatment and testing for viral load among others. GNP+ con–tinues to gather evidence, provide needed information on health and rights for PLHIV, and offer a virtual activist hub for mobilizing and collaborative work through the PLHIV app Voice+[21].

In another example, The International Network of People who Use Drugs (INPUD) undertook community–driven research in partnership with the Global Health Centre of the Geneva Graduate Institute involving network members from Africa, Americas, Europe and Asia. The findings were used to craft evidence–based recommendations, such as the need to focus on criminalized populations, including on reform of laws and policies, community leadership and essential services and commodities, to inform the drafting of the Pandemic Accord. Intended audiences were WHO, member states and global health advocates.

In a separate effort, small grants were provided to drug user–led networks in the Philippines and Tanzania to conduct a legal needs assessment to create a baseline for drug policy legal reform.

Of the 31 networks documenting or producing evidence for increasing access or improving services, 9 of them started a new activity in 2023, 17 had an ongoing activity started in 2022, and 5 had ongoing activity from before 2022, reiterating the cyclical and often responsive nature of advocacy work.

Figure 8. Focus areas for documentation of gaps in service access or quality (number and % of network partners)

Focus areas for documenting gaps in service access or quality

- Sexual and reproductive health and rights in the context of HIV
- HIV–related criminalization (including of drug use or sex work)
- Youth health, rights, leadership
- Gender transformative approaches (including focus on girls and women, transgender people, and gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men)
- Other
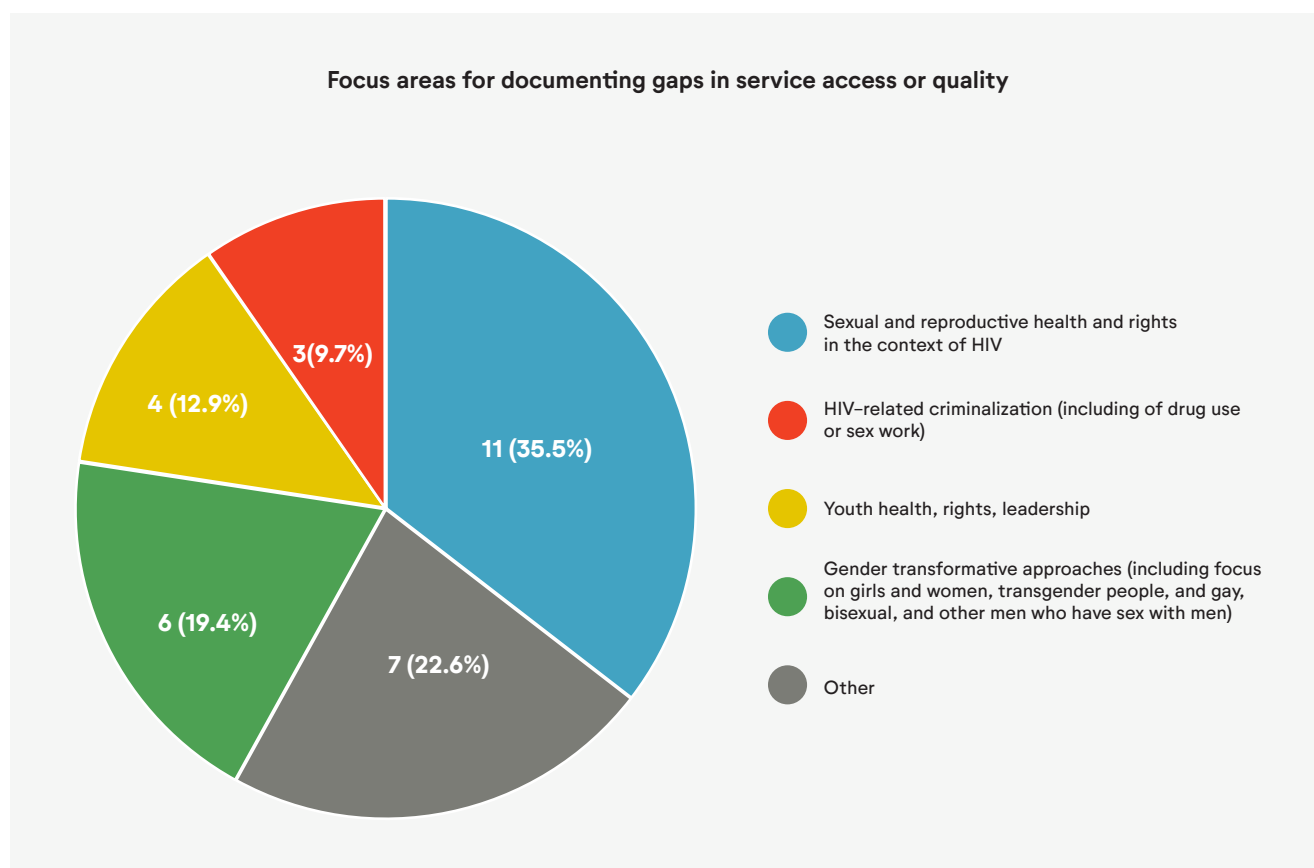
Those stating the 'Other' category include those who reported a focus on budget advocacy (1), health rights for people in prison (1), stigma and decriminalisation of people who use drugs (1), monitoring and trend analyses (1), and access to prevention and treatment (1).

Early Action to Increase Access to/Quality of Services

Network advocacy initiatives to improve access to or quality of services were undertaken by 41 networks. Of these, 27 reported that their main goal was to increase access to services, while 14 focused on improving the quality of services.

For example, the Eurasian Coalition on Health, Rights, Gender and Sexual Diversity (ECOM) has been studying chemsex, which is a priority topic in the field of men who have sex with men health and have already prepared several publications in this field. In 2023 they conducted a qualitative study examining the reasons for use and risks for men who have sex with men practicing chemsex in Kazakhstan with the financial support of RCF. This work formed part of joint advocacy activities undertaken with national partners and this contributed to a new Global Fund country grant in Kazakhstan that has funded pilot services for 450 chemsex users during the year in two cities – Almaty and Astana. This work is being supported by the development of a training module that will be used, in 2024, to train doctors in the specifics of working with men who have sex with men who practice chemsex. Funding for such training is also included in the national grant of Kazakhstan.

Of the 41 networks that implemented advocacy initiatives to increase access/quality of services, 12 of them started a new activity in 2023, 17 had an ongoing activity started in 2022, and 12 had ongoing activity from before 2022.

Figure 9. Networks' engagement with entities in their advocacy work to increase access, quality or demand for services for ISPs.
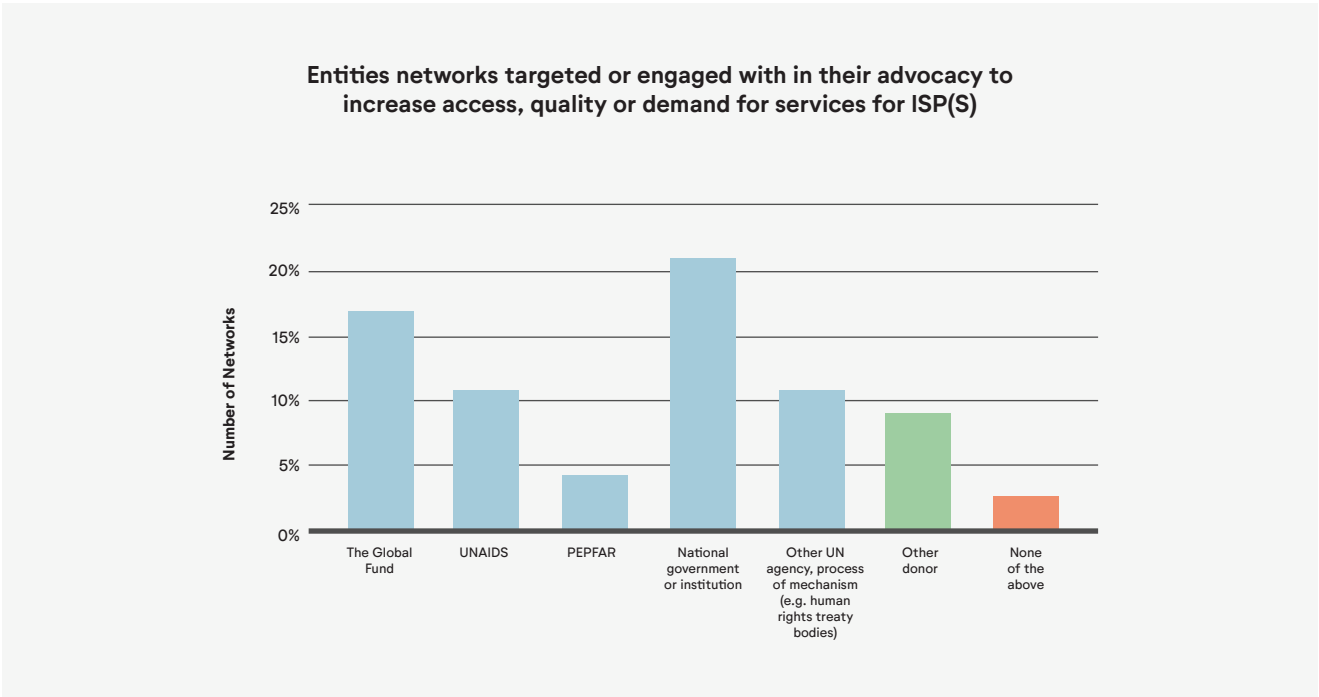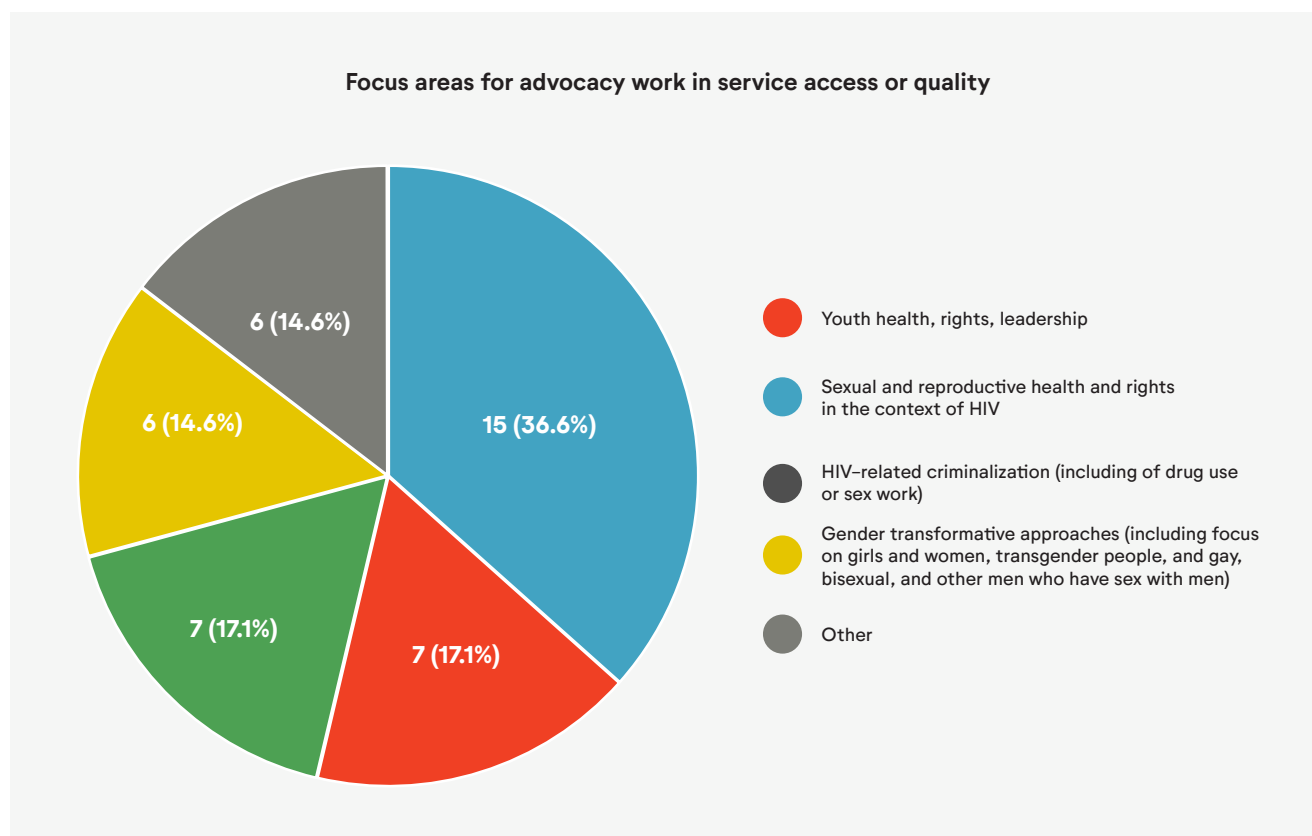

Entities networks targeted or engaged with in their advocacy to increase access, quality or demand for services for ISP(S)

Figure 10. Focus areas for the advocacy initiatives to improve access to or quality of services of the 41 reporting networks

Focus areas for advocacy work in service access or quality

- 15 (36.6%)
- 7 (17.1%)
- 7 (17.1%)
- 6 (14.6%)
- 6 (14.6%)

Legend:
- 🔴 Youth health, rights, leadership
- 🔵 Sexual and reproductive health and rights in the context of HIV
- ⚫ HIV–related criminalization (including of drug use or sex work)
- 🟡 Gender transformative approaches (including focus on girls and women, transgender people, and gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men)
- ⚪ Other

Those stating the 'Other' category included those who reported a focus on latest technical guidance and best practices in HIV programming (1), health rights for people in prison (1), and stigma and decriminalisation of people who use drugs (1).

Advanced Action to Increase Access to/Quality of Services

It is observed that advanced actions often result from ongoing, long–term efforts and investments. In 2023, 17 networks reported implementing other advanced actions to improve access/quality services. These actions included direct engagement with authorities and decision makers; the development of key resources including advocacy roadmaps and tools; and capacity building on CLM among other actions.

Other actions taken to increase access to and quality of services included the efforts of Coalition PLUS, which led an analysis of implementation contexts in Central Africa, Mauritius and Latin America, followed by the provision of health training courses. To support these initiatives, Coalition PLUS established a framework contract with an equipment supplier to obtain equipment at reduced prices. In addition, it benefited from two sponsorship contracts, covering the costs of experts and providing equipment for training courses. A partnership with Eurofins Scientific was set up to finance equipment and pay for certain training courses in Morocco, Burundi and Mauritius. This example demonstrates Coalition PLUS' commitment to meeting the specific health needs of ISPs, while mobilizing resources and strategic partnerships to strengthen its actions in the fight against anal cancer and anal–related diseases.

