

The State of Trans* and Intersex Organizing

Summary of Findings

This report summarizes the findings of a survey of 340 transgender (trans*) and intersex groups worldwide, conducted from July to September 2013 by Global Action for Trans* Equality (GATE) and American Jewish World Service (AJWS). The survey documents the deep discrimination and multiple challenges facing trans* and intersex people, and the organizing that they are leading worldwide to win their human rights. It also documents the funding of trans* and intersex groups and the challenges and obstacles they face in obtaining resources to carry out their work.

GEOGRAPHY AND DEMOGRAPHICS

- **The trans* and intersex movements are young, diverse and growing rapidly worldwide.** Almost one-third of the groups surveyed were founded in the past three years, indicating likely further growth in the coming years.
- **Most trans* and intersex groups work locally, with only a few global and regional organizations.** Groups surveyed work primarily within their home countries, with the greatest number working at the local level (38 percent), national level (34 percent) and provincial/state level (20 percent). Of those surveyed, only 22 groups stated they work regionally (7 percent) and six stated they work globally (2 percent).
- **Many trans* and intersex groups are led by trans and intersex people, but a surprising number are not.** The majority of groups in the survey (63 percent) are led by trans* and intersex people. The percentage of these “self-led” groups in the Caribbean, Central and South America (73 percent) and Asia (65 percent) is higher than in North America (53 percent), the Pacific, Australia and New Zealand (53 percent) and Middle East and North Africa (40 percent).

FINANCES

- **Nearly half of the trans* and intersex groups that responded to the survey are not independent organizations, but rather are programs of larger human rights and health organizations with broader mandates beyond trans* and/or intersex work.** Only a quarter of these groups make most or all of their own financial decisions. Close to a third report that they share financial decision-making within a larger organization and 42 percent report having little or no say in financial decisions about their work. As a result of these arrangements, a large number of trans* and intersex activists are unable to use their knowledge of their communities’ needs and priorities to make decisions about how resources dedicated to them are spent.
- **Across the board, trans* and intersex groups operate on scarce resources.** More than half (54 percent) of groups have a current annual budget of less than \$10,000. Nearly all groups (95 percent) have budgets of less than \$250,000 a year.
- **Groups led by trans* and intersex people have smaller budgets and less savings than those that are not led by trans* and intersex people.** Intersex-led groups have a median annual budget of \$0–\$ 5,000. Trans*-led groups have a median annual budget of \$5,000–\$10,000. In sharp contrast, groups that are not led by trans* or intersex people have a median annual budget of \$20,000–\$50,000 for their trans*/intersex work.

Trans*: People whose gender identity or expression differs from the gender assigned at birth. Some trans* people identify and present themselves as either a man or a woman; others identify with a non-binary gender category. Trans* people describe themselves by many different terms, some of which are specific to local cultures. Many global activists have started to use the abbreviation “trans*,” with an asterisk denoting a placeholder for the entire range of possible gender identities that fall under the broad definition of trans*.

Intersex: People who were born with chromosomes, gonads and/or genitals that vary from female and male standards. A former medical term, intersex has been reclaimed by intersex people as a personal and political identity. In certain local contexts, intersex people have also reclaimed the older term “hermaphrodite” (or, more recently, “herm”) and the abbreviation “inter*.”

- **The groups surveyed do not have significant financial stability.** While the nonprofit industry standard is for organizations to have 3 - 6 months' expenses in reserves, 68 percent of groups working on trans* and intersex issues have no reserves or savings at all.
- **Trans* and intersex groups are severely under-staffed.** More than half of the groups surveyed have no full-time staff (55 percent) and half of the groups have no staff at all (49 percent), with the bulk of the work being done by volunteers.
- **Governments rarely fund trans* and intersex issues.** Seventy-one percent of groups that have sought external funding believe their national governments have no interest in providing support. Government funding—whether from state or provincial governments, national governments or foreign governments—is the least likely source of funding for trans* and intersex issues overall.
- **Groups face enormous challenges in obtaining funding.** Once a potential funder has been identified, many groups find lengthy applications forms to be beyond their capacity. One of the most frequently cited obstacles is that many grants available to LGBTI communities or on prevention or treatment of HIV and AIDS do not reach trans* or intersex groups or people. Also, groups in rural areas, francophone and other non-English-speaking countries, and certain countries report difficulties obtaining funding.
- **Lack of data may deter donors from funding trans* or intersex groups.** Lack of data on the number of trans* or intersex people in society and the human rights violations they face appears to be a barrier for some donors, who may believe that the problem is not 'big enough' to justify funding.

SERVICES, PROGRAMS AND NEEDS

- **Groups want to expand to provide direct services.** Many groups expressed the desire to expand to provide direct services to trans* and intersex communities. Thirty-five percent of the groups, including 56 percent of intersex-led groups, responded that they want to provide social services and 31 percent want to provide health care.
- **In addition to core funding, trans* and intersex groups seek other kinds of support from donors.** The survey revealed that groups have three strong priorities for additional support: networking and exchanges with other trans* and intersex groups; skills training; and mentoring programs for group leaders.
- **Groups want to network with peers and enhance their capacity by gaining access to mentoring and skills training, including fundraising.**

