



ASWA ANNUAL REPORT 2024



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MESSAGE FROM REGIONAL COORDINATOR

As we reflect on the past year, I am both proud and humbled by the incredible resilience and solidarity that each of you has demonstrated in the face of continued challenges. Despite the growing influence of anti-gender and anti-rights movements, our advocacy for decriminalization and the rights of sex workers has remained steadfast, both in regional and global spaces.

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We have successfully implemented key projects, including our annual mentorship program, which continues to empower and uplift our community.

Additionally, we have built strong partnerships with like-minded organizations and allies, strengthening our collective voice in the fight for justice and equality.

However, we also recognize that some of our critical initiatives will extend into 2025, including our efforts to address the ongoing impact of Mpox on sex workers and the importance of advocating for better healthcare access and protection.

Looking ahead, ASWA is committed to the continued work of advancing our strategic goals and ensuring that our members remain at the center of all advocacy and actions.

We are in the process of developing our new Strategic Plan for 2025-2028, which will serve as a roadmap for our collective future.

Your unwavering support and participation are key to our success, and I encourage each of you to stay engaged, informed, and united as we move forward.



GRACE KAMAU
REGIONAL COORDINATOR



PROJECT PROGRESS UPDATES



UTILIZING SEX WORKERS' LIVED EXPERIENCES TO SHAPE AND SCALE UP ACCESS TO HIV PREVENTION INNOVATIONS SUPPORTED BY ViiV HEALTHCARE



Through this project supported by ViiV Healthcare, the African Sex Workers Alliance (ASWA) enhanced the capacity of **12** sex worker leaders and organizations in Eswatini, Botswana, Namibia, and Mozambique. These included organizational leaders, finance personnel, and program officers.

ASWA conducted a capacity assessment for four target organizations (VooV, Tiyane, NAMSWA, and Sisonke Botswana) and developed work plans to address identified weaknesses.

Monthly mentorship meetings provided support in budgeting, advocacy, financial management, and resource mobilization. A mentorship guide was also developed.

As a result, the organizations successfully secured funding and expanded initiatives. In Namibia, sex workers broadened their HIV-related services to include children.

Two organizations, Namibian Sex Workers Alliance and Right Not Rescue, obtained new funding following ASWA's recommendation. Additionally, Tiyane Vavasate and Abevamo in Mozambique developed key organizational policies and improved financial management systems.

TRAINING FOR POLICY ENGAGEMENT

ASWA trained **35** sex workers on effective policy engagement.

This resulted in increased representation of sex workers in national AIDS councils across four countries.

In Eswatini, VooV organized stakeholder meetings to address the challenges faced by sex workers living with HIV.

In Botswana, Sisonke actively engaged in national policy discussions, while in Namibia, sex workers contributed to the Integrated Biological and Behavioral Surveillance Survey (IBBS).

ADVOCACY FOR INNOVATIVE HIV PREVENTION PRODUCTS

Sex worker-led groups were previously excluded from discussions on HIV prevention methods such as **CAB LA** and **DVR**.

ASWA provided training on advocacy and policy engagement, leading to increased involvement in these discussions.

In Eswatini, VooV contributed to DPVR and oral PrEP pilot initiatives.

In Botswana, Sisonke actively participated in the rollout of injectable ARVs and the PrEP ring.

In Mozambique, sex workers successfully engaged with the government on new HIV prevention tools.





ASWA AT 56TH UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

CONDEMNING THE UN SPECIAL RAPPOREUR'S REPORT ON SEX WORK



Grace Kamau, Regional Coordinator for the African Sex Workers Alliance (ASWA), strongly criticized a report by Reem Alsalem, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, during the 56th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council.

In her submission, Kamau argued that the report misrepresents the rights of sex workers, undermining their agency and autonomy by framing their rights solely as a women's and human rights issue without acknowledging the full complexity of their lived realities.

She emphasized that such a narrow perspective ignores the structural and legal barriers sex workers face, leading to policies that further stigmatize and endanger them.

Kamau further contended that the report conflates sex work with trafficking and sexual exploitation, diverting attention from the real human rights challenges that sex workers experience.