In Greece, the European Prison Litigation Network (EPLN) prepared a third party intervention before the European Court of Human Rights in a case concerning the lack of appropriate medical care in prison for an HIV–positive patient at the end of 2023. In the communication update to be submitted early 2024, EPLN is calling on the Court to update its approach to State parties' obligations on the protection of prisoners' health. In particular the Court is called on to uphold European Court of Human Rights caselaw to the standards of international bodies (UN and medical associations) in the matter.

Another notable effort was conducted by the International Network of People who Use Drugs (INPUD), which led a brown bag session for Unitaid[22] staff on creating, establishing and managing community advisory boards, highlighting the importance of meaningful community involvement across all stages of research and programming. INPUD reports that this was well-received by Unitaid staff and will to inform their current and future community advisory board initiatives.

The Eurasian Harm Reduction Association (EHRA) developed and introduced various tools, including a Practical Handbook on CLM Tools and a web-based method selection tool. These resources assist community groups in choosing appropriate data collection methods aligned with their advocacy goals, considering their resources and needs.

Reported Results

Of the 55 networks that carried out at least 1 activity to improve the enabling environment (policies or practices) for better access to or quality of services for ISPs, 25 (45%) reported they had changes/results to report for 2023. 16 suggested changes linked to increased access to services and 13 reported changes linked to improved quality of services (note organisations could respond to both).

For the 16 with results to report for increasing access to services, insights into key change factors that led to this include the extent that partners utilised evidence from research, targeted lobbying as well as engagement with key government officials and other partners.

Figure 11. Focus areas for results to report for improving access to services of the 16 reporting networks

Focus areas for results in improved quality of services

- 6 (37.5%) — Sexual and reproductive health and rights in the context of HIV
- 1 (6.3%) — HIV-related criminalization (including of drug use or sex work)
- 1 (6.3%) — Gender transformative approaches (including focus on girls and women, transgender people, and gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men)
- 3 (18.8%) — Youth health, rights, leadership
- 5 (31.3%) — Other
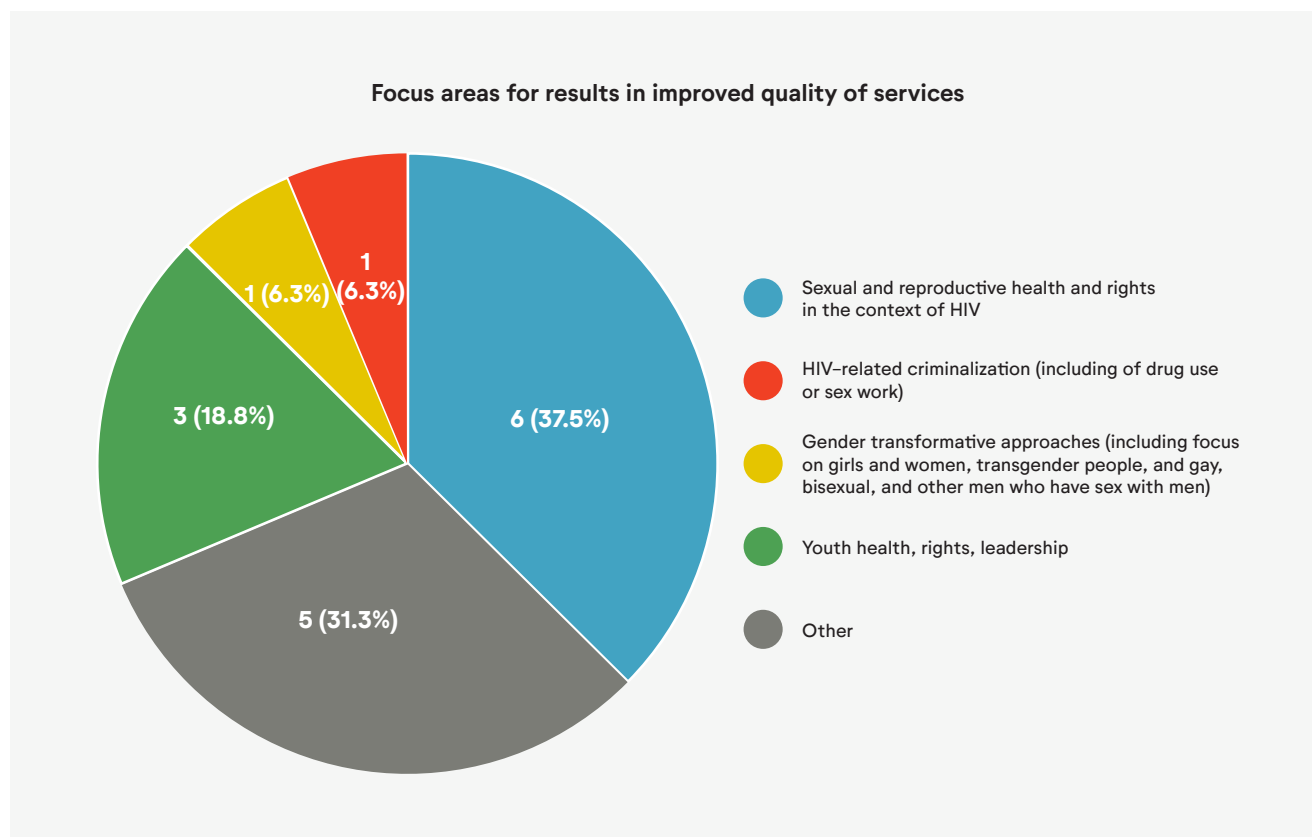
Those stating the 'Other' category included those who reported a focus on health rights for people in prison (2), and increased accessibility for PLHIV, KPs and pregnant women to innovative treatments (1).

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[22] Unitaid is an international organization that aims to save lives by making new health products available and affordable for people in low- and middle-income countries.

Notably, an RCF partner[23] reports that their various advocacy initiatives, stakeholder engagement and involvement in technical working groups and mental health coordinating committees contributed to the passing of the New Corrections Act in Zimbabwe[24], that has improved mental health services for people in prisons and includes the setup of rehabilitation centers in communities.
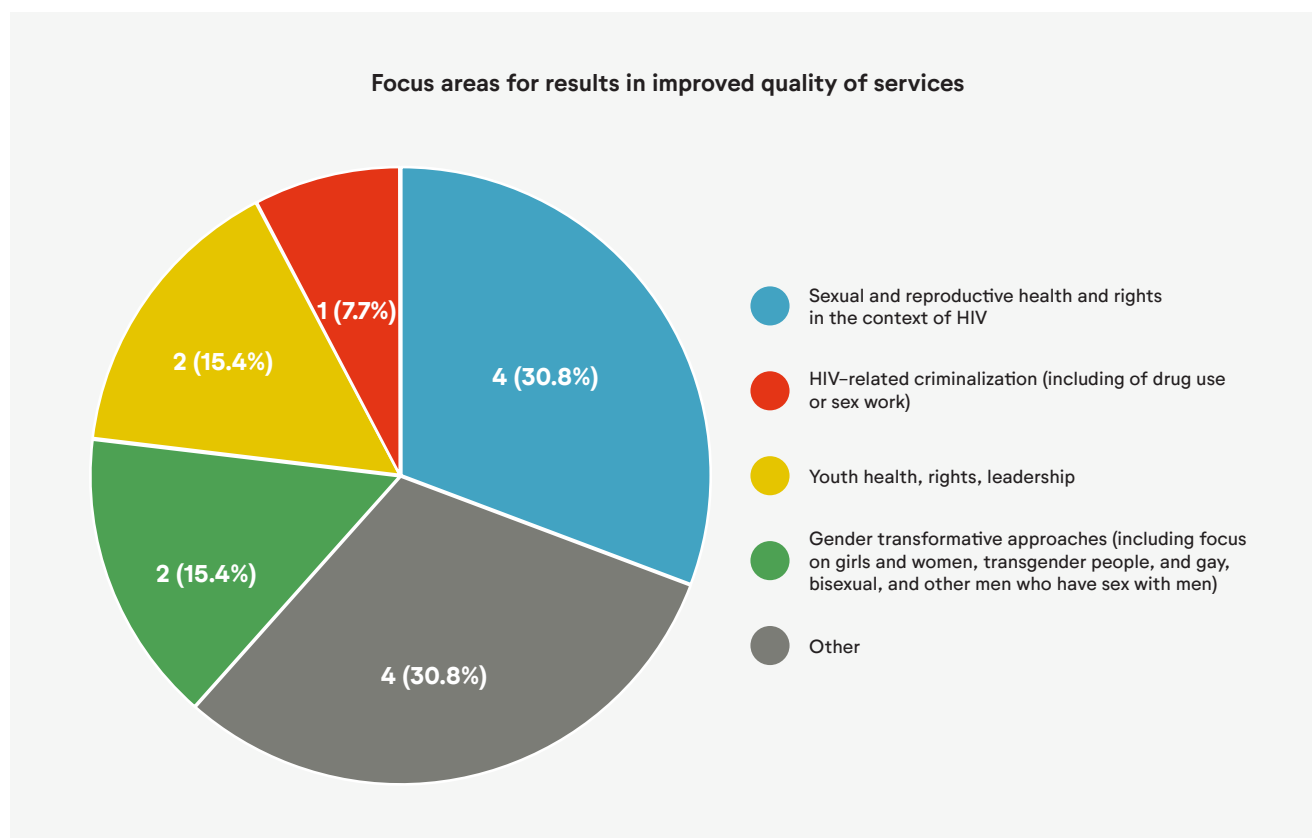
The Eurasian Harm Reduction Association (EHRA) reports that advocacy efforts in Croatia supported by EHRA's sub-grants led to the conceptualization and push for the "Tripsitters" project, extending harm reduction efforts into nightlife settings. The initiative's progress includes the preparation of a pilot drug checking project in Rijeka, with plans for expansion throughout Croatia. This has been backed by thorough planning, evaluation by the Ministry of Health, and financial arrangements, showcasing a strong partnership between civil society and governmental bodies. Notably, the project overcame initial resistance, securing approval and cooperation from the Ministry of the Interior, facilitated by the Croatian Institute of Public Health's advocacy.

The results presented above are promising and indicate real progress in harm reduction efforts across indicated countries. They provide excellent examples of the catalyzing impact of RCF–funded ISP–led networks across the globe.

Figure 12. Focus areas for results to report for improving quality of services of the 13 reporting networks.

Focus areas for results in improved quality of services

- 4 (30.8%) — Sexual and reproductive health and rights in the context of HIV
- 1 (7.7%) — HIV–related criminalization (including of drug use or sex work)
- 2 (15.4%) — Youth health, rights, leadership
- 2 (15.4%) — Gender transformative approaches (including focus on girls and women, transgender people, and gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men)
- 4 (30.8%) — Other

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[23] Some partner names anonymized across this report for safety and security

[24] Zimbabwe Prisons and Correctional Service Act 9 of 2023

Those stating the 'Other' category included those who reported a focus on including professional training (1), or for all key populations to have improved quality of services (1).

The Global Network of People Living with HIV (GNP+) reports that their engagement in the planning for the HIV sustainability planning influenced language in the UNAIDS sustainability primer[25] to include participation of communities of PLHIV and key populations at country level. GNP+ also participated in the WHO updates of the Viral Load Guidelines[26] which now confidently confirm and promote U=U[27]. These results ultimately contribute to improved quality of services globally.

The MENA Network of People who Use Drugs (MENANPUD) reports that 50 professional injectors were upskilled and equipped with naloxone, syringes, alcohol swabs and tourniquets in Afghanistan as a result of a member organization's efforts on International Overdose Awareness Day.

For the 13 networks with results to report for improving quality of services, insights into reported key change factors that led to this include RCF financial support; efforts of colleagues on-the-ground; partnership and collaboration; training and empowerment; strategic representation; direct technical assistance; and convening national meetings and advocacy.

> "We are able to affect a change in people's lives, including their health, because of our peer-to-peer and network approach which means the most marginalized are reached, including street-involved people who use drugs. This is because we have peer staff that are strongly connected to grassroots communities and are able to educate, capacitate and gain the trust from local communities."

> "What made this change possible was additional targeted resourcing, long-term peer-to-peer technical assistance and long-term engagement with the Global Fund both at the Board and Secretariat level."

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[25] UNAIDS: HIV response sustainability primer — 17 January 2024
[26] WHO Policy Brief: The role of HIV viral suppression in improving individual health and reducing transmission — 22 July 2023
[27] U=U, which stands for "Undetectable = Untransmittable" is a scientifically sound concept in the field of HIV treatment. It indicates that if a person with HIV is on antiretroviral therapy (ART) and maintains a consistently undetectable HIV viral load, they cannot sexually transmit the virus to others.

Outcome Area 4: Resource Accountability / Funding Environment

This section considers how networks documented funding needs and commitments for HIV programmes or engaged in advocacy initiatives to improve the funding environment for the HIV response for ISPs.

Main Findings

- 38 networks carried out activities aimed at improving the funding environment for the HIV response for ISPs

- 18 networks documented funding needs for HIV programmes or monitored state or donor expenditure

- 19 networks implemented advocacy initiatives to increase sustainable financing

- Of the networks that carried out activities to improve the funding environment, 42% had change results to report.

In 2023, 38 (54%) of the networks reported having carried out at least 1 activity to improve the funding environment for the HIV response for ISPs. 18 networks documented funding needs for HIV programs for ISPs or monitored state or donor expenditures against their commitments, 19 networks implemented an advocacy initiative or campaign for increased sustainable financing of the HIV response for ISPs, and 17 networks implemented other activities to increase sustainable funding for the HIV response for ISPs.

Foundational Action on Community–Led Evidence Generation

Of the 18 networks that documented funding needs or monitored state or donor expenditures against their commitments, 5 indicated they conducted a costing exercise to estimate funding needs for HIV programs for ISPs, 10 reported they monitored domestic or international donor commitments, and 3 conducted other documentation.

