ASWA NEWSLETTER

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OUR VOICES IN RIO

In July, ASWA joined sex workers and allies from around the world at AIDS 2026 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. For us, being in Rio was about making sure sex workers were present in conversations about HIV prevention, funding, community-led responses and the future of the HIV movement.

At the Sex Workers Networking Zone, ASWA Regional Coordinator Grace Kamau spoke openly about the reality many sex worker-led organisations are facing. Resources are shrinking, and community programmes are under pressure. Yet sex workers are still expected to keep reaching communities, organising and advocating. Grace reminded us that even in difficult times, our movement has something powerful: each other.

> **We have our strengths as sex workers.**

ASWA AT AIDS 2026









The Networking Zone created a space for sex workers to meet, learn from one another and talk about what is happening in our different countries. It was also a reminder that global HIV conversations cannot happen without the communities most affected.

New HIV prevention technologies are bringing new possibilities. But innovation means little if sex workers cannot access it. We need options that work for different bodies, different lives and different circumstances. And we need sex workers involved from the beginning – not brought in after the decisions have already been made.

FROM RIO, WE CARRY ONE MESSAGE FORWARD:

NOTHING ABOUT US WITHOUT US.

Our presence in global spaces helps bring community experiences into discussions about HIV funding, prevention technologies and the future of community-led services.
But representation must also translate into action. Governments, donors and development partners need to ensure that sex worker-led organisations participate meaningfully in decisions about funding, prevention programmes and implementation.

READ MORE:
https://home.aswalliance.org/2026/08/06/grace-kamau-calls-for-stronger-solidarity-at-the-sex-workers-networking-zone-during-aids-2026/

ASWA SECRETARIAT ENGAGEMENTS AND PROGRAMME UPDATES

Through meetings, partnerships, training and regional engagements, the ASWA Secretariat continues working to strengthen sex worker-led responses to HIV, improve access to sexual and reproductive healthcare and ensure our communities are represented in decisions that affect us.



ZAMBIA

BUILDING KNOWLEDGE AND LEADERSHIP THROUGH EMPOWERHER

EMPOWERHER — CHOICE ACADEMY

Through the Aidsfonds-supported EmpowerHER project, ASWA has worked with Zambia Sex Workers Alliance and Sisterhood for Health Equality to strengthen community knowledge and leadership.



The CHOICE Academy brings together learning on HIV prevention, sexual and reproductive health and rights, advocacy, community mobilisation, leadership and community-led monitoring.

This work recognises that having HIV prevention products available is only part of the solution. Sex workers also need accurate information, the confidence to ask questions, and opportunities to influence how services are delivered.

Community-led monitoring is particularly important because it allows sex workers to identify barriers, document experiences and use that evidence to advocate for improvements.

WHY IT MATTERS

The CHOICE Academy connects HIV prevention knowledge with advocacy skills. Participants can use what they learn to engage with their communities, communicate prevention options and raise concerns about services that do not meet sex workers' needs. It also reinforces the importance of investing in sex workers as educators, advocates and community leaders.

CHALLENGING STIGMA IN SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTHCARE

UGANDA

ASWA participated in an engagement in Uganda, with technical support from Ipas Africa Alliance and support from AmplifyChange. The discussions addressed barriers sex workers face when seeking sexual and reproductive healthcare.

For many sex workers, the challenge is not simply finding a health facility. It is knowing whether they will be treated with dignity when they arrive.

A service may be available, but fear of judgment, discrimination or breaches of confidentiality can prevent people from using it.

WHY IT MATTERS

VCAT approaches create opportunities to examine attitudes and practices that can exclude sex workers from essential healthcare.

The wider goal is to strengthen services that listen to our communities, respect our decisions and respond to our actual healthcare needs.

Healthcare providers must protect confidentiality, provide non-judgemental care and ensure that sex workers can access comprehensive SRHR services without discrimination.

KENYA

ASWA participated in a Values Clarification and Attitude Transformation (VCAT) engagement in Western Kenya, in collaboration with Ipas Africa Alliance and with support from AmplifyChange.

