

Resourcing the Statelessness Field

Survey Analysis

1. Why did we do a survey and who responded?

There are many groups around the world led by people who are impacted by statelessness which exist to serve their communities and pursue change. They are often operating in hostile environments with staff/volunteers facing significant and serious threats to their security. Financial insecurity is a massive challenge for these groups, often due to an inability to register their organisations and comply with state regulations, but also because individuals themselves can be both undocumented and criminalised as a consequence of their statelessness. In 2022, civil society representatives with lived and learned experience of statelessness and donor allies came together to explore and implement strategies to increase funder awareness of statelessness as a cross-cutting and intersectional human rights challenge and to strengthen funding commitments to address it. A survey was developed to better understand the gap between the needs of the field and current levels of funding and identify key barriers to accessing donors faced by groups working on statelessness – registered and unregistered, Non-Government Organisations, stateless led groups, Community Based Organisations, networks and coalitions. The survey was translated into four different languages (Arabic, English, French and Spanish) to reduce language barriers and increase the number of respondents. It was circulated in the last quarter of 2022.

The evidence generated about the survey about the resourcing needs and funder-access issues faced by groups working on statelessness will be used to inform a new initiative – *the Global Statelessness Fund*. The purpose of this Fund is to channel strategic, unrestricted, and long-term funding directly to stateless activists and impacted person-led organisations, where the need is greatest. It will increase the agency, independence, capacity and leadership of impacted person-led groups and activists to pursue the change they want to see and deliver more effective strategies. It will also catalyse more sustainable funding to the statelessness field and help to strengthen the position of impacted person-led groups, challenge power imbalances within the field and enhance the agency of stateless people, facilitating their meaningful participation in regional and global initiatives.

The survey received 56 responses in total: 45 in English, five in Arabic, four Spanish and two in French. The majority of respondents (63%) indicated they were from non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Other respondents included community-based groups (22%), loose networks (6%), coalitions (5%) and faith-based organisations (4%). The survey yielded responses from organisations globally, as shown on the map, with the following spread across regions: Asia and the Pacific (39%), Africa (20%), the Americas (18%), Europe (14%) and the Middle East and North Africa (5%).

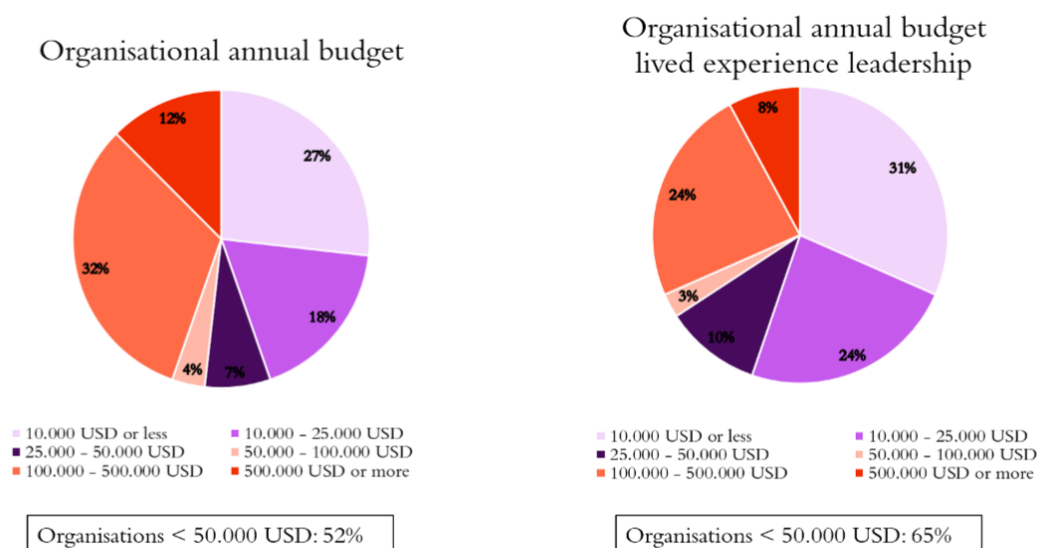


Of the 56 organisations that responded, 38 (70%) indicated that they have lived experience leadership. This means their leadership is made up of people who are directly impacted by statelessness themselves or who are part of a community which is impacted by statelessness. Of these 38 impacted person-led groups, ten are not legally registered in their country of operation and 11 do not have their own bank account. This is a barrier to funding for many, as donors are often unwilling or unable to find creative ways of getting money to organisations or individuals in contexts where they are unable to access formal banking processes.