Figure 13. Funder or donor focus of networks' documentation efforts of 18 reporting networks

Funder or donor networks' documentation efforts focused on in 2023
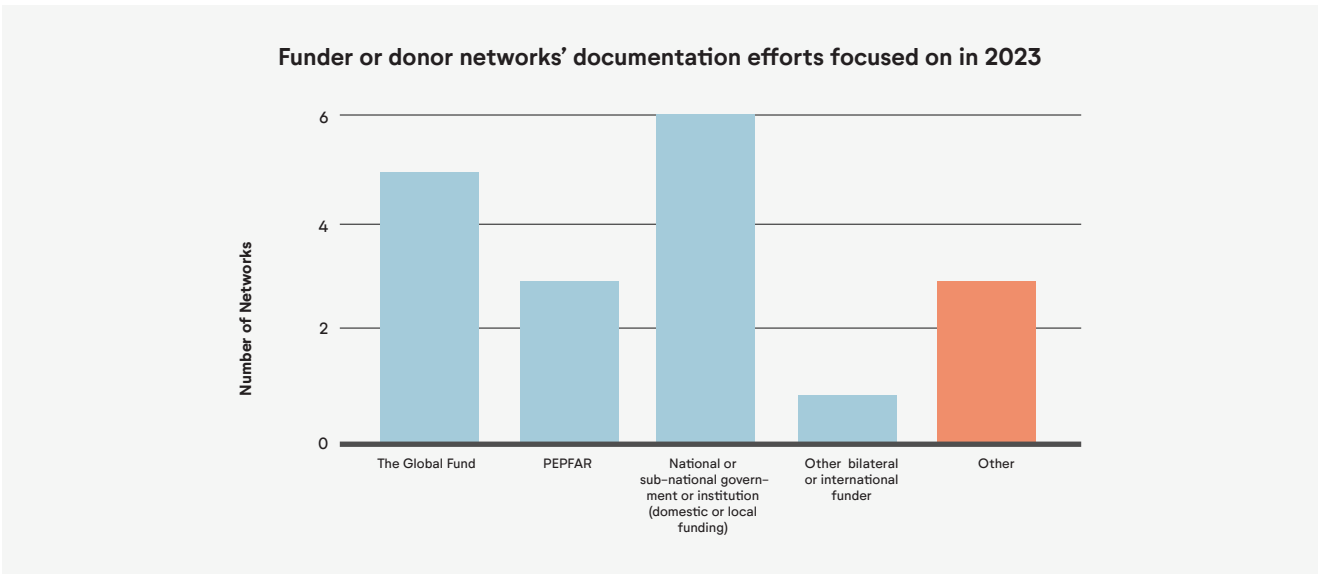
Those stating the Other category reported this to highlight engagement with donors who have shown leadership and support for youth–related initiatives. There was also direct mention of the Gilead Sciences and SCALE Initiative.

15 of the 18 networks (83%) indicated that the documentation or evidence generation was community–led.

Networks detail their monitoring and documentation efforts related to the funding environment for the HIV response for ISPs. For instance, The International Community of Women Living with HIV Asia Pacific (ICWAP) initiated a mapping exercise of existing funding and resource mobilization, including the engagement of women and girls living with HIV in the GF in Cambodia, India, and Vietnam. They developed a final report with recommendations for each country, endorsed by stakeholders and UCO/UNAIDS offices. This assessment report served as a credential for women's networks to coordinate and advocate with funders and partners.

In another case, The South African Network of People who Use Drugs (SANPUD) reports that RCF funding enabled them to be a part of a Harm Reduction International (HRI) study, which was implemented in partnership with Elton John AIDS Foundation. The study focused on addressing the current financial support for harm reduction in South Africa taking into account the understanding that expanding harm reduction funding and the provision of financial grants are integral to influencing the funding for HIV and AIDS treatment. They observe that,

> "by reducing the number of people sharing needles, we reduce the number of HIV transmissions — thus reducing the burden on state resources to provide HIV treatment at public health facilities".

Early Action to Improve the Funding Environment

There were numerous advocacy initiatives undertaken by networks to improve the funding environment for the HIV response for ISPs.

For example, one of the members of The Coordination of Action Research on AIDS and Mobility in Asia Network (CARAM Asia) organized and implemented a series of HIV Financing workshops to enable local government and organizations to identify funding priorities and to explore how to generate income to finance certain programmatic areas. This created a basis for advocacy meetings with policy makers and diplomats for health budget allocation for the migrant community in Malaysia.

Another example of this form of advocacy work undertaken in 2023 is seen in the advocacy initiative implemented by Y+ Global, which aimed at improving the funding environment for the HIV response for ISPs. The initiative focused on ways to increase financial support for HIV programs targeting young people living with HIV and other key populations. Of import is that Y+ Global leveraged this work to build a broad base for a campaign by working with other 'Count Me In' consortium partners, as well as other organizations, including Youth LEAD, Youth RISE, and YPEERAP, that are part of the 4 Youth program supported by RCF. The Campaign[28] (Youth Unmuted) focused on raising awareness of the impact of HIV on young people and key populations to mobilize support from the GF donors and encourage governments and donors to prioritize funding for HIV programs. A significant aspect of this work was that the process included training sessions on fundraising for young advocates to empower them with the knowledge and skills needed to advocate for increased funding for HIV programs.

Image 4. RCF partner youth-led consortium Annual Reflection, Learning and Planning Meeting, March 2023

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28 Youth Unmuted Campaign

Figure 14. Funder or donor focus of advocacy initiatives of 19 reporting networks.

Funder or donor networks' advocacy efforts focused on in 2023
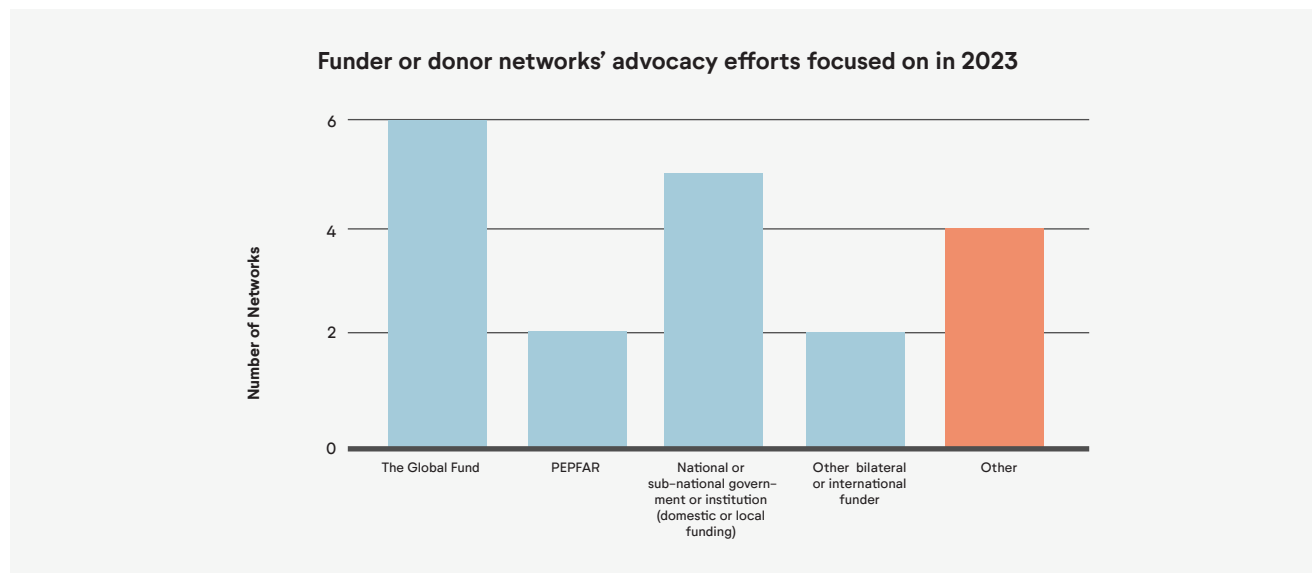
Of the 19 networks that implemented advocacy initiatives to improve funding, 10 of them started a new activity in 2023, 7 had an ongoing activity started in 2022, and 2 had ongoing activity from before 2022, re–flecting the long–term implementation and often cyclical nature of advocacy work.

Advanced Action to Improve the Funding Environment

Of the 38 networks that implemented actions to improve the funding environment for ISPs, 17 networks implemented other actions to increase sustainable funding for the HIV response for ISPs.

These efforts include the work of Harm Reduction International (HRI), which launched a campaign calling on governments and donors to divest from the drug war in 2023, first with a soft launch at the Harm Reduction International Conference 2023 (HR23) in Melbourne in April. The campaign message to divest from the war on drugs and invest in community, health and justice permeated HR23. In September HRI launched the Aid for the War on Drugs report and a new campaign web–site. The report was launched via a widely attended webinar, generating extensive coverage around the world including thoughtful reporting in The Guardian (UK), High Times (US) and We, the Citizens newsletter (Singapore). HRI also drafted and placed an op–ed on the report in Devex. The report was covered in Spanish language media in Spain, Chile, Colombia and Mexico, as well as in the French publication, Liberation, and in Italy's leading drug law reform newsletter which has over 4000 subscribers.

Reported Results

Of the 38 networks that carried out at least 1 activity to improve the funding environment for the HIV response for ISPs, 16 (42%) reported they had changes/results to report for 2023. For *"the funding commitment that your advocacy contributed to"*, 9 suggested this was linked to funding specifically for community–led HIV services, programs, or initiatives; and 5 suggested this was linked to funding for HIV programs for ISPs more generally.

Reported results include that of MPact Global Action (MPact), which is a member of Funders Concerned About AIDS. In this capacity, they worked with the group to highlight key population challenges to access resources globally[29]. In 2023, MPact Global Action (MPact) worked with Gilead Sciences, Inc. to produce a funding stream for Latin America and the Caribbean. This work resulted in a new USD $4 million investment in the region, as a result of two years of effort.

In another case, The Coordination of Action Research on AIDS and Mobility in Asia Network (CARAM Asia) advocated for increased sustainable financing on HIV vulnerabilities of migrants in Pakistan. 11 meetings (4 meetings with the Ministry of Health, 2 meetings with the Ministry of Overseas, and 5 with the National AIDS Control Program) were held. It has been found that currently, there is no budget allocation by the government for migrants' HIV and SRHR needs. CARAM Asia member SPEAK Trust advocated with the government and highlighted on multiple forums the need for the inclusion of migrants in the next GF round. CARAM Asia reports that the migrant financing issue has gained significant traction and migrants' HIV challenges have been made part of the draft National AIDS strategy, awaiting Ministry of Health approval. This strategy aims to also guide the budget allocation process for HIV vulnerabilities of migrants in the future.

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[29] HRI publication: Towards domestic public financing and social contracting for harm reduction

REFLECTIONS ON 2023

Factors Enabling Change

Grantees have identified key factors contributing to positive changes. These include:

- The ability to take time for strategic planning and decision-making; and active involvement in advisory boards at various levels which enabled the integration of diverse perspectives into institutional mechanisms.

- Training initiatives have empowered individuals and enhanced the capacity of ISP community leaders.

- Intersectional and cross-sectoral strategic partnerships among HIV, LGBTQI+, SRHR and other human rights CSOs and activists, as well as various multilateral donors, private foundations, governmental actors, service providers and health-care professionals have provided influential support for change. There have been positive shifts in funding commitments for the HIV response for ISPs, driven by long-term community advocacy efforts.

- Diverse actors have been brought together for dialogue through effective platform leveraging.

- The capacity of community-led organizations has been built to engage meaningfully in decision-making processes, supported by evidence from research and costing exercises.

- Direct resources and technical assistance have enabled communities to participate effectively in processes like the GF's GC7.

- Community representation in decision-making bodies, evidence-supported targeted advocacy, and collaborative efforts have fostered political commitment.

These factors highlight the importance of ongoing strategic planning, capacity building, partnership expansion, and resource mobilization in driving positive impact across the HIV sector.

Value of Long-Term Support For Sustainability

A range of activities started before 2023 while others were launched in 2022 or 2023 itself. Various organizations across different regions undertook advocacy, capacity building, and fundraising initiatives in the lead up to 2023 to strengthen the case for sustained financial support. Some collaborations were set in motion a couple of years prior to this funding cycle; however, most training programmes, campaigns and donor engagement events were rolled out in 2023. This combined approach to funding highlights the value of continued long-term support to ensure existing collaboration activities as well as funding to launch new activities — for example involvement in GF processes. Partners supported under the GF's CE SI report that long term predictable funding is a prerequisite to community agility and capacity to respond in a timely manner to new and emerging challenges and opportunities.

Some activities began prior to 2023 such as the registration of entities which can take several years of efforts. For example, YPEER Pakistan gained official registration in 2023, the result of an effort that began two years earlier. This registration enables more effective support to funding and advocacy efforts for HIV and SRHR organizations in Pakistan.

There were also activities that started in 2022 or 2023. In 2022, Transgender Europe (TGEU) initiated a one-year fundraising training programme targeting 10 activists from marginalized communities within the European Union. This programme included training sessions, practical exercises, and networking opportunities aimed at empowering trans-led organizations. Furthermore, building on work done in 2022, Paediatric-Adolescent Treatment Africa (PATA) and The Global Network of Young people living with HIV (Y+ Global) developed and piloted a capacity building training for AGYW organizations, and in 2023, the resultant curriculum for these organizations was finalized and published. Furthermore, advocacy gains reported by grantees are often a result of more than one year's work, for example MPAct Global Action (MPact), where efforts exerted over a two-year timeframe led to increased funding to ISPs as described in the narrative above.