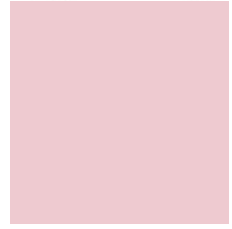
She pointed out that terms like "exploitation of prostitution" in international law should not be interpreted as encompassing all forms of sex work, as the Trafficking in Persons Protocol and the CEDAW Convention draw clear distinctions between exploitation, trafficking, and consensual sex work.

By blending these terms, the report fails to fully advocate for the rights and protections that sex workers deserve.

"Conflating these issues impedes our ability to properly address the needs of sex workers, especially in cases of exploitation and trafficking," Kamau asserted.

She urged the United Nations to revise its approach and engage meaningfully with sex workers' organizations to ensure their voices are included in global human rights advocacy.





DATA-DRIVEN ADVOCACY TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST SEX WORKERS



We are committed to raising awareness about gender-based violence (GBV) against sex workers across Africa through the project **“From Evidence to Action: Data Advocacy to Combat Violence Against Sex Workers”** supported by Feminist Opportunities Now (FON).

By engaging with donors, communities, policymakers, and like-minded stakeholders at national and regional levels, we challenge the stigma and discrimination that sex workers face, advocating for their right to live free from violence.

ASWA firmly believes that all individuals, regardless of occupation, deserve safety and dignity. Through this initiative, we work to build the capacity of sex worker-led organizations to collect and analyze data on violence, using this evidence to drive advocacy at national, regional, and continental policy-making platforms.

Our efforts focus on securing commitments from duty bearers to end violence, stigma, discrimination, and harmful policies that perpetuate these injustices. By leveraging data-driven advocacy, we aim to transform evidence into meaningful action, ensuring a safer and more just world for sex workers.





ASWA ENGAGES IN THE CQUIN PROJECT TO ENHANCE INTEGRATED HIV SERVICE DELIVERY

The CQUIN project, an HIV learning network, provided a platform for ASWA to engage in meaningful discussions on best practices and innovative approaches for integrated service delivery, including the integration of family planning (FP) and hypertension (HTN) services into HIV treatment programs.

Discussions focused on expanding the equitable HIV Testing Services (HTS) strategic model mix to ensure broad access and maximum impact, with a particular emphasis on optimizing HIV self-testing (HIVST) and addressing quality concerns, especially in regions with declining HIV incidence.



ASWA actively participated in panel discussions and presentations, highlighting the impact of community advocacy on improving person-centered HIV services and identifying barriers to accessing HIV care in public facilities.

A key focus was the integration of non-HIV services, such as family planning and hypertension care, into HIV programs to create holistic and responsive healthcare solutions for individuals.

ASWA AT IAS 2024: ADDRESSING CRIMINALIZATION



The International AIDS Society (IAS) 25th International AIDS Conference convened global experts to educate and advocate for a world where HIV is no longer a public health threat.

ASWA participated in a panel discussion on the impact of criminalization on HIV service uptake, exploring how punitive laws and policies hinder access to essential HIV services, further widening health disparities.

At the Global Village, sex workers had a dedicated networking zone led by the Global Network of Sex Work Projects (NSWP) under the theme "Let Sex Workers Lead."

This space highlighted the critical role of sex workers in the HIV response, emphasizing their leadership in advocacy and service delivery. A key discussion at the networking zone focused on sex worker-led funding and the donor landscape, facilitated by the Red Umbrella Fund.





ASWA AT AWID 2024 ADVOCATING FOR DECRIMINALIZATION & LABOR RIGHTS FOR SEX WORKERS



ASWA attended the AWID International Forum, a global convening that fosters dialogue, action, and resource-sharing to strengthen networks and drive meaningful change.

At this year’s forum, ASWA, in collaboration with ATHENA and SWEAT, delivered a presentation on the penalties of criminalizing sex work.

The discussion, which brought together allies, donors, partners, and sex workers, examined the negative impacts of criminalization, including increased vulnerability to violence, discrimination, and poor working conditions.

While highlighting these challenges, the session also showcased positive strides within the sex worker movement, featuring successful advocacy efforts and legal reforms that have led to tangible improvements in sex workers' lives.



Additionally, the conversation emphasized the importance of research and documentation on sex work and labor rights, which continues to shape informed, rights-based approaches to policy and advocacy.