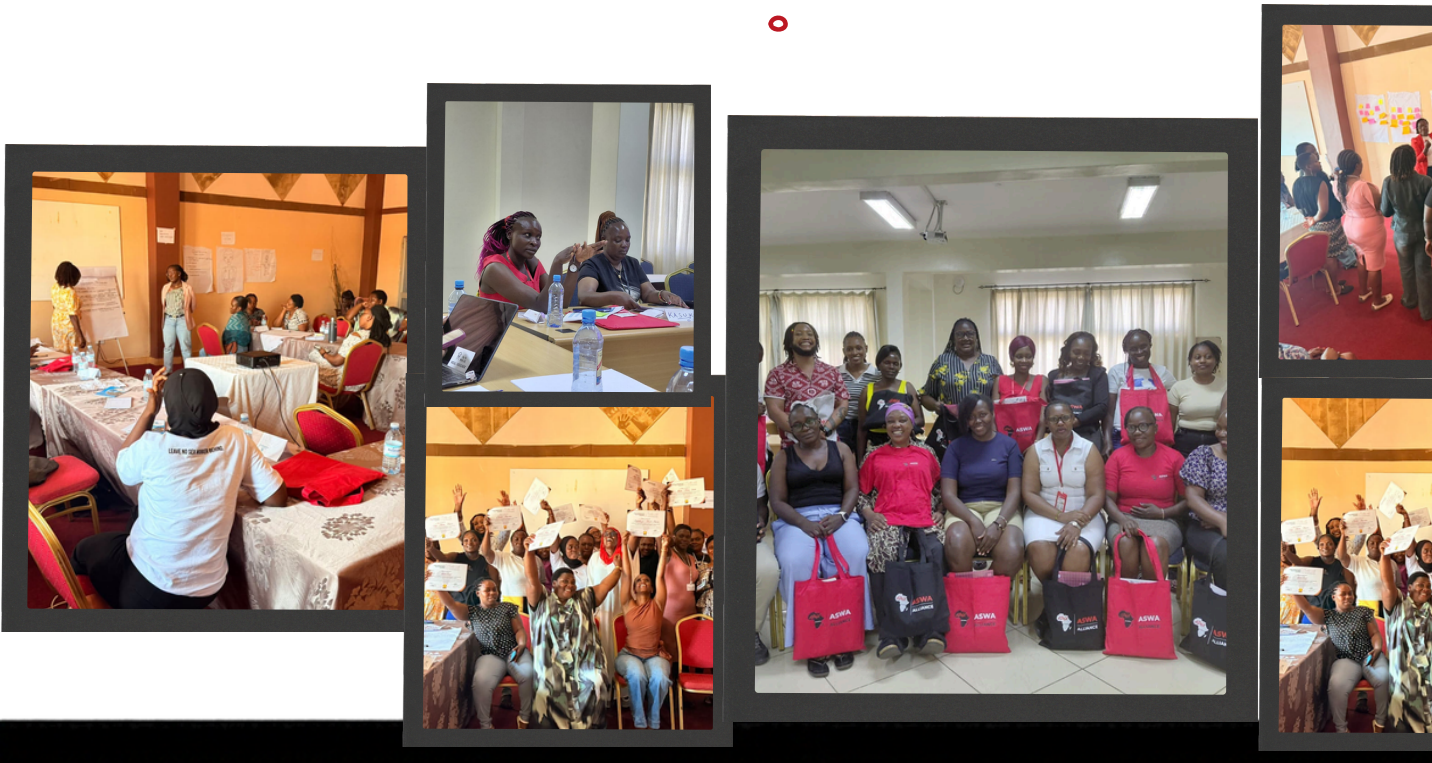
The engagement focused on examining the attitudes, beliefs and stigma that influence how sex workers access sexual and reproductive health services, particularly abortion-related care.

Through discussions and reflection, participants explored how personal values, discrimination and judgement can create barriers to healthcare and undermine our ability to make informed decisions about our bodies.

WHY IT MATTERS

Stigma and judgement continue to prevent many of us from seeking the sexual and reproductive healthcare we need. When healthcare providers allow personal beliefs to influence how they treat sex workers, we risk being denied services, mistreated or discouraged from seeking care altogether.

VCAT sessions help challenge these attitudes and encourage more respectful, non-judgemental healthcare. For us, this means being able to access contraception, safe abortion care where legally available, and other essential health services without fear of discrimination.