Figure 15. Start time for activities across programmatic outcomes (% and # of partner networks)
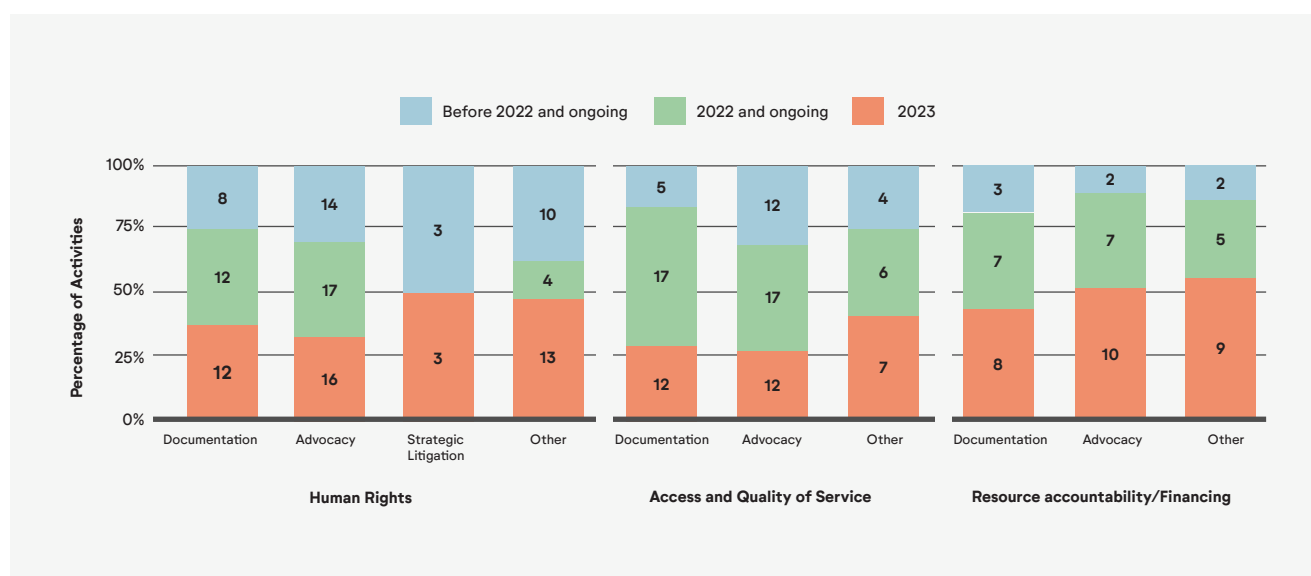
The above graph (Figure 15) illustrates the start times for activities by programmatic area and action area (documentation, advocacy, strategic litigation or other). Across all programmatic areas, there is evidence of ongoing activities started before 2022 (approximately 25%). For activities started in 2022 and ongoing, the range is from having no activities (strategic litigation) to approximately 50% (documentation for access to and increasing quality of service). There is also a spread of activities that were started in 2023, as indicated in the green, ranging from a minimum of approximately 25% (documentation for access and quality of services) to over 50% (advocacy for resource accountability and financing). This further indicates the need for core funding to ensure activities occurring over more than an annual period are being supported.

Community–Led Responses

Community–led groups played a pivotal role in documentation in all outcome areas. Within Human Rights there were activities where transgender people led all stages of the Asia Pacific Transgender Network (APTN) Trans COMP CBM Tool pilot[30], including recruitment, liaising, data gathering, technical support, analysis, and dissemination. Field officers from underserved populations documented human rights violations in the Shared Incident Database, enhancing CSOs ability to document rights breaches. In 2023, community members used the REAct (The Rights — Evidence — ACTion) platform [31] to gather testimonies and documentation for advocacy in Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Moldova, and Kyrgyzstan, leading to policy change efforts.

Community–led activities in advocacy and influencing funding strategies were also numerous. Transgender Europe (TGEU) provided fundraising training to activists from marginalized communities, focusing on organizational development, strategic planning, and proposal writing to build the fundraising capacity of trans–led organizations. Sex Work Advocacy Network (SWAN) and member organizations documented the funding landscape for sex workers, assessing social and medical support, funding sources, state HIV services to create regional and national strategic action plans. Global Action for Trans Equality (GATE) coordinated with trans and intersex organizations globally to collect data on their needs and funding challenges, ensuring accurate representation for effective advocacy. Youth–led organizations gathered inputs, conducted costing exercises, and monitored donor commitments to generate evidence for funding advocacy, ensuring their needs and challenges were addressed in funding strategies. **These developments underscore the importance of resource creation and community led documentation in strengthening community advocacy and ensuring sustained impact.**

Capacity to Meaningfully Engage / Build Parnterships

ISP networks play a crucial role in establishing and maintaining **key partnerships**, significantly enhancing advocacy and program effectiveness. For example, the Seven Alliance consortium, comprised of APCOM, Asia Pacific Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS (APN+), Asia Pacific Network of Sex Workers (APNSW), Asia Pacific Transgender Network (APTN), International Community of Women Living with HIV in Asia Pacific (ICW–AP), Network of Asian People who Use Drugs (NAPUD) and Youth LEAD, developed a comprehensive five–year roadmap for sustainable CLM in the Asia Pacific region. This partnership, supported by regional community–led organizations, identified critical areas for successful implementation, demonstrating the power of collective effort in achieving sustainable development goals.

Data from across programmatic outcome areas shows RCF–supported networks' effective engagement with national governments and institutions, the GF, UNAIDS, PEPFAR and other UN agencies, processes and mechanisms. Significant impact is reported as a result of those engagements, making the case that community–led networks must lead the HIV response globally.

Innovative approaches within ISP networks often stem from their ability to collaborate effectively with diverse stakeholders. A notable example is the partnership between Latin American Network of People Who Use Drugs (LANPUD), Positive Leadership Alliance (ALEP) and other regional networks in Latin America, which allowed for the first–time inclusion of a drug users' network in a GF grant. **This partnership not only provided funding but also created a new platform for advocating for the rights of drug users, highlighting how innovative collaboration can lead to groundbreaking advocacy and support initiatives.**

ISP networks are pivotal in **movement building** by leveraging strategic alliances and fostering community–led initiatives. In 2023, a significant partnership was formed with the Global Health Policy and Politics initiative, marking a crucial step in decriminalization efforts. This collaboration included co–convening a webinar to empower activists in the Asia Pacific region, showing the power of ISP networks in mobilizing movements and amplifying marginalized voices through strategic partnerships and concerted advocacy efforts.

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[30] Trans COMP Community–Based Monitoring: Key findings from the multi–country pilot implementation – APTN
[31] A Practical Guide: Implementing and Scaling Up Programmes to Remove Human Rights Related Barriers to HIV Services — The Global Fund.org
(see pge. 80)

Looking Forward

Networks outlined several key areas for further work in the coming year. One focus is on further enhancing global collaboration and partnerships. For instance, the ongoing partnership with PEPFAR through the Country Operation Plan (COP) development process is set to continue, emphasizing youth engagement and support for young key populations and young people living with HIV. Additionally, there is a concerted effort to include networks representing migrant and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities to enrich and strengthen ongoing advocacy efforts, promising greater impact in the future. These initiatives underscore the commitment to strategic partnerships and inclusive collaboration to address evolving challenges and sustain progress in the coming year. Networks also highlighted work that needs to be done with healthcare providers where there are significant gaps in HIV knowledge, often leading to misinformation, highlighting an overarching need for better education on HIV and human rights. They emphasised that work still needs to be done in these areas in the future.

The Case For Core Long–Term Funding

Core flexible long–term funding is crucial for the success and sustainability of ISP networks and sustainability of the HIV response. This funding enables organizations to build credibility, enhance their planning and resource mobilization capabilities, improve financial management, and pass due diligence processes. Long–term core flexible funding helps networks strengthen their institutional capacity and systems to manage projects and grants effectively, thereby strengthening community systems to deliver high–quality, rights–based HIV response programs. This foundational support also catalyzes networks' abilities to diversify their funding sources and secure additional financial support from major donors like the GF.

Networks supported by RCF are strengthening their democratic governance, offering the ISP communities they serve a way to hold these networks accountable. This in turn raises greater community understanding and participation in democratic governance, empowering communities to hold their governments and duty bearers to account for their HIV, health, and human rights commitments. This ability to adapt and pivot in the face of adversity and the roll–back of rights is essential to locally owned, domestically resourced and sustainable HIV responses. Project funding alone is insufficient to protect against the current loss of progress on HIV, health and gender equality due to anti–rights movements.

The new RCF strategy will prioritize ISP–led regional and global networks to support the movement's continuity despite the challenging global environment. The core funding provided by RCF empowers ISP–led and ISP–serving networks to decide where and when to invest their resources and to quickly respond to the threats and opportunities that emerge while delivering on their promise to end AIDS and improving the lives and well–being of their communities.

Image 5: One of four advocacy stickers created by NSWP and the regional sex worker led networks during 2023. The stickers are also available in Spanish, French, Chinese & Russian.

ANNEX 1:
DATA TABLES

As a consequence of the MEL review, the figures reflected in the below tables may vary, and the difference may be due to measure–ment changes rather than changes at grantee level.

Outcome 1: Network Strength and Influence

Progress to Strengthen Organizational Status		Baseline		2022 progress		2023 progress		Cumula–tive prog–ress from Baseline	Average 2022 – 2023	Change between 2022 – 2023
		# of Networks	% of 72 Reporting Networks	# of Networks	% of 72	# of Networks	% of 71 Reporting Networks			
Foundational & Early Action	Network operates with a fiscal host	29	40%	29	40%	23	32%	–21%	36%	**–19%**
Advanced Action	Network is in the process of registering			6	8%	7	10%	NA	9%	**23%**
Results	Network is registered	57	79%	59	82%	58	82%	2%	82%	**0%**

Progress to Strengthen Organizational Status		Baseline		2022 progress		2023 progress		Cumula–tive prog–ress from Baseline	Average 2022 – 2023	Change between 2022 – 2023
		# of Networks	% of 72 Reporting Networks	# of Networks	% of 72	# of Networks	% of 71 Reporting Networks			
Foundational	Network has only volunteers to carry out a defined scope of work and has no paid staff members	11	15%	7	10%	2	3%	–82%	6%	**–72%**
Early action	Network has one paid staff member and volunteers to carry out a defined scope of work	10	14%	12	17%	10	14%	0%	16%	**–17%**
Advanced action	Network has more than one paid staff member and may have volunteers to carry out a defined scope of work	51	71%	53	74%	53	75%	4%	74%	**1%**
Results	Network has a core team of full–time paid staff to carry out scope of work for at least 2 years	NA	NA	44	61%	23	32%	NA	47%	**–47%**

Progress to Strengthen Financial Capacity and Accountability		Baseline		2022 progress		2023 progress		Cumula–tive prog–ress from Baseline	Average 2022 – 2023	Change between 2022 – 2023
		# of Networks	% of 72 Reporting Networks	# of Networks	% of 72	# of Networks	% of 71 Reporting Networks			
Foundational	Network has a fiscal host which manages accounting	29	40%	29	40%	8	11%	–72%	26%	**–72%**
Early action	Network has at least one paid dedicated finance staff member to manage accounting	41	57%	46	64%	61	86%	49%	75%	**34%**
Advanced action	Board Treasurer regularly monitors financial reports	58	81%	59	82%	64	90%	10%	86%	**10%**
Results	Network conducts its own regular organizational and project audits	49	68%	41	57%	52	73%	6%	65%	**28%**

Progress to Strengthen Financial Sustainability		Baseline		2022 progress		2023 progress		Cumulative progress from Baseline	Average 2022–2023	Change between 2022–2023
		# of Networks	% of 72 Reporting Networks	# of Networks	% of 72	# of Networks	% of 71 Reporting Networks			
Foundational	Network has more than one source of funding	60	83%	63	88%	66	93%	10%	90%	6%
Early action	Network has a costed strategic plan	32	44%	33	46%	34	48%	6%	47%	4%
Advanced * action	Network has secured funding to implement its strategic plan for at least two more years					15	21%		21%	
Results	No single donor accounts for more than 30% of network's funding	15	21%	17	24%	22	31%	47%	27%	29%

Progress to Strengthen Democratic Governance and Representative Constituency		Baseline		2022 progress		2023 progress		Cumulative progress from Baseline	Average 2022–2023	Change between 2022–2023
		# of Networks	% of 72 Reporting Networks	# of Networks	% of 72	# of Networks	% of 71 Reporting Networks			
Foundational	Network has a process in place to democratically elect a governance body (e.g. Board of Directors) from among the network members	54	75%	53	74%	53	75%	–2%	74%	1%
	The network has open member–ship, whose members participate in governance elections in line with its membership statute	45	0.63	44	61%	43	61%	–4%	61%	–1%
Early action	Board leadership regularly rotates and adheres to principles of diversity in selecting new leadership	57	79%	59	82%	55	77%	–4%	80%	–6%
Advanced action	Board of Directors actively engages in governance of the network and is account–able to its constituents from among the members of the network	52	72%	55	76%	67	94%	29%	85%	24%
Results	At least 50% of Board is comprised of members from the communities and regions served by the network	52	72%	52	72%	60	85%	15%	78%	17%

Progress to Strengthen Influence and Capacity to Mobilize Movements		Baseline		2022 progress		2023 progress		Cumulative progress from Baseline	Average 2022 – 2023	Change between 2022 – 2023
		# of Networks	% of 72 Reporting Networks	# of Networks	% of 72	# of Networks	% of 71 Reporting Networks			
Foundational	Network has developed a formal or informal advocacy strategy in consultation with its membership (of network or consortium)	53	74%	31	43%	62	87%	17%	65%	**103%**
Early action	Network active in an is-sue–based coalition beyond its target ISP or HIV–related issue	48	67%	55	76%	58	82%	21%	79%	**7%**
Advanced action	Network engages in cross–sector partnership or working relationships with government or UN agencies, bilateral or multi–lateral donors	51	71%	20	28%	63	89%	24%	58%	**217%**
Results**	Network plays a role in a co–ordination council or board delegation on a topic for its constituent ISP(s)					49	69%			

* No direct comparison to 2022, best metric is possibly 2022 'Network has a resource mobilization strategy in place' of which 36 had at baseline and 38 had in 2022

**No direct comparison to 2022, best metric is possibly 2022 'Network plays a formal and regular representative role in steering HIV and/or health policy for target ISP at national/regional or global levels' of which 32 had at baseline and 35 had in 2022

Outcome 2: Human Rights

Progress to Advance Human Rights of ISPs		Baseline		2022 progress		2023 progress		Cumulative progress from Baseline	Average 2022 – 2023	Change between 2022 – 2023
		# of Networks	% of 63 Reporting Networks	# of Networks	% of 63	# of Networks	% of 63 Reporting Networks			
Foundational	Network generated credible evidence for advocacy strategy or campaign	53	84%	47	75%	32	51%	–40%	63%	**–32%**
Early action	Network developed an advocacy strategy or campaign for the human rights of ISPs	46	73%	47	75%	47	75%	2%	75%	**–1%**
Advance Action	Network supported strategic litigation	17	27%	14	22%	6	10%	–65%	16%	**–57%**
Results	Advocacy activities or strategic litigation related to human rights of ISP(s) resulted in a legal or policy change			7	11%	23	37%		24%	**232%**

Outcome 3: Access to and Quality of Services

Progress towards Improved Access or Quality of Services		Baseline*		2022 progress*		2023 progress		Cumulative progress from Baseline	Average 2022 – 2023	Change between 2022 – 2023
		# of Networks	% of 58 Reporting Networks	# of Networks	% of 58	# of Networks	% of 58 Reporting Networks			
Foundational	Network has generated credible evidence to support advocacy strategy or campaign to improve access to services for ISPs.	49	84%	32	55%	31	53%	–37%	54%	**–4%**
Advanced action	Network caried out a campaign or advocacy activities to influence accessibility of services	47	81%	32	55%	41	69%	–13%	62%	**26%**
Results	Advocacy activities result in better enabling environment for increased access to or quality of services			14	26%	25	42%	NA	34%	**63%**

