



# MENTORSHIP GUIDELINES

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**AFRICAN SEX  
WORKERS ALLIANCE  
(ASWA)**



## SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

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The African Sex Workers Alliance (ASWA) is a Pan African Alliance of sex worker-led groups that exist to strengthen their voices, to empower and to advocate for and advance the health and human rights of female, male and transgender sex workers including those living with HIV and using drugs through networking, movement building and development of partnerships.

ASWA was formed in February 2009 with an initial membership drawn from 10 African countries. ASWA is a growing alliance of sex workers and sex worker partners seeking to contribute to social and economic justice for sex workers in Africa.

Its vision is an empowered sex work industry where sex workers have equal access to human rights, social justice, and health care in a dignified manner. Through this organizing ASWA presently has over **150** members from **35** African countries.

**Vision:** A world free of stigma and discrimination where sex work is recognized and protected as work.

**Mission:** ASWA is a Pan- African network of sex worker-led groups that amplifies the voices of sex workers, raises visibility, and advocates for the human dignity of diverse community of sex workers working and living in Africa.

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# PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE GUIDELINES

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These guidelines have been developed by ASWA to guide mentors and mentees in its mentorship program.

ASWA supports the mentorship of African sex worker leaders by other experienced African sex worker leaders.

The purpose of ASWA's mentorship initiative is to strengthen the capacity of sex workers to effectively play their roles thereby strengthening the sex workers movement.

For ASWA, mentorship is important for continuity of the sex workers movement as it generates new leaders.

ASWA identifies mentees and mentors and links them up based on needs and experiences.

ASWA holds sessions with mentors to prepare them for their roles, share experiences, and learn from each other.

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# WHAT IS MENTORSHIP

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Mentorship is a voluntary relationship between the mentor and mentee whereby the mentor guides or holds the hand of the mentee over time with the aim of strengthening the capacity of the mentee.

Mentorship is not a one-way relationship. Both the mentor and mentee share and co-learn from each other. The mentor and mentee are at the same time both 'students' and 'teachers'.

Mentorship can be informal or formal. An informal mentorship might involve the mentor and mentee occasionally meeting and exchanging ideas over coffee or a drink. Formal mentorship is structured, with clear objectives and a mentorship plan.

# WHO IS A MENTOR

A **mentor** has a lot of experience for example on leadership, resource mobilization, people management, or advocacy and wishes to voluntarily mentor another, usually less experienced, person.

Age, experience, academic qualifications, or the role or position held does not alone make someone a mentor; wanting to mentor, and having basic mentoring skills, is critical.





## WHO IS A MENTEE

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A **mentee** is someone undergoing mentorship. The mentee is usually less experienced than the mentor, and desires to be guided to grow.

A mentee is not defined by age, education, role, or position. Even very educated, experienced, and senior leaders can require mentorship in particular areas.

## PURPOSES AND OBJECTIVES OF MENTORSHIP

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The purpose of a mentorship is to support the growth of a mentee.

Mentorship can help the mentee to produce innovative ideas and deal with problems.

The specific objectives of a mentorship relationship will vary. They should be clearly defined at the beginning of the mentorship relationship.

## INITIATION OF MENTORSHIP

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A mentorship may be proposed by the mentee or mentor or others who know the needs of the mentee.

Irrespective of where the idea may have come from, it is necessary the mentee and mentor fully understand, agree, and consent to the mentorship.

A mentee should never be coerced into mentorship or be pressured to work with a particular mentor.

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## SECTION 2: ROLES OF THE MENTOR AND THE MENTEE

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### ROLES OF THE MENTOR

- Learn as much as possible about the mentee, their work, and context.
- Support the mentee in defining clear objectives for the mentorship, based on their needs.
- Agree with the mentee on the roles and responsibilities of mentor and mentee.
- Co-develop with the mentee the mentorship program, which includes the days, times, duration, platforms (for example virtual or in person or a mix of these), and content for mentorship.
- Share their experiences with the mentee and point the mentee to resources that can be helpful.
- Create a relaxed and conducive environment for the mentee.
- Actively listen to the mentee.
- Be very clear on tasks assigned to the mentee and follow up on assigned tasks.
- Connect the mentee to relevant people, networks, and platforms.
- Fully commit to the mentorship, and not to get started if they are not able to commit their time. Do not commit to mentorship if you feel you are not the right mentor.
- Motivate the mentee out of their comfort zone and motivate them to explore new talents.
- In appropriate cases, acknowledge your limitations in terms of knowledge and experiences
- Celebrate with the mentee milestones in the mentorship.



## ROLES OF THE MENTEE

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- Being passionate about mentorship is the most important responsibility of the mentee and the critical consideration for success.
- Fully commit to the mentorship and if you cannot, it is better not to get started.
- Define with your mentor the objectives of the mentorship. Be clear why you need the mentorship and what you want to get out of it. Mentorship objectives should be ambitious and realistic.
- Attend mentorship sessions on time. Discuss with your supervisor, colleagues, or family so that you can fully dedicate yourself during the mentorship sessions.
- Carry out all tasks assigned by the mentor as part of the mentorship.
- Pro-actively share with your mentor your knowledge, experiences, and context as these are important in ensuring the mentorship remains relevant.
- Be clear and explicit with your mentor on what you don't understand or need more of.
- Keep a professional distance between yourself and the mentor.
- End the mentorship if you no longer have interest or time or the mentorship is no longer needed.