Over half of respondents were from organisations that dedicate a clear majority of their time (60% or more) to working on nationality and statelessness issues. In fact, a third of the groups that completed the survey work *exclusively* on these issues. All respondents indicated that their work on nationality and statelessness, is not specifically focused on just one issue, but are rather encompasses activities across several areas, such as legal identity and documentation, children's nationality rights and gender discrimination.

2. What are the effects of financial insecurity on organisations and their activities?

In terms of organisational budgets, 52% of respondents have an annual operating budget of less than \$50,000 USD. When we zoom in on the organisational annual budgets of organisations with lived experienced leadership, we see that the percentage of organisations with smaller budgets increases. Two thirds of the organisations that are impacted person led organisations have an annual budget of less than \$50,000 USD and one third of these organisations have an annual budget of \$10,000 USD or less. This demonstrates that the majority are working with very small budgets.



Operating on a small annual budget can be another barrier to funding because not all donors are interested or able to make grants available to organisations of this size. It also affects the ability to properly staff an organisation and guarantee continuity of activities. Ten organisations operating at \$50,000 or less indicated that they have no paid employees and are reliant entirely on volunteers to execute their work. Nine of these ten organisations are impacted person led. This puts organisations in precarious situations where they may lose staff, or where delivering/continuing activities is reliant only on goodwill. It also forces situations where they are unable to compensate for time. In a field that has historically marginalised the expertise and needs of lived-experience leaders and affected persons, this poses a significant problem. Ensuring funding and resources are directed to these groups not only so they effectively carry out their work but also so salaries and other forms of appropriate compensation can be allocated is critical in breaking down existing hierarchies and power imbalances.

"We end up losing trained staff members due to lack of resources."

Community-based organisation in Kenya;
annual budget \$10,000 or less

Financial insecurity disproportionately affects impacted person-led organisations, yet it is these small, under-resourced groups that are especially in need of funding. Impacted-person-led groups should be at the centre of statelessness discourse and agenda setting.

“We are only able to implement short-term activities and fail to respond to the outcome of those activities to sustain the change we want to see.”

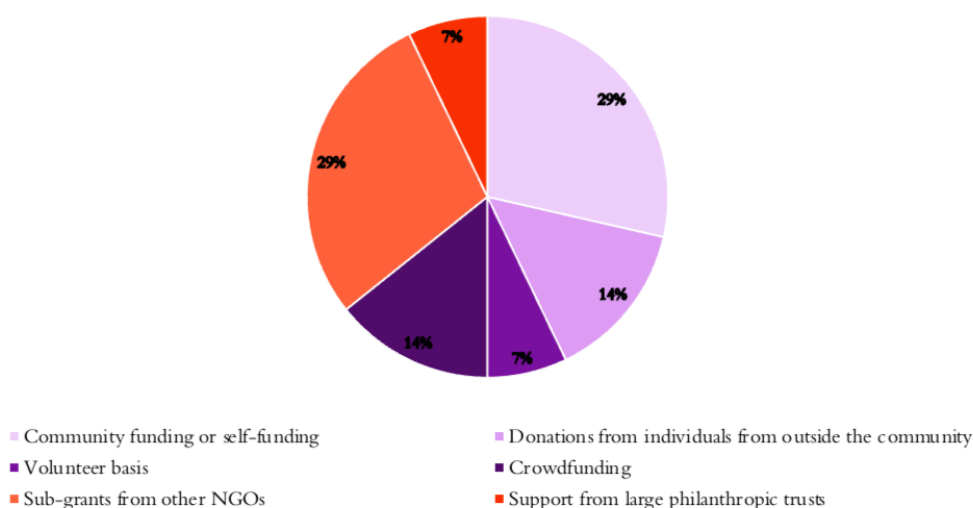
NGO in Eswatini; annual budget \$10,000 or less

They best understand and represent the needs of their communities but historically have been denied a seat at the table or only provided tokenistic participation and are not afforded adequate funding to continue their work.