* Baseline and 2022 progress values taken from averaging the 2 indicator responses that were reported in 2022 that have been combined in 2023

Outcome 4: Resource Accountability in financing the HIV response for ISPs

| Progress towards Increasing and Sustaining Financing of the HIV Response		Baseline		2022 progress		2023 progress		Cumulative progress from Baseline	Average 2022 – 2023	Change between 2022 – 2023
		# of Networks	% of 24 or 6 Reporting Networks*	# of Networks	% of either 24 or 6 reporting networks*	# of Networks	% of 38 Reporting Networks			
Foundational	Network undertook budget monitoring and analysis to develop advocacy plan	11	46%	8	33%	18	47%	64%	40%	**44%**
Early action	Network has conducted budget monitoring of state or donor expenditure against their commitments (generated evidence of a gap between available funding and need).	3	50%	1	17%	15	39%	400%	28%	**132%**
Advanced action	Network implemented a campaign or other advocacy activities to push for increased sustainable financing	17	71%	10	42%	19	50%	12%	46%	**19%**
Results	Network's advocacy contributed to an increase in financial commitments to HIV response and ISP programming			6	25%	16	23%	NA	24%	**–10%**

*In 2022 different numbers of networks responded to the separate indicators which were combined in 2023

THEORY OF CHANGE AND MEL FRAMEWORK 2023

RCF Theory of Change

When regional and global civil society and community–led networks are stronger, people from inadequately served populations will have more influence over the human rights and HIV issues that affect them.
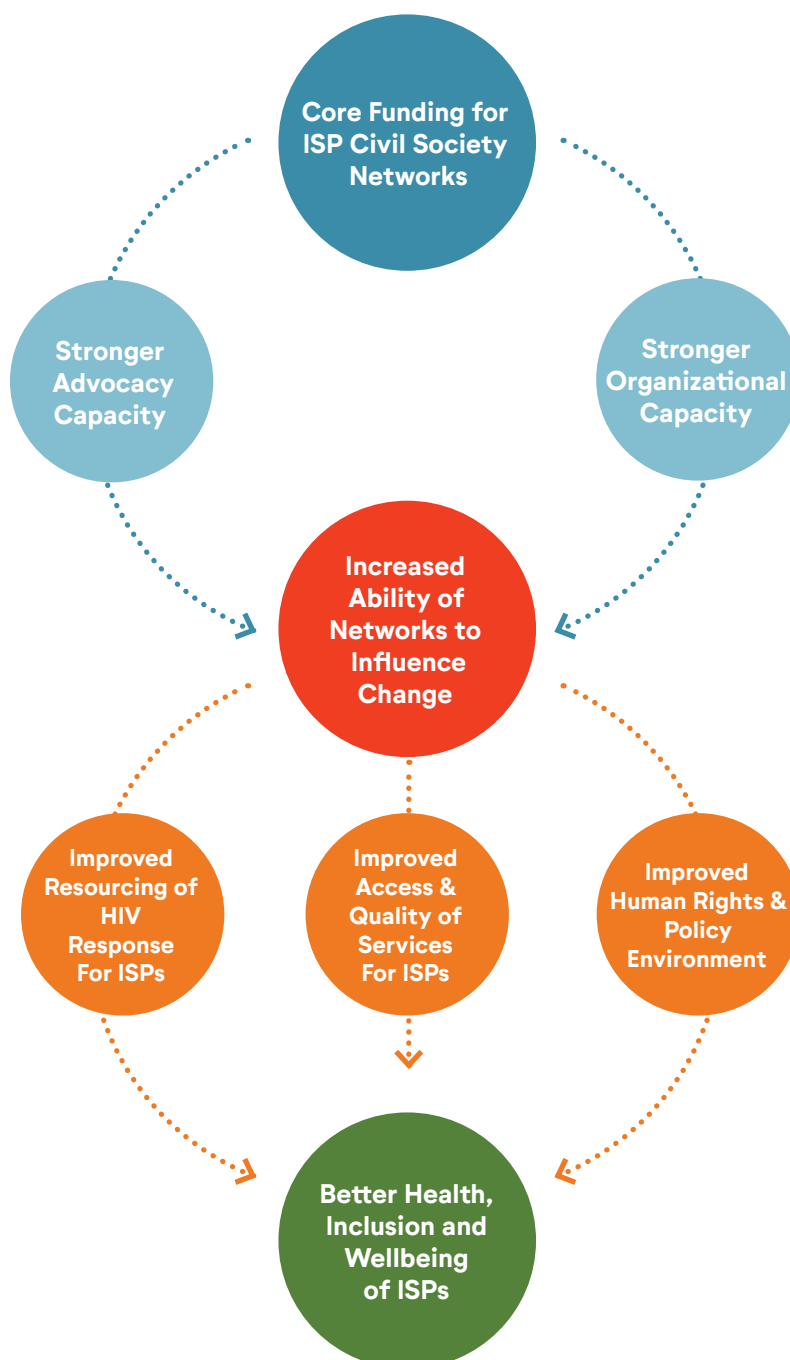
Revised MEL Framework 2023
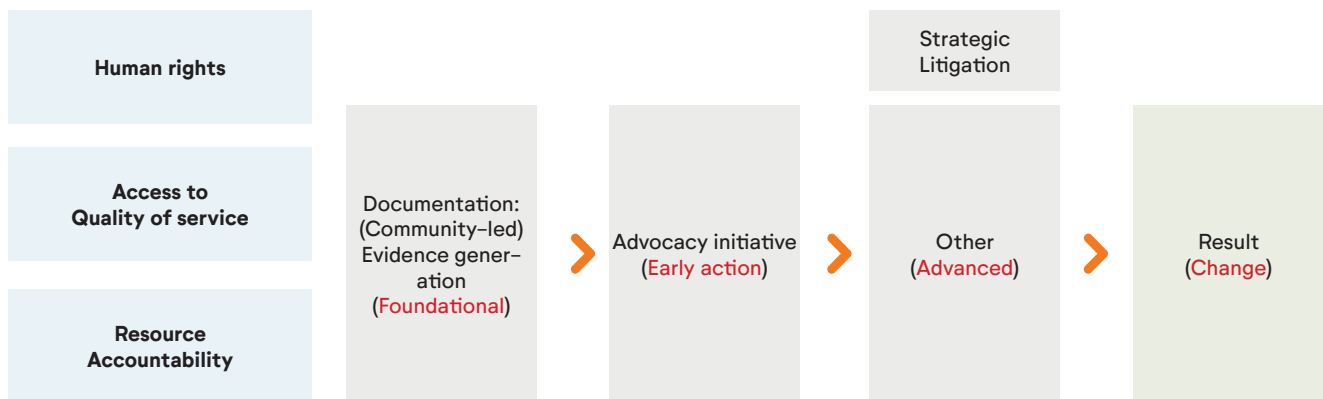
Network Strength and influence

Organizational Capacity	1A. Number of networks with strengthened organizational status
	1B. Number of networks with strengthened core staff structure
	2A. Number of networks showing strengthened financial capacity and accountability
	2B. Number of networks showing strengthened financial sustainability
	3. Number of networks more representative of their constituencies and more democratically governed
Advocacy Capacity	4. Number of networks showing strengthened influence and capacity to unite and mobilize movements

Programmatic Outcomes

Human Rights	5. Number of networks contributing to an **IMPROVED HUMAN RIGHTS** environment for at least one ISP
Access to Services	6. Number of networks contributing to **INCREASED ACCESS TO HIV SERVICES** and programs
	7. Number of networks contributing to **INCREASED QUALITY OF HIV SERVICES** and programs
Resource Accountability	8. Number of networks contributing to **INCREASED AND SUSTAINABLE FINANCING OF HIV RESPONSE** including ISP programs
	9. Number of networks contributing to **IMPROVED HIV-RELATED FISCAL ACCOUNTABILITY**

Extract from 2024 MEL Presentation

|		
Network strength and Influence	1a Registration Status	Is network registered or does it operate with a fiscal host?
	1b Staffing Structure	Are core staff roles in place and is there enough funding to maintain them for at least 2 years?
	2a Financial Capacity	Does network have a comprehensive financial management system?
	2b Financial Sustainability	Has network secured enough funding to carry out its strategy for at least 2 years?
	3 Democratic	Does network have a comprehensive financial management system?
	4 Network Influence (Advocacy Capacity)	Does network have capacity to mobilize collective action for change?

Human rights		Strategic Litigation	
Access to Quality of service	Documentation: (Community-led) Evidence generation (Foundational) > Advocacy initiative (Early action) > Other (Advanced) > Result (Change)		
Resource Accountability			

1. Documentation [foundational] >	2. Advocacy initiative [early] >	3. Other [advanced] >	4. Result
Description [narrative]	Description [narrative]	Description [narrative]	Description [narrative]
New or continued? [value of long-term support]	New or continued? [value of long-term support]	New or continued? [value of long-term support]	New or continued? [value of long-term support]
Community-led?	Type of RCF funding [value of core support]	Type of RCF funding [value of core support]	Type of RCF funding [value of core support]
Type of RCF funding [value of core support]	Thematic focus	Thematic focus	Thematic focus
Thematic focus	Institutional focus	Institutional focus	
Institutional focus			

FINANCIAL REPORT

FINANCIAL REPORT 2022–2024

*Figure A:*
Funders' Contributions to the RCF Pool – 2022–2024 ($39.2 Million)
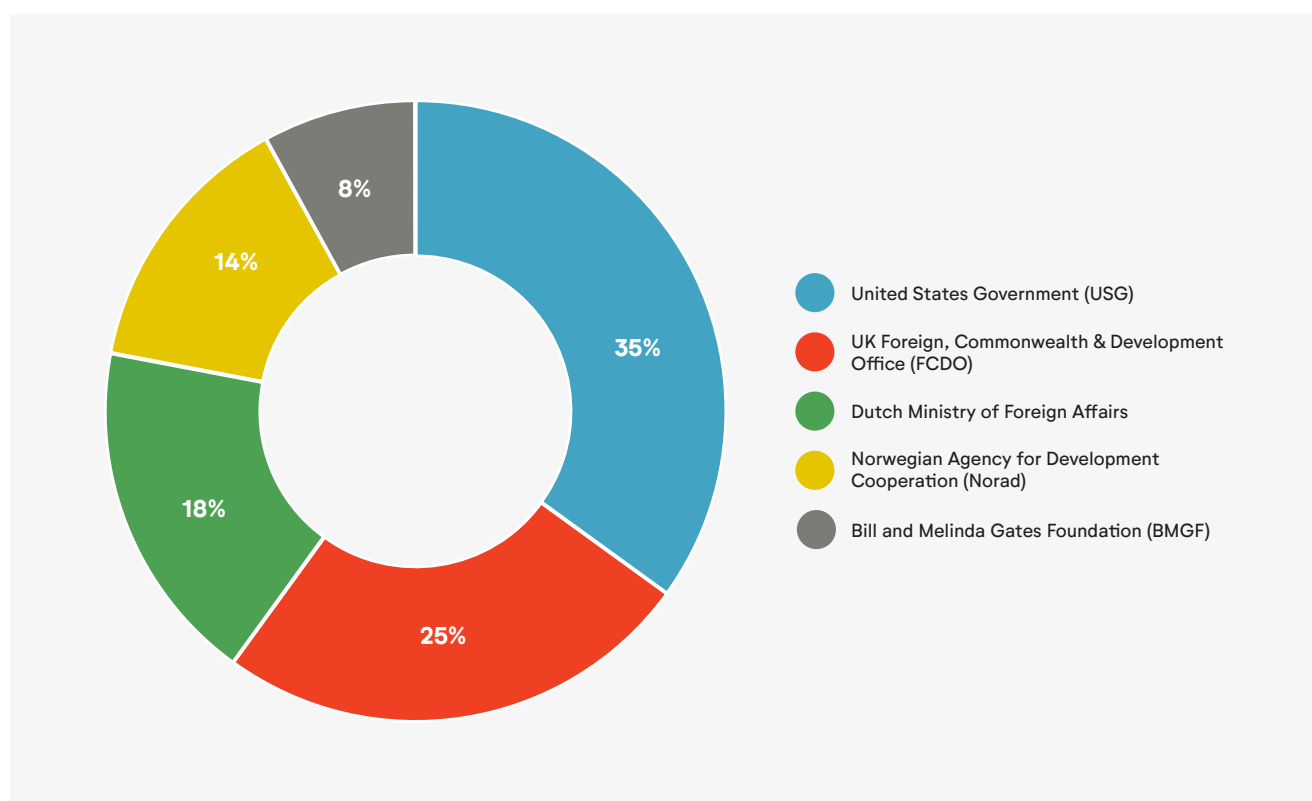
| Funders' Contributions to the RCF Pool 2022–2024		
Donor	**Contribution**	**Portion**
United States Government (USG)	$13,800,000	35%
UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO)	$9,689,241	25%
Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs	$7,166,576	18%
Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad)*[31]	$5,611,640	14%
Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF)	$3,000,000	8%
TOTALS	**$39,267,456**	**100%**

[31] No USG funding was used for advocacy related to decriminalization of sex work.
   Norad finances are not spent on resources and activities which are not OECD DAC approved.

