



Fundraising tips:

for Suicide Decriminalisation
& Suicide Prevention

Fundraising Tips for Suicide Decriminalisation & Suicide Prevention

Raising money for suicide decriminalisation advocacy can be challenging because it sits between sectors. Mental health donors often focus on outcome related services rather than legal reform, while human rights donors may see suicide prevention as a health issue, rather than a rights issue. This means organisations need to help donors understand where the work fits and why it matters.

We have detailed some fundraising tips that UnitedGMH have gathered after working in suicide decriminalisation advocacy for the past 8 years.



1. Capitalise on Suicide Prevention / Mental Health Funding Opportunities



- a. **The Strategy:** When mental health / suicide prevention funding opportunities arise, see if you can include suicide decriminalisation as the key that would help your intervention / research succeed. Show funders that changing the law is a necessary first step for crisis hotlines, community care, and health data to actually succeed.
- b. **Examples of such Opportunities:**
 - i. **Regional & Multilateral Youth/Mental Health Grants (e.g., UNICEF Regional Offices):**

The UNICEF Regional Office for the Caribbean funded a research initiative to gather youth perspectives for an upcoming national mental health legislation and suicide prevention plan. Advocates strategically used this funded research exercise to collect data on suicide decriminalisation, which adds to the evidence base to drive the broader policy movement. *Look out for similar research and consultation grants in your region.*
 - ii. **Health System & Crisis Implementation Grants (e.g. Suicide Prevention Services / Ministry Collaborations):** Global initiatives like Zero Suicide International or Lifeline International have funded research, frontline crisis scaling, and national implementation projects. For example, Zero Suicide International collaborated with the Ministry of Health in Nepal to adapt suicide prevention frameworks locally. Keep an eye out for these projects.
- c. **How to Position It:** Explain that when suicide is illegal, crisis hotlines, community care, and health data do not work well. Fear of police arrest stops people in crisis from reaching out for help. Fear of being prosecuted for providing care means service providers do not want to help people who are suicidal. Demonstrate to funders that as long as suicide attempts are criminalised, crisis hotlines, community care, and clinical data collection will be fundamentally compromised because fear of prosecution deters people from reaching out and deters healthcare providers from accurately documenting cases of attempted suicide. **Frame policy reform as opening the door for effective public health programs.**

2. Adapt Your Language to Fit Funder Priorities



- a. **The Strategy:** Match your core arguments of why we need suicide decriminalisation directly to the funder's primary objective by adjusting the words you use.
- b. **How to Position It:**
 - i. **For Human Rights & Policy Reform Donors:** Emphasise how decriminalisation protects fundamental human rights, specifically upholding the right to health guaranteed under regional and international treaties.
 - ii. **For Public Health & Global Health Donors:** Focus on how repealing these laws helps achieve Sustainable Development Goals 3.4 and 3.5, specifically improving data integrity through accurate suicide reporting, ensuring universal health coverage reaches vulnerable populations without fear of criminal penalties and reduction of premature mortality from NCDs and substance abuse including harmful drug abuse.
 - iii. **For Criminal Justice Reform Donors:** Highlight how law reform reduces unnecessary police involvement in mental health crises, diverts individuals toward care rather than overburdened penal systems, and stops the criminalisation of human vulnerability.

3. Target Colonial Law Reform and Legal Empowerment Funds



- a. **The Strategy:** Look outside the health sector entirely and apply to open calls from trusts and foundations that fund international human rights work and the repeal of legacy colonial penal codes. For example, [Open Society Foundations](#), [The Sigrid Rausing Trust](#), [The Arcus Foundation](#), [The Oak Foundation](#)
- b. **How to Position It:** In most countries where suicide remains criminalised (such as parts of the Caribbean, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Asia), the law is a remnant of 19th-century British or European penal codes. Donors who fund legal empowerment, strategic litigation, or constitutional challenge funds (like those fighting to decriminalise LGBTQ+ identities, sex work etc) can view colonial law reform through a unified lens. Pitching suicide decriminalisation as a legislative cleanup of colonial-era oppression unlocks specialized

legal and civil liberties funding.



REMEMBER:

Good work does not automatically attract funding. Organisations need to make it easy for donors to understand what needs to happen, why it matters, and what their money will make possible.

Here are three tips that to all of the strategies above:

1. Start with lived experience

Short, factual stories can help donors understand the human impact of suicide criminalisation and why reform matters. Use stories carefully and ethically, with consent and without sensationalising people's experiences.

2. Make the ask specific

Instead of asking for general support, show what a relatively small investment could make possible. For example: \$5,000 to train 50 frontline workers or \$3,000 to run community awareness sessions.

3. Show the impact you can have

Highlight how your work creates a ripple effect. Many donors want to see your impact scale from the individual to their family, caregiver, and broader community. Set the scene with numbers, then back them up by highlighting your trusted local, regional, and global partnerships. Funding should feel like an opportunity to build on something that is already moving.

Further resource

For organisations looking to strengthen their fundraising approach, [Kevin Brown's Fundable and Findable framework](#) provides a practical way to think about donor readiness, visibility, and how to turn good work into compelling investment opportunities.

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