ASWA’s participation reinforced the urgency of decriminalization and the need for stronger protections and labor rights for sex workers worldwide.





EMPOWERING FUTURE LEADERS

A TRANSFORMATIVE MENTORSHIP PROGRAM FOR YOUNG SEX WORKER ADVOCATES

Thirteen young sex workers from 13 countries participated in a transformative nine-month mentorship program designed to foster both personal and professional development.

Paired with experienced mentors, the mentees engaged in a comprehensive online experience covering crucial topics such as advocacy skills, leadership development, new HIV technologies, sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), and capacity building.



Through tailored sessions, mentees learned to develop effective advocacy strategies for sex workers' rights, emphasizing community mobilization, ownership, and leadership to influence policy change.

The leadership development component allowed participants to explore their unique leadership styles, build confidence, and strengthen skills in decision-making, conflict resolution, and team management.

The program also focused on practical capacity-building, equipping mentees with essential skills such as public speaking, proposal writing, and grassroots campaign organization.

Feedback from mentees was overwhelmingly positive, with many expressing gratitude for the actionable resources and templates shared.

This mentorship initiative empowered participants to become influential advocates for marginalized groups, equipping them with the tools to lead and drive lasting social change in their communities.

13

mentees with experienced leaders from the sex worker movement

This initiative underscores ASWA's commitment to nurturing the next generation of sex worker leaders and ensuring their continued growth and empowerment.





ADVOCATING FOR SOCIAL PROTECTION & SRHR

STRENGTHENING SEX WORKERS' ACCESS ACROSS AFRICA

We successfully sub-granted nine countries—Senegal, Benin, DRC, Malawi, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania—to advance social protection and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) for sex workers across Africa.

A series of workshops, training sessions, and meetings have been conducted to share findings and address the challenges sex workers face in accessing essential services and support.

These activities, carried out in the nine countries, aimed to identify gaps in social protection mechanisms and SRHR access, highlighting the systemic barriers and discrimination sex workers encounter.

The insights gathered underscore the urgent need for targeted interventions to enhance the well-being and rights of sex workers.

Research findings reveal a pressing need for comprehensive sensitization efforts among healthcare providers, law enforcement, and government agencies to combat stigma and improve the inclusivity of social protection schemes.

The advocacy efforts emphasize the importance of unified action among sex worker-led organizations and community leaders to drive systemic change.

ASWA HIGHLIGHTS CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACT ON SEX WORKERS AT SRHR SUMMIT 2024



At the Annual SRHR & Climate Change Summit 2024 in Kisumu, ASWA delivered a compelling presentation on the critical intersection of gender—specifically focusing on sex workers—and climate change.

The presentation underscored how climate change disproportionately impacts sex workers and emphasized the urgent need for inclusive, gender-responsive solutions to enhance resilience and promote equity in climate-related policies and interventions.





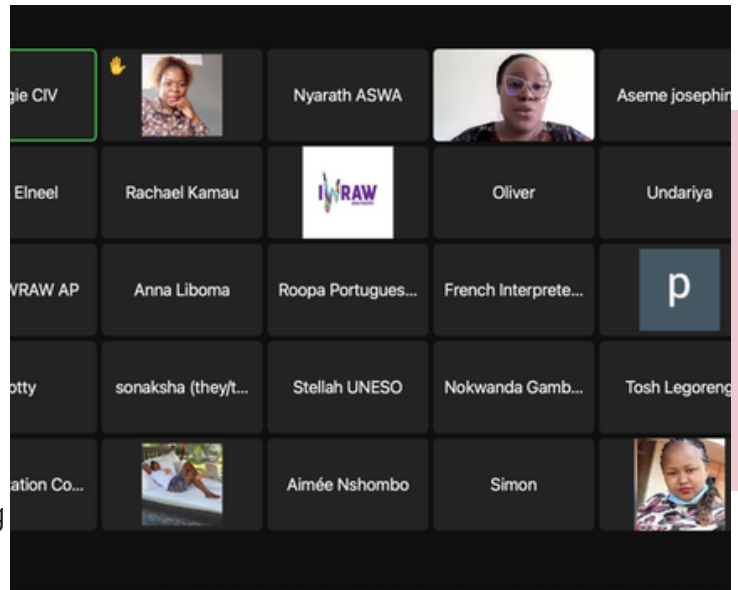
SEX WORKER LEADERS TRAINED ON GENDER EQUALITY, MACROECONOMICS & HUMAN RIGHTS

Fifteen sex worker leaders from 15 countries participated in a one-month online training focused on gender equality, macroeconomics, CEDAW, and sex workers' rights.