Figure B:
Total RCF Expenditure 2022–2023 ($24.8 Million)
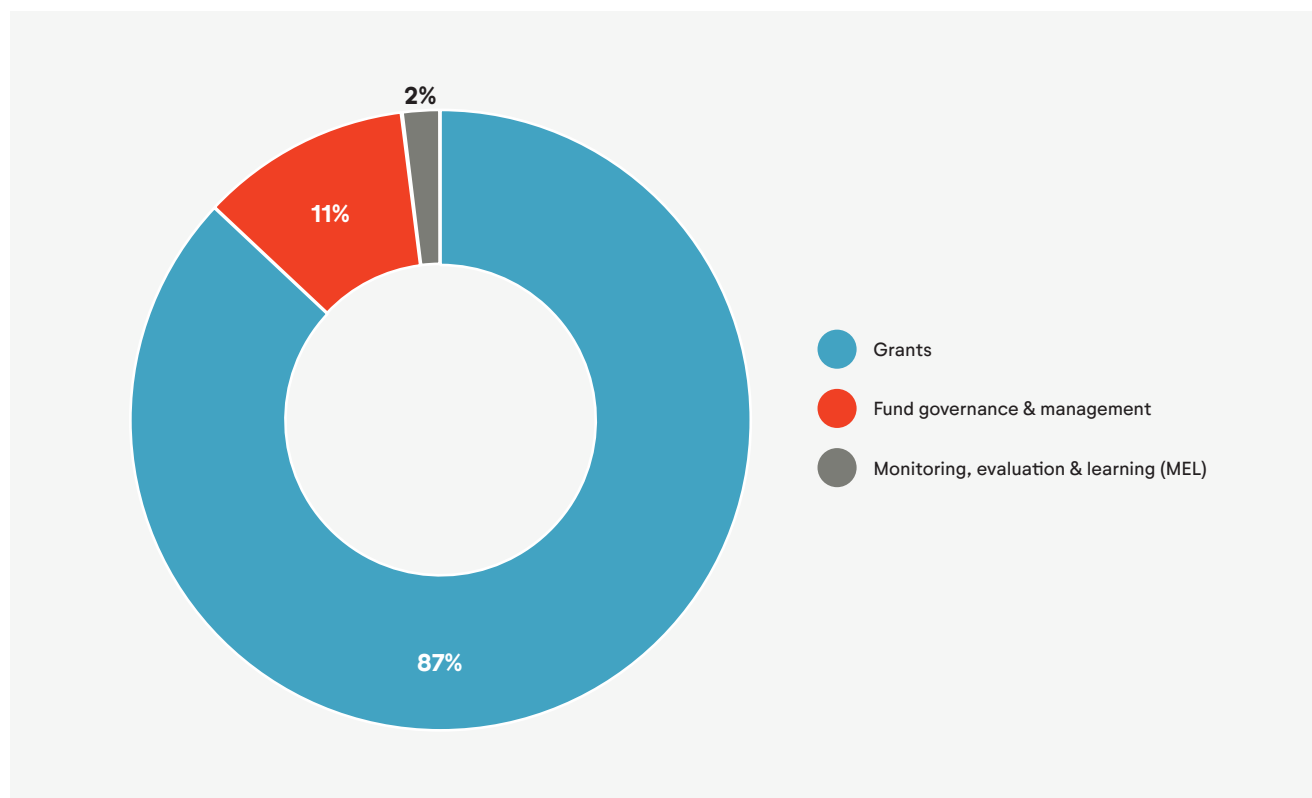
Total RCF Expenditure in 2022–2024				
Budget line	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**	**2022–2024**
Expenditure ($)				
Grants	$10,424,012	$11,225,677		$21,649,689
Fund governance & management	$1,217,576	$1,551,070		$2,768,646
Monitoring, evaluation & learning (MEL)	$88,407	$272,738		$361,145
TOTALS	**$11,729,995**	**$13,049,485**		**$24,779,480**
Expenditure (%)				
Grants	89%	86%		87%
Fund governance & management	10%	12%		11%
Monitoring, evaluation & learning (MEL)	1%	2%		2%
TOTALS	**100%**	**100%**		**100%**

Figure C:
Total RCF Grantee Expenditure 2022–2023 ($22.2 million)

- Grantee expenditure
- Remaining balance on grant commitments
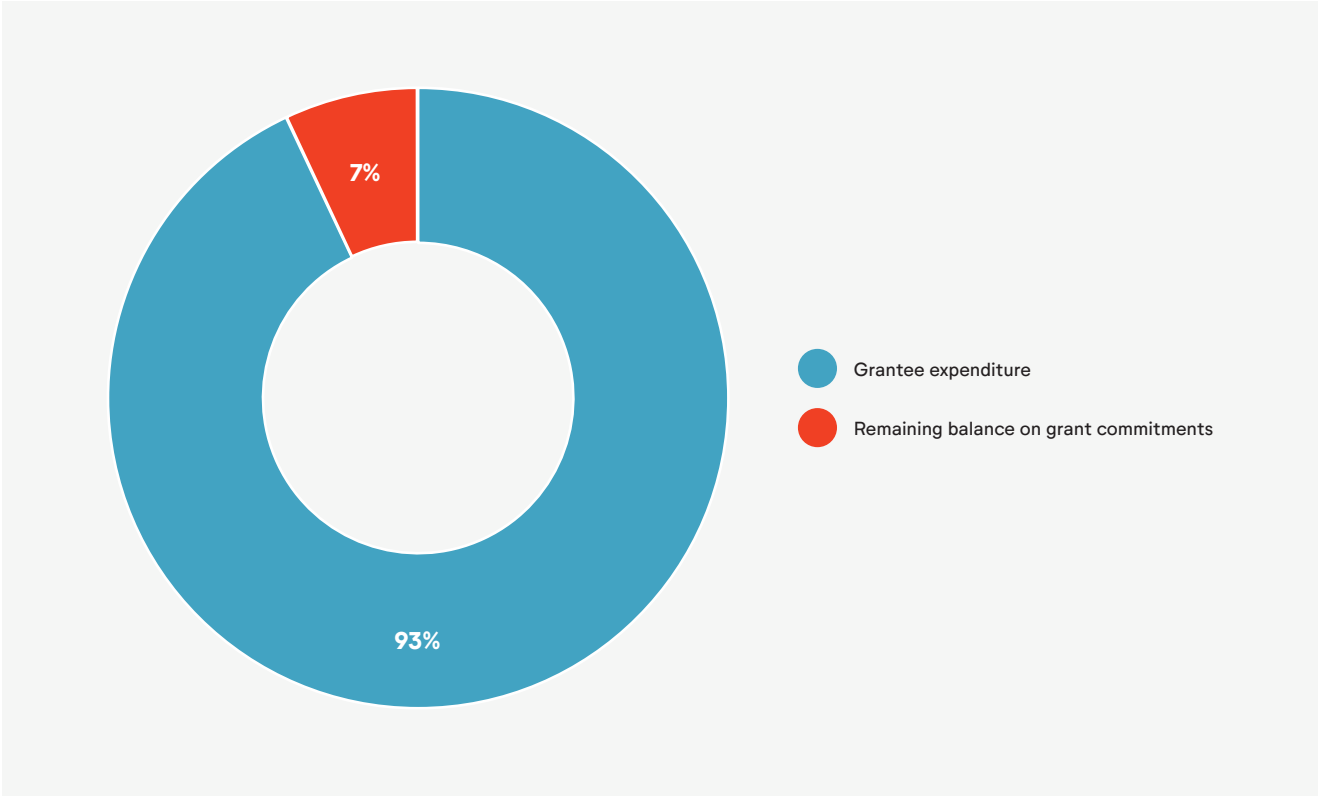
| Total grant commitments 2022–2023	Expenditure 2022	Expenditure 2023	Expenditure 2024	Total grantee expenditure	Remaining balance on grant commitments
$22,248,333	$9,285,226	$11,413,287		$20,698,512	$1,549,821
Percentages				93%	7%

Figure D:
RCF Grants 2022–2023 – Core vs. Activity Expenditures ($20.7 million)
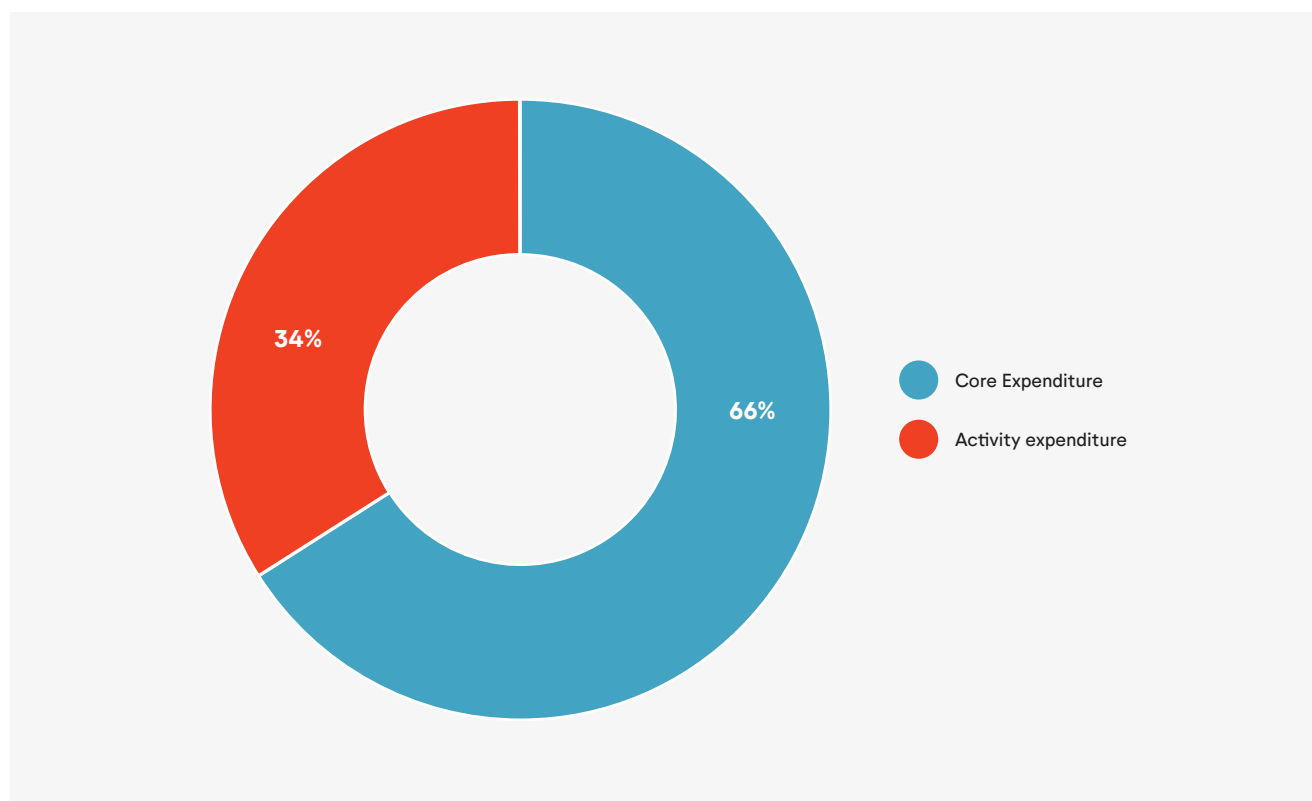
RCF Grants 2022–2024 Core vs. Activity Expenditure			
Year / Category	Activity expenditure	Core expenditure	TOTAL
Expenditure ($)			
2022	$2,793,590	$6,491,635	$9,285,226
2023	$4,334,091	$7,079,196	$11,413,287
2024	$0	$0	$0
2022–2024	**$7,127,681**	**$13,570,831**	**$20,698,512**
Expenditure (%)			
2022	30%	70%	100%
2023	38%	62%	100%
2024			
2022–2024	**34%**	**66%**	**100%**

Figure E:
RCF Grants 2022–2023 Core Expenditures ($13.6 Million)
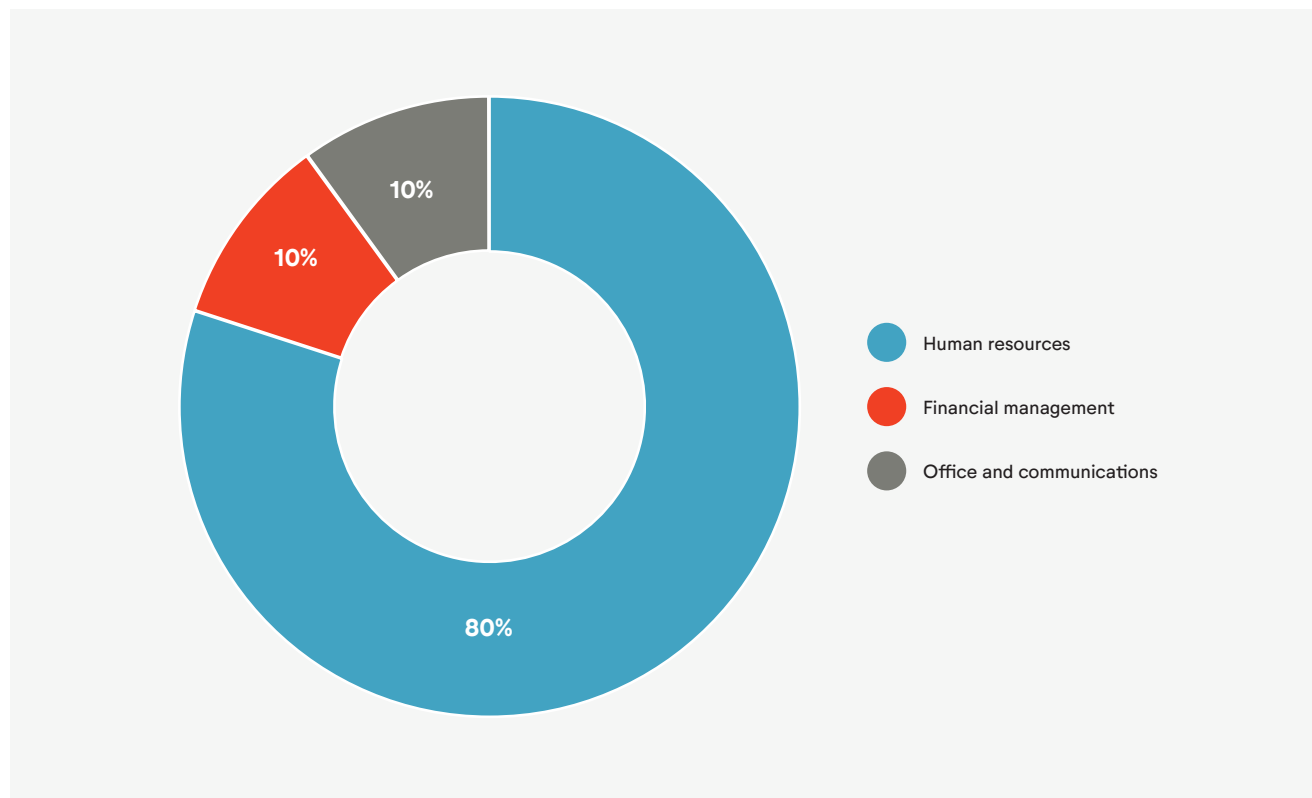
RCF Grants 2022–2024 – Core Expenditure				
Year / Category	Human resources	Financial management	Office and communications	TOTAL
Expenditure ($)				
2022	$5,151,219	$663,499	$676,918	$6,491,635
2023	$5,655,080	$667,684	$756,432	$7,079,196
2024				
2022–2024	**$10,806,299**	**$1,331,183**	**$1,433,350**	**$13,570,831**
Expenditure (%)				
2022	79%	10%	10%	100%
2023	80%	9%	11%	100%
2024				
2022–2024	**80%**	**10%**	**10%**	**100%**