ASWA AT NEBULA INSTITUTE 2026

From 14–17 September 2026, ASWA's Regional Coordinator participated in the Nebula Institute 2026 in Atibaia, São Paulo, Brazil.

The gathering brought together activists, human rights defenders and representatives of civil society organisations from 61 countries to exchange experiences, strengthen connections and explore strategies for advancing human rights and social justice.

ASWA's participation provided an opportunity to connect with other Nebula Fund grantees and learn from movements working across different contexts.



WHY IT MATTERS

ASWA's participation created an opportunity to learn from other movements, exchange strategies and build connections with organisations working to advance human rights. These experiences can help strengthen our advocacy, improve how we respond to challenges facing sex workers across Africa and bring new ideas into our work.

REFLECTING ON PROGRESS: ASWA AT THE FON DISSEMINATION WORKSHOP

In September 2026, ASWA participated in the Feminist Opportunities Now (FON) Capitalisation Dissemination Workshop, where partners came together to review programme achievements, share experiences and identify lessons for future feminist advocacy.

For ASWA, the workshop was an opportunity to highlight two important areas of work supported through FON: our Murder Monitoring Tool (MMT) and country-level subgrants in Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, Burkina Faso and Ethiopia.



Through the MMT, we are strengthening efforts to document the killings of sex workers and generate evidence that can inform advocacy for protection, justice and accountability. The country subgrants have also supported sex worker-led work at national level, helping bring resources closer to the communities advocating for their rights.

The workshop allowed us to share these experiences with other partners, reflect on lessons from implementation and highlight why continued support for community-led initiatives remains essential.



WHY IT MATTERS

The impact of FON goes beyond funding activities. It has supported practical tools for documenting violence and provided resources for advocacy in four African countries.

By bringing these experiences into the workshop, we helped demonstrate why funding must reach sex worker-led organisations directly and why the work already started needs sustained investment.

For our communities, this means stronger documentation of violence, more evidence to support advocacy and greater opportunities for sex workers to influence responses to the challenges we face.

FRANCOPHONE MEMBERS STRENGTHEN THEIR WORK ACROSS SIX COUNTRIES

CHAD | RWANDA | DR CONGO | MALI | CAMEROON | CÔTE D'IVOIRE

During the third quarter of 2026, ASWA supported Francophone members across six countries through capacity-building sessions and country calls focused on fundraising, advocacy and sharing experiences across the network.

Members explored practical ways to develop funding proposals, identify funding opportunities, approach potential donors and keep track of donor contacts and follow-ups. The sessions also provided space to discuss the challenges organisations face in securing funding and how they can strengthen their resource mobilisation efforts.



Another important focus was the use of data collected through ASWA's murder-monitoring work. Members discussed how documenting violence against sex workers can help identify patterns, inform programmes and provide evidence when advocating for the safety and rights of our communities.

ASWA also held country calls with Francophone members and partners, providing an opportunity to share updates, discuss challenges and exchange ideas on how organisations are responding to issues in their respective countries.

These conversations helped identify common priorities and areas where further support and collaboration are needed.
The engagements also gave ASWA a better understanding of the needs of Francophone members, particularly around access to funding, documenting violence and strengthening advocacy.



WHY IT MATTERS

For many of our member organisations, securing funding and documenting violence remain significant challenges. Strengthening fundraising skills, improving how we use community-generated evidence and creating opportunities for members to learn from one another can help our organisations respond more effectively and continue advocating for sex workers' rights.

ASWA IN THE MEDIA: HIGHLIGHTING VIOLENCE AGAINST SEX WORKERS IN KENYA



On 11 September 2026, Daily Nation published an article titled “Surviving the client: Violence Kenya’s sex workers face every day,” written by journalist Wanja Mbuthia.

The article highlighted the violence sex workers experience in Kenya and the challenges many of us face when seeking justice. It featured perspectives from Grace Nyarath, Programmes Coordinator at the African Sex Workers Alliance (ASWA), and Jane, Director of the Kenya Independent Sex Workers Alliance (KIASWA).

The report brought attention to how stigma, criminalisation and costly reporting procedures discourage sex workers from reporting violence. As a result, many incidents remain undocumented, leaving survivors without the protection and support they need.

It also highlighted the impact of funding cuts on essential health, legal and economic empowerment services, raising concerns about the growing vulnerability of sex workers who already face significant barriers to accessing support.