3. Where does funding to the field come from?

The survey showed us that organisations with an annual income of \$50,000 USD or less are mainly reliant on sub-grants from other NGOs (39%) and community funding (17%). Only 11% of income comes from the support of large philanthropic trusts. When looking at impacted-led groups that are not legally registered, we see the level of direct support from trusts and foundations drop down to just 7%, as shown in the graph below. In contrast, these groups rely heavily on a variety of different sources of individual support – from within and beyond the community, via donations, crowdfunding and volunteering. These groups are at the sharp end of those who are in most critical need of funding and yet are the furthest from philanthropic foundations.

Sources of income organisations < 50,000 USD,
impacted-person led and not legally registered



According to the survey findings, these smaller groups can be reached through larger NGO sub-grants, i.e. larger NGOs working as intermediaries. However, this contributes to the existing power imbalances in the field with these larger NGOs being seen as funders rather than equal partners, changing the dynamics of the relationships and may result in larger NGOs holding power over these under-resourced organisations.

4. What barriers are faced in accessing funding?

There are many challenges and barriers that organisations face when trying to access funding. The three most common challenges organisations that responded to the survey reported experiencing are:

- The lack of prioritisation of the issue by donors (22%),
- The lack of fundraising capacity within the organisation itself (20%), and
- The lack of knowledge among donors on the issue (18%).

Many organisations also indicated frustration around very strict grant requirements including onerous applications and reporting needs (5%), the lack of feedback on failed applications (12%), ineligibility due to (a too small) organisational budget size (10%) or lack of registration / bank account (7%), and unreasonable / impractical government restrictions (5%).

“It has become easier to talk about fundraising and money, but it has become increasingly disappointing that even though we have so many great successes, donors are still uninterested in the work.”

Stateless-led NGO based in the USA

A lack of funding threatens the ability to retain or hire paid personnel and thus contributes to an unsustainable reliance on volunteers. Additionally, a lack of long-term funding deprives organisations of the opportunity to innovate and grow their existing programmes. When funding is predominantly project based, organisations find themselves unable to carry out other activities which are not explicitly covered in the terms of reference for the funding received – even when facing a change of circumstances on the ground or acute organisational needs.

“Lack of funding restricts the organization from undertaking other programs on issues not covered by donors Terms of Reference.”

Impacted person led NGO in the Philippines operating on an annual budget of 10,000-25,000 USD.

“There is a struggle to make the monthly budget for projects which means constant pressure to ensure they keep operational and therefore no room to innovate and grow in the way we have potential and experience to”

NGO in Pakistan that runs legal assistance and service provision programmes for stateless populations.

Finally, the nature of insecure funding means that organisations are often forced to halt operations when funding runs out until a time that they are able to allocate more resources to their activities. The pause in activities can be detrimental to the efficacy of the project work, especially in situations where organisations are working directly with communities.

“More secure resourcing would guarantee us continuity of work and continuity of mobilization for the cause, as we are forced to stop working for long periods due to our inability to obtain funding.”

Impacted person led NGO working with Syrians affected by statelessness (in Syria and abroad) and operating on an annual budget of 10,000-25,000 USD.

5. Who is behind the survey?

This survey and analysis carried out by the ‘Donor Engagement Steering Group’ (DESG) - ten individuals made up of those with lived experience, civil society and donors who are working together to explore and implement strategies and activities which to increase donor awareness of statelessness as a cross-cutting and intersectional human rights challenges and strengthen donor commitments to the address the issue. The DESG is made up of Amal de Chickera (Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion); Bina Ramanand (Family Frontiers); Catherine Harrington (Global Campaign for Equal Nationality Rights); Georgia Field (Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion); Laura Bingham (Temple University); Laura van Waas (Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion); Martin Dunn (Dunn Family Charitable Foundation); Subin Mulmi (Nationality for All); Travey Gurd (American Jewish World Service) and Yassah Kimei (Nubian Rights Forum).