Figure F:
RCF Grants 2022–2023 – Activity Expenditure per ISP ($7.1 Million)

🔵	People living with HIV
🔴	Sex workers
🟢	People who use drugs
🟡	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual,MSM, Queer
🔵	Transgender and Intersex
🟢	Prisoners
🟠	Women and Girls who are ISP
🔵	Youth who are ISP
⚫	Migrants who are ISP
⚫	Other
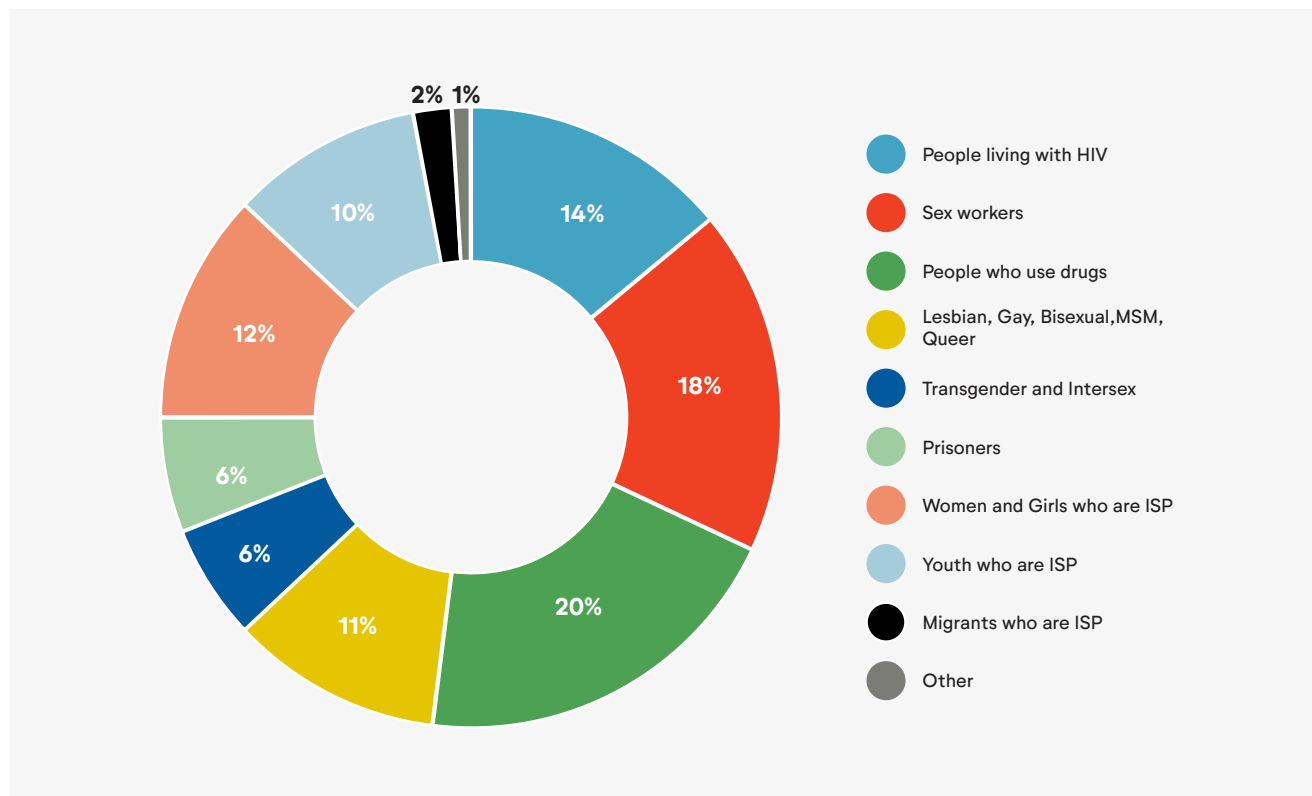
RCF Grantee 2022–2024 Activity Expenditure per ISP
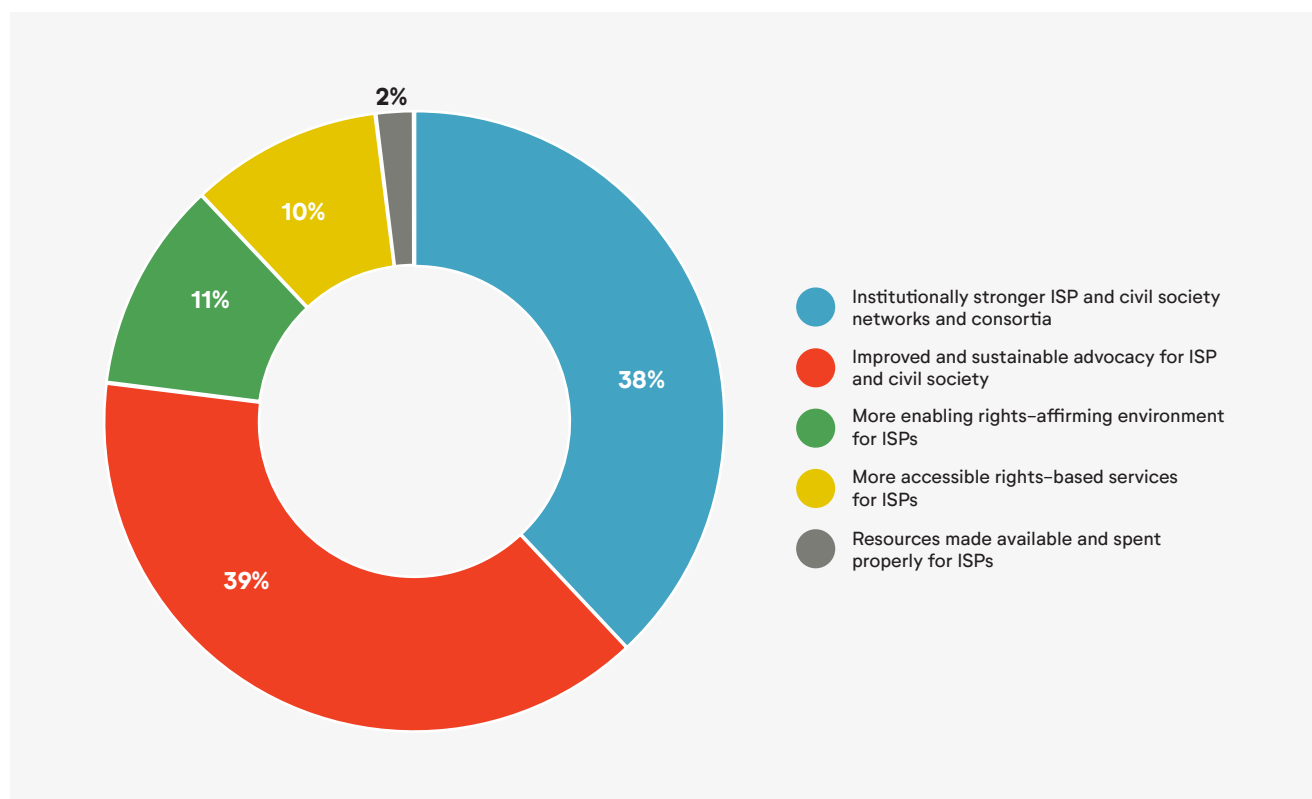
Year / Category	People living with HIV	Sex workers	People who use drugs	Gay, Bi and MSM	Transgender and Intersex	Prisoners	Women and Girls who are ISP	Youth who are ISP	Migrants who are ISP	People living in rural areas	Other	TOTAL
Expenditure ($)												
2022	$325,334	$532,405	$569,054	$283,405	$202,286	$159,057	$405,164	$256,101	$58,755	$307	$1,722	$2,793,590
2023	$668,451	$726,107	$876,424	$533,029	$257,422	$277,349	$425,883	$457,015	$79,046	$1,018	$32,349	$4,334,091
2024	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
2022– 2024	**$993,784**	**$1,258,512**	**$1,445,478**	**$816,434**	**$459,708**	**$436,406**	**$831,047**	**$713,116**	**$137,801**	**$1,325**	**$34,070**	**$7,127,681**
Expenditure (%)												
2022	12%	19%	20%	10%	7%	6%	15%	9%	2%	0%	0%	100%
2023	15%	17%	20%	12%	6%	6%	10%	11%	2%	0%	1%	100%
2024												
2022– 2024	**14%**	**18%**	**20%**	**11%**	**6%**	**6%**	**12%**	**10%**	**2%**	**0%**	**1%**	**100%**

Figure G:
RCF Grants 2022–2023 – Activity Expenditure per Region ($7.1 Million)
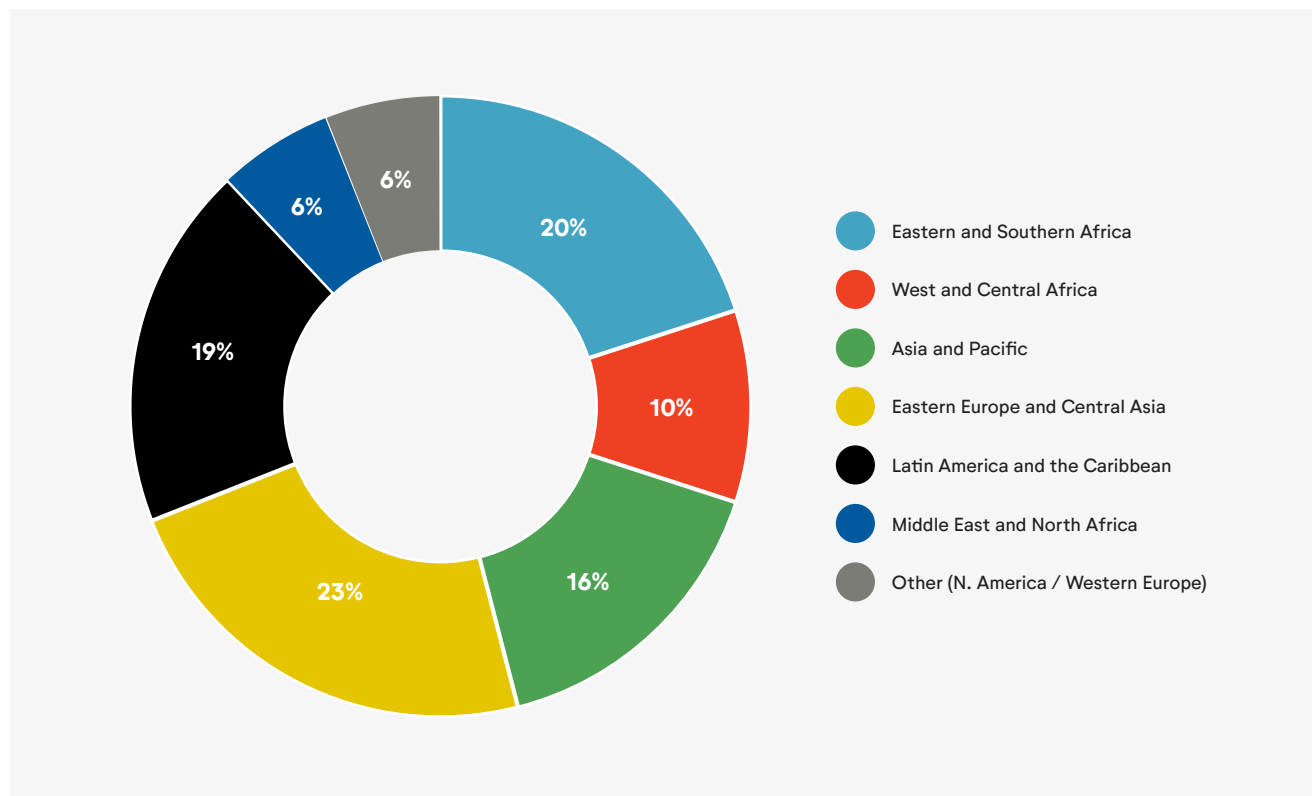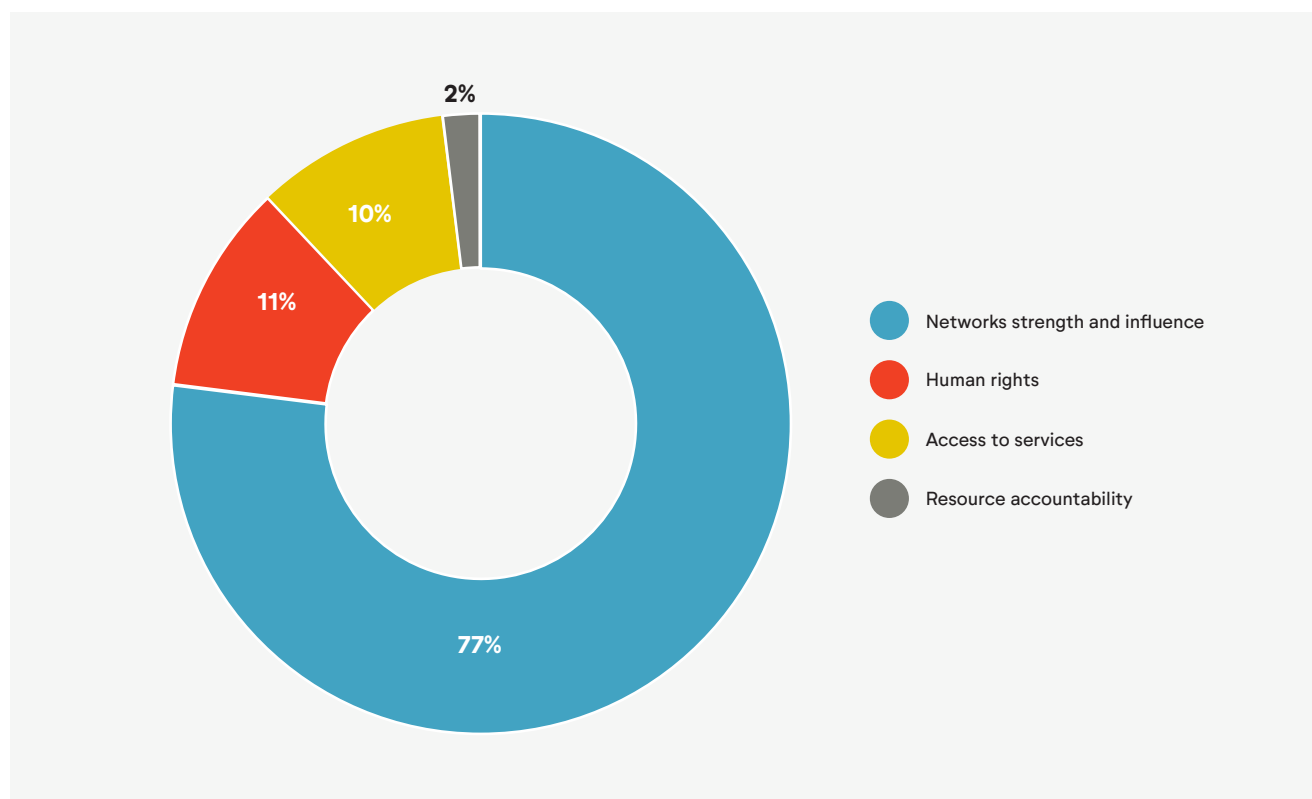

