



ROBERT CARR FUND

for civil society
networks

BUILDING AN HIV AND GLOBAL HEALTH RESPONSE

Who We Are



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Where Communities Lead and No one is Left Behind

Direct support to civil society in the HIV response has produced remarkable results since the beginning of the AIDS epidemic. Ending the epidemic requires a significant increase in funding for advocacy, community mobilization and service by civil society and communities directly affected by AIDS. The Robert Carr civil society Networks Fund (RCNF) is a primary funding mechanism working to fulfill this need.

Launched in July 2012, the RCNF **aims to strengthen and support the work of global and regional civil society networks responding to HIV**. These networks are led by and represent those most in need of comprehensive HIV services: inadequately served populations (ISPs) – people who face a higher risk of HIV infection, illness and death, yet have less access to treatment, prevention and support services.

What we do:

The RCNF provides both **programmatic and core funding** to eligible civil society networks in the response to HIV. It has **four main outcome areas for its funding**:

- **Capacity building:** to improve global and regional network capacity.
- **Service delivery and advocacy:** to enhance HIV response implementation.
- **Human rights:** to support advocacy and programmes, that serve to protect human rights
- **Resource accountability:** to ensure sufficient, strategically targeted investments for effective national-level responses to HIV.

WHO WE SERVE: PEOPLE AT THE HEART OF HIV COMMUNITY NETWORKS

The Robert Carr civil society Networks Fund supports networks representing 'Inadequately served populations' (ISPs) in the HIV response.

ISPs include people living with HIV, gay men and other men who have sex with men (MSM), people who use drugs, prisoners, sex workers and transgender people. In some localities, ISPs also include women and girls, youth, migrants and people living in rural areas.

Our current funding: wide-ranging support in the midst of great unmet need

The RCNF's current donors include the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD), the UK government's Department for International Development (DFID); the US President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR); the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation; the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria; and the MAC AIDS Fund.

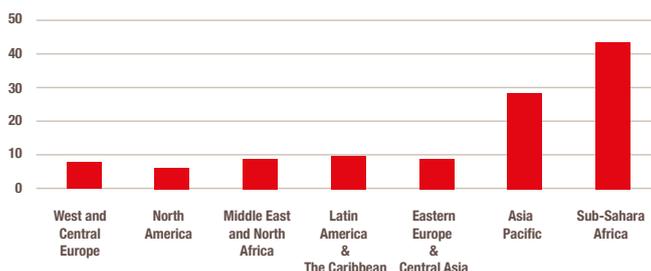
With their contributions and backing, the RCNF invested slightly more than \$18.3 million through 38 grants in its first two years of funding (2013, 2014 and 2015). All grantees, global and regional networks, benefit a wide and expanding range of geographic areas and ISPs (see Figures 1 and 2).

Figure 1. Key populations supported through RCNF grants (first two rounds)

% of all grants that include at least partial attention to selected population	Round 1	Round 2
People who use drugs		
People living with HIV		
Women living with HIV		
Gay men/men who have sex with men (MSM)		
Sex workers		
Transgender		
Youth		
Prisoners		

Figure 2. RCNF geographic scope

The RCNF aims to work at the global and regional level and have an impact at the national level. Through the first two years of funding, most of the grantees had activities in Africa



Number of times that an awarded proposal of RCNF had activities in a region.

Interest and demand have exceeded expectations and available funds, a situation that highlights the **great unmet need among communities and networks most affected by HIV.**

The RCNF was only able to fund about 20% of all eligible grant applications – and even successful grantees received, on average, only 54% of their requested funding due to resource limitations. The total amount requested from applicants considered eligible for funding exceeded \$108 million. When compared with the amount of funding available and awarded, that figure indicates a **funding gap of around \$90 million.**

How we do it: funding models

The RCNF provides one-, two- and three-year grants to successful applicants. It has funded proposals from individual global and regional networks. The fund has increasingly has prioritized funding by **consortia of networks** in an effort to strengthen global and regional partnerships.

In this model, members of each consortium focus on a common ISP or theme, such as people who use drugs and gay men and other men who have sex with men (MSM). Each consortium has a lead network and a memorandum of understanding that details all members' obligations and responsibilities.

Our systems: community-driven and collaborative

Three main bodies coordinate and oversee the Robert Carr Fund: the International Steering Committee (ISC), the Programme Advisory Panel (PAP) and the Fund Management Agency (FMA). All three are linked, but operate separately.

The RCNF's **emphasis on partnership and collaboration** is exemplified in the International Steering Committee: its eight members include four donor representatives and four civil society networks. As the main governing body, it sets the RCNF's strategic direction and approves proposals for funding.

The grant review process is undertaken by the peer-led Programme Advisory Panel (PAP), which includes community-based technical experts. This **community-driven approach** builds ownership among recipients and ensures that the unique expertise and experience of community members drive the funding priorities and grant selection.

ADVANTAGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The added value of the RCNF includes:

- Precedence. The first international fund that specifically aims to strengthen civil society networks across the world.
- Partnership. A collaboration of donors and civil society networks that are active in the area of HIV.
- Possibilities. Provides both programmatic and core funding to international civil society networks.
- Priorities. Serving ISPs – the communities and populations most in need of effective HIV prevention, treatment, care and support
- Predictability. Resources that allow networks and sub-grantees to be secure about their future, and to plan accordingly.

And finally, the Fund Management Agency (FMA) implements the work of the Fund, administering grants and providing logistic support to the other two main bodies. The FMA, which operates as the secretariat, is **Aids Fonds Netherlands**. Selected through an open process, Aids Fonds has 30 years of experience of working with community networks.

Our impact: demonstrated success and commitment

Grantees started their activities in 2013. The findings of an independent Mid-Term Review (MTR), conducted in 2014, were positive, underscoring the RCNF's notable impact in just a short period of time. The MTR concluded the following:

- The RCNF is increasingly **meeting the expectations of global and regional networks** by supporting many that might otherwise have faced closure.
- There are now **multiple, concrete examples of how the Fund's resources have strengthened networks' structures, programmes and advocacy** – and, in turn, boosted their ability to make a difference to inadequately served populations in HIV responses.
- The **goals and objectives of the RCNF are the right ones**. They are evidence-informed and fill an important niche by concentrating on a critical need within the civil society architecture: global and regional networks focused on the rights of key populations. As a targeted fund for such populations, **the RCNF is overcoming a major gap in the global response to HIV**.

- The **RCNF's donors are pleased with results so far and want to continue investing**. Donors broadly appreciate the Fund's ways of working and, in particular, remain keen on the idea and potential benefits of a pooled fund. **Donors have recommitted to the RCNF for the next terms** with a sustained or increased financial contribution. All express optimism that additional resources, including from new donors, will have a major and sustained difference on the success of HIV responses in general – and especially to the health and rights of inadequately served populations worldwide.
- The Fund Management Agency (FMA), Aids Fonds, is doing an excellent job. It faced and has largely met high expectations in setting and executing administrative and logistical functions for the Robert Carr Fund to date.

Civil society networks that are flocking to the RCNF largely echo the MTR's enthusiasm. Supporting their efforts to strengthen capacity and provide stronger, sustained advocacy and services represents a unique opportunity to make a difference in the push to end AIDS. The RCNF is a proven vehicle to advance and achieve that goal.



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