## **SECTION 3: MENTORSHIP STEP-BY-STEP**

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### **STEP 1: GETTING STARTED AND BUILDING RAPPORT**

The first step is for the mentor and mentee to agree on the objectives of the mentorship. Mentorship should be needs based.

The mentee takes the lead in shaping their mentorship objectives, based on where they are presently and their desired paths of growth. The role of the mentor is asking clarifying questions that help the mentee sharpen the mentorship objectives.

Development of the mentorship objectives may be achieved in one or more sessions. The objectives of the mentorship should be framed in ways that make it easy to assess progress.

It is good practice to write down the agreed mentorship objectives, and to keep revisiting them from time to time and changing them if necessary. Laying the foundation for a good rapport between the mentor and mentee early on is also important.

In addition to agreeing on mentorship objectives, other important things to talk about and agree on at the commencement of mentorship are:

- The duration (there are not set rules for how long mentorship should last).
- When and where the mentorship sessions will be conducted.
- The specific issues or areas of focus in the mentorship.
- The roles and responsibilities of the mentee.
- The roles and responsibilities of the mentor.
- How to resolve disputes and disagreements between the mentor and mentee.





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## STEP 2: DEVELOPING CONTENT OR AREAS OF FOCUS FOR THE MENTORSHIP

Based on the mentorship objectives, the mentor and mentee co-develop the mentorship plan which sets out what issues or areas to focus on when.

Here is an illustrative mentorship plan.

Day/week/month 1	<b>Getting started</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Setting out mentorship objectives</li><li>• Agreement on roles and responsibilities of mentor and mentee</li></ul>
Day/week/month 2 and 3	<b>Mentorship plan</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Co-developing mentorship plan with specific sessions</li></ul>
Day/week/month 4 to 8	<b>Mentorship sessions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Session 1:</b> Overcoming challenges in resource mobilization.</li><li>• <b>Session 2:</b> How to relate with an over-bearing donor.</li><li>• <b>Session 3:</b> How to maintain a professional relationship with donor staff.</li><li>• <b>Session 4:</b> Role of the board in fund-raising.</li><li>• <b>Session 5:</b> Financial sustainability and viability of reserve funds.</li></ul>
Day/week/month 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• End of mentorship review</li></ul>



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## STEP 3: CONDUCTING MENTORSHIP SESSIONS.

Once the mentorship plan is in place, it is now time to roll it out based on the schedule agreed between the mentor and mentee.

### REMEMBER:

- Keep to the agreed start and end time for mentorship sessions. Rescheduling, when necessary, should be initiated early enough.
- Address beforehand any potential challenges for the mentoring sessions. Virtual mentorship sessions can have challenges, for example the quality of internet connection and these need to be addressed in advance as much as possible.
- Mentorship should be centered on the mentee. Always begin with where the mentee is and their experiences on the issue being discussed.
- The mentor should be an active listener. Here are some useful tips on active listening: <https://hbr.org/2021/12/how-to-become-a-better-listener>
- Do not impose your views and opinions on the mentee.
- At the end of the session, summarize the key elements of the mentorship session.
- If there are tasks the mentee should undertake before the next session, it should be made clear.
- Begin the next session by summarizing the previous one and linking it to the current session.
- Ensure confidentiality of discussions between the mentor and mentee.
- Keep the relationship professional. Avoid discussions of unrelated personal matters.
- Always be respectful to each other.
- Maintain open communication with each other.



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## **STEP 4: ASSESSMENT OF MENTORSHIP**

It is important to have ongoing assessment of the mentoring relationship. Is it headed in the right direction? Is the mentee on track to achieve their objectives?

Assessment should be integrated throughout the mentorship for example, at the end of each session, every month, and at the end of the mentorship. Mentorship should evolve as necessary based on the continuous assessments.

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## **SECTION 4: MANAGEMENT OF DISPUTES AND DISAGREEMENTS**

Disputes and disagreements can arise during mentorship. It is important to ensure from the very beginning clarity on how disputes and disagreements will be managed.

The mentor and mentee have primary responsibility for raising their issues of concern with each other and working towards their resolution.

Disputes and disagreements that are not satisfactorily resolved between the mentor and mentee should be referred to the ASWA regional coordinator for guidance and mediation if necessary.

Mentorship may be suspended while the disputes and disagreements are being investigated and resolved.

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## SECTION 5: CLOSEOUT OF MENTORSHIP

Mentorship ends after the agreed duration, but it can be extended by mutual agreement.

The mentor and mentee should have a close-out session to reflect on the extent to which the mentee has achieved their objectives, challenges experienced, and lessons learnt. Documenting these in a brief report is useful for future reference.

Mentorship can be ended early, for example, if either mentee or mentor is no longer available or committed to the mentorship or there are unresolvable differences between them.

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**If you have questions or comments on these guidelines, please write to [info@aswaalliance.org](mailto:info@aswaalliance.org)**