The participants, selected from five regions with three individuals from each, were trained to integrate the specific rights and needs of sex workers into broader macroeconomic policies and initiatives.

The program also equipped them with tools to utilize CEDAW as an advocacy instrument for advancing sex workers' rights while strengthening their capacity to engage in international human rights spaces.

A key component of the training was exploring ways to build partnerships and solidarity between the sex workers' movement, women's rights organizations, and feminist groups to bolster inclusive and intersectional advocacy efforts for sex workers' rights and human rights-based policies.



EXCITING PARTNERSHIP: ASWA HOSTS APNSW FOR THE SEX WORKER ACADEMY EXCHANGE



ASWA was honored to host the Asia Pacific Network of Sex Workers (APNSW) for a week-long exchange program to learn more about our Sex Worker Academy.

The exchange focused on integrating human rights principles into sex worker organizations' work, with an emphasis on empowerment, education, and capacity-building.

Participants engaged in knowledge-sharing sessions, learning about planning and implementing a Sex Worker Academy, and visited Hoymas Kenya and SWOP Ambassadors.

The exchange strengthened global solidarity and reaffirmed the fundamental principle that sex workers' rights are human rights.



HUMAN RIGHTS AND ADVOCACY: A RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH TO PROTECTING SEX WORKERS

ASWA remains a steadfast advocate for the human rights of sex workers across Africa, addressing criminalization, violence, discrimination, and access to essential health services.

Through a rights-based approach, ASWA has empowered sex workers to assert their dignity and demand safe, equitable healthcare, including HIV services and sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR).

We strongly advocate for the inclusion of sex workers in HIV service provision, recognizing their central role in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

To combat violence, ASWA has sub-granted organizations working to mitigate and document violence against sex workers.

Utilizing tools like the Murder Monitoring Tool App, we collect and report data on violence and rights violations, leveraging this evidence for advocacy and policy change.

This data-driven advocacy is critical in exposing the vulnerabilities faced by sex workers and in pushing for systemic reforms, particularly in reducing stigma and discrimination within healthcare systems and society at large.

LEGAL AND POLICY ADVOCACY

ASWA continues to play a pivotal role in legal and policy advocacy, working alongside Frontline AIDS, WACI Health, and LVCT to bridge the gap between HIV prevention, sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR), and Universal Health Coverage (UHC).

We are deeply committed to advocating for the decriminalization of sex work and ensuring that sex workers' voices are central in health policy discussions.

Through engagement with government officials, civil society organizations, and key stakeholders, ASWA actively pushes for policy reforms that prioritize sex workers' rights, particularly in the context of UHC implementation.

This collaboration seeks to create an evidence-based, inclusive approach that guarantees sex workers' inclusion in health benefit packages while empowering advocates at the country level to hold governments accountable for their commitments to comprehensive healthcare.



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HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE & HIV SERVICES

ASWA has made significant strides in expanding healthcare access for sex workers, particularly in HIV prevention, STI care, and mental health support.

A key focus has been integrating person-centered, differentiated service delivery models that address the unique health needs of sex workers.

By ensuring sex workers' active involvement in community engagement, policy formation, and health program implementation, ASWA has helped create more inclusive and accessible healthcare environments.

Sex workers were also well-represented at the AIDS Conference, where they participated in discussions about criminalization and its impact on HIV service uptake.

These conversations have been instrumental in advocating for removing barriers to healthcare access, such as stigma, discrimination, and legal obstacles.

Additionally, ASWA continues to push for the integration of HIV services into existing healthcare facilities, ensuring that sex workers can access the care they need without fear of marginalization.

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH RIGHTS (SRHR)

ASWA's SRHR advocacy continues to amplify the voices of sex workers, particularly in conversations around bodily autonomy.

This year, ASWA has worked to ensure that sex workers have access to a full range of SRHR services, including contraception, safe abortion, and other essential reproductive healthcare.

A critical aspect of this advocacy involves highlighting the need for safe working conditions, pushing for legal reforms and policy implementations that protect both the health and labor rights of sex workers.



Denial and criminalization of bodily autonomy is a violation of fundamental human rights

By integrating sex workers into health program design and decision-making, ASWA has successfully ensured that their specific needs are prioritized in health systems and policy discussions.

Furthermore, ASWA has been instrumental in advocating for the integration of HIV and SRHR services, recognizing the interconnected nature of these issues and the need for a holistic approach to sex workers' health and well-being.



ITPC/CLM SUMMIT

ASWA participated in the CLM Summit, which provided valuable insights into community-led monitoring (CLM) initiatives and their measurable impact on the health sector.

The Summit reinforced the importance of multi-stakeholder collaboration, highlighting how CLM can bridge gaps between policy and implementation in areas such as climate resilience and gender equity.

One of the key takeaways was the value of integrating community-generated data into policy frameworks, enabling decision-makers to make informed choices that improve resource allocation, service delivery, and accountability.

The discussions reaffirmed CLM's critical role in amplifying community voices, ensuring systemic change across diverse sectors—including the work of ASWA.

LOVE ALLIANCE: CAPACITY BUILDING IN DRC

ASWA had the opportunity to travel to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) to build the capacity of member organizations and beneficiaries.

The training, which brought together participants from DRC, Central African Republic (CAR), and Côte d'Ivoire, aimed to strengthen organizations' ability to engage in sustainability planning and national-level advocacy.

The participants developed national sustainability roadmaps, drawing inspiration from the UNAIDS Sustainability Primer.

This initiative provided organizations with the tools and knowledge necessary to advance long-term, sustainable advocacy strategies in their respective countries.



AHEA CONFERENCE: ADVANCING THE WELL-BEING OF KEY POPULATIONS



Representing ASWA at the AHEA Conference was an incredible opportunity to engage with activists, human rights defenders, donors, and partners in critical discussions around HIV, stigma, discrimination, women's rights, and faith-based issues.

The conference provided a safe and inclusive space for strategizing on ways to enhance safety, legal protections, and overall well-being for marginalized communities.

A key highlight was the recognition of two ASWA staff members, who received well-deserved awards for their contributions to advocacy and community engagement.

ASWA extends appreciation to Team TACEF for their continued partnership and collaboration. This collective action and shared learning reaffirm the importance of standing together to create lasting change for key populations facing hostile environments.



MEMBERSHIP AND COMMUNICATIONS: KEY ACHIEVEMENTS AND FUTURE FOCUS

MEMBERSHIP

Expansion & Growth:

ASWA's membership expanded to **40** countries and over **165** organizations last year.

Funding & Capacity Building:

- Shared funding opportunities with members.
- Documented success stories from funded initiatives.

Advocacy & Support:

- Provided support letters that led to impactful advocacy and capacity-building efforts.
- Collected testimonies showcasing ASWA's role in strengthening members' work.

Regional & International Representation:

- Strengthened ASWA's engagements in the MENA region.
- Collaborated with Talayan NGO, a sex worker-led network in MENA.
- Secured additional regional and global advocacy platforms for representation.

COMMUNICATIONS

Enhanced Information Sharing:

- Provided regular updates on funding, policy, and advocacy.
- Expanded ASWA's digital strategy (newsletters, website, social media).

Showcasing Impact:

- Highlighted success stories and best practices from members.
- Published testimonies on ASWA's contributions.

Networking & Collaboration:

- Strengthened partnerships with regional and global networks.
- Enhanced ASWA's visibility through strategic communication and storytelling.

40

Members states

165

Member Organizations





As we conclude this year's report, we reflect on the incredible journey we have undertaken together. The past year has been one of resilience, growth, and collective commitment to our mission.

Our achievements would not have been possible without the dedication of our members, partners, and stakeholders who continue to support our vision.

Looking ahead, we remain steadfast in our pursuit of innovation, inclusivity, and sustainability as we strive to create even greater opportunities for our community.

MORE ABOUT US

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