WHY IT MATTERS

Violence against sex workers is not only a safety concern but also a human rights issue. When we cannot report abuse without fear of discrimination, violence continues unchecked, and perpetrators are rarely held accountable.

Media coverage like this helps bring our experiences into public conversations and draws attention to the urgent need for stronger protections, accessible justice systems and sustained support for sex worker-led organisations.

For ASWA, ensuring that our voices are heard remains an important part of advocating for a future where we can live and work safely, access justice and exercise our rights without fear.

READ MORE:
zurl.co/pZCuL

THE LEARNING JOURNEY

YOUNG EMERGING LEADERS — 2026 COHORT

Young sex workers are already leading in their communities. Through the Young Emerging Leaders Mentorship Programme, we are creating space for them to build their knowledge, ask questions, learn from one another and strengthen the skills they need in their advocacy. Between July and September, the 2026 cohort continued its learning journey.

1

14 JULY

HUMAN RIGHTS INSTRUMENTS

The cohort explored human rights mechanisms including CEDAW, the Universal Periodic Review and African human rights systems – and how these spaces can be used to push for the rights of sex workers.

2

21 JULY

HIV PREVENTION TOOLBOX

From condoms and oral PrEP to injectable prevention and lenacapavir, participants explored the growing HIV prevention toolbox and why prevention choice matters for sex workers.

3

4 AUGUST

LEADERSHIP & ADVOCACY

What does leadership look like when it comes from lived experience? The session looked at leadership, advocacy and how young sex workers can use their voices to influence change.

4

25 AUGUST

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & MOVEMENT BUILDING

Participants explored how we engage our communities, bring more people into our work and build stronger sex worker movements.

5

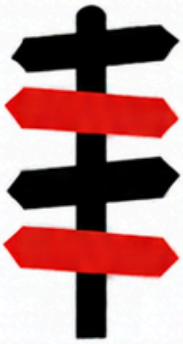
1 SEPTEMBER

ORGANISATIONAL CAPACITY BUILDING

The learning journey moved from individual leadership to stronger organisations – looking at what organisations need to grow, plan and sustain their work.

WHY THIS INVESTMENT MATTERS

The programme connects human rights knowledge with practical leadership, community organising and organisational development. Understanding HIV prevention options helps young people advocate for services that respond to their communities. Understanding human rights mechanisms gives them tools to challenge exclusion. Organisational skills help strengthen the groups and networks that will carry this work forward. Investing in young sex worker leadership is therefore also an investment in the future sustainability of our movement.



THE JOURNEY CONTINUES...

Human Rights
HIV Prevention
Leadership & Advocacy
Community Engagement
Movement Building
Organisational Strengthening

> **Young sex workers are not only the future of our movement. They are already part of its leadership today.**

“WE LOST OUR SAFE SPACE”

MVOTI ON HIV CARE AND THE COST OF FUNDING CUTS

For Nomalungelo Mvoti, a sex worker and single mother from Eswatini, the funding crisis is personal. For years, mobile clinics helped sex workers access HIV services, STI treatment, condoms, lubricants and psychosocial support. But there was something else that made those services important. Sex workers could seek healthcare without feeling judged.

> The mobile clinics were our safe space.

As funding has reduced, some of those services have disappeared. For sex workers, that can mean travelling further for healthcare, returning to facilities where stigma remains a problem or being given prescriptions for medicines they cannot afford to buy. Mvoti explained that sometimes there simply isn't enough money. Food has to be bought. Children have needs. There is transport to pay for. There is rent and electricity. And then there is medicine.

> Sometimes we cannot buy the prescribed medicine, so we become sick.

This is what funding cuts look like when they reach our communities. They are not only budget lines. They affect whether someone can get treatment. Whether a peer educator is still available. Whether condoms and lubricants reach communities. Whether a sex worker feels safe enough to walk into a clinic. Mvoti wants decision-makers to remember the people behind their decisions.

> When people make decisions about us, they should first listen to us.



WHEN FUNDING SHRINKS,

HOW DO WE KEEP OUR SERVICES GOING?

Across Botswana, Mozambique, Namibia and Eswatini, accounts from sex workers have shown how funding reductions can affect access to healthcare, outreach and other community-led services. These experiences raise an important question about sustainability. What happens when programmes that sex workers have relied on for years lose the resources needed to operate?

Community organisations must still respond to members seeking information, treatment, referrals and support. But adapting to reduced funding is not the same as having the resources to replace lost services.

Sex worker-led organisations are continuing to advocate, share information, mobilise communities and seek ways to sustain their work.

The next step is to document these responses in greater detail: which services have been maintained, what has changed, and what support organisations need to continue.

We must also recognise the limits of resilience. Communities should not be expected to absorb every funding shock without adequate resources.

WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE?

Donors and governments must protect long-term investment in sex worker-led organisations, including outreach, peer-led services and community-led monitoring. Funding decisions should involve the communities most affected and include realistic plans for continuity when programmes change or end.

BEYOND ACCESS

WHAT DOES HIV PREVENTION CHOICE REALLY MEAN?

Esther has lived and worked as a sex worker in Namibia for more than three decades. For more than 25 years, she has also worked for the rights, health and safety of sex workers and other marginalised communities. She has watched HIV prevention change. Today, there are more options. Condoms. Oral PrEP. PEP. Injectable prevention. And newer long-acting options such as lenacapavir. But Esther says we need to be careful about what we call “choice.”

> **The important issue is that availability on paper does not necessarily equal meaningful choice.**

A prevention method might technically exist. But is it in stock? Can you get to the clinic? Can you afford the transport? Is the clinic open when you need it? Will you be treated with respect? Will your information remain confidential? Can you choose another method if the first one does not work for your life? That is where real choice begins.



> **Choice means having multiple methods and being able to select the one that works best for your body, work, relationships and circumstances.**

Esther is excited about long-acting HIV prevention, including lenacapavir. But she also has a warning. New technologies must reach the communities that need them. They must be affordable. They must be available through services sex workers trust. And sex workers must be included in decisions about how they are rolled out.

Name changed in the original story.

READ ESTHER'S STORY →

> **Sex workers should not be given one option and told to make it work.**

THE REALITIES OF RURAL AND UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES

For sex workers living outside major towns and cities, the barriers can be even greater. Long distances to health facilities, transport costs, limited clinic hours and shortages of prevention commodities can make regular healthcare difficult. For sex workers living with disabilities, physical accessibility and the availability of appropriate information and services may create additional barriers. Economic insecurity also limits the healthcare choices available to us.

When someone must choose between paying for transport to a clinic and meeting their family's immediate needs, prevention becomes harder to access. Criminalisation and stigma can make these challenges worse by discouraging sex workers from seeking services or reporting discrimination.

WHAT WE ARE ASKING FOR

Governments and healthcare providers must ensure that prevention options are available beyond major urban centres. Donors should support community-led outreach and service delivery, while policymakers must include sex workers in decisions about prevention access.

WE WANT THE FULL PREVENTION TOOLBOX.

And we want the freedom to choose.

This work was supported by ViiV Healthcare.

WHEN VIOLENCE GOES UNCOUNTED

New Research Puts a Spotlight on Pregnant Sex Workers

In July, new research examined homicides of pregnant female sex workers in Kenya, Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

ASWA Regional Coordinator Grace Kamau was among the authors.

The research brings attention to something that receives far too little attention: violence against sex workers during pregnancy.
Pregnancy does not remove the risks sex workers face. For some, pregnancy can exist alongside criminalisation, stigma, poverty, violence and difficulty accessing healthcare or justice.

And when violence against sex workers is not properly documented, it becomes easier for those deaths to disappear.

WHY DATA MATTERS

We need to know what is happening in our communities. We need to know who is being killed. We need to understand where violence is happening and what puts sex workers at risk.

But collecting evidence is only the beginning. The information must lead to prevention, protection, accountability and justice.

Research and community-led documentation can help identify patterns that would otherwise remain invisible.

The findings also underline the importance of strengthening reporting mechanisms, protecting those who share information and ensuring that evidence reaches the people responsible for preventing violence.

> **Behind every number is a person whose life mattered.**

FROM EVIDENCE TO ACTION

Governments must investigate violence against sex workers and ensure access to justice without discrimination. Research institutions and development partners should invest in ethical, community-led evidence gathering and work with sex worker-led organisations to translate findings into prevention and protection measures.

OUR LIVES MUST COUNT.

READ THE RESEARCH →

https://journals.plos.org/globalpublichealth/article?id=10.1371/journal.pgph.0005781

PRIDE, IN OUR OWN WORDS

Sex Worker Pride Day 2026

On 14 September, we joined sex workers around the world to mark Sex Worker Pride Day. Pride gives us a moment to celebrate who we are and what we have built. Across Africa, sex workers are organising.

Leading organisations. Supporting one another. Advocating for better healthcare. Documenting violence. Challenging harmful laws. Speaking in national, regional and global spaces. And refusing to be left out of decisions that affect our lives.



Reflecting on our movement, ASWA Regional Coordinator Grace Kamau said:

> When I look across our movement in Africa, I see so much to be proud of.



OUR PRIDE IS IN WHO WE ARE.

In our voices. In our leadership. In the ways we continue to show up for one another. And in our refusal to disappear.

THIS IS OUR PRIDE.

We celebrate our Pride, and we continue to call for the decriminalisation of sex work and an end to violence, stigma and discrimination. Governments must review punitive laws and policies that put sex workers at risk, while institutions responsible for healthcare and justice must ensure our rights are respected.

READ MORE →

https://home.aswaalliance.org/2026/09/15/aswa-marks-sex-worker-pride-day-2026/

But Pride is not only celebration. It is also a reminder that we are still fighting. Criminalisation continues to make sex workers less safe. Violence continues. Stigma still follows sex workers into health facilities, workplaces and communities.

That is why Pride and advocacy cannot be separated. As Grace reminded us:

> We deserve to live and work safely, freely and with dignity."



ASWA MEMBERS' IMPACT

Across Africa, sex worker-led organisations continue to create opportunities, defend our rights and keep essential services reaching our communities. This quarter, we highlight progress in international advocacy, HIV prevention, economic empowerment, healthcare accountability and digital rights.

UGANDA

AWAC EXPANDS ITS VOICE AT THE UNITED NATIONS



AWAC announced that it had been granted Special Consultative Status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), opening opportunities to contribute to international discussions on human rights, gender equality and development.

WHY IT MATTERS

Sex worker-led organisations deserve representation in the spaces where international policies are shaped.

READ MORE →

LIBERIA

WHITE ROSE ALLIANCE SUPPORTS COMMUNITY-LED HIV PREVENTION

White Rose Alliance was recognised for its contribution to Liberia's Global Reach II HIV prevention programme, including community-based efforts to improve access to PrEP.

WHY IT MATTERS

Sustaining peer-led HIV services is essential as funding changes threaten community healthcare programmes.

READ MORE →



LIBERIA

WHITE ROSE ALLIANCE JOINS DIGITAL RIGHTS ALLIANCE

White Rose Alliance joined nine other civil society organisations in establishing the Digital Advocacy and Rights Alliance (DARA), addressing digital privacy, security and online harassment.

WHY IT MATTERS

Our right to safety and privacy must also be protected online.

READ MORE →

UGANDA

WONETHA EXPANDS SKILLS TRAINING AND HEALTH OUTREACH

WONETHA supported skills training for 30 women in Kalangala and acquired a motorised boat to improve access to health services for communities living on remote islands.

WHY IT MATTERS

Economic opportunities and accessible healthcare help our communities make informed choices about their lives.

READ MORE →



UGANDA

UNESO STRENGTHENS HEALTH AND HUMAN RIGHTS DIALOGUE

Uganda Network of Sex Worker-led Organizations

UNESO documented four regional stakeholder dialogues involving 120 participants, bringing together community organisations, health providers and government representatives to discuss sexual and reproductive health and rights.

WHY IT MATTERS

Community voices must be included in decisions about the healthcare services we use.

READ MORE →

UGANDA

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: LADY MERMAID EMPOWERMENT CENTRE



Lady Mermaid Empowerment Centre (LMEC) has reported community-led monitoring of HIV, TB and malaria services, working with health facilities to identify gaps and promote respectful healthcare.

WHY IT MATTERS

We should have a voice in assessing whether healthcare services are accessible and responsive to our needs.

FOLLOW LMEC'S WORK →

DR CONGO

HODSAS PUSHES FOR COMMUNITY VOICES IN PUBLIC HEALTH RESPONSES



During the third quarter of 2026, HODSAS continued raising concerns about the exclusion of key populations from public health responses in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

In August, the organisation highlighted the need for Congolese key-population civil society organisations to be meaningfully involved in the Ebola response.

Through a presentation shared during an information session organised by the Global Fund Advocates Network, RANA and WACI Health, HODSAS questioned how an effective response could be achieved without the participation of communities facing barriers to healthcare.

HODSAS also shared its involvement in learning and networking activities linked to malaria elimination, community leadership and advocacy.

These engagements provided opportunities to exchange experiences with other civil society actors working to improve health responses across Africa.



WHY IT MATTERS

Sex workers and other key populations are often left out of decisions about public health emergencies, despite the barriers we face in accessing services. HODSAS's advocacy reminds us that effective health responses require community participation, not just consultation after decisions have already been made.

READ MORE →

ERAM CONTINUES PUSHING FOR SEX WORKERS' RIGHTS IN NAMIBIA



Equal Rights for All Movement (ERAM) continues to advocate for the recognition and protection of sex workers' rights in Namibia, bringing attention to the violence, discrimination and barriers to justice that our communities face.

In September 2026, Namibia's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) outcome was adopted by the UN Human Rights Council. This marked an important stage in a process to which ERAM, together with the Namibian Sex Workers Alliance (NAMSWA), ASWA and the Sexual Rights Initiative, had contributed through a joint submission.

The submission highlighted the challenges sex workers continue to face, including criminalisation, police abuse, discrimination in healthcare and exclusion from labour protections. It called for the decriminalisation of consensual adult sex work, improved access to healthcare and stronger measures to address violence against sex workers.

As Namibia moves towards implementing its human rights commitments, the concerns raised by ERAM and its partners remain important. Sex workers must be included in discussions about the laws, policies and services that affect our lives.

WHY IT MATTERS

Our experiences of violence, discrimination and exclusion must be reflected in national human rights processes. Through this joint advocacy, ERAM and its partners have helped bring these concerns to international attention and created an evidence base for continued engagement with decision-makers.

READ MORE →

LUSOPHONE MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

The Mozambique National Platform for Sex Workers' Rights (PNDTS) continues to play an important role in advocating for the rights, safety and well-being of sex workers in Mozambique.

Through its involvement in community-led initiatives, the Platform has worked to strengthen responses to violence, discrimination and barriers to healthcare. Its advocacy highlights the importance of ensuring that sex workers are involved in decisions about the policies and services that affect our lives.

The Platform has also been associated with efforts to strengthen organisational systems and advance discussions on the legal and policy environment affecting sex workers. These efforts reflect the need for stronger community-led institutions that can document rights violations, engage decision-makers and advocate for meaningful change.



WHY IT MATTERS

Across Africa, criminalisation, stigma and discrimination continue to limit our access to justice, healthcare and protection from violence. Strong sex worker-led organisations are essential for documenting these challenges and ensuring that our voices are heard.

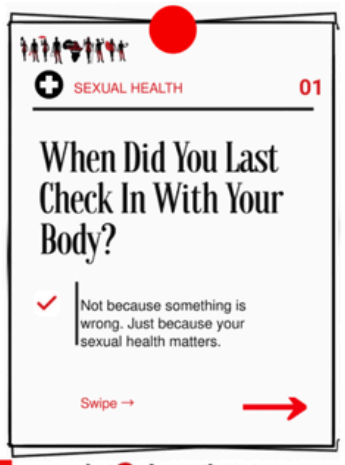
The work of the Mozambique National Platform reminds us that advancing sex workers' rights requires more than providing services. It also means strengthening our organisations, protecting our rights and ensuring that sex workers have a meaningful role in shaping the decisions that affect our communities.

Read more →

SEPTEMBER: A MONTH OF SEXUAL HEALTH ADVOCACY

Sexual health is part of our everyday lives as sex workers. It is about healthcare. But it is also about information, choice, consent, bodily autonomy, safety and being able to make decisions without stigma. Throughout September, we used key moments to keep those conversations visible.





> VCAT was not about telling me what to believe about abortion. It made me question why I believe certain things and whether those beliefs could make another sex worker feel judged when she needs support.
>
> — Sex worker, VCAT participant

4 SEPTEMBER

WORLD SEXUAL HEALTH DAY

Our message was simple:

SEXUAL HEALTH IS A RIGHT — ESPECIALLY FOR SEX WORKERS.

We deserve healthcare that respects our bodies, choices and dignity.

26 SEPTEMBER

WORLD CONTRACEPTION DAY

There is no single contraceptive method that works for everyone. Sex workers deserve accurate information and access to different options so that we can choose what works for our bodies and our lives. Choice matters.

28 SEPTEMBER

INTERNATIONAL SAFE ABORTION DAY

For sex workers, barriers to abortion do not exist in isolation. Restrictive abortion laws can overlap with criminalisation of sex work, stigma, poverty and discrimination in healthcare. Sex workers deserve safe abortion and post-abortion care without judgement. We deserve confidentiality, accurate information, respect and healthcare that sees us as people first.

CONNECTING THE ISSUES

Our experiences show why sexual and reproductive health cannot be separated from economic security, criminalisation, violence or the sustainability of community-led services.

When funding is reduced, outreach and access to information can suffer. When healthcare is unaffordable or far away, having a prevention method available does not guarantee that someone can use it. When sex work is criminalised, fear and stigma can make it harder to seek help or report violations.

And when young sex workers are excluded from decision-making, programmes risk overlooking the needs of the next generation.

Addressing these challenges requires more than awareness campaigns. We need governments, donors, healthcare providers and development partners to support comprehensive, accessible, non-judgmental services developed with sex workers themselves.

OUR BODIES BELONG TO US, OUR CHOICES SHOULD BELONG TO US.

READ: BEYOND SEPTEMBER →

Q3 IN OUR WORDS

> We have our strengths as sex workers.
>
> — Grace Kamau

> When people make decisions about us, they should first listen to us.
>
> — Nomalungelo Mvoti

> The important issue is that availability on paper does not necessarily equal meaningful choice.
>
> — Esther

> When I look across our movement in Africa, I see so much to be proud of.
>
> — Grace Kamau



These voices say a lot about this quarter. We want to be heard. We want choices that exist in real life, not only on paper. We want services led by and designed with our communities. We want resources to reach the organisations doing the work. And we want to live and work safely, freely and with dignity.

LOOKING AHEAD

THE WORK CONTINUES

Q3 gave us a lot to carry forward. We saw again why community-led HIV services matter. We heard why prevention choice must be real. We continued investing in young sex worker leadership. We brought attention to violence that too often goes undocumented. Our members challenged exclusion and found new ways to respond to what sex workers need. And Pride reminded us to celebrate what we have built even as we continue pushing for change.



OUR PRIORITIES FOR Q4

SUSTAINING COMMUNITY-LED SERVICES

We want to document how sex worker-led organisations are responding to funding challenges, the services they are working to maintain and the support they need. This includes collecting stories from our members about adaptation, partnerships, community-led approaches and the practical challenges of sustaining their organisations. These experiences can help strengthen our advocacy with donors and development partners.

TURNING HIV PREVENTION CHOICE INTO REAL ACCESS

We will continue advocating for the full HIV prevention toolbox, including access to PrEP, PEP, condoms, lubricants and newer prevention technologies. Particular attention is needed for rural and underserved communities, where distance, costs and limited services can restrict meaningful choice.

STRENGTHENING YOUNG LEADERSHIP AND MEMBER ADVOCACY

We will continue supporting young sex workers to develop their leadership and advocacy skills, strengthen their organisations and participate meaningfully in decisions affecting their communities.

As we move into the final quarter of 2026, one thing remains unchanged:

SEX WORKERS MUST BE PART OF EVERY DECISION THAT AFFECTS OUR LIVES.

HOW MEMBERS AND PARTNERS CAN CONTRIBUTE

We encourage members to continue sharing brief updates on their activities, achievements, challenges and emerging priorities. We particularly want to hear about changes resulting from advocacy, communities reached, services sustained, partnerships developed and the ways sex worker-led organisations are adapting to funding challenges. These stories help us show not only what our movement is doing, but why it matters.

We will keep organising. We will keep speaking. We will keep telling our own stories. And we will keep making space for sex workers to lead.

NOTHING ABOUT US WITHOUT US.