RCF Grantee 2022–2024 Activity Expenditure per Region

Year / Category	Eastern and Southern Africa	West and Central Africa	Asia and Pacific	Eastern Europe and Central Asia	Latin America and the Caribbean	Middle East and North Africa	Other (N. America / Western Europe)	TOTAL
Expenditure ($)								
2022	$484,009	$248,406	$450,099	$693,310	$567,041	$167,997	$182,728	$2,793,590
2023	$933,626	$451,477	$681,984	$971,579	$811,866	$241,952	$241,606	$4,334,091
2024	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
2022–2024	**$1,417,635**	**$699,883**	**$1,132,083**	**$1,664,890**	**$1,378,907**	**$409,949**	**$424,333**	**$7,127,681**
Expenditure (%)								
2022	17%	9%	16%	25%	20%	6%	7%	100%
2023	22%	10%	16%	22%	19%	6%	6%	100%
2024								
2022–2024	**20%**	**10%**	**16%**	**23%**	**19%**	**6%**	**6%**	**100%**

Figure H:

RCF Grants 2022–2023 – Activity Expenditure per Outcome Area ($7.1 Million)

RCF Grantee 2022–2024 Activity Expenditure per Outcome Area						
Year / Category	Institutionally stronger ISP and civil society networks and consortia	Improved and sustainable advocacy for ISP and civil society	More enabling rights–affirming environment for ISPs	More accessible rights–based services for ISPs	Resources made available and spent properly for ISPs	TOTAL
Expenditure ($)						
2022	$968,762	$1,251,055	$268,477	$277,025	$28,271	$2,793,590
2023	$1,746,716	$1,556,083	$521,938	$409,977	$99,377	$4,334,091
2024	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
2022–2024	**$2,715,478**	**$2,807,138**	**$790,415**	**$687,001**	**$127,648**	**$7,127,681**
Expenditure (%)						
2022	35%	45%	10%	10%	1%	100%
2023	40%	36%	12%	9%	2%	100%
2024						
2022–2024	**38%**	**39%**	**11%**	**10%**	**2%**	**100%**

Figure I:
RCF Grants 2022–2023 – Activity Expenditure per Results Area ($7.1 Million)

RCF Grantee 2022–2024 Activity Expenditure per Results Areas					
Year / category	Networks strength and influence	Human rights	Access to services	Resource accountability	TOTAL
Expenditure ($)					
2022	$2,219,818	$268,477	$277,025	$28,271	$2,793,590
2023	$3,302,799	$521,938	$409,977	$99,377	$4,334,091
2024	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
2022–2024	**$5,522,616**	**$790,415**	**$687,001**	**$127,648**	**$7,127,681**
Expenditure (%)					
2022	79%	10%	10%	1%	100%
2023	76%	12%	9%	2%	100%
2024					
2022–2024	**77%**	**11%**	**10%**	**2%**	**100%**

Figure J:
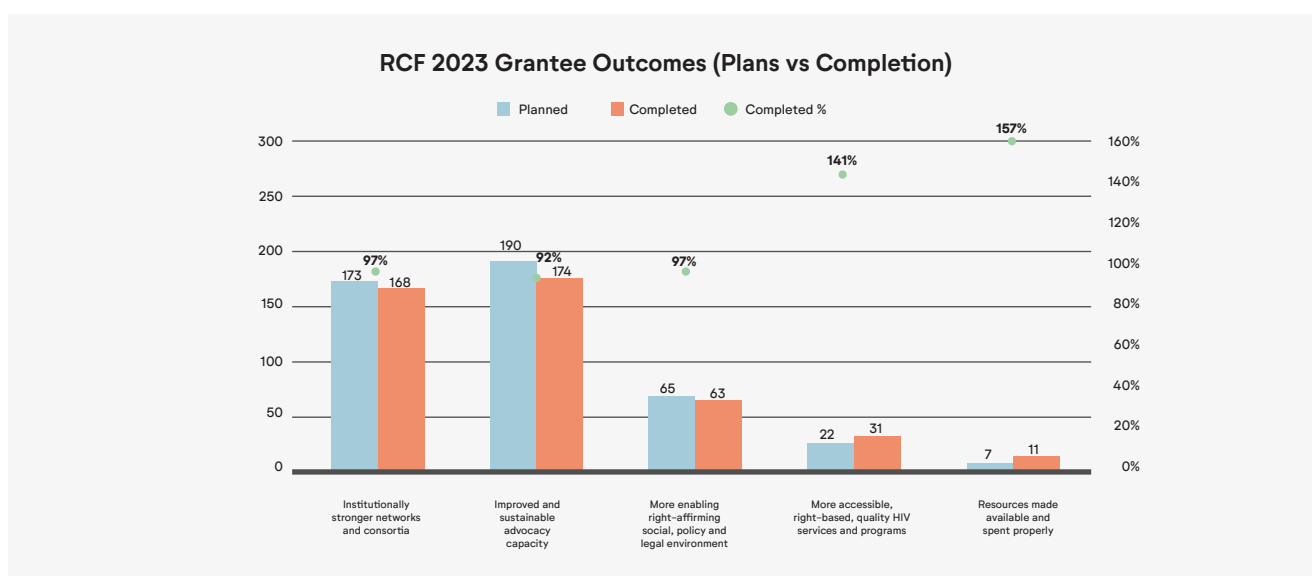**RCF Grants 2022–2023 – Activity Expenditure per Category of Activity ($7.1 Million)**
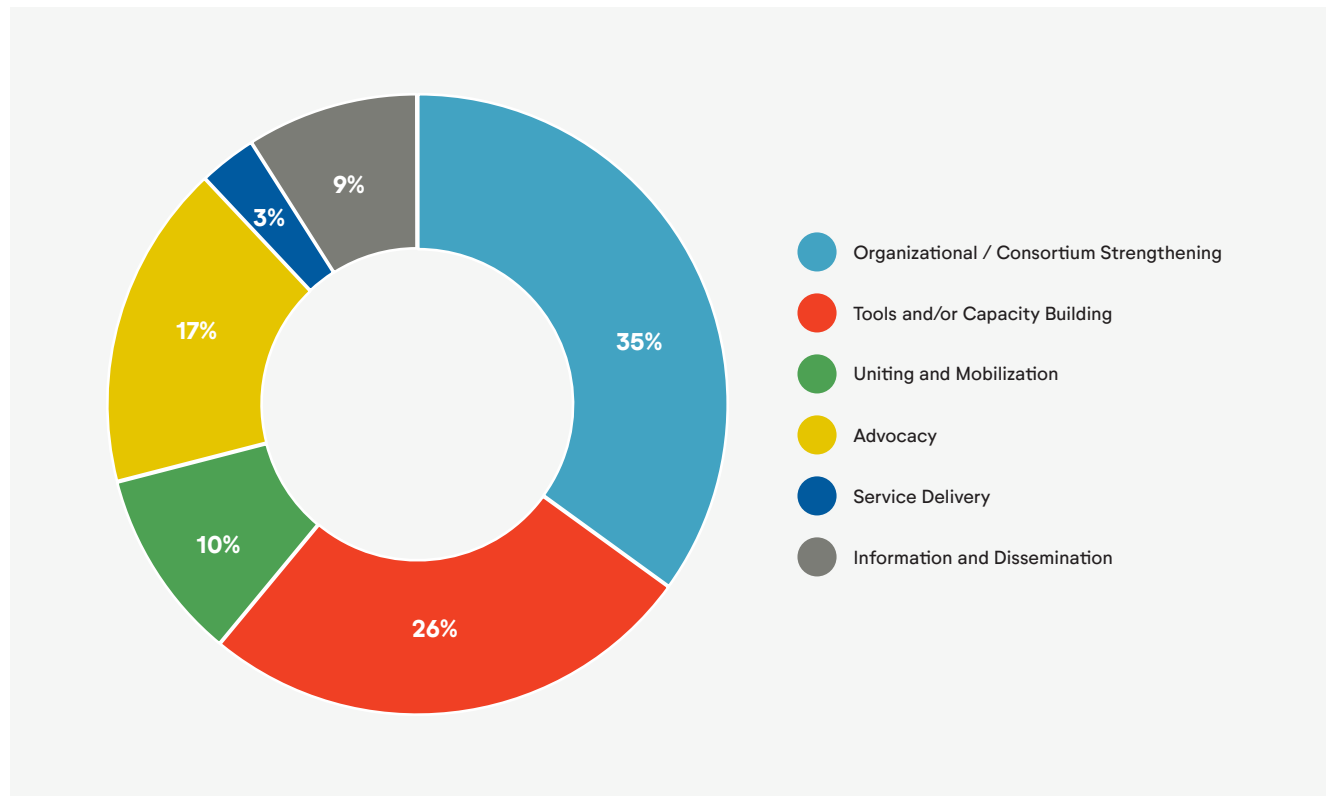
RCF Grantee 2022–2024 Activity Expenditure per Category of Activity

Year / Category	Organizational / Consortium Strengthening	Tools and/ or Capacity Building	Uniting and Mobilization	Advocacy	Service Delivery	Information and Dissemination	TOTAL
Expenditure ($)							
2022	$918,255	$900,911	$296,719	$401,675	$86,077	$189,954	$2,793,590
2023	$1,575,801	$973,763	$442,086	$781,018	$122,141	$439,281	$4,334,091
2024	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
2022–2024	**$2,494,056**	**$1,874,674**	**$738,805**	**$1,182,693**	**$208,218**	**$629,235**	**$7,127,681**
Expenditure (%)							
2022	33%	32%	11%	14%	3%	7%	100%
2023	36%	22%	10%	18%	3%	10%	100%
2024							
2022–2024	**35%**	**26%**	**10%**	**17%**	**3%**	**9%**	**100%**

PLANNED VS. COMPLETED ACTIVITIES

Outcome	Planned	Completed	Completed %	Main challenges in implementation reported by grantees
Institutionally stronger networks and consortia	173	168	97%	All of the activities that where not completed in 2023, were replanned to be implemented in 2024. Some of the main reasons include: Transition of leadership; de–lays in a preceding activity o the need to adapt format of tools / materials.
Improved and sustainable advocacy capacity	190	174	92%	All acitvities (16 NC) that were not completed in 2023 are replanned to be implemented in 2024. Some of the main reasons Include:Changes in leadership and priorities of key partners, identified opportunity to redirect resources toward more Impactful initiatives planned for 2024, or inability to complete a pre requi–site activity.
More enabling rights–af–firming social, policy and legal environment	65	63	97%	The activities (2 NC) that were not completed in 2023 are replanned to be implemented In 2024. The stated reason is decision to postpone the activity to the next year due to strategic (organizational) reasons.
More accessible. right–based, quality HIV services and programs	22	31	141%	Activities were added after Initial planning resulting In 9 additional activities completed In this area,
Resources made available and spent properly	7	11	157%	Activities were added after initial planning resulting in 4 additional activities completed in this area.
TOTALS	**457**	**447**	**98%**	

The above figures represent the planned (workplan) vs. completed (activity log) activities per outcome area for the year 2023. Figures above 100% are a result of re–programming and inclusion of new activities across 2023, not originally reflected in the grantee workplans.

2023 MONITORING VISITS

Overview

The RCF regularly plans and implements monitoring visits to grantee sits of operations, RCF utilizes the monitoring visits for:

Compliance Verification:

Ensuring Compliance: These visits allow RCF to verify that grant recipients are adhering to the terms and conditions of the grant, including financial management, program implementation, and reporting requirements.

Identifying Noncompliance: Monitoring visits help identify any areas of noncompliance, whether accidental or intentional, with internal policies or external regulations.

Technical Assistance: If issues are found, these visits provide an opportunity to discuss possibilities for strengthening and guidance to improve compliance.

Progress Assessment:

Tracking Progress: Site visits help to track progress of activity implementation, measure impact, and assess achievements. They help answer questions like: Are the planned activities on track? Are milestones being met?

Measuring Impact: RCF gets the opportunity to observe activities and outcomes firsthand, monitoring visits provides insights into the realized effectiveness and impact.

Relationship Building:

Strengthening Partnerships: Site visits foster relationships between grantors and grantees. Face-to-face interactions build trust and enhance collaboration.

Understanding Context: Being on-site allows grantors to understand the local context, challenges, and opportunities, which informs decision-making and support.

In 2023, 5 visits were implemented between January and October 2023 (inclusive).

Location	Visit Dates	Partners Visited	Visiting Staff
Beirut, Lebanon	16 — 20 January	1 grantee, 2 consortium members , 2 local partners & 2 fiscal hosts visited	1x PO (Program Officer), 1x FO (Finance Officer/ Business Controller), 1x CO (Communications Officer)
Marrakech, Morocco	10 — 15 March	1 single regional network; 5 organizations (Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Uganda, Zimbabwe)	1x PO, 1x FO
Capetown, South Africa	27 – 30 March	1 fiscal host (+ meeting with consortium lead), 1 consortium Lead	1x PO, 2x FO
Kingston, Jamaica	1 — 23 August	1 single regional network	1x PO, 1x FO
Edinburgh, Scotland	10 — 11 October	1 single global network	1x PO, 1x FO

Key agenda topics included:

- Governance overview
- Organizational overview
- Deep dive into RCF 3–year grant: progress, challenges and outlook for the remaining time period, also addressing:
  - Network overview
  - HIV environment for partner's target groups
  - Current programming
  - Financial sustainability
  - Network's challenges and barriers
- Financial management
- Resource mobilization and organizational sustainability
- Meetings with consortium partners

Reporting and Follow–Up

After a monitoring visit, RCF compiles findings and observations.

Key conclusions include:
Areas of Strength: Identifying successful practices and effective strategies.
Areas for Improvement: Highlighting issues or gaps that need attention.

Next steps involve:
Follow–Up: Addressing any identified issues or recommending additional support.
Reporting: Documenting findings and sharing them with relevant stakeholders.
Adjustments: Making necessary adjustments to the grant or workplan based on insights from the visit.

Norway

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The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

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

UK